

**Caritas and Pastoral Social:
“Weaving reflections and
methodologies on equality
between men and women”**

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INTRODUCTION

The *Conclusive Document* of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, held at Aparecida, Brazil in 2007, expressed that “it is a painful contradiction that the continent with the largest number of Catholics is also the one with the greatest social inequity.”¹ The data that allow us to assert inequality in the so-called “hopeful” continent are staggering: over two million people live under the poverty line, which implies living on less than two dollars a day². This situation contrasts with the shocking accumulation of wealth by minority groups in our countries. One of the elements that shape this inequality – and which we must become aware of – is “the difficult situation affecting the dignity of many women. Some are subjected to many forms of violence, even as children and adolescents in the home and elsewhere: trafficking, rape, servitude, and sexual harassment; inequalities in the workplace, politics, and the economy; exploitive advertising by many social means of communications which regard them as a means of profit³.”

A few years before the Fifth Conference, the participating countries in the General Assembly of the United Nations, where the UN Millennium Declaration was adopted, agreed to work together to eradicate extreme poverty and to foster development. For that purpose, they set thirteen goals to be met by 2015, being the third one “**promoting gender equity and empowering women.**” To monitor this goal, the UN adopted three types of indicators: education, employment and political participation. This shows that gender issue is transverse in the society’s structure; it widely interfere in the production of wealth, in public administration, in the political system, in religion, and in the shaping of subjectivity; gender issue affects women’s and men’s quality of life producing disparities-inequalities and serious social and ecclesiastical problems.

Pastoral Social – Caritas in our continent, from each country’s context, is called to encourage “in the light of the Gospel and the Catholic Social Teaching, the transformation process of the American continent reality.”

¹ DA, 527.

² CELAM, 2004.

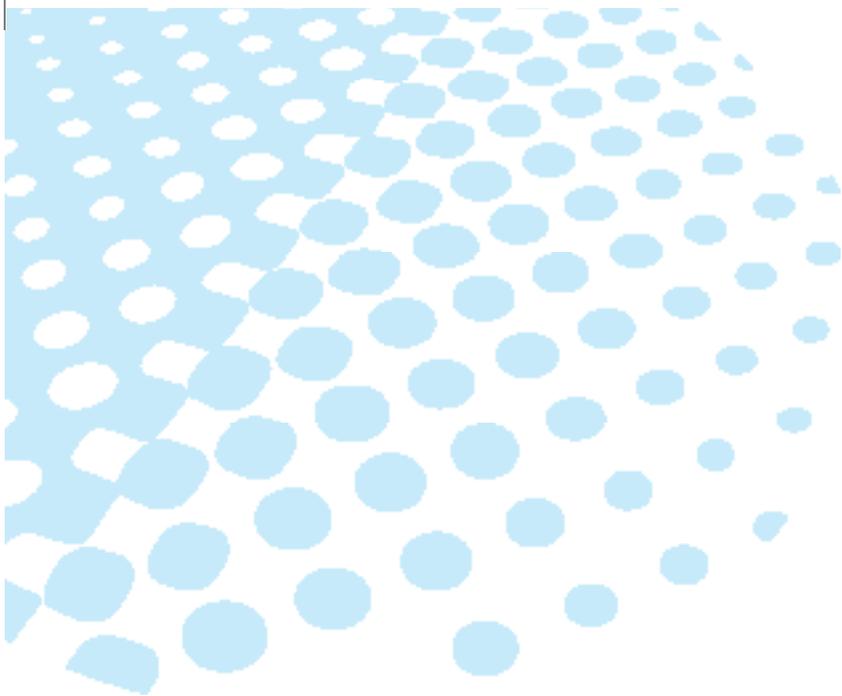
³ DA, 48.

The Latin American and Caribbean Caritas - Pastoral Social network has a long tradition and broad experience in working with women. This network faces the problems above mentioned and the new ones emerging every day. Its work has been contributing to overcoming the problems of many women and their organizations. All this is in line with its mission in the continent: encouraging, from each country's context, and "in the light of the Gospel and the Social Doctrine of the Church, the transformation process of the American continent reality, with the poor and excluded in the prominent role, to build – in harmony with the creation – a fair, brotherly and supportive society, which is a sign of the Kingdom of God."

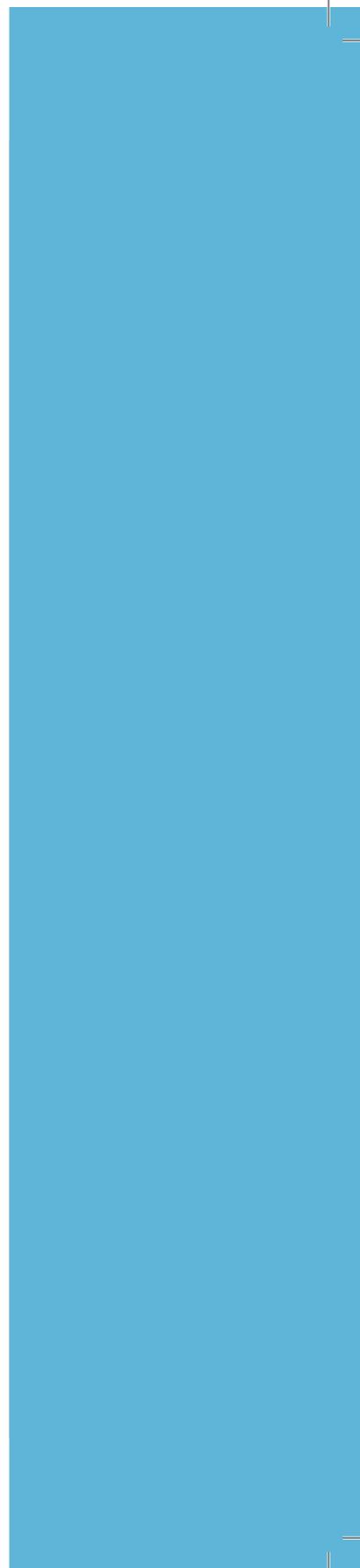
It is from its own experience that Caritas – Pastoral Social now want to take on the challenge of facing the structural and structuring gender issues more deeply. This is not easy. There are radicalized standpoints which have little or nothing to do with our option of faith according to the Gospel and to the teaching of the Church. We want to break away from those standpoints, since we are aware of the antagonistic struggles they propose. We also want to strongly assert with a deep conviction, the defence and care for life, the value of marriage and family as they emerge from God's loving and creating project.

Our goal, with this document, is to provide tools so that Caritas - Pastoral Social's work contributes to reducing gender inequities, which represent a violation to human rights, and to enabling a transformation in the relations between men and women in the Church and in society.

For that purpose, we will firstly affirm the situation of inequality between men and women in our Region (I part). Secondly, we will briefly analyze that situation from our faith viewpoint. We will especially take into account Jesus' message, Saint Paul's teaching, the work of the universal Magisterium and of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops. Within that religious framework, we will explain how and why we undertake the gender perspective (II part). Finally, we will offer some suggestions for action by Caritas - Pastoral Social with the aim of being able to face gender inequality problems in the communities and community groups we work with (III part).



**I. INEQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN
AND MEN IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**





I. An ancestral situation rooted in culture

In Latin America and the Caribbean, like in other regions of the world, one of the reasons for social inequality affecting women and men is related to culture. In our Region, the prevailing culture has cast women to an inferior position in relation to men through expressing and transmitting values in the family, at school and in the society since very early ages. This oppresses men and women in different ways. Thus, men are required to be strong; while women should be submissive. This simple fact has direct consequences on the lives of men and women: overbearing men who do not take care of their health; women who silently suffer violence at home or who are subjugated in their workplace.

There can be no analysis of inequality in the relationship between men and women if the cultural element is not pinpointed as one of the factors highly influencing on the role assigned to both in the family, in the society and even in the Church. Addressing the analysis of contextual structures (the economy, the organization of the State, power relations, etc.) from the gender perspective may help become aware of such inequality in a certain socio-cultural context.

