

2013/2014

OUR VOICES

ems women's network



ENGLISH

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONSULTATION IN INDIA



Evangelical Mission in Solidarity

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Participants of EMS International Women's Consultation, CSI/Paul

**Dear women,
dear sisters in the women's network,**

in August, delegates from Japan, South Korea, India and from the Indonesian islands of Bali, Sulawesi and Halmahera travelled all the way to Bangalore. Most of them spent ten very full days at the campus of Vishranthi Nilayam, the guesthouse of the CSI Order of Sisters as their "temporary Indian home".

"Women as agents of building God's community" was the overarching theme, suggested by the Indian sisters. During the consultation we followed the liberation strategy of to SEE – JUDGE – ACT.

We closely examined the reality that most women live in a rather patriarchal environment both, in cultural and religious communities. The responses from questionnaires and case studies were very instrumental resource material to build on during the consultation process.

We dealt with power dynamics, patterns and underlying values that feed destructive power games also among women in different positions and age groups.

The game of Indiaka proved to be an inspiring symbol of how to share power, grow as team players, dare to take risks and learn to take on a leading role in a playful way without excluding others.

The friendships which developed among the participants in this period created a wonderful feeling of sisterhood.

In the course of the consultation, each country delegation in turn was responsible for the devotional prayers and we learned new creative ways of celebrating and strengthening our faith.

We are very grateful to the Order of Sisters and Synthia Sobha Rani, CSI Women's Fellowship, for all their support.

Since the last women's consultation in Lebanon 2002 many years have passed before this next consultation could take place. We hope and pray that our next personal exchange among sisters of the EMS women's network will be sooner.

Kind regards

Gabriele Mayer
Gabriele Mayer, PhD
EMS Women and Gender Desk
September 2013



Symbols of Women’s Strength

During the inauguration and opening session each delegation presented a symbol of women’s strength from their home country and their cultural community.

Delegates of the Church of South India presented a wonderful dark brown sculpture, mother holding a girl child.

Vasanthi and Jessie explained to us why they chose this symbol:

The woman is God’s creation, she is the backbone of the family – and the church. Usually, she is the first teacher of the child. Here we can see that the mother is carrying her child and feels so happy to do this. She got many qualities like love, kindness, hospitality, tolerance, patience, goodness and she is very faithful. This contrasts immensely against the background of a society that knows female feticide and only 39% of girls but 64% of boys receive education.



Delegates of the Christian Protestant Church of Bali, Indonesia showed a photo displaying an old woman carrying two heavy buckets of water – on her face a big smile.

Hetty and Deborah could see in that hardworking woman the strength of women, who never give up looking after their family in spite of weakness or sickness. Often it is a sacrificial life of women, but there is always a smile on her face.

Delegates of the United Church of Christ in Japan distributed brown and yellow fabrics for each participant, illustrating a grain of wheat.

Michiko and Sayuri explained this symbol coming from the women’s fellowship of Kyodan. Kyodan is a union of many Protestant denominations. The women’s fellowship is relatively independent. They commit much time and en-

ergy to God’s mission despite the serious lack of the younger generation. Living as Christian minority in Japan they follow Jesus’ example to become a grain and bring much fruit.

The delegate of the Protestant Church of South East Sulawesi, Indonesia shared her symbol of a green Sarung, traditional women’s clothing

Tirza showed us how women use the Sarung in various ways to underline their natural beauty or for daily chores. In the church more than 70% are women and children. In the midst of many challenges they utilize their strength to encourage one another and continue their hard work. They are the ones who make a living for the family despite many economic and educational limitations.



Tirza from South East Sulawesi explains her symbol of strength: a green Sarung.

The delegate from the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, Indonesia told the others about her research on domestic violence in female pastors’ families.

Jerda reported about the strength of female pastors who continue with their ministry even if they were beaten and their face shows bruises the other morning. These women

followed the call into ministry and continue with pastoral care to their congregations. They look for resources not to give up and how to balance the demands at home and the demands of their congregation. They find strength in small groups who support one another.

Delegates of the Presbyterian Church of Korea brought a bank account book to the centre.

Myung Shil and Eun-Hye surprisingly put a bank account book in front of us illustrating the strength of Korean women. They explained that legally there isn't any more discrimination between men and women. Education allowed many women to seize "economic power" in their homes, but in social reality many women remain in their "comfort zone" and prefer to remain ignorant towards injustices below the surface.

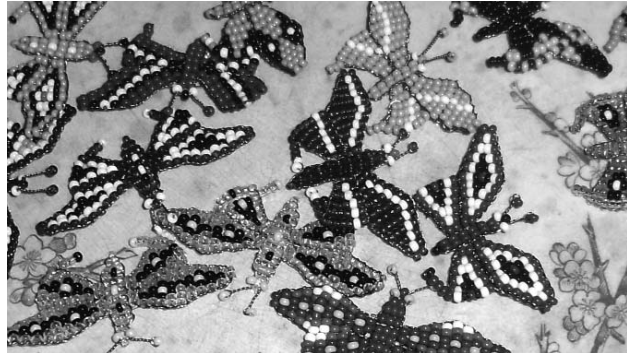
The delegate of the Christian Church in South Sulawesi, Indonesia brought the symbol of orange Baju Bodo, a unique women's dress.

Ni Luh used the colorful Baju Bodo against the restrictive backstage for many women in South Sulawesi where the majority of church people are women, but good education is offered only for boys. Church leaders make a difference in judging moral behavior between men and women.



Ni Luh from South Sulawesi brought the orange Baju Bodo.

Delegates of the EMS Secretariat in Germany brought colourful butterflies, handmade of beads from a South Sudanese Women's project



Butterflies as a symbol of strength in spite of filigree appearance, a symbol against all weakness. Butterflies have wings like eagles. We recall Isaiah 40:31 which says: "but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint". ☺

Compiled by Flora Rani, programme assistant at the Church Council for Child and Youth Care and Vasanthi Saduri, principle of ARPANA School in Bangalore.



CHALLENGES of CHURCHES

Deborah Murthy summarized the diverse challenges church women are facing in their respective countries. Each of them is influenced by their country's cultures, economic and political situation and history: Women in India and Indonesia in particular are facing low education (GKSS, South Sulawesi), lack of economic access (GEPSULTRA), domestic violence (GMIH, Halmahera), women sacrificing themselves (Bali Church) and sexual/gender abuse (Church of South India).

