

Women Speak For the Healing of the World

Introduction

In preparation for the LWF Assembly, women in the LWF Communion met in one global and five regional pre assemblies and discussed and deliberated on several aspects of the theme “For the Healing Of the World”. They found commonalties of faith, confession and shared experiences as important aspects of healing. All acknowledged that there was first of all, a need to name the wounds and illnesses that needed healing and affirmed that the wounds of the world need not discourage us but instead, be seen as opportunities for healing.

Their articulation have been collated together, made precise and concise, in this brochure for easy reading and for effective follow up actions.

1. The Sickness of Violence:

There needs to be a confession on the preeminence of empire building and civil religion in a few countries and of their unilateralism and militarism. These countries have failed to trust God and have instead trusted in their own efforts for security not realizing that their security rests in ensuring that people in the rest of the world feel secure in their own countries.

Violence against women particularly domestic violence, clergy abuse, institutional violence, disproportionate effect of war and conflicts on women, children and trafficking of Women and children, as well as exclusion of women from church structures and systems are forms of violence in which the churches need to play a more proactive role and make the churches safe places for women to disclose instances of abuse and violence.

➤ For healing the havoc caused by violence:

- *All the Pre Assembly women’s meetings unanimously agreed that the LWF program “The Churches say No to Violence Against women” should be launched in all regions, countries and churches and facilitated to be translated into all major local languages, disseminated widely among lay and theological leaders, pastors, congregations and communities.*
- *To initiate further discussions using the document as a discussion starter and to formulate institutional policies gender to address different types of violence.*
- *Women entreat the churches to play a lead role in mobilizing support for reduction of weapons of mass destruction, promotion of human rights and human rights mechanisms, and use the opportunities we have in and through the many educational institutions run by the churches to promote a culture of non-violence.*
- *Churches should keep alive the vision that there is power in nonviolence, that it is possible to live non-violently leading through daily confessions that create hope, restore relationships and living conditions. A reclamation and exploration of the biblical concept of ‘Shalom’ would guide us into a way of life God intended for us..*
- *We entreat the LWF to openly condemn any country that promotes war or is at war, the use of nuclear/biological weapons and also to call for all countries to disarm for the protection of lives and environment.*
- *Invest in spiritual empowerment of women to live the message of hope in word and deed, through development and use of their skills in conflict prevention and resolution.*
- *Use Gender concept as a means of healing relationships and in reducing violence.*

- *Implement gender awareness programs in all churches for church leaders and support research and projects in gender training.*
- *Explore and promote naming and studying new masculine models.*
- *The Desk of WICAS be renamed as “Gender Desk in church and Society” to facilitate and accompany the churches in these processes.*

2. The illness of HIV/ AIDS

Silence and taboo continues to surround HIV/AIDS in congregations while there is a need for confession from rich countries for their apathy to recognize/respond to the urgency of the AIDS pandemic. There is a need for an intentional focus on the gender dimension while addressing the issue of AIDS as women are disproportionately affected. War and conflict, rape, proscribed/controlled sexuality, drug abuse, unemployment and ethnic differences abet the increase of AIDS as well as the ignorance and myths that surround it often to the detriment of women and children.

➤ For the Healing of HIV/AIDS Pandemic

- *Intensify the LWF Campaign against HIV/AIDS pandemic "Compassion, Conversion and Care" in a holistic way, advocate for generous funds from western governments for HIV/AIDS treatment, research and to intensify drugs subsidy and formulate strategies that are country specific.*
- *Work out a global strategy for care of children orphaned by AIDS.*
- *Strategic and regular workshops for church leadership be held on HIV/AIDS awareness and to remove all stereotyping and stigmatization.*

3. The wound of Exclusion by some Church Structures and Systems

We are yet to realize in a fuller way that as Christ's body, we are an interdependent global community and that the structures of church more often than not have perpetuated power and dominance of one group, and at times the church itself as one such dominating group. There is a need to go beyond mere participation and presence of women in church structures to according them their rightful place in policy designing and as leaders and representatives.

➤ For the healing Church Structures and systems

- *The cherished Lutheran concept of ‘Priesthood of all believers’ be strategically emphasized now in all congregations so that the spirit of Reformation continues to reform the church and Society.*
- *Affirm the different ways of healing: through revising our liturgies, liturgical language, and lectionaries to facilitate the concept of communion more fully. Women call for a review of the 3 “L’s (Liturgy, Lectionary and Language)” to heighten the experience of inclusive communion.*
- *Women call for re-visioning of theological education that provides knowledge, skills and scope for the students to be involved in all aspects of living and for building up the capacity of theologians/ pastors to preach and teach from scriptures with a fully human hermeneutics from the perspective of women, youth and children.*
- *Using gender as a tool for analysis, address the issues of sexuality and power and equip pastors to conceptualize gender issues.*
- *Member churches are requested to live up to their commitments of affirming and promoting the leadership of women, making our policies and negotiations as signs and our practices, visible expressions of inclusive communion that we profess.*