In the prevailing patriarchal culture showing strong machismo features, women have been cast to the home sphere, and the public sphere has been assigned to men. Explicitly or as part of the social imaginary, men and women tend to place themselves in the real world according to this image.

In the private sphere, the gender perspective helps us consider why and how the roles of men and women have been assigned in the family, and the way power flows in it. In the public sphere, it helps us clarify and reform the type of relationships between men and women which have been structured in the economy, political, work, and State environment, and which expose social inequalities that not only jeopardize women's dignity, but also hinder the genuine development of the peoples.

In the first World Conference on the legal and social status of women, summoned by the UN in 1975 and held in Mexico D.F, a worldwide action plan was adopted with a minimum of goals to be met within the following ten years. These focused on guaranteeing women's equal access to resources such as education, employment opportunities, political participation, health services, housing, nutrition, etc. This approach represented a turning point – which had started to take shape in the early 1970s – in the way women were seen. Whereas, prior to this, women had been seen as passive receivers of support and assistance, now they were seen as full members in equal terms with men, having the same rights to resources and opportunities. A similar transformation was taking place in the way of addressing development. Whereas at the beginning, development was thought to help women's cause, now there was consensus that development was not possible without her full participation.

For this and other reasons, the UN, in the Millennium Development Goals Declaration, whose first fundamental goal is “eradicating extreme poverty and hunger,” includes, precisely the third one, “promoting gender equality.” It set the following indicators as indicators of inequality elimination between the genders: a) equal access of girls to pri-

mary education, preferably by 2005, and to all educational levels by 2015; b) ratio of women in salary jobs in the non-agricultural sector; c) ratio of seats held by women in national parliaments. In order to eliminate poverty and promote development, women's participation in building the society has to be undertaken as a fundamental political dimension.

A perspective confining the gender inequality issue to family and private context would not encompass the issue comprehensively. It is true that the family, and what happens inside it, belongs to the private sphere. But it is also true that the ways in which people relate to each other inside the family also influence on the public sphere.

As we pointed out before, among the peoples of our Region, the machismo patriarchal mindset has led to the dominance of categories of thoughts conceiving women as inferior to men. Thus, it justifies unacceptable subjugating and submission attitudes and, what is even worse, verbal and physically violent practices, which are very frequent unfortunately⁴. Besides, women are excluded from building the public space.

This mindset has also led to consider the female body as merchandise. It hurts to see that women themselves follow these customs when bringing up their sons and daughters. They tend to become unaware, involuntary "accomplices" of reinforcing these behavioural and thinking patterns in their own families, and especially, in girls, who – since early age – are raised to accept this situation.

The rapid cultural changes with the subsequent new shape of the society have precipitated a deep crisis in the patriarchal model. As CELAM points out in its reflections "Globalization and New Evangelization in Latin America and the Caribbean," *a positive process [has started] for validating women's dignity and capacity, and this process is managing to overcome men's machist spirit, which does not value the 'female talent', casts women to household chores, with which men do not help, and exclude them from the public sphere and from several managerial positions in the society.*⁵

With all this in mind, and following CELAM's reflections we do not aim to "to deny the great diversity and complementary nature between the genders, as to their diversity as different entities in both biological and psychological aspects", which is based on nature itself. We do aim to highlight the negative connotations that the historical and sociological – cultural – determination has when attributing certain diversities between men and women⁶.

In our Region, the prevailing culture has been one that –in the ways of expression and the values transmitted in the family, the school and the society, since very early ages – oppresses both men and women in a different way.

⁴ According to the survey carried out by the World Bank "Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean", 2003, domestic violence is "a challenge still pending in the countries of the region". Haiti is the country with the highest violence rate in the area, with 70% of the female population affected.

⁵ Reflections of CELAM 1999-2003: "Globalization and New Evangelization in Latin America and the Caribbean", 2003, No. 45. See. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 23-24.

⁶ CELAM, *Idem*, 46.

2. Employment and Equality. Inequality in the Era Change

The world of wage employment has been historically shaped with men as key players. Women, who have been joining it progressively in the last century and in an even more intensely over the past years, appear as the periphery of that universe. They earn less, hold less important positions, and work mostly in unstable or informal jobs. If, in addition, they are in charge of supporting their families as single-parents, the lack of job stability affects a higher number of people. This reveals one of the sides of the “feminization of poverty” considered today as a new type of poverty.

Various reasons have led women to join the employment market more than in the past. Among them, we can mention women’s wish to fulfil themselves⁷ or serious economic needs such as supporting their homes due to the man’s unemployment or job instability, or due to the fact that she is a single parent in charge of her children.

However, according to data provided by ECLAC (2005), the incorporation of women in the employment market is always lower than that of men, either in unstable, badly-paid, low-productivity jobs, or those requiring higher levels of education.

Between 1990 and 2002, gender disparities in low-productivity jobs fell by 3 percent, owing especially to the worsening of male employment inclusion, which grew from 43% to 46%. Female employment inclusion remained steady. In our Region, the female population employed in those low-productivity jobs reaches 56%, whereas the male population is 46%. This varies according to the countries: in Panama, it is 39%; in Bolivia, 77% (ECLAC, 2005).

Following the same source (ECLAC, 2005), the average wage for women in 2002 was 69% of the men’s wage. Even doing the same job, women still earn less than men. The wage difference in relation to men decreased in the segment of working women with lower schooling indices (up to 3 years), moving from 55% in 1990 to 66% in 2002. On the contrary, it is higher or it decreases slowly in the segment of women with more years of education (between 10 and 12 years). In those same 12 years (1990-2002), the difference in wages only fell by 4 percent.

Other elements to be considered as to this inequality are that women are still being employed for subordinate jobs. Their employment status is seldom unstable and informal, and does not cover social security benefits. In addition, the employment market usually selects and prefers childless young women within the female sector.

This last aspect leads us to confirm, as CELALM does in the reflections mentioned above, that “many organizations that work in favour of women try to silence or underestimate the value and mission of motherhood. Its significance for the culture of the peoples and for the survival of the family is not mentioned or is underestimated. As a consequence, many young women, especially those with a university degree, overestimate their professional fulfilment, whereas the option of being a mother is outshined.”⁸

⁷ Ibid, 41.

⁸ Ibid, 43.

3. Gender and Health

Health means much more than life expectancy.

Gender equality does not mean equal mortality or morbidity rates for both genders, but ensuring equal opportunities for women and men to have good health.

It should be emphasized that the health status and men's and women's behaviour are very much related to the social construction of the gender.

Male socialization has a considerable effect on men's health. It is clear that they are more prone to risk behaviours, which broadens the life expectancy gap in relation to women. Violence, smoking, alcohol and drug consumption, inadequate eating habits, lack of physical exercise and a higher suicide rate may be indicators of early death among men.

Women, partly due to their reproductive function, face a different set of health risks. Although they can live longer, they are usually more affected by long-term, chronic diseases, which influence significantly on their quality of life.

At the same time, a lower access to nutrition, education, employment and income makes women have fewer opportunities to enjoy good quality services.

Another aspect to consider is that, although women represent most of the paid and unpaid health workers, the majority of them works in the lowest levels of this workforce. Therefore, they have fewer chances to influence on the health policy and the decision-making process.

In order to pave the way for equality in the gender-health combination, it is necessary:

- To eliminate unnecessary, unfair and avoidable differences in the health and survival status.
- To allocate technological, financial and human resources. They should also be available according to each gender's special needs.
- Women and men should contribute to health funding according to their economic capacity and not to each gender risks or needs in each stage of the life cycle.
- To deploy responsibilities, power and rewards in a fairly social manner in order to contribute to women and men in health management. This includes valuing unpaid jobs in health care.

4. Gender and Migration: Another Aspect of the Feminization of Poverty

The problem of the feminization of poverty mentioned above is also related to the migration processes, which have increased due to the economic and socio-cultural changes in our times.