Women in Japan and Korea experience totally different questions/situations than women in India and Indonesia. They enjoy prosperity and education. According to the reports we listened to, it seems that women in these societies are tempted to become egoistic and do not care about social problems. They seem not to be bothered by their exclusion in decision making processes. They are living in 'the golden cage'.

Demanding realities

by Gabriele Mayer

Each delegation had presented a symbol of women's strengths but also reported on the challenges of their context and their community. Demanding burdensome realities became visible.



We utilized the social justice method of SEE-JUDGE-ACT. The origins of this method are associated with the late Belgian priest, Joseph Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement. Liberation movements striving for social justice also used the process of SEE – JUDGE – ACT in order to review the concrete situation; to analyze, discern and judge that reality based on biblical reflection – and, finally, to decide on how to act what should be done.

At the Asian women's consultation we unraveled that method by asking each participant to respond to four questions before the consultation:

1. Eye-opener in childhood that taught you to see differences between boys and girls .
2. Situations where women put women down.
3. Experiences and strategies to cross boundaries.
4. Biblical stories that fight gender injustice.

These responses offered rich resource material and case studies we could utilize during the process of SEE – JUDGE – ACT.

SEE

Some eye-opener that taught to see differences between boys and girls:

- Experience from Japan: A girl wanted to become like a male TV character and used a male first person pronoun for herself in kindergarten. The kindergarten teacher blamed her in front of the whole class.
- Experience from India: Daughter was expected by her father to be at home before 6pm.
- Experience from Korea: Female student went through her first menstruation and realized sensitive responses at home and at school.
- Experience from Indonesia: Brother is sent to a better school than his sister, whereas she is married at an early age.
- Experience from Indonesia: Bride moves to the family of the bridegroom and suddenly her freedom and the familiar values of her own family come to an end. ...
- Experience from Germany: Aunt and uncle wanted to find the "right" profession and "right" husband for the niece. With their own son probably they would not have dared that.

Questions we discussed:

- What happened with the girl/boy? Which self-understanding was promoted?
- Who are the agents that bring restrictions to the free development of girls?
- What do we see applying gender glasses to such social formation?



Deeper insights with "gender glasses"

The word ‘judge’ is used here in a positive sense – it means to look closely and analyze the situation in order to make an informed judgement about it. This involves two key parts: social analysis and theological reflection.

During our Bible Studies in Vishranthi Nilayam we read closely Bible stories dealing with the Hagar story in Genesis 16, with Mary and Martha in Luke 10 and Canaanite woman in Matthew 15. These biblical stories inspired our reflections on how to discern and to judge our realities in light of the gospel. You find those reports on pages 12/13.

Participants shared experiences and strategies of how they cross and overcome boundaries:

- naming and making public situations of injustice - together with others
- networking with others who can support and encourage oneself
- working hard – three times as much as men
- “In 1995 my sister came out as a lesbian which was still tabooed at that time in Germany. This news widened my horizon about what is normal and what is not normal.”
- becoming active and searching for financial support to follow one’s vision like better education.
- claiming and holding on to one’s vision and purpose of life
- learning to play the “power game” in a constructive and inclusive way

At Vishranthi Nilayam those eighteen women took advantage of creative ways to do reflection and interaction with the group. One moving method was that each woman withdraw for about 20 minutes to identify for herself boundaries she became aware of due to group discussions and self- reflection. Crayons and thick paper were offered. Everyone was invited to find a creative visible expression, a symbol, a cartoon displaying her boundary she would like to overcome. Sitting quietly in the garden of Vishrathi Nilayam, meditating and creating a visible sign of one's challenge, surrounded by the community of sisters, offered an atmosphere of comfort – and encouragement.

Then the sharing in the group revealed that sometimes much pain was touched by recalling hurdles and naming boundaries women would like to overcome. Boundaries seemed more than just an obstacle of today. Sometimes they have grown and are imbedded in our beliefs and behavioral patterns that take a longer journey to cross them – again and again.



Biblical Meditation



by Jerda Djawa at the opening worship service of the Asian Women's Consultation in Bangalore. She is a pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, Indonesia. Since November 2012 she has been the first delegate of the EMS Women's Network in the EMS General Meeting. Currently she is doing her PhD in Jogjakarta, Indonesia.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12: 32

God reminds us not to worry about what we will eat and wear. Because s/he knows everything that we need and everybody needs. Life is more than food, the body more than clothes. Think of the ravens: they neither sow nor reap; yet God feeds them. You are worth far more than the birds! Set your mind upon his kingdom, and all the rest will come to you as well.

What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is reflected in situations where we can find justice, welfare and people can feel peace. The kingdom of God is happening if there are no people marginalised, if all are equal, people meet on the same eye level and help each other. If all these things are running well, so building God's community will happen.

These words are simple and beautiful. In fact however, it turns out to be difficult to stand up for justice and righteousness. It seems to be a difficult task to provide welfare for all people. And it is almost impossible to keep peace. The churches always proclaim these words. But after many experiences I sometimes feel hopeless because these words almost seem to be the slogan in church life. When the church is facing situations of injustice or poverty and strife,

they withdraw to their comfort zone and close their eyes and ears and let everything done.

On top of that, often the church itself seems to be precisely the agent of injustice and quite the opposition of righteousness, properousness and peace. This fact scares many people. Including women! In many churches women's voices are not heard, women are marginalized, they have less power and less bargaining positions. They are facing the authority and arbitrariness of the leaders.

Into this situation Jesus said:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

This text challenges us as women to keep on striving for better communities. Personally, I am deeply believing in the strength of women. Every woman has incredible strength, the strength to arise! We are always striving to provide food for our children and families. We are striving to keep them healthy. We are striving to protect them. These are the basics of giving life. Women can provide all this. So do not be afraid to be the agent for building God's community. Do it now. God will complete us. Do not be afraid. Amen. ☺



Participants listening attentively.

