The role of faith-based actors in achieving gender justice
A GLOBAL EMERGENCY

Massive gender inequalities still persist globally, despite efforts by the international community over the past decades.

Gender inequality is one of the most pressing humanitarian and human rights issues of our times

Gendered injustice is visible both in public and private spheres. At this rate none of us will see gender justice in our lifetime, nor will many of our children.

Violence against women is a global emergency and a public health crisis. This is especially true in humanitarian and emergency contexts where violence against women and girls is exacerbated by higher risks and vulnerabilities. Moreover, according to UN Women, globally, women aged 25 to 34 are 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty.

Despite these appalling numbers, in recent years, a backlash against gender equality and women’s
rights has led to a stalling of progress or even a regression in the efforts to achieve gender justice.

Religious, economic and political fundamentalisms are gaining strength in different forums and have a direct impact on the discrimination that women and girls around the world experience on a daily basis, whether through sexual and gender based violence, denial of their sexual and reproductive rights, or their economic and political disempowerment.

We will not end gender injustice simply by changing the laws or reducing poverty. We must address the root causes of the problem and change those cultural norms and beliefs that devalue women and girls and corner them into disempowered roles.
A NEW NARRATIVE

A critical part of the problem of promoting gender justice globally is related to cultural and social norms that restrict or harm the rights and lives of women and men worldwide.

Eighty-four per cent of the world’s population self-identifies as members of a faith group.

Religious leaders play a central role, both in people’s lives and as “norm setters”, legislators, moral compasses and advocates.

Faith-based institutions have great influence over those norms and rules that impact individual and collective behaviours, including those affecting the role of women, their bodily autonomy, their sexual and reproductive rights, and their health education and awareness.

Challenging patriarchal or other structures of power and creating an enabling environment for gender justice requires interventions at multiple levels: societal, community, household and individual.
Faith actors are present and have influence in each of these realms of power and can, therefore, play a unique and far-reaching transformative role in achieving and sustaining gender justice.

We must counter the backlash against women’s rights by creating a new narrative that positions faith-based actors and communities as a central part of transformative processes, as being part of the solution.

Our aim is to strengthen a movement of religious advocates and institutions and create a space where progressive interfaith voices can work together to advance women’s rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, to achieve gender justice for all.
OUR WORK

The ACT Gender Justice Programme

To strengthen the protection of rights-holders ACT Alliance works with, and to close the gender gap, we must address unequal power relations and promote human dignity for all.

We must be committed to ensure gender equality and identity as common values and inalienable human rights. For this reason ACT Alliance has launched its Gender Justice Programme to challenge patriarchy and other discriminatory structures of power.

Churches, faith-based organisations and networks are able to influence as norm setters, service providers, policy-makers and as civil society leaders. For this reason they must be included in a comprehensive and holistic solution.

To this end ACT Alliance will:

+ Promote capacity-building within the alliance, including the implementation of our gender justice policy, to strengthen and mobilise the commitment of faith leaders to become a positive force for gender justice.

+ Support ACT Alliance’s national, regional and sub-regional Forums in shaping and implementing
gender sensitive and gender positive programmes, which in turn will promote gender justice at all levels.

+ Position itself as a positive and forward-looking advocate for gender justice, especially by contributing to the implementation of the SDGs and by connecting the local to the global sphere.

+ Ensure the programme providers buy in the gender justice vision and understand gender analysis and gender sensitive implementation.

In its programmatic work, ACT Alliance will focus on different thematic priorities, which will contribute to
achieving the goals of the programme:

+ Preventing and overcoming Gender Based Violence based on an ethic of resistance to injustice.

+ Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in a comprehensive and holistic manner, in the intersection of access to services, bodily autonomy and integrity, access to information and personal autonomy.

+ Promoting economic justice and supporting activities related to women’s economic empowerment, as well as focusing on structural changes such as those focusing on gender, business and human rights.

+ Developing gender transformative work with men and boys to promote equality; questioning individual attitudes and institutional dynamics and social norms that create and reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities for men and women.

+ Advocating for family law reform which remains one of the most intractable areas of legal reform, not least because most family laws are based on religion, culture and tradition, which are in turn vested in the laws.

+ Working on the issue of women in migration which includes women and girls who are neither workers nor migrants, but who are directly affected by migration.

+ Integrate gender perspectives to emergency preparedness and humanitarian response, as well as the nexus and the intersectionalities between them.
IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST GO ALONE.
IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR GO TOGETHER.

A coalition more than 135 churches and church-related organisations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people.

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