The urgent need to migrate, given unemployment and the subsequent impossibility of supporting the home, has meant that men temporarily or definitively leave their families, thus making women become single parents. Many peoples and communities

in our countries have almost been transformed into women alone ones with children waiting for the right moment to leave their home for a better lifestyle.

Generally adopted as a search for an economic solution, migration causes a significant alteration in gender relations and, consequently, in the traditional family model. Currently, in Latin America, the nuclear family model formed by two parents with children decreased from 46.3% (1990) to 41.1% (2005).

When migration was mainly a male issue, the fundamental problem was family reunification. However, today, the increasing female migration has brought up the problem of gender inequality in the work sphere. As an example, Mexican women migrating into the United States earn – in the “Services” sector – an average annual income 44% lower than the men employed in the same jobs. Besides, 31% live in households which are below the US poverty threshold.⁹

Internal migrations have also risen as a consequence of increasing urbanization, natural disasters or severe weather conditions. This has also affected women. In Brazil, for instance, there are the so-called “widows of drought,” whose husbands have emigrated leaving their wives in a strange situation of “widows whose husbands are alive.”

5. Gender and Education: A Differentiated Access

Out of thirty-five million illiterate people in the Region, 55% are women. Although it is true that the education expansion policy has had positive results for women, these results are not the same in every social layer: “The highest access to equal opportunities took place in high levels, and higher discrimination was kept in poor rural groups”. Thus, the gap between the “highly educated” women and “illiterate” ones remains¹⁰.

Thanks to higher investment in education, illiteracy rates have decreased sharply in the Region. Latin America and the Caribbean are in the fourth place in the world ranking of public expenditure in education, with 4.4% of the regional Gross Domestic Product allocated to the sector, ahead of Central and Eastern Europe and Central, Eastern Asia and Asia-Pacific.¹¹

According to the survey mentioned above, the table of public expenditure per student in relation to the GDP per capita shows that the Latin American countries with the highest investment in elementary education are Cuba, Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; while the ones with the lowest investment are Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay.

Cuba, Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are also on the top of the list of countries in the Region allocating more resources to high school education. In the

¹⁰ CELAM, Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development, “Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: between the changes and the crisis”, Guatemala, 1988.

¹¹ Instituto de Estatística da Organização da ONU para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO), *Compêndio Mundial da Educação*, 2007.

other extreme, the ones which invest the least at this level are Guatemala, Dominican Republic and Peru.

Regarding higher education, Cuba and Mexico are the countries allocating more resources from their public funds, whereas Peru and Chile stand out for investing the least.

The same survey shows that women account for the highest percentage of participation in teaching, which does not imply the overcoming of gender inequalities. However, some inequalities remain such as the traditional female and male models seen in school programs, even in textbooks, the undermining of the teaching profession, especially in the first grades which are mainly in charge of professional women and the superiority of men's average performance in the employment market at the same school level as women.

According to a survey carried out by the World Bank (2003), the gap in school education between women and men has been narrowing in every country in the Region. In some of them, the female level of education is even higher than the male one. This holds true for Brazil, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Argentina, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Colombia. In these countries, enrolment rate is less among boys and dropouts are higher among the same population. This is mainly due to boys' needs to help support their families¹². However, in economic crises, parents are more likely to withdraw girls than boys from school because of poverty reasons.

Together with the logical predominance of official programmes, a rich experience with "alternative" popular education programmes has increased in Latin America¹³. Women have become a specific target for non-formal, popular, alternative education, either because of their lower chances to have access to formal education or because of their higher inclusion in schooling projects.

According to a World Bank's survey (2003), in school education, the gap between women and men has been decreasing in every country in the Region. In some of them, female level of education is higher than the male one.

6. Political Participation: Equal Representation

The 2005 ECLAC report shows a lower participation of women in legislative bodies than that of men for Latin America and the Caribbean. However, compared to 1990, it represents an increase in women's participation in the Region, except in Guyanas, El Salvador, Honduras and Venezuela. In 2005, the highest participation of women in politics was seen in Cuba, with 36%; in Costa Rica, with 35%; and in Argentina, with 34%; and the lowest in Haiti, with 4%; in Honduras, with 6%; in Guatemala, with 8%; and in Brazil, with 9%. The lower presence of women in

¹² *Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2003.

¹³ Cormack and Fujimoto, 1993; JUNJI-OEA, 1994.

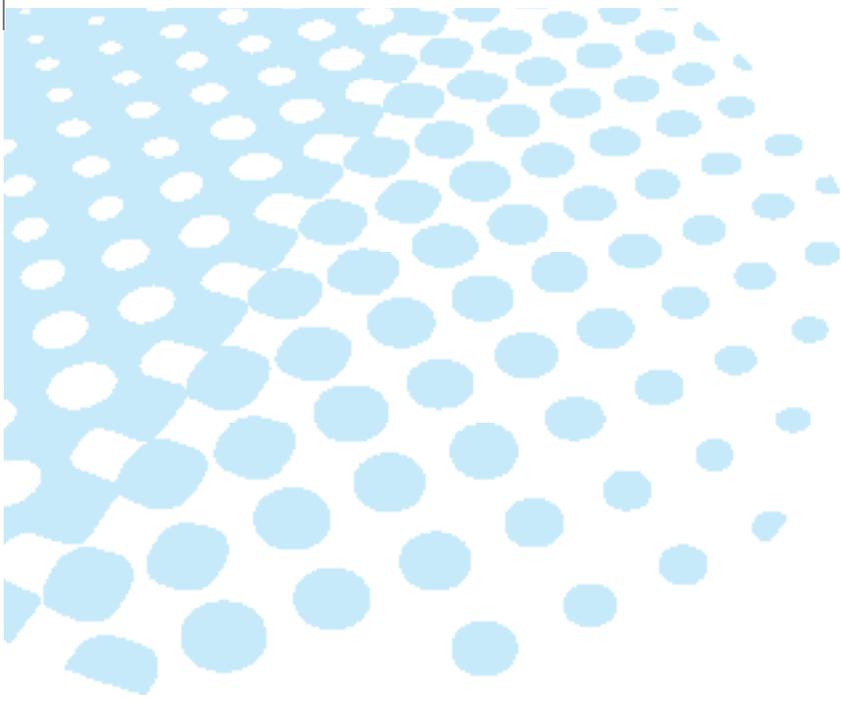
representative offices or in the executive power, compared to the high number of men is also usually seen as an indicator of democratic deficit.

Even though in some countries women's right to vote is relatively recent, their level of participation in elections is the same, and sometimes higher than that of men. This contrasts with the little political representation to which women has access.

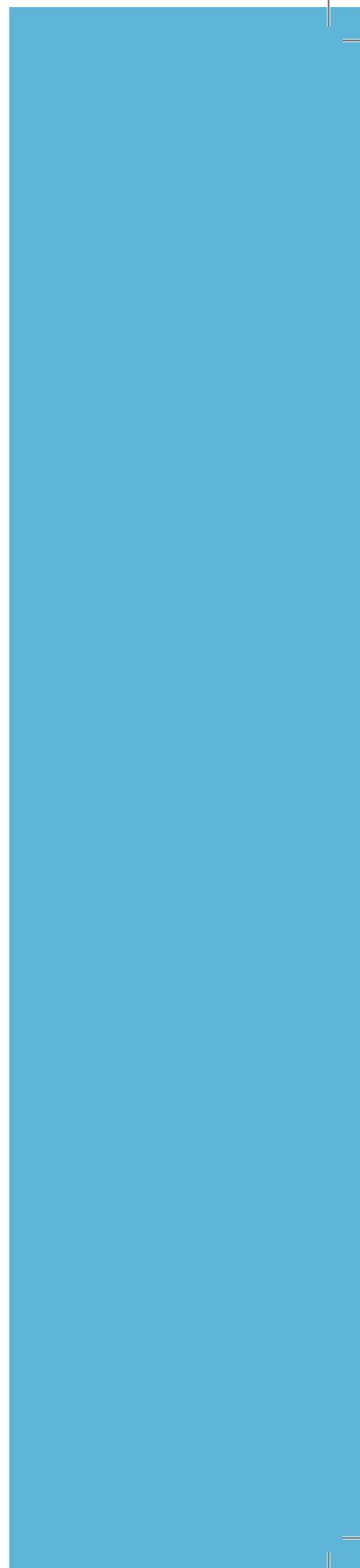
Fewer women have become president in the Region: Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (Nicaragua, 1990-1996), Mireya Moscoso (Panama, 1999-2004), Michelle Bachelet (Chile, 2005-2009), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina, 2007-2011) and Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica, 2010-2014).