Arpana – School for mentally challenged children

Vasanthi Saduri is the principle of ARPANA and she took us to her school. She is also the elected treasurer of CSI Women's Fellowship



The school for mentally challenged children is in Bangalore City. ARPANA supports children irrespective of caste, creed and religion. It is managed by Karnataka Central diocese, CSI and funded by Kindernothilfe Duisburg, Germany. Started in the year 1981 with 20 children, it has grown to 76 children today.

of retardation are integrated into surrounding schools. Children with severe and profound retardation receive education by the trained personal at ARPANA school. They are taught values of life and trained in self help skills like carpentry, tailoring, screen printing, envelope making, catering, craft and art work. Every day nutritious food is provided.

ARPANA is bringing awareness to the community to overcome superstitious beliefs. Children who are mentally retarded are brought up in a way that stimulates their development and offers them growth and self-esteem. ☺

Children are classified according to the degrees of mental retardation such as mild, moderate, severe and profound. Children who have mild and moderate degrees

The situation of Widows in India

by Jessie Shiri. She is the Vice President of Karnataka Regional Women's Fellowship and served for 45 years at United Theological College in Bangalore.



As soon as women loose their husband, the society in our Indian culture will look down upon them.

Widows are supposed to be inside the house and confined within the four walls. They are not supposed to take any kind of important role, for example during the wedding ceremony of their children or any other

functions. They are considered to bring a bad omen to festivities and social functions.

In Hindu culture widows have a ceremony where they break the glass bangles worn on their hands. The Bindhi on their forehead will be removed and they are not allowed to keep flowers in their hair. Wearing beautiful saris is also not allowed. I myself live now for 19 years as a widow and have experienced some of these social rules.

Today I am convinced that widows have to come out from their cage and fight for their rights and to avail the entitlements by the government. ☺



Visit to Mysore

by Deborah Murthy, elected president of the Women's Fellowship in Bali



One highlight of our women's consultation was our trip to Mysore, exploring Indian history and cultural heritage. First we stopped at the Sultan's Summer Palace. It was built by Sultan Tipu in 1750 – 1799. He was a famous and well educated prince, fluent in English, Persian and some Arabic languages. His people also considered him a great warrior. The palace is really well maintained. The walls and ceilings are decorated by beautiful hand paintings illustrating scenes of war, but also ambassadors who brought valuables to the Sultan and his princess. We enjoyed looking at the illuminating portrait paintings by Thomas Hickey. The portrait of Sultan Tipu shows a perfect and handsome man. But the displayed linen trousers of the prince convey a more realistic impression of the real size of the prince.

The next destination was the main place - Maharaj Palace in Mysore. It is much bigger than the Palace of Sultan Tipu. Sultan Tipu Palace was influenced by Islam religion and at Maharaj Palace we observed strong Hindu influences. The paintings and statues mostly tell the story of Hindu legends, such Mahabharata. Coming from Bali, I myself noted similarities between the exposed Indian art and the art of Bali. The chair of the king was made of gold, also the kitchen utensils were of high quality of porcelain, gold and silver. This Maharaj Palace keeps Indian heritage in high value. Security measures were quite strictly applied on thousands of visitors. We visited the place on Independence Day of India. No wonder that thousands of people visited the palace besides us.

Our third destination was an Art Gallery. This gallery keeps hundreds of paintings, music instruments from many countries and different ages, kitchen sets from China, Japan and as well a very old clock. The warden in the Art Gallery explained that the clock was made in the year 1700. It is still working and plays beautiful music every 15 minutes. Not far from the Gallery, we



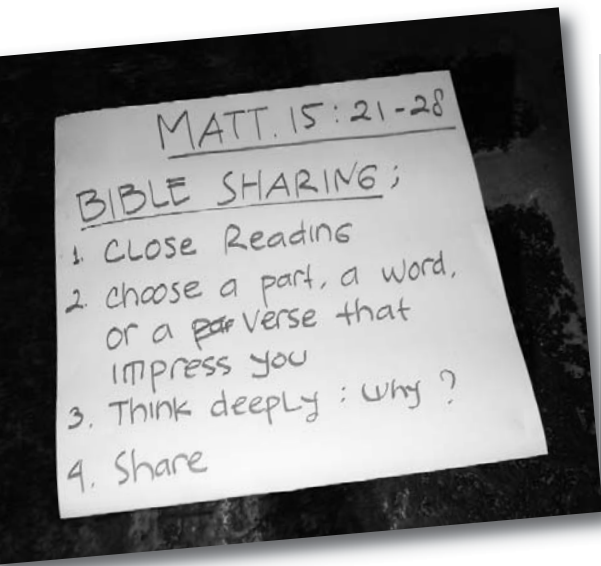
visited the historical Cathedral Church. The foundation of the church was laid by Maharaj of Mysore, Sri Krisnara Jendra Wadiyar Bahadur on 28 October 1933. The architect was influenced by Europe culture.

We were quite impressed of the efforts India is making to maintain its heritage properly. Many centuries ago, famous cultures of India were highly developed. Despite enormous economic tensions in the Indian society poverty does not stop the Indians to care for their longstanding heritage. ☺



Bible Sharing

Based on the responses the participating women sent in before the consultation started, we selected these three Bible stories and dealt with them on various days.



STEPS FOR THE BIBLE STUDY GROUPS :

1. Close Reading: read the text carefully, and repeatedly until you can find the meaning of that text and tell the story with your own words.
2. Choose a word, a verse or a part that touch you deeply. Maybe it gives you strength, exhortation or frightens or confuses you.
3. Think deeply about that part that you have chosen, based on your own experience or background.
4. Share with sisters in your small group.

MATTHEW 15:21-28 THE FAITH OF A CANAANITE WOMAN

Sharing results after group discussion :

- ❖ Jesus learns from the woman. Jesus himself moves away from his comfort zone and expands his boundaries. That is a reason why women love Him.
- ❖ Jesus encourages widows.
- ❖ Jesus acknowledges when our faith is increasing.
- ❖ Sometimes women are puzzled why Scriptures can say discriminatory remarks regarding people. Then it is important that they respond like the Canaanite woman was doing.
- ❖ Women are struggling for a better life.

summarized by Jerda Djawa

GENESIS 16:1-16 SARAI AND HAGAR

Questions raised by Jerda Djawa when she introduced the Bible passage:

How is Hagar expanding her boundaries?

