

## **Conclusions: Principles and Actions to Develop Gender Policies**

### **I. Previous Definitions**

**Of gender.** Bible-based reflections present gender categories as a tool to be analyzed; a conceptual framework that helps us understand the process to build male and female identities, the power relations between them, the society, and the relation to nature and cosmos. This perspective takes Bible reading and theology to a holistic, systemic and ecological paradigm.

Gender theories challenge us, both men and women, to build new more inclusive and less dual, rationalities based on a holistic concept of being human and part of this world.

From gender categories, both theology and Bible reading are challenged to get involved in theological deconstruction to then, by doing so, question and deconstruct the patriarchal theological speech basics. Our body, our histories and our experiences take their significance back when we read the Bible considering the gender theories.

**Of gender theory.** The study of human relations served as a foundation to see how masculinity and femininity are built up. Then, this theory focused on ways to understand reality to then transform it and propose the empowerment of the powerless, women mainly. Finally, it helped to identify those small patriarchal elements that affect both men and women.

This analysis category is a tool that not only knows and understands the reality, but also transforms it in all its dimensions to take the widely diverse human identity back.

**Of masculinity.** Men-related Bible stories show that there is not an only way to be a man. Violence and discrimination against women based on literal reading of the sacred pages are closely related to a male-oriented and patriarchal culture seeping through our thoughts as individuals, societies and churches. Such patriarchal culture dictates and demands men to behave in a given way. Every man that does not follow that hegemonic pattern is considered as less man than the rest.

In Jesus of Nazareth we find a different speech about God from the paternalistic one spread by the religious leaders at that time. Jesus addressed to God as "Abba", that is, father (Mk 14, 35-36; Rom 8, 15). That word sounds like a child's babbling when calling his father. In Jesus' words, the expressions "my father" or "our father" (Mt 6, 9; 26, 29.42; Lk 11, 2) carry a good father's confidence, intimacy and affection<sup>1</sup>. When he says his father is his followers' father as well, Jesus gives his disciples an example of mercy, love and generosity that every man should have and give to those around him without distinction. Jesus' attitude is way far from the picture of a distant God and asks men to do the same: look at each other as siblings and treat them, being men or women, as we would like to be treated.

### **II. Principles**

To present our point of view related to the issue addressed in the Consultation, it is necessary to consider some principles on which our proposals are built up:

1. We believe in the essence of a loving, caring and fair God.

---

<sup>1</sup> REYES ARCHILA, Francisco. 2007/1. «My father and your father; my God and your God. The image of God Father in the Gospels», Latin American Bible interpretation magazine 56. Quito: RECU/DEI

2. We assert Jesus' liberating masculinity as a proposal to build new humankind.
3. We promote to bring back the biblical-theological image of man and women according to God's original design. As part of the heavenly priesthood, both man and woman have the responsibility to steward the creation and power execution in a balanced, agreed and reflexive way.
4. We recognize that sin has altered God's original design for the world and the humankind and, in consequence, the relation with God, the intrapersonal relation, the relation between man and woman, and the relation with the creation have been damaged and deformed.
5. We promote an updated approach to the biblical text considering the history and the context.
6. We propose and promote equal opportunities for men and women to develop their potentialities.
7. We stand by a restoring justice and reject all form of violence against men, women and the creation.
8. We stand by a holy and integrationist sexuality that values the corporeal nature oriented to a plentiful and healthy life development.
9. We express the need to build inclusive and actively participative communities that accept diversity, plurality, and interculturality.
10. We promote a church renovation that brings about a change in the language by giving new meanings, new relations and new liturgical practices.
11. We reject and report gender-related exploitation, traffic and discrimination.
12. We promote healthy families that encourage fair and equal power relations between men and women to prevent violence and mistreatment situations.

### III. Action Lines

These action lines have been proposed to rebuild, from a gender perspective, a plentiful life for every man and woman. These involve practices that some individuals and institutions follow. These also involve actions from and with the church, the community and the society. Based on a situational diagnosis, we propose to plan actions like sensitization, pastoral, education and advocacy that meet the existing realities properly.

#### Diagnosis

As an institutional practice it is necessary to have situational diagnosis of issues related to the woman, the country and the region. This diagnosis involves analyzing the church reality based on violent situations, indicators of violence against women, baselines, indicators of context realities in relation to gender, and others.

#### Sensitization and Raising Awareness

We sensitize through campaigns that cover the following aspects:

- Gather with other actors working on this issue to talk about and sensitize on gender equity.
- Promote art spaces that lead to reflection on violence.
- Draw up and design letter addressed to pastoral organizations to sensitize on gender issues.
- Allow healthy relations between men and women to promote gender equity.
- Raise awareness of churches and organizations on violence and gender equity through praying and mobilization.
- Promote gender equity in ministry groups.
- Sensitize churches (men and women pastors, leaders and others) through publishing.
- Prepare flyers containing Christian values and God's proposal for the relation between men, women and couples.
- Have cinema forums.
- Procure the families, the church and the community equal gender opportunities regarding good treatment and good practices.