In the revolutionary processes and the struggles for independence in our countries, women had a significant participation which has not always been properly acknowledged.





**II. Towards renewed and
universal awareness of equal
dignity between men and
women: biblical-theological
reflection**



I. Introduction

The situation of inequality, which vast majorities of our peoples live in, cries out to heaven. Latin American and Caribbean Bishops have stated that “every offense against the dignity of man is an offense against God himself, in whose image man is made”¹⁴.

Every situation of discrimination, marginalization or exclusion of any person should help us renew and strengthen our evangelical, compassionate, freeing attitude as disciples-missionaries of Jesus Christ.

When Caritas addresses these issues, it does so from its own ecclesiastical identity. Situated in the heart of the Church, Caritas wants to be loyal to its mandate to radiate love, making its contribution to build justice and peace in the world. This mandate leads it to undertake, with all the good-will people and with the values of the Kingdom of God, the commitment to generate more and better life conditions so that all of us can live with dignity as brothers and sisters.

The option of Caritas in Latin America and the Caribbean of introducing the gender perspective in its actions is in keeping with the wide framework of blessings, and more specifically with the one that says: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Mt 5, 6).

With these reflections, or conceptual framework, we want to specify the reasons for this option, clarifying our understanding by gender perspective and its scope. We would like to not only expose in a prophetic way the discriminations and injustices against women, but also to propose (III part) promotion ways and strategies which “concentrate on all areas of women’s life, beginning with a universal recognition of the dignity of women.”

In Caritas, we assume that the search for an effective equality of rights for everybody also implies undertaking coordinated actions to prevent more gender injustices. Jesus, who gave His life for the salvation of the entire humankind, guides us and encourages us in this option of life, a decent life, with no excluded men or women. He wants us to be committed to the struggle for justice and freedom of everything that oppresses people, and he supports us in this way so that women can be recognized, respected and valued in their distinct dignity. Thus, men and women will be able to build together a world in which his Kingdom of peace, justice and love grows more and more every day.

In I part of this work document, we try to briefly confirm the reality of some gender inequalities with higher impact on women. This does not mean that men are not affected too. It is clear that presenting gender inequality as a women’s problem is insufficient. It is something that for different reasons, concerns us all, though.

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¹⁴ Third General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, *Message to the Peoples of Latin America*, Puebla, 1979, 306. See. *Ecclesia in America*, 57.

¹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Women*, 6.

In this II part, we want to strengthen our faith perspective focusing it on God and on his plentiful revelation which is his Son Jesus. In Christ, and encouraged by the Spirit, the Church is permanently called to move forward the mission received. Therefore, we will take some references from the Bible and the Magisterium that support the essential equality of the humankind.

Finally, with the contribution of the human sciences, we will be able to clarify the concept of gender and its implications to the specific work done by Caritas.

2. The Life and Teaching of Jesus

“Actually,” assert the Bishops in the Second Vatican Council, “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear.” (GS, 22). The Words and Actions of Jesus are for us, then, the key to interpreting the mystery of mankind. Looking, listening, learning from Jesus lets us discover the truth and the wealth in humankind.

In line with the message given in the Old Testament, Jesus teaches us, without hesitation, that women and men are equal in terms of dignity. His way of acting, and his praxis confirm it.

In one of those occasions in which to test him the Pharisees ask him about divorce, Jesus answers: “But from the first, male and female made he them. For this cause will a man go away from his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; And the two will become one flesh; so that they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Mk 10, 6-8). His words refer us to two Christian anthropology foundational texts: Gen 1, 26-31 and Gen 2, 4-25. On the one hand, men and women, created in God’s “image and like him” (Gen 1, 27); both, therefore, are able to know, love and mirror their Creator (GS, 12). On the other hand, “it is not good for the man to be by himself” (Gen 2, 18): the man-woman partnership is the first expression of the human communion. Being “God’s image”, man –male and female– is, “by his innermost nature [...] a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.” (GS, 12).

As a consequence, the human being will not be a self in itself, but related to a fellow you. This “you” is the “adequate help” to mutually discover who they are and to be able to proclaim with happiness: “This really is a bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.” This “you” will make the communion of “we” possible. From the beginning, men and women are called to cooperate together, in communion, with the creating work.

In an adverse context which fostered or, at least, tolerated inequality, the passages from the Genesis remembered by Jesus are clear when teaching that, created “in God’s image and like him”, men and women have the same dignity and, among them, there are no hierarchies which place one over the other¹⁶.

¹⁶ In the Genesis, the terms used denote that the human being does not exist but as a man and a woman. Therefore, knowing the influence of oral and written language on helping transform ideas, actions and relations, in that document, it has been opted for using an “inclusive language” which makes it possible for women to become as visible as men.

Jesus, immersed in the culture of those times, acted with full freedom¹⁷. His attitude towards women surprised his followers and detractors. It surprised his disciples when he talked with a Samaritan woman in the daylight. It surprised the Pharisees when he let the sinner woman touch him and allowed her to wash his feet with her tears of repentance. It surprised the old when he refrained from their drive for justice inviting those who had never sinned to throw the first stone against the woman caught in adultery. It surprised Martha when he gave her the possibility of feeling a disciple like her sister Mary, and later, when he asked her to confess him as what he is: the Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus' attitudes confirm the message of the Genesis and exceed it. Recreated in his Spirit, women participate like men in the same divine life.

3. Paul's Message and the Life in the First Communities

The first communities, following the teaching and work of Jesus, included women in mutual cooperation with men, in the task of spreading the Gospel... women who prophesy, who teach, who serve the community. In the final greetings of his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul not only expresses his gratitude to those who helped him, but also, when mentioning several women (Phoebe, Prisca, Junia, Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Olympas), surprises us for the high number of women serving the community in some way, accounting for the fruitful activities to spread the Gospel done jointly by men and women (Rom 16, 1-16)¹⁸.

Paul is a witness to this community life which includes everybody. He announces salvation which unites in Christ regardless of race, social status or gender. All the human beings have been created in Christ; they reflect his splendour and are transformed in his own image by the Spirit (Col 1, 15-17; 2 Cor 3, 18). In Christ and for Christ, the distinctions that segregate, the divisions that make foes, the differences that give a hierarchy are overcome and transcended: "There is no Jew or Greek, servant or free, male or female: because you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal 3, 28).

When revealing the theological and Christological identity of men and women, Our Lord's Word teaches us that God's project for humankind is inclusive. Therefore, diversity becomes an unlimited source of resources which enable the development of social and community life thanks to the contribution of everybody. Men and women are called to play an active role in this New Kingdom. Everybody is invited to live a generous love, service, tenderness, communion and mutual devotion. Thus, it will be possible to create

¹⁷ John Paul II, Letter to Women (1995): Christ, "Transcending the established norms of his own culture, [...] treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. In this way, he honored the dignity which women have always possessed according to God's plan and in his love." (No. 3).

¹⁸ See *Christifideles Laici*, 49.

a fairer and more brotherly society in the image of God Trinity, who wants a plentiful life for all his sons and daughters.

4. The Teaching of our Ministers

The ecclesial Magisterium announces the truth about the human person¹⁹ over again. Its prophetic word, in a world that makes an attempt against human dignity in many ways, continues exposing outrage against the weakest ones and announcing that any type of segregation is contrary to God's plan.