How did the angel empower Hagar?

Sarai and Abram were waiting for the promised child. As they became really old, Sarai finally gave Hagar, her slave girl, to Abram as a substitute wife.

It was a common practice of that time. A married woman who could not have children was shamed by the fellow beings. As Hagar was the maid servant she had to obey. Fortunately, she became pregnant. The child born to the maid woman was considered to be the child of the mistress. Hagar "misuses" her new status as pregnant slave girl and causes much tension. When Hagar over-powers Sarai, Sarai blames Abram for this unexpected result. Abram could not see, judge and act. He asks Sarai



to do according to her will. Sarai took out her anger treated Hagar in a harsh way. Hagar decided to leave and go into the wilderness. First she crosses her boundaries as a slave girl and then expands her boundaries by going into the wilderness.

But the angel of the LORD gave her advice to return to Sarai, the cause of her problem and even to submit to her. She goes back and accepts God's promise of help to her. She is willing to correct her attitude because she had experienced at the well that the Lord was seeing her. Obeying the LORD'S promise and coming back was an emotional situation but she acted justly to be blessed. This promise of God empowers Hagar to realize that there is God who sees.

Instead of running away from our problems it is wise to return to our problem, face them and accept God's promise of help. It is indeed right and good to wait upon the LORD with faith for his promise to be fulfilled instead of taking the temptation into our hands and interfering in God's will and plans.

reflected by Synthia Sobha Rani



During the role play ...



LUKE 10:38-42 MARTHA AND MARY

The Bible challenges patterns – expanding social roles of women Jerda Djawa introduced three questions:

- ❖ Who you are, Martha or Mary ?
- ❖ What is the positive aspect of Martha and Mary?
- ❖ What do you learn regarding this “other” aspect ?

Eun-Hye Shin from South Korea shares what her group found out: My international group was composed by Jerda from Halmahera/Indonesia, Jessie from India, Sayuri from Japan, Flora from India, Tirza from Indonesia and Eun-Hye from South Korea. Jerda asked us in her introduction to Luke 10 to read closely the Bible passage and then to see whom we identify either Mary or Martha. But all of us we could identify with both, Mary and Martha. We felt we have two sides in us in our real life and our real identity. Sometimes we feel like being on Mary's side.

Sometimes we feel like becoming Martha's side. However, we realized that we have to think what is more important to us and what is more close to God's intention for us. Especially when Jesus talked about the kingdom of God, his disciples stayed in their seats next to Jesus. Most of the listening crowd were men. It was nothing special for them sitting and listening. But Mary was a woman. And as a woman she did have a different social role which she practiced. Deviating from that social role for women Mary did not go to the kitchen for serving. She stayed at Jesus' side and listened carefully. She was flying over her boundaries. She chose “the better part” as some translations expressed it. Jesus said to her, “That will not be taken away from her.” Yes, right. When we choose that part for God, nobody is entitled to take it away from us. That is the point! We should keep in mind even if someone looks down on us or makes cynical remarks, you just choose the better part for God's sake and continue your own path with God. That's sufficient. ☺

reported by Eun-Hye Shin

Prayer in memory of the Korean “comfort women”

Compiled by KIM Myung Sil. She did her PhD in Liturgical Studies at Garrett – Evangelical Theological Seminary, USA. She works as an adjunct professor at several colleges in South Korea. This prayer was offered as morning devotion by our Korean delegates.



OPENING PRAYER

God ever just,
You hear the cry of the poor;
You break the power of the oppressor
And set the downtrodden free.
Change inhumanity to compassion
And let the desires of the affluent
Yield to the needs of the poor.
Turn our hearts to the way of the gospel,

That peace may triumph over discord
And our justice mirrors your own.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.

Henderson, Liturgies of Lament, 72

TELLING THE STORY

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? I have cried desperately for help, but still it does not come. During the day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer. I call at night but get no rest. I am no longer a person; I am a worm, despised and scorned by everyone! All who see me make fun of me: they stick out their tongues and shake their heads. You relied on the Lord, they say. Why doesn't God save you? If the Lord likes you, why doesn't God help? Many enemies surround me like bulls; they are all around me, like fierce bulls from the land of bashan. They open their mouths like lions, roaring and tearing at me. My Strength is gone, gone like water spilled on the ground. All of my bones are out of joint. My heart is like melted wax. My throat is as dry as dust, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have left me for dead in the dust. O Lord, don't stay away from me! Come quickly to my rescue.

Rosemary Ruether, Women-Church, 154-157

SILENCE

CALL TO BE PEACEMAKERS

We are here to end the violence. Yes, we will!
We are here to break the terror. Yes, we will!
We are here to heal the wounded. Yes, we will!
We are here to change the system. Yes, we will!
We are moving out together. Yes, we are!
The end of the old, the beginning of the new. This is the time!
The end of silence. The beginning of protest and change.
We are the ones, and we will do it. Yes, we will!

Women-Church, 157-158





REFLECTION/ PREACHING

"For men's sexual desire, women were sacrificed like in this bible story. The comfort women were raped by men to solve the conflict among men. Japan brought them by force, and Korea let them do it to keep their lives. Some of those unnamed women died in the miserable war field, some became crazy, some abandoned and hidden after the war, just some survivals showed off before the world but looked away and neglected by Korean society as well Japan. Japan haven't still had compensated for their violence, and Korean government doesn't want to mention about that due to the economic reasons. Only some institutes, especially being run by women, have had claimed the women's rights. Violence and vengeance are not just belonging to the old stories in the bible and our past. Women as objects are still suffering from betraying, raping, torturing, murdering, and dismembering....."

NAMING SIGNS OF RESISTANCE AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE AND SIGNS OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD-WIDE WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS



BLESSING

May the God who heals
 touch us and our violent world,
 and bless and be with us always.
 Go now to denounce violence,
 to listen to the cries of the violated,
 to walk with abusers and the abused,
 to live the strength of Christ.

Liturgies of Lament, 73/74

Playful game with Indiacaca

Interactive method inspires reflection on power

by Deborah Murthy from Bali, she is a trained medical doctor and works as a social worker. She is the elected president of the Women's Fellowship in Bali.