- *While acknowledging that that dialogue with ecumenical partners must continue, women call for more focus on concrete practical ecumenism that is experienced at local level, and call for action together in solidarity for the common good, as ecumenism at the grass root level.*
- *Strengthen regional networking by formation of structures like All Africa Lutheran Council to effectively implement recommendations of the communion and transform all Church Leaders meeting into Church Leadership Meeting to remove the exclusion of women, youth and lay.*
- *Women call for perseverance but with patience in moving towards becoming a visible expression of being an inclusive communion by ordaining women in all member churches by the next LWF assembly, to develop a clear theological and cultural rationale for their ordination and facilitate women their full leadership in all duties in Word and Sacrament.*
- *Be intentional in promoting education of girl children, to train women and empower them for active leadership.*

4. The infection of Economic Globalization

While the gap between the rich and the poor are ever widening, the earth's resources, peoples and environments are paying for the sustenance of the lifestyle of the rich countries and their excessive consumption. This has implications for the rich countries too. The idolatry of consumerism ('Affluenza') leads to lack of meaning in people's lives and to a stereo typed mass media model of women forcing women across cultures to copy foreign models, indulge in consumerist behavior and thereby resulting in a denial of real identity to women.

Women face economic globalization in a very personal way through feminization of poverty, of jobs and of migration that leads more women in unorganized sectors, but women have little knowledge of these in spite of experiencing the effects in the worst possible way. Subsequently there is further exploitation through trafficking and sex industry, an increase of violence in the family reinforced by frustration, unemployment and individualism. Migration of people due to poverty and loss of traditional livelihoods, causes break up of families, women being left with the sole responsibility of the remaining family, and the abandoning of children.

➤ For the Healing from Economic Globalization

- *Women call for the communion to redefine individual and corporate sin, the practice of true sense of community living, promote the concept of and respect for the Sabbath*
- *Church should emphasize TAHA- 'there are hundreds of alternatives' and be an alternative itself and work towards making human beings the central focus and not the consuming market.*
- *Develop an study and analysis of impoverishment through churches that would lead to mobilizing of solidarity movements.*
- *Promote an ethic for sustainable life styles that affirm fullness of life, in which women are facilitated to be active participants in countering economic globalization.*
- *Empower women with knowledge and skills to address the environmental factors like water distribution, deforestation, forest fires and drought.*
- *Work for an ecumenical response to globalization, creating political awareness leading to social change.*
- *Confront the idolatry of the empire by being peace-makers and peace builders, and by challenging the negative interplay between religion and nationalism.*

5. The harm of negative Cultures

“Role Stereotyping” continues to be one of the cultural wounds inflicted on women while there is an added threat of mono-culture and individualism leading to further alienation and exploitation.

➤ *For the Healing of Negative Cultural Impact*

- *Harmful traditional practices and myths need to be condemned and new forms of masculine models uplifted*
- *Voices of women should be actively listened and respond to when women name their wounds.*
- *Churches should work for the protection of property rights of women in the event of the husband’s death and ensure their children’s welfare.*
- *Promote cross-cultural education through visitations to bring out the life sustaining and life affirming cultures that are being eroded.*

6. The trauma of Religious Conflict

These conflicts threaten to set back the advances made by women over long struggles. Religious conservatism affect the contribution of women.

➤ *For the Healing of Religious conflict*

- *We need both interfaith and intra-faith dialogue, which are reflected at ground level and matched with actions on uniting issues.*
- *Skills and experience of women in being peace makers and builders be intentionally bringing brought to negotiating tables.*

7. Choking of Environment

Church needs to respond to the pain of the exploited earth in a concerted way. Water as one of the most important and basic human needs require attention since there is a move to privatize and commodify that could well lead to more conflicts in the years to come. The culpability of the Multi National Corporations in privatizing basic services with no regard for environmental care needs to be countered boldly.

➤ *For the Healing the Environment*

- *Women call for two campaigns for the environment: a recycling campaign practicing the 3 ‘R’s – **Reuse, Reduce and Recycle**; a tree planting and education campaign using the infra structure and the network that is readily available in the communion to replenish the earth.*
- *Churches should explore and uplift cultures that encourage care of the environment.*
- *Create and strengthen a network of women to deal with environmental issues to positively influence public policies.*

8. The wound of disintegration of Families

We need to acknowledge that power dynamics exclude certain groups and formations from our view of “family”. The natural act of care giving has been commodified through sex tourism, trafficking of women and children and the exploitation of domestic helpers and migrant workers.

➤ ***For the Healing of Families***

- *There is a need for making churches more welcoming of people with different sexual orientation and to accept all forms of families where stability and security can be experienced*
- *Commodification of care giving needs to be combated by documenting issues of child labor, bonded labor, migrant workers and other human rights issues, forming congregation-based social action groups to address the issue and promote entrepreneurial/ self-help skills to increase economic empowerment and independence of women.*

Conclusion

Our baptismal call, our daily confession and the encounter with and the energizing of our Lord through the Holy communion creates hope and restores relationships and living conditions. We urge all to take these as signs that God lives in us and we in God and to work towards healing and wholeness for the whole of God's creation through the LWF Communion.