The Second Vatican Council: *Gaudium et Spes*

In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), having already said that “where they have not yet won it, women claim for themselves an equity with men before the law and in fact” (No. 9), the Synod Fathers urge the People of God to acknowledge the essential equality

The first communities, following the teaching and work of Jesus, include women in mutual cooperation with men, in the task of spreading the Gospel... women who prophesy, who teach, who serve the community.

among men and to work for defeating and eliminating any type of discrimination in the fundamental rights of persons: “Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition. True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is

to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honoured. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to

¹⁹ The history of the Church testifies that, many times, the scale of the relations between the genders was tipped towards a certain hierarchical dualism prevailing in the historical-cultural context, and passed on from the ecclesiastical speech, became customary and way of life in the family and the society. Women were considered inferior to men. John Paul II recognizes how difficult it is to express acknowledgement of the precise responsibilities which he sincerely regrets and asserts: “May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision. When it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the Gospel contains an ever relevant message which goes back to the attitude of Jesus Christ himself”. (JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Women*, 3).

embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men.” (No. 29).

Following the teachings of the Sacred Scripture, the Synod Fathers remind us again that the foundations of human dignity and living together in love like brothers and sisters lies in the fact that we have been created in the image of God, and therefore, we form only one family (nn. 12 and 24). Given the signs of the times, it is clear that there is some concern about the human gender’s fundamental equality. Men and Women should acknowledged it by eliminating any type of discrimination.

Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Christifideles Laici (1988)²⁰

The Magisterium after the Council constantly restates this truth on the human being, man and woman, and their mutual responsibility for making history. The way ahead is a shared way. Men and women are jointly called to work together in the tasks still to be done so that the equal dignity for men and women shines and is acknowledged. And, in particular, it should be recognized women’s indispensable contribution to building the Church and developing society.

This is what John Paul II remarks in “Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World”: “The participation of women in the life of the Church and society in the sharing of her gifts is likewise the path necessary of her personal fulfilment - on which so many justly insist today - and the basic contribution of woman to the enrichment of Church communion and the dynamism in the apostolate of the People of God.”²¹

Today like yesterday, this way is filled with difficulties: “when confronted with the various forms of discrimination and marginization to which women are subjected simply because they are women, time and time again strongly affirmed the urgency to defend and to promote the personal dignity of woman, and consequently, her equality with man”²².

For that purpose, it is necessary to always remember that “It is quite clear from the words and attitude of Christ, which are normative for the Church that no discrimination exists on the level of an individual’s relation to Christ [...] and on the level of participation in the Church’s life of grace and holiness”²³.

And then, John Paul II concludes: “It is an urgent need, then, to move from the acknowledgment in theory of the active and responsible presence of woman in the Church must be realized in practice”²⁴.

²⁰ We highly recommend fully reading this exhortation, especially, Chapter IV: “Labourers in the Lord’s Vineyard” and, in it, the title “Women and Men,” 49-52. It is also recommended the “Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, by John Paul II, on the dignity and vocation of women on occasion of the Marian year” (1988).

²¹ Christifideles Laici, 51.

²² Christifideles Laici, 49.

²³ Ibid., 50.

²⁴ Ibid., 50 y 51.

Latin American and Caribbean Bishop's Magisterium

In addition, the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops, based on the anthropologic and theological foundations of the human condition, warn us about the attempts made against human beings' dignity, especially, against the poor, the natives, the Afro-Americans and women. Regarding our concern, our Bishops agree that the situation claims for an organized praxis for women, who have equal rights and obligations, to be present in temporary realities, to participate together with men, in transforming the society. They point out that it is urgent to have an explicit commitment in favour of the inclusion of women in public and ecclesial life, in leadership tasks and their active participation in several spheres, without giving up on family life and the commitments entailed by it. For that purpose, it is necessary to have a dialogue with the public powers in order to guarantee laws which foster development²⁵.

On occasion of the Fifth Conference in Aparecida, they continued and deepened the reflection on the place of women and the need of transforming the situations that oppress them so that women can fully participate in the ecclesial, family, cultural, social and economic life, creating spaces and structures which favour a bigger inclusion²⁶. "Woman is called to be a good steward with man for the present and the future of our human society."²⁷

With the purpose of achieving full collaboration from women in society and the Church, the Bishops propose some pastoral actions: a) foster an organization by the pastoral in such a way that it helps discover and develop in each woman and in ecclesiastical and social spheres the "female talent" and promotes the highest participation by women; b) guaranteeing the effective presence of women in the ministries that in the Church are entrusted in the lay people, and also in the pastoral planning and decision-making steps, valuing their contribution; c) accompanying female associations that fight for overcoming difficult situations, vulnerability or exclusion instances; d) promoting dialogue with authorities to devise programmes, laws and public policies which enable the harmonization of women's work life with their duties as family mothers."²⁸

In this task, men's active participation is also engaged, since it is not possible to move forward in communion and reciprocity without joint work. For that purpose, it will be necessary to promote the reflection upon the impact of the current cultural models on their identity, and on the mission they have in the family, in the Church and in the society.

²⁵ Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops (DP): "The Present and the Future of Evangelization in Latin America", Puebla, 1979, 834-849. Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops (DSD): "New Evangelization. Human Promotion. Christian Culture. Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today and Always", Santo Domingo, 1992, 104-110.

²⁶ Fifth General Conference of Latin American Bishops (DA): "Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ so that they may have life in Him. – I am the true and living way – (Jn 14, 6), Aparecida, 2007, 451-463.

²⁷ Ibid., 452.

²⁸ Ibid., 458.

This aims to generate the competencies that will allow them to favour their role in their matrimonial life, in the exercise of fatherhood and in the evangelization.

Concluding, the Ecclesial Magisterium has exposed the injustice implied in every instance of gender discrimination and has firmly remarked equal dignity between men and women. It is everybody's responsibility to promote instances which enable the recognition of this gift so that, becoming aware of the fundamental equality with which men and women were created, they can generate and strengthen equal, personalizing and freeing relationships.

5. The Impact of Culture in the Shaping of Subjectivities

The evangelical option implies achieving theoretical and practical recognition of women's equal dignity, and requires making the historical, cultural and structural causes of inequality visible, as well as the effects that inequality brings about for women and men.

John Paul II states: "we are heirs to a history which has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude." Delving into the causes, he says "the many kinds of cultural conditioning which down the centuries have shaped ways of thinking and acting"²⁹.

This inherited conditioning makes it very difficult to become aware of one's own dignity. As culture shapes the mindset, it has been building images, symbols, and customs which reproduce and strengthen behaviours, which seem to be natural and are never questioned. Many women have found natural the fact that they are subjugated by men. Many men have grown up thinking that dominating women is something inherent to their manhood, thus consolidating hierarchical bonds.

These situations of domination and subjugation have led to the establishment of an unacceptable family and social asymmetry, and they have been a subtle and frequently masked reality. Maybe due to that reason it can be perceived certain difficulties to acknowledge it and become aware of it. Both men and women are usually brought up in such an environment and with such a way of thinking that both of them find it natural the hierarchical relations between genders and the consequences this brings about.

It is also difficult to tell what is natural and what is cultural in the distribution of functions between men and women, or in taking over spaces for action and power. Biology has left the trace of custom: the strongest male over the weakest female.

There is no doubt that gender differences shape us as men and women making it possible the rich experience of love, the generation of life, the life together and the mutual

²⁹ John Paul II, Letter to Women, 1995, 3.

exchange. But the problem arises when injustices are caused claiming gender issues. The differences emerging from biology cannot justify some cultural interpretations on masculinity and femininity that end up imposing privilege of men, and segregation and exclusion of women. The fact that men are physical stronger does not justify their dominant position. In our culture, masculinity has meant being active; while femininity has meant being receptive and passive. Being a man implies having presence in public life; being a woman, on the contrary, means being consigned to the home and private sphere. Being a man means having the real possibility of a higher income; however, being a woman means resigning oneself to a lower income for the same job. It cannot be denied that deep injustices are suffered or avoided in our society only as a consequence of being a man or a woman.