Indiacaca game is coming from Latin America. This game offers a lot of fun but also invites us to reflect on how to use power within a group. Indiacaca is a specific kind of "ball", this flat "ball" is made of leather, and it has some colorful feathers on the top. We learnt to throw the Indiacaca gently, focusing on the person we liked to aim at and gain as a partner player. It was even more fun if we succeeded in keeping the Indiacaca as long as possible in the air, every woman helped that it did not fall down. Every player is encouraged to aim Indiacaca to the next person. We learnt to communicate even when the Indiacaca was unclear in its direction and several persons started to run. We enjoyed the game very much, even Michiko, 70 years old, our elder sister from Japan, was so happy to join the game.

This game illustrated and taught me a lot about how power play should be managed. We are supposed not to keep the power (Indiacaca) in our hands, but rather utilize it and play as a team, develop networking skills and offer and receive appropriate information. We should not shy away when the Indiacaca is coming towards us (we get a chance to use the power!). When power brings us closer to our vision of life, then we should not hesitate to utilize it and to share the

flow of the game with our team mates and sisters that she also can take advantage of the opportunity. Fair power play is managed with much wisdom and readiness to include others. Such kind of power play can bring happiness and prosperity for our communities and even for our country. <

Lessons I learnt from playing Indiacaca:

1. Play the Indiacaca/power game properly
2. Communicate to prevent hurting colleagues or losing an opportunity
3. Make an effort to seize opportunities even if no one is running to the center for instance, do not allow the ball/opportunity to drop
4. One needs skilled eyes to see the opportunity coming
5. Good team cooperation is a prerequisite to win the game/power
6. Willingness to share power fosters fair play.



Sharing power, whose turn is it now?

Interactive methods promote the consultation process

by Gabriele Mayer

Changing a limited perspective on oneself – and feeling empowered

Looking at the many hurdles women have to overcome in their biographical journey but also in their churches and communities it is no wonder that sometimes it feels really difficult to develop a strong self-esteem. Often women were told – as girls – “you cannot do that” that many of them as adults still know this inhibiting voice in themselves.

An exercise in a safe community proved that there are means to restore lost appreciation for oneself.

In a first step (1), each participant was asked to write down three things she is not at ease with herself and do not like. Then (2) the paper was folded in a way that others did not see what was written on the paper. The paper was attached by an adhesive stripe on the back of each person. (3) Then, outdoors, each woman wrote a positive appreciation of another woman on her back. After having received five comments we had to stop because of time limitation.

Then (4) everyone was reading the comments she received – and was puzzled by the perspective others do have on her – despite her own view on her personal reality.

This was a wonderful experience of how women can support one another by sharing honestly positive observations of sisters.



Exercises on Evaluation and Commitment

In three groups participants made sure that fruits of the consultation will not be lost but rather continue to be a valuable part of each delegate when she returns home and seeks ways to include them into her life, her family and her ministry.

One group: composing and walking an evaluation journey

Recalling the path we travelled during the consultation participants gathered items and objects that illustrated this path. Then, on the last morning, everyone could (re-) walk step by step and recall the process during the consultation. Each person was invited to identify situations where crucial learning took place and to sit down at this place.. (see pages 18 & 19 – called “harvesting fruits”.)

Second group: preparing and celebrating a farewell worship service

For celebrating the closing worship service a group developed a nice liturgy that included everyone, in particular when we “decorated” the painted tree in the centre of the chapel. (page 19)

Third group: becoming active as public relations officer

They turned out to become the “editorial team” preparing written contributions and photo collection for this issue of OUR VOICES.



Harvesting Fruits from the International Women's Consultation



Learning Experiences – Lessons learnt

On the closing day all participants walked along the “evaluation spiral” recalling each day and the various sessions through passing at items and objects laying on the floor. Then each woman was invited to sit down at a place most impressive to her during the past eight days. The women identified following learning experiences:



Intercultural Learning

Voices...

- ... from Indonesia: “The consultation opened my mind for the diversity of cultures and traditions.” “I was deeply impressed how India pays attention to its history and culture as we saw in Mysore.”
- ... from Japan: “Before leaving Japan I was told: In India you will change your perspective! How did this happen? By looking at the life of the people, by learning about Indian history, by being part of their daily life, how women dress in various traditional saris and how people are eating...”
- ... from Korea: “I learnt a lot by talking late at night and being in close personal exchange with other women from another culture”.

“Friendship happened beyond borders and I experienced intercultural sisterhood.”

English as language was quite a challenge. Some had to slow down, others had to gain courage to speak up, all of us needed time to get accustomed to unfamiliar ways of speaking English. It was part of our learning process to become patient with one another and to listen closely what the sisters wanted to say.

Bible Stories (see pages 12/13)

“Mary and Martha changed my thinking and offered a new outlook on siblings.” (Indonesian participant).

“I felt encouraged by the Bible studies. One important message for me: Do not give up!” -- “What I take with me: Continue to be adventurous! The Bible study of the “Canaanite woman” taught me: Have great faith!”

“My mind was broadened. Close Bible reading impressed me a lot.” (Indian participants)

“I gained a new understanding of Hagar, an access I had never experienced before. The role play offered an opportunity to “enter into Hagar’s shoes”. (Korean participant)

Crossing Boundaries

“God entered my heart. I looked into myself and became aware of inner boundaries.” (Japanese participant).

“Before coming to this workshop I was not aware of my boundaries, now I see them clearly and want to expand them. The teaching methods helped a lot. We experienced that each and everyone of us is important.” (Indonesian participant)

"Reflecting on Gender Glasses helped me to see more clearly our reality." (German participant)

"I am encouraged to become an agent of change, I want to overcome my inhibitions and raise my voice more boldly." (Indian participant).

Diversity of religious traditions

"The diverse devotions prepared by different national groups impressed me." (Indian voice).

"Worship service and receiving Holy Communion was very special for me." (Japanese voice).

"I liked to visit another church (St Marks Cathedral in Bangalore) and learn about other church practices & liturgies." (Korean voice).

Empowerment as a woman

Voices from India....."The program helped me to understand better how women should act by looking at the movements of SEE – JUDGE – ACT".

"I am encouraged to become an agent of change, I want to overcome my inhibitions and raise my voice more boldly."