- Sensitize (civil, social, political, student) people through the media: banners, enlargements, publication, and educational material.
- Take the media (radio, television, Internet, etc.) into account to raise men and women's awareness on couple relations (power relations).
- Reassert the Church and faith-based communities as promoters of justice and equity.

## **Pastoral**

We wish both the church and the organizations to address this issue and take on gender practices in their internal and external relations. To that effect, we propose to:

- Encourage churches to set multidisciplinary teams to accompany boys, girls, teenagers, women, men and families who are victims of violence.
- Promote different and mixed spaces to listen to and share experiences to have second thoughts on feminity and masculinity, and to encourage participation.
- Propose interdisciplinary accompaniment to resolve conflicts.
- Accompany couples along their daily life on a regular basis.
- Develop abilities to self-support in terms of finances and work.
- Develop programs to promote, prevent and assist the victim and the offender integrally in case of domestic violence and sexual violence as well.
- Build the church and organizations' abilities to provide primary care to people affected by violence, and to network with organizations addressing this issue.
- Motivate to read the Bible from altars and in every educational space.
- Look for and procure spaces for the Church to get involved in social action.

## **Education**

We believe that the educational area is essential when proposing gender equity. At that effect we propose to:

- Facilitate education and training on gender addressed to pastors and church leaders, both men and women. Train local church members as well.
- Educate and train pastors through workshops, campaigns and other means on gender equity, masculinity, feminity, and violence from a social and biblical theological perspective.
- Propose theological centers, seminars and institutions to add to their study plan: pastoral training, accompaniment of couples, building masculinity and feminity, violence, gender equity, family planning, alcoholism, sexual education, reality information, and national and international judicial frameworks. These should also be added in Sunday schools.
- Choose easy-to-understand and ludic material using an inclusive language.
- Have a joint work with men and women to deal with these topics by using their life testimonies as motivating elements.
- Educate on living as couples and pastoral based on a gender equity perspective.
- Promote deep theological reflections considering the social history context (exegesis and hermeneutics).
- Encourage to develop a gender perspective from the Bible perspective.
- Encourage to use inclusive language.
- Add the gender approach to church and organizational spaces.
- Promote talks about gender with families, couples, children and church leaders in order to get rid of different socialization patterns (roles distribution). For this purpose we could make use of colors, toys and role-playing.
- Have workshops on masculinity.

- Review the lyrics and church liturgy promoting God's negative image of an imperative male-oriented God, and write song lyrics about an inclusive, community and genderless God.
- Promote horizontal relations in every human interaction and institutional spaces.
- Work on values regarding femininity, self-esteem and inner healing.
- Promote pastoral advising and accompaniment of already established couples or about to get married on family planning, alcoholism, affective relations, sexual education, reality information, and national and international judicial frameworks.

## Political Advocacy

As part of a society, the organizations and/or churches must take on an active work to deal with gender issues. At that effect we propose to:

- Write and send letters to authorities to let them know about this issue.
- Have alliances with local institutions.
- Get the church involved in the State gender-oriented activities.
- Give meaning to important dates like Mother's Day, International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>) and International Day against Gender Violence (November 25<sup>th</sup>) to talk about, reflect on and raise awareness without turning them into isolated activities, but allowing a growing recognition.
- Encourage the church to get involved in existing groups pertaining to the local government and the civil society to deal with this issue.
- Promote the church participation in creating social policies.

## IV. Glossary

- **Diversity**  
Meaning the different ways of being man and woman, and variety and difference of customs and cultures in specific cultural and geographic contexts.
- **Femininity**  
Summarizes the qualities expressed by being a woman. Depending on the social cultural context and space, these qualities may differ from others.
- **Gender**  
Ideas based on society and culture about what masculinity and femininity are, how men and women should relate; roles, possibilities and limitations each sex has leading to different and unequal opportunities. These ideas should not be related to biological differences and should change as time passes by.
- **Gender policies**  
Orientating guidelines that set specific objectives, appropriate and relevant methodologies to promote and make gender equity effective when working for an organization or institution.
- **Gender theory**  
Analyze and reflect on human reality in the past, present and future. This analysis category may be applied at a subjective, personal or private level or at a public level regarding the political, social and economical situation
- **Interculturality**

Approach and interaction process among cultures to focus on dialog and mutual respect for diversity and difference depending on the world view within a unity framework.

- **Masculinity**  
Different ways of being and feeling a man in relation to his corporal natural, inter-rationality and ownliness.
- **Ownliness**  
A human being's innermost dimension. A person sees himself or herself as a person for him or her.
- **Plurality**  
Meaning the differences in a person or a group within another group. Acknowledge and value every opinion on behalf of the common wellbeing.