Masculinity and femininity as cultural constructs are conditioned by history, customs, representations, education and they are not always fair to the equal dignity of men and women.

6. Contribution of the Gender Concept for Ecclesial Reflection

The gender perspective may be useful as a hermeneutic key to read and interpret reality and the historical data.

The Gender Perspective

From our faith viewpoint, it will always be imperative to find out whether inequality between men and women is determined by biology or is, instead, associated with cultural and social representations in a certain time and context. This is a task we cannot avoid, since if inequality were attributed to an unavoidable consequence of a certain biological configuration, it would be impossible to change it.

The “gender” category –as an analytical mediation– enables the research into inequality relations between men and women in day to day concrete situations and in social bonds. Analyzing reality from this gender perspective helps recognize that such inequality does not arise from biology, but from cultural and symbolic aspects of the identity built from the biological sex of men and women, without neglecting its foundation for the personal shaping. At the same time, it helps us reveal how power is framed in interpersonal bonds. In other words, femininity and masculinity, although their foundation and root lies in human biology – sexual difference between men and women –, take up historical forms conditioned by culture, customs, representations, the education received, etc. Clearly, the cultural context we are born in and raised carries the inheritance of big “marks” or conditioning factors that expresses ways of thinking and acting through the different moments in history.

“Test them all; hold on to what is good” (1 Thess 5, 21)

We consider that the gender perspective may be useful as a hermeneutic key to read and interpret reality and the historical data. With it, it is possible to critically di-

differentiate the roles of the genders, products of culture, assigned to men and women; to question established standards and overcome dehumanizing models. And thus, being able to imagine, expressing and achieving gender equality.

We are aware that the crucial incorporation of this perspective implies leaving aside radical and positivist viewpoints which, rejected by the Ecclesial Magisterium, cancel out sex differences or consider that in order to revert subjugation or injustice against women, it is necessary an antagonist and dialectic attitude of opposition to men. We want to explicitly reject the “ideology of gender” according to which, as the Fifth Conference in Aparecida says, “each everyone can chose his or her sexual orientation, without taking into account the differences set to them by human nature. This has led to legislative changes that gravely injure the dignity of marriage, respect for the right to life, and the identity of the family.”³⁰ We undertake as an authentic challenge the hard task of assigning a new meaning to the “gender” concept from the teaching of the Church.

We do think it is important to critically analyse the cultural traces and social conditions to understand that the functions which have been socially assigned to the genders can change throughout history and in the different cultures, and that the biological differences are not the cause of gender inequality. Therefore, inequality situations between men and women –such as women’s limited access to education, difficulties to access proper work training, salary disparities for the same job, the segregation generated by the division of work according to gender – are the result of a society organized on the base of an unfair structure and not on certain biology.

The necessary visibility of this de facto situation and our embarking on ways to change it will have a strong political impact, and will contribute to establishing societies increasingly fair and equalitarian.

Caritas in Latin America and the Caribbean has decided to incorporate the gender perspective as a valid instrument, critically undertaken, to acknowledge the injustices between men and women which have been naturalized, though they are not. It will also be considered as a comprehensive approach, both for the internal institutional organization and for employment plans and projects. With this option, we want to work for the materialization of a fairer, plentiful life for everybody; a life which loyally responds to the teaching of Jesus and the Church.

7. Pastoral Challenges

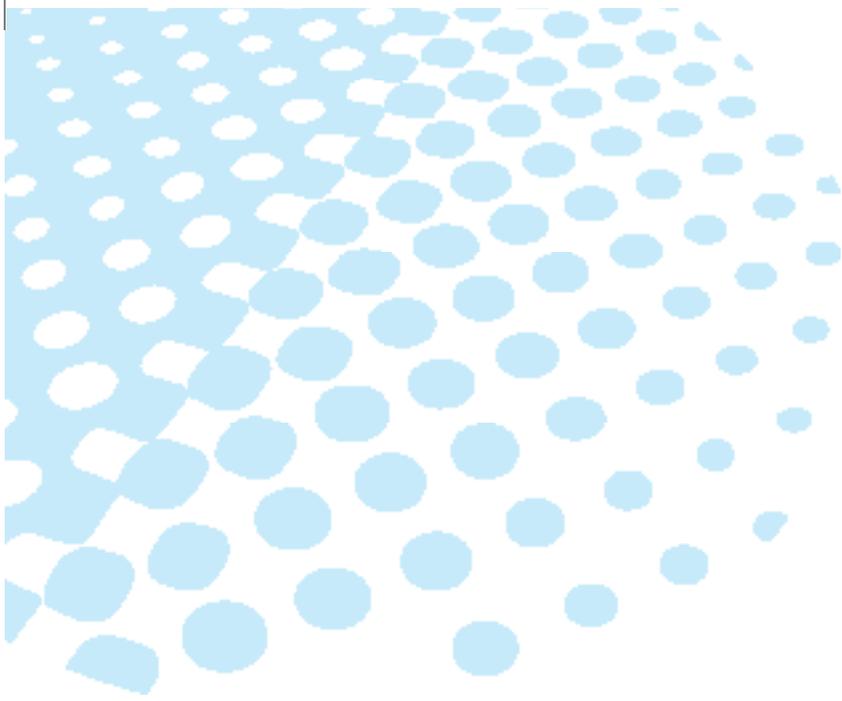
From the considerations made in this II part, some priorities for pastoral action emerge naturally. We propose to:

- Strengthen awareness of equal dignity between men and women.
- Educate for the recognition of cultural, symbolic and social aspects which have shaped inequality between the genders without attempting to suppress the biological differences.

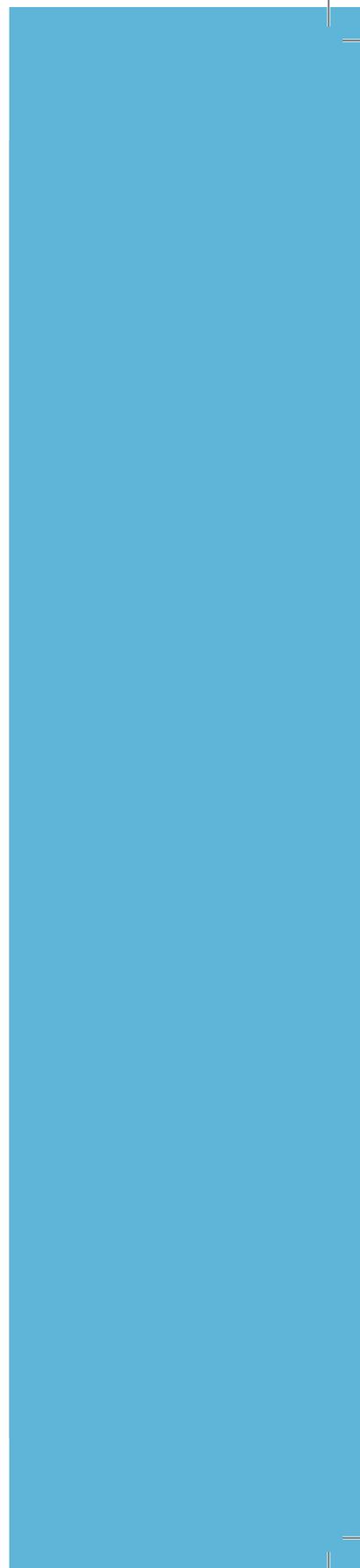
³⁰ DA, 40.