"I feel empowered, enlightened, enriched."

Voice from Indonesia....
"Be bold – and fight for equality!"

Hospitality

"Being welcomed by Synthia in the middle of the night at the airport made me feel at home", was recalled by an Indonesian participant.

Intense learning process

"I liked very much the creative and interactive methods of teaching." (Indian voice)

"The Indica game touched me deeply. It teaches us how to understand power play in a different way" was shared by an Indonesian participant.

"Changing perspectives opens up new horizons - like the mole on the elephant's trunk*!" was recalled by an Indian participant. [*referring to a cartoon, where a mole sits on an elephant's trunk that the lying elephant erected to the sky. The mole is enabled to receive a totally different perspective than the one he usually experiences]

"I feel inspired to implement more interactive methods in my congregation, doing Bible studies in our women's fellowship etc... Indica taught me how to use power in a way of team play" shared by an Indian participant.

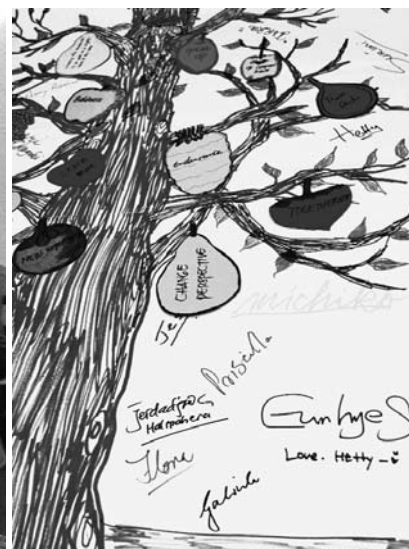
"This consultation was a wonderful God given journey for me. The movements SEE – JUDGE - ACT offered a lot of wisdom. I will become bolder." (Indian participant)

"Methods helped a lot to learn. I appreciated the practical dimensions of the workshop, not only preaching/listening..." by an Indian participant. (see pages 16)

Compiled by Bärbel Wuthe



During devotion time: Receiving the blessing from above and forwarding the blessing to others.



Tree with a variety of fruits

NEWS from EMS Women's Network

NEWS FROM NECB LEBANON

Current political situation in the neighbour country of Syria

Many people in Lebanon are depressed expecting a military strike on Syria. Families who have children are afraid to send them to schools and we do not go out except for very important necessities. Lebanon has been a primary refuge center for hundreds of thousands of Syrians, some of whom ended up living under bridges or other miserable locations and under very bad conditions.

Wadia Badr asks us "Please pray for us because it is only through God's grace and love that we can endure such uncertainties."

Wadia Badr, President, Helping Hand

The Helping Hand Association of the National Evangelical Church of Beirut is a non-profit organization which was founded in 1899 to serve the church and the community. It consists of the church women and their friends who enjoy participating in its activities. This year we welcomed new members from outside our congregation.



Photo: private

The Women's Association was engaged mostly this year in extending their hands to help in the new project that the NECB started last September, the Center for Assisted Living. Our ladies were excited to help in different ways. Some volunteered to visit the center weekly and spend some time with the residents. Others volunteered to send them home-made cakes. Different activities were held such as a monthly Bible study, caroling during the Christmas season, coloring eggs and singing hymns on Easter, celebrating Mother's Day etc.. The Helping Hand also decided to do a monthly morning coffee in the center where we receive both men and women to socialize with the residents. At the same time we can raise some money for emergency needs. All this is done in good will and commitment to the ministry of the church through which we grow in spirit and in the love and service to our Lord Jesus Christ and to our sisters and brothers. ☺

NEWS FROM GHANA

Rebecca Downona, our liaison-woman of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, reports:

"Accra New Town is an area within the Accra North Metropolis, it is located around the Tesano- Police Training Depot at the West and the Accra Girls Senior High School at the Eastern part. Life at Accra New Town is friendly for Christians, Muslims and Traditionalists to coexist.



Photo: private

The Women's Ministry at the congregations makes every effort to organize weekly meetings. Their major activities are Bible Study, Prayer, Talk on various topics such as women empowerment, healthy lifestyle, entrepreneurship, how to manage small scale projects, advocacy on domestic violence and many others. The Fellowships celebrate the World Day of Prayer, monthly Intercessory Prayer, visitation to Foster Homes /Orphanages, Psychiatric Hospitals, the Aged and Backsliders. The Women's Fellowship (about 580 members) serves as the link between the numerous women in the congregation for effective Worship life.

In order to reduce the poverty among many women, vocational skill training such as bead making, baking of bread and other pastries are encouraged. Snack shops are operated to generate some funds to support the fellowship. The District Fellowship Executive promotes Intensive Prayer session weekly towards global concerns such as: - The War in Syria, the Disaster at Bangladesh and the unrest in the Middle East, the Health state of Nelson Mandela." ☺

NEWS FROM LUWU CHURCH IN INDONESIA

Insights into the life of the women by Tiny Pasande

„We, the women of the Protestant Indonesian Church in Luwu (GPIL), are glad to learn more about the life of women in other countries. The society in Indonesia is pluralistic above all with regard to religions and ethnic belonging.

Unfortunately, there is no interreligious cooperation neither on church nor on the political level. But we, the women of GPIL, try to cooperate with Muslim women, for example during a joint seminar on women's health or when cooking together for family celebrations. The women of Luwu Church in the villages of Seiko, Ranteballa, Bastern have enormous problems with regard to communication. The women do not get any kind of information because there is no electricity and no transport possibility. They live according to traditional customs, the work in the fields is very arduous.. They live isolated like in former times. The church must help these people to overcome isolation and to make their life easier. These are some insights of the women's life in Luwu Church in Indonesia.”

Tiny Simanungkalit Pasande has been a pastor of Luwu-Church, Sulawesi, and is now working in the Protestant Church in Baden. Tiny and her husband Diks Pasande have two boys who live together with them in the congregation of Muggensturm near Karlsruhe. From autumn 2013 Tiny will be a member of the EMS Women's Advisory Board. We welcome her heartily. ☺



Photo: private

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Moravian Women's Association in South Africa Colleen Cunningham, EMS liaison person shared following activities with us:

Gender Justice Program:

„We have started the first phase of the Gender Justice Program in conjunction with Rev. Elise Theunissen, our Vice President. We have already submitted the first report to EMS and we just completed the third consultation at Matatiele in April. All consultations have been very successful with regard to attendance. Our members and delegates are absolutely receptive to change and transformation as they admitted themselves.

