



'Ensure Gender Equality; Empower Women and Lift up Humanity'

Concept Note

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, which is an imperative for strengthening and empowering women and lifting up humanity for a just and peaceful world. Five years after envisioning Sustainable Development Goals, and twenty-five years after adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, violence against women and girls remains a pervasive human rights violation. The devastating impacts on women and girls, families, communities, and society are evident in most situations, especially since the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Violence against women and girls has significantly increased during the pandemic. Lack of adequate security, health care as well as financial instability has created tensions within families, which mainly affects women who are already suffering due to the increased care burdens under lockdown.

Gender discrimination, harmful cultural practices, structural and economic factors are causes that demean the dignity and sacred worth of women and girls. Women continue to experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and are denied equal opportunity at every level in society. Although the State bears the primary responsibility of preventing violence and protecting the economic and social rights of women and girls, inequality in education, unequal pay for equal work, sexual harassment, trafficking in persons, unaffordable and inaccessible health care and services, and gender-biased laws and policies are examples of the continued denial of gender equity and justice.

Gender equality is the most emphasized attribute of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set an ambitious universal plan of full realisation of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within 15 years, with a commitment to leave no one behind (UN 2015a). It recognizes that realizing gender equality is a matter of human rights and is vital to progress across all the goals and targets. However, the SDGs will not be attained if women are denied access to resources and opportunities for education, employment, and decision-making. Gender equality is a goal in its own right protected in SDG 5 and it cuts across all 17 SDGs within the Agenda, which contains 45 targets and 54 indicators related to gender equality.

Achieving gender equality in real terms entails that women are not inherently vulnerable but are rather the agents of transformative change. Attaining gender equality is critical both as an important goal in itself and as an effective means to achieve sustainable development. It is important to emphasize that gender equality is not a women's issue alone and should engage both men and women. Gender equality is not

about transferring opportunities from those who can avail them to those who cannot, but about creating conditions where each person regardless of their gender has the right and ability to realize their human potential. Many existing institutional structures and cultural barriers that are inherently gender-biased, prohibit gender equality, and deny women's rights must be critically examined and radically transformed.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) firmly believes that the full realization of women's rights and effective participation of women in decision-making will lead to inclusive and transformative policies that are necessary for the achievement of the SDGs. The conclusions of the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women-65 (CSW-65) acknowledge that "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and women's full, equal, effective, and meaningful participation and decision-making in public life as well as the elimination of violence are essential for achieving sustainable development, promoting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, enhancing inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productivity, ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere, and ensuring the well-being of all". It also recognizes that women and girls play a vital role as agents for sustainable development. Hence, it is timely that all people of faith take a lead and play their part in achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

The proposed two-day (8-9 July , 2021) online consultation of the CCA will aim at deliberating on the importance of investing in gender equality and promoting women's role to accelerate the effective implementation of the SDG-2030 Agenda. The CCA will invite advocates and activists from its respective member constituencies to participate in the consultation.

Specific Objectives

The consultation aims to:

- Engage with the CCA's member constituencies to acknowledge the importance of gender equality for achieving sustainable and peaceful societies;
- Encourage member churches and ecumenical networks to invest time, energy, and resources to promote gender equality in society at large; and,
- Advocate for and participate in the interventions and policies needed to implement SDG 5 which promotes equal rights and opportunities for women and girls.