- Learn to unveil the naturalized mechanisms for oppression³¹.
- Foster creativity when proposing and carrying out the possible transformations of the prevailing models.
- Give special attention to the voices of those men and women discriminated on the basis of gender issues; listen to their stories, enable dialogue and encourage hope.
- Work jointly - both men and women – to promote justice and expose situations which discriminate against women and make them invisible.
- Promote a major role for women and due acknowledgement of their contribution to the Church's evangelizing work.
- Exercise participation in public spheres to materialize the necessary changes.
- Create inclusive communities, where everybody is recognized with equal opportunities.
- Create spaces and initiatives which enable the experience of mutual communion.

³¹ V. AZCUY, *Teología y género. Un diálogo al servicio de la fe y la promoción de la justicia. Conferencia inaugural*, USAL.



**III. “As you sow so shall you
reap”: The Action of Caritas
and Pastoral Social for equality
in gender relations.**



Introduction

With this document, we have accepted the challenge of reflecting upon and revising our pastoral practices in the Caritas - Pastoral Social network in Latin America and the Caribbean from the gender perspective.

The concern for gender inequality-disparity is not new in the history of Caritas' pastoral action in the Region. Domestic violence, poverty, the misery of homes abandoned by the father and under the sole responsibility of the mother, lack of access or poor access to health, education, social security, employment, social assistance, etc. have been the objective of the many programmes already implemented or in progress.

Thanks to these pastoral actions, Caritas has contributed to the search of overcoming complex and varied problems for many women and their organizations. Moreover, this experience has let us perceive the need to face the structural and structuring causes of inequality between men and women.

Also, we have progressively become aware that to face social injustice caused by gender inequality-disparity, we need to work with women and men alike because it involves the relation between male and female. The problem lies in their relationship, and its effects impact on everybody. This means that working for women's inclusion in an isolated way without taking into account men or the relation between both genders does not help meet the goal, since the problem is not properly healed unless the origin and cause of exclusion and injustice is addressed.

Now, in the III part of this document, we want to suggest some points to structure the actions of the Caritas - Pastoral Social network in Latin America and the Caribbean with a methodology that undertakes the following challenges:

1. Generate opportunities for awareness and understanding of the topic at the national, diocesan, parochial and community levels.
2. Provide the teams with basic diagnosis, planning, monitoring and assessment tools and training activities so that they can incorporate the gender perspective in their work.
3. Transverse the gender perspective in Caritas - Pastoral Social's day to day actions, either in the internal organization or in the actions with the base groups.
4. Get to know /monitor the existing public policies, and so influence on the search for structural changes.

As a methodological way, we suggest going over three stages: Awareness, Training and Action.

We have progressively become aware that also, to face social injustice situations caused by gender inequality-disparity, we need to work not only with women, but also with men, because it involves the relation between male and female.

I Stage: Awareness

This first stage must be considered as an opening door for the teams at the different levels -national, diocesan and parochial and community groups - to start perceiving and recognizing gender inequality aspects that harm pastoral action and the work done in favour of a higher justice and social peace.

It must be articulated in three moments: a) learning the reason for this topic and questioning reality (I part of this document); b) learning and undertaking the teaching of Jesus and the Church (II part of this document); c) starting revising one's own testimony and the pastoral action.

An immediate fruit of this stage may be to start understanding the need of adopting institutional policies which strengthen the experiences of gender equality in the teams and correct, if necessary, unequal situations and practices.

If the team can go through each of these three awareness moments, it will have the necessary base to carry on to the following stages.

II Stage: Training

This training should only start once the team or community has already covered the awareness stage. Trying to train those who have not become aware of the problem, it will likely lead to failure and regression in the methodological path.

This stage also has different moments: a) diagnosis and analysis of the reality from an evangelical-theological standpoint; b) training for acting based on planning, monitoring, evaluation and systematization (PMES) tools.

a) **Diagnóstico e análise da realidade: ver / julgar**

a) *Diagnosis*. The diagnosis must be performed following three vectors: detecting internal problems; checking on gender problems in the performing communities; and public policies. .

Problem detection should not be highly detailed. Only the problems the team considers to be addressable should be aimed at. Therefore, this will avoid feeling downhearted due to helplessness or incapability.

The result of the diagnosis must be the definition of problems which should be addressed internally, in the communities (at least, a base group) and in relation to public policies.

b) *Analysis*. Once the diagnosis has been performed, it is very important to reflect upon and enlighten the problems detected using the conceptual framework of this document (II part), the Social Doctrine of the Church, the Aparecida Document, the situational surveys of each zone or the Region and other readings that the team may consider important and suitable for the context they live in.

It is important to look for texts adequate to the reality of the social work of the Church, since the topic has controversial areas, and the sense and work aim with the

Other readings that may help in the training process can be those that refer to topics such as human rights, sustainable development, the environment, risk management, public policies, etc.

topic are varied. The surveys should not produce or foster unnecessary resistance.

Other readings that may help in the training process can be those that refer to topics such as human rights, sustainable development, the environment, risk management, public policies, etc. It can also help reading works developing sociological and anthropologic aspects on religion and the gender perspective.

b) PMES Training

At this moment, the practical tools of PMES (planning, monitoring, evaluation and systematization) should be provided, choosing a pilot experience involving internal work, work with base groups and with public policies.

The production of an instrument which helps developing the gender work should also be included.

A PMES with a gender perspective should adopt two aspects: a) internal organization, and b) gender relations in the community groups.

- a) In the internal organization of its institutional structure, it should examine the quantitative and qualitative composition of the teams from the gender perspective; it should check whether the methodology adopted is inclusive or not and whether it favours the participation of women and men in equal conditions or not; it should consider the distribution of power in the teams; it should examine whether the educational material reflects an equitable gender relation perspective and whether the division of work also favours those relations or not.
- b) The work done with community groups should start with detecting group's experiences and their problems, especially those which arise from the man-woman relationship, and the search for solutions that have been addressed. From that on, they should discuss gender problems, trying to detect the reasons that explain their existence and to devise the strategies that the group will adopt to solve them.

b1) Work Planning in the Gender Perspective

It can be adopted either a specific planning of the gender issues or an overall planning of the Caritas' actions from the gender perspective, or both things together as one.

1. Specific Planning

In this type of planning, gender issues are addressed as a specific topic within a definite time span and with the implementation of theoretical and practical aspects. This procedure is adequate to the realities which are still unaware of the work from this perspective. Its main risk is that it does not enable a comprehensive approach of the gender issues, and it takes them only as something to be constructed, a mere topic to be developed.

2. General Planning in the Gender Perspective: Multi-disciplinary Approach

In this way of planning, all the actions-activities are undertaken from the gender perspective (transverse approach), and it is not restricted to some specific activities. The

idea here is not to discuss gender issues, but to have them always in mind to achieve equality in all the practices to be performed.

The activities will not appear in the plan under the label of “gender” but will be undertaken from that perspective. This has the advantage of influencing on the institution’s daily practices and not only on a certain project or programme. For this purpose, a systematic, continuous, broad, comprehensive approach is necessary.

With the aim of preventing a rise in the daily workload as a result of this planning, it is important to:

- a) Avoid generating no-responsible processes, which may happen when “everybody is responsible” but nobody assumes direct or concrete responsibility.
- b) Do not incorporate the cross functional gender approach spontaneously or intuitively. Plan it carefully in each programme and activity, keeping, at the same time, a healthy flexibility.
- c) Plan activities with a specific aim other than gender issues, but when being implemented, include the gender perspective. For instance, a project for giving access to drinking water to X families, in a community Y, and for a period Z. An activity could be analyzing the time, length and number of participants of the meetings with the purpose of guaranteeing that both women and men can participate in them.
- d) Systematize the process of transverse approach implementation in the gender perspective, trying to include all the people working in the planning, the division of work, the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation.

The gender perspective also implies a transverse approach to all the dimensions of daily life achieving micro and macro social transformations in the relations between women and men. Therefore, participative planning, monitoring and evaluation should:

- a) Favour active participation by the group which has been historically oppressed-excluded.
- b) Pay special attention to the selection of methods and materials to be used in the learning and training process.
- c) Strengthen formal and informal organizations of the oppressed-excluded group.
- d) Take into account the bond between gender and class or race in relation to equal access to resources and services.