Christian Education Department:

As part of my portfolio as Christian Development Officer I serve on the Department of Christian Development within the MCSA. Unfortunately this Department became non-existent during the past inter-synodal period. This meant that part of our mandate was to resurrect the department –WHICH WE DID! We could submit a Report, our Strategic Plan as well as a detailed Activity Plan for the inter-synodal period 2013-2017. They are included within the Synodal minutes. They give direction and vision for the MCSA for the next 4 years and we hope and pray that we have enough energy to succeed.

Provincial Synod:

At the Synod in April, we have submitted quite a few proposals – which have been accepted. Amongst others, the EMS Gender Policy [without the checklists] was adopted and we will align it with the LWF Gender Policy once it is complete. Another proposal was to address Gender Based Violence within the Church, thus creating safe spaces.

LWF Gender Policy:

WICAS is presenting a draft LWF Gender Justice Policy to the Council 2013.

The 2009 LWF faith reflection on gender and power, and inclusivity and gender justice resolutions of the Eleventh Assembly in 2010 laid the foundation for this important tool.

The gender policy will assist the communion to achieve equality between women and men by implementing measures that promote justice and dignity.” ☺


NEWS FROM CAMEROON

by Beatrice Ngeh, Department for Women's Work, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

"In the late 1980s, it was resolved that the Department for Women's Work (WWD) of the PCC, recruit part-time workers to assist staff in serving the fast growing Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) Movement and the Department. In each of the 23 Presbyteries, at the time, a woman was elected for a period of five years renewable once for this assignment. They were given the title of Women's Work Helpers (WWHs). The PCC now has 27 Presbyteries, but some thickly populated ones have elected two women to serve them. We have a total of 37 WWHs serving the Department.



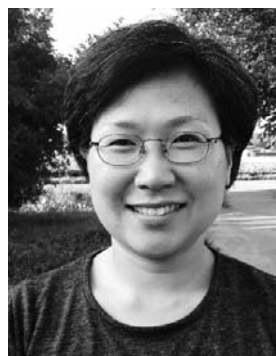
Their work is to help the 1045 groups of the CWF achieve their objectives. A group has an average of 50 members. WWHs are facilitators for generating opportunities for income creation by means of improving on agricultural methods, and expanding small business. Agriculture is the backbone of the Cameroonian economy. They are also facilitators for the advocacy for gender mainstreaming, and animators for adult literacy and community health. They help to improve Bible knowledge and service in congregations among the Christian women they serve. The Staff of the Department are responsible for up-grading and training them in leadership roles.

From 18-22 June 2013, staff organized a leadership workshop to strengthen animation and organizational capacities of 20 WWHs at the Presbyterian Church Centre in Kumba. Some topics treated were: Narrative and Financial Report Writing, Lesson on Nutrition and Care of pre-school children, Practical lessons on income generation (production of laundry soap, pastries and fries for the market), beauty of the home, meals for children (vegetables)." 


NEW MEMBER OF THE EMS WOMEN'S ADVISORY BOARD FROM OCTOBER 2013

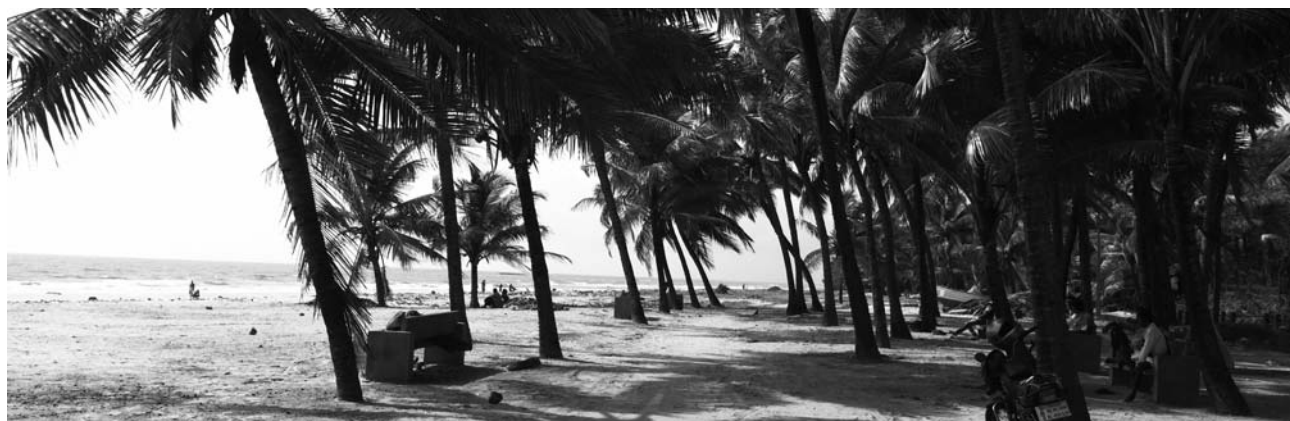
"My name is Hyung Soon IM from South Korea. I am happy to introduce myself to you as a new member of the EMS Women's Advisory Board.

For more than one year now I have been living in Ludwigsburg together with my husband and our two children. Before moving to Ludwigsburg I had been working in Münster (North Rhine Westphalia) as a member of a Korean congregation since 2000. The focus of my work as a pastor's wife was counseling other congregation members, offering devotion times and being responsible for the logistics of the congregation life.