3. Combination of both types of planning

This combination is adequate when the institution lives complex realities and a detachment, in its actions, from the gender perspective. We think this situation is usual in Caritas.

The main risk in these situations is that the planning may derive only from gender-specific activities and this perspective is not incorporated in the institution’s daily life. It is evident that, in an institutional process which has become aware a little – or not aware at all, it is necessary to generate specific actions that train for working on the gender perspective, but this should not be the ultimate aim.

b2) Monitoring

It consists in checking the targets or expected results to gender equality set in the planning stage are being met. For that purpose, it is necessary to forecast which indicators will help measure the effectiveness of the actions taken.

For example, depending on the case, the following indicators may be helpful: balance the number of men and women present; active participation by all of them in the discussions and decisions; language used; methodology used; educational material used; etcetera. We suggest that the indicators chosen help monitor both the management (internal monitoring) and the results (monitoring on the base).

b3) Evaluation

The evaluation is not the final stage of the process, but it is present through it. Its objective is to make us reflect on the changes caused with the aim of shifting actions, if necessary. The learning from the experience and the achievements strengthen us resolve the new decision-making processes. Evaluation is important because it makes it possible to measure effectiveness, efficacy, efficiency, and the performance of the actions taken under the gender perspective.

We suggest that the evaluation be made during the entire process. It should cover the strategies, activities, methods, techniques and procedures used. The following questions may help:

- Are the changes reaching the communities? To what extent?
- Are the strategies, the methodology and the educational material adopted efficient, effective and enough to reach the set targets?
- What is the gender equality testimony in Caritas 's agents like? Is the team trained to work from the gender perspective?
- Once the process is over, the evaluation might be oriented to the following way: Were the planned actions carried out? Should any action not be carried out, what was the reason? Have the actions taken helped meet the targets? Was cost-benefit analysis performed? Have expenses met the budget? Were expenses too high? Were they too low? Why?
- From the challenges chosen, which was entirely met? Which was only met in part? Which was mostly met? Which was not met at all? What new challenges have emerged?
- In communities, have we noticed any changes in gender attitudes favouring the equality paradigm?
- Were the testimony, the methodology and the educational material adequate to work on gender perspective?
- Has the internal organization of the institution favoured or hampered the work on gender perspective?

Evaluation is important because it makes it possible to measure effectiveness, efficacy, efficiency and the performance of the actions taken under the gender perspective.

III Stage: Action

This stage aims at the action by Caritas - Pastoral Social both internally and in the base groups, as well as its impact on public policies.

For that purpose, we have taken the three priority vectors (theme and transversals) as referent for the action. They were adopted in the general planning of SELACC 2007-2011.

a) Theme

1. Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

- Guarantee the gender equality perspective in managing conflict, from the analysis to the search for solutions.
- Work for fairer gender relations with more reconciling ways.
- Shape and accompany, from the gender perspective, all the work done by the community teams.
- Foster the diversity of fairer and more reconciling ways of life, incorporating gender indicators

2. Migration and Traffic of People

- Gender equality as equality of rights for people.
- Work, in a different and adequate way, with women who are victims of sexual violence and who are exploited at work.
- Incorporate gender perspective into the migration problem.
- Work with authorities for improving treatment to women, preventing them from being exploited for their condition as migrants. Influence on changes in public policies which promote women's dignity.

3. Environment, Emergencies and Risk Management

- Life Defence and Promotion. Women and men as the focus of our concern about the environment.
- Citizen Participation. Favour women's and men's participation as a citizen in the drafting and enforcement of environmental protection laws and policies.
- Prominence. Making the contribution of women and men visible in the sustainable management of the environment and in the conservation of biodiversity.
- Gender Analysis. With the purpose of determining the specific needs, skills and current contributions by adult women and men, girls, boys, teenagers and the elderly in emergency situations.
- Planning for food assistance considering the nutrition situation. Taking into account the differences between men and women when considering the varied nutritional needs of children, women, men and the elderly. Everybody's responsibility for contributing to food security.

4. Comprehensive and Supportive Human Development

- Supportive and sustainable development and inter-cultural approach. From local to global without any social exclusion and with gender equality.
- Sustainability. Transformation of relations between people and nature at the environmental, cultural, political and economic level.
- Constitutional Principle of Inclusion. Inclusion of all women and men.
- Breaking away from the environmental utilitarian viewpoint.
- Construction of power, democracy and participation from a gender equality basis.
- Respect to indivisible rights: environmental, social and employment rights, self-fulfilment, cultural differentiation, ethnic-race, gender.

5. Institutional Strengthening and Coordination

- *Sensitivity to gender issues in the evangelizing action:* Every intervention made by the pastoral agents, addressed to the communities and families must reflect a new way of being a Church, sensitive to gender differences.
- *Equality:* Respond properly to men and women's varied needs and problems, trying to favour the people who are in a disadvantaged situation in order to achieve a more symmetric social valuation among them.
- *Equal opportunities and treatment:* In the work teams, men and women will have equal opportunities and job promotions.
- *Testimony:* Being a testimony to those relations we would like to be built and guaranteed in the society.

b) Transversals

1. Communication

- Develop communication models to enable hearing the poorest.
- Try to achieve communication in a way where we can all participate, we can all be communicators.
- Influence on the creation of communication models promoting the culture of Life.
- Foster communication skills which favour the use of better technologies as a contribution to common welfare in this globalized world.
- Opt for:
 - A communication model that undertakes values, principles and a language in gender perspective, with efficiency, intelligence and passion.
 - The subjects of communication are the concrete woman and man. We do not want to be the voice of those who have no voice. Instead, we want to open channels to democratize the word and help all the voices be heard in a cultural, ethnical and gender plurality.
 - Promote communication models that, exceeding just information, will constitute an effective instrument for evangelization and influence.

- Communicate to keep us informed, to pass the evangelical values on to others and to achieve their social and ecclesiastical participation.

2. Citizen Participation and Political Influence

Citizen participation means much more than just voting for those who represent us in the government. It means directly exercising rights and fulfilling the obligations inherent to every citizen.

- *Prominent Role*: fostering the prominent role of women and men in the society's decision-making areas (schools, universities, associations, political parties, local, regional and national governments, etc.) trying to achieve increasing participation by those who have been historically subjugated or have not been taken into account in the decision-making processes.
- *Equal Opportunities*: prioritizing equal participation of men and women in the society's decision-making processes.
- *Empowerment*: building popular empowerment from local mobilization and organization processes, valuing existing experiences and motivating for building new ones, including the gender perspective.
- *Sovereignty*: through gender equality, strengthen the sovereignty of the peoples, cultivating their traditions, values, cultures, ethnic groups, as a force and a resistance factor against the excluding and oppressing development model.
- *Democracy*: cultivating higher participation processes for everybody in Caritas internally (balloting at the different levels, work groups' and teams' organization, management, councils, etc.) and in areas of the society which enable equal participation of men and women.

CONCLUSION

We know that we have a long way ahead. Being aware of that this document can and must still be improved and enriched with the reflection and experience of Caritas of the Region, we would like it to serve as additional help encourage our pastoral way in the comprehensive and persistent quest of more gender equality. We hope that, as we move on in this service, more and more people, men and women, will become aware of the importance of such quest and will join us in this action for a more dignified, fair and brotherly life.

We hope that in the mid and long term, it can be noticed:

- A decrease in the indicators of violence against women in the base groups where Caritas – Pastoral Social carries out their actions.
- An alliance with other organizations that work on the same perspective.
- A higher mobilization for asserting and consolidating public policies which promote gender equality.
- Better understanding by Caritas - Pastoral Social of the gender perspective in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The transverse presence of gender perspective in the actions taken by Caritas - Pastoral Social.
- Higher participation of women in the internal organization of Caritas - Pastoral Social and in the community groups where the actions are taken.

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