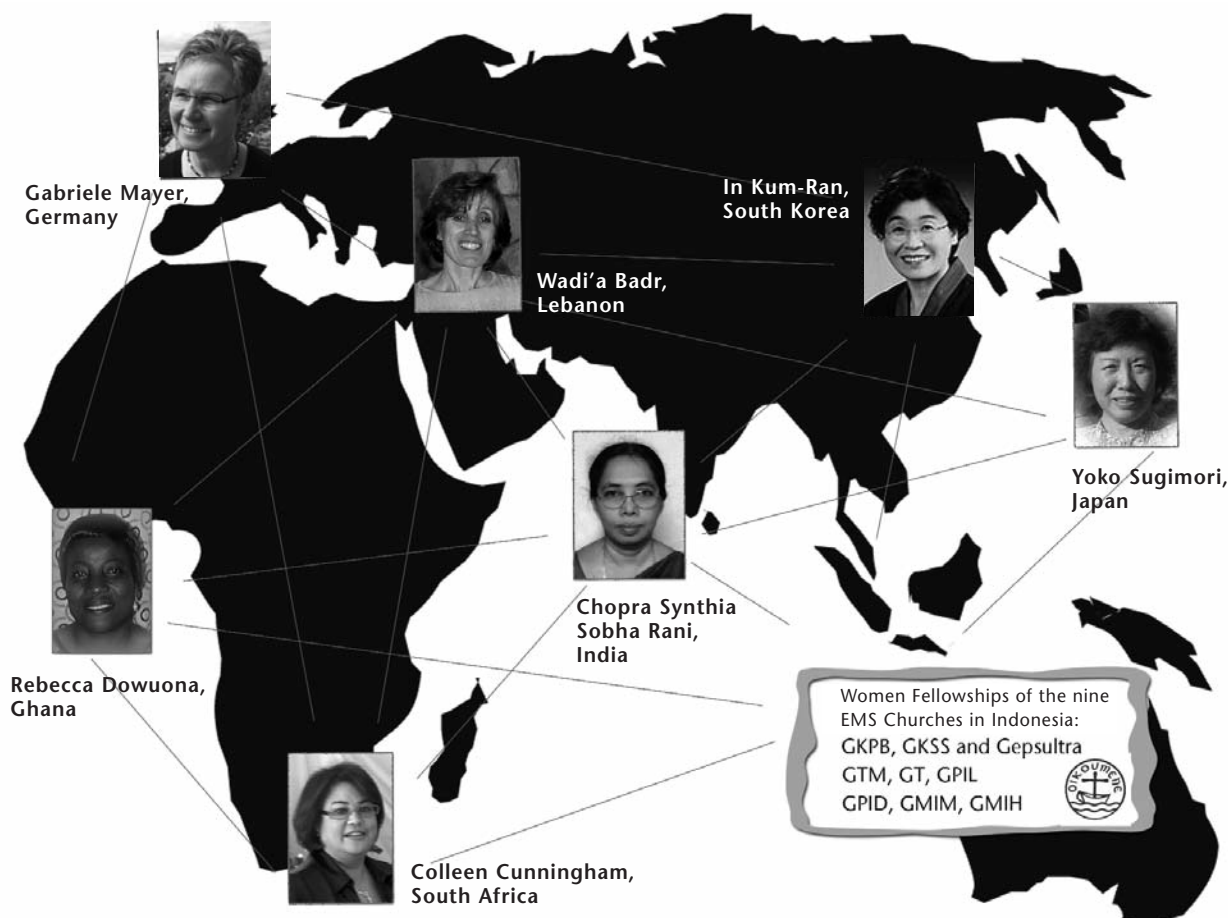


Photos: private

I am thankful for learning quite a lot here in Germany from faithful and diligent people and I am glad to learn even more from the life in Germany and from German churches. Taking over the role of being a bridge between Korea and Germany my aim is to forward many of these things I have learnt here to the Korean churches and people, to share with them and help them to get on well. I believe that God will lead us into life and he will give us wisdom so that we can act in the way God wants us to act." 



The Liaison Women of the International Women's Network



OUR VOICES is published once a year in English, Indonesian and German language for the international EMS women's network. Responsible in the sense of press law: Gabriele Mayer, PhD

EDITORIAL BOARD: Gabriele Mayer, Bärbel Wuthe, Deborah Murthy

LANGUAGE: We apologize for language errors. English is not the first language of most of our authors. Funds are limited for native speakers' translations.

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PRINT: Grafische Werkstätte der BruderhausDiakonie, Reutlingen, October 2013

TRANSLATIONS: from German – Bärbel Wuthe
 from German into Indonesian – Aguswati Hildebrandt Rambe
 from Indonesian into English – Jerda Djawa, Deborah Murthy, Eun-Hye SHIN

Articles identified by an author do not necessarily reflect the editors' opinion. Copies or reprint welcome, just indicate EMS source.

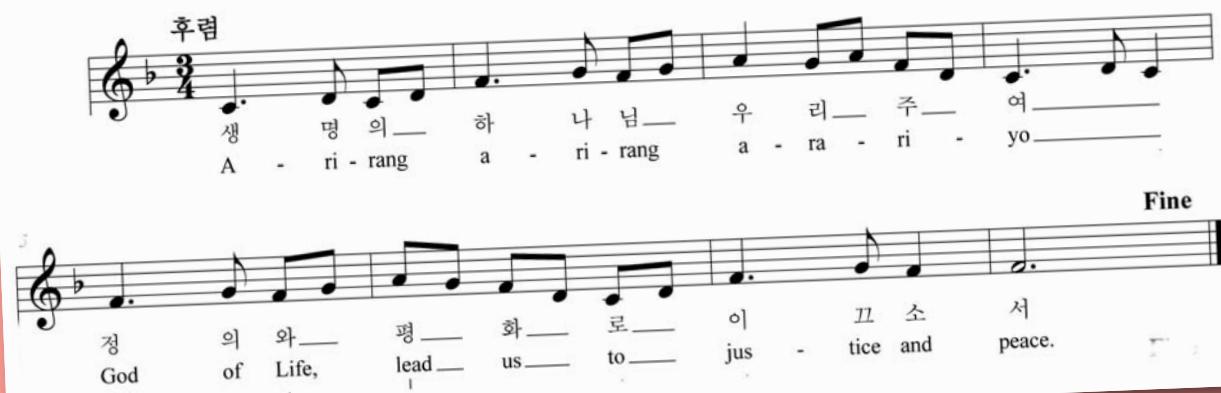
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God of Life - Arirang



*God of love cares for the fragile life.
The wick dimly burning God fans into flame.*

*The Spirit help us be faithful pilgrims.
Waiting for your wisdom for the peace of the world.*