

A World of Women in WSCF – The Women's Commission

INGJERD HELENE JØSSANG

The World Student Christian Federation is an organisation with over 100 years of history. Women have always been highly active at many levels in the organisation from the beginning. Women's contribution in the socio-political life of the federation has questioned the structure, leadership, and the methodologies of our programmes. The 1977 General Assembly of the Federation passed a mandate that gender issues and women in the WSCF be focused on as one of the priorities and the decision was made to hold a Women's Pre-Assembly in the subsequent General Assembly. The inter-regional women's committee was also established. The committee consists of the female participants of the Executive Committee of WSCF global.

The Commission

The commission is dedicated to promote gender justice in our churches, our societies and inside our own organisation. Women find themselves tied to a chain of patriarchy in the social, cultural, economic, political, religious and educational areas of life. The discrimination against women persists in all of these areas even today, and that's why the work of the Women's Commission is still an important focus for the Federation. Women's experiences transcend the differences of religions, classes, castes, races and genders. Therefore one of the tools of working is to share stories and experiences of gender based discrimination in our home, social and religious meeting places and in our communities to break the internalisation of discrimination based on gender.

Women work on these areas at all levels of the Federation by contributing to the development of new tools to re-define and analyse our everyday life and our society. Also, inside our own Federation, it has proved to be fruitful to challenge our own structures and leadership when it comes to discrimination against women. We want to ensure that our Federation is committed to empower women to be involved in all



Ingjerd Helene Jøssang (28) is one of two European representatives in Executive Committee in WSCF and a member of the European Regional Committee of WSCF Europe. She works as a medical doctor in Norway and has been a member of Tromsø SCM for 7 years, with special interest for gender issues.



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levels of decision-making, and to be represented in the leadership positions at all levels of the Federation. We want to ensure non-hierarchical forms of participation and leadership.

Pre-Assembly

One of our tasks is to prepare and moderate the Women's Pre-Assembly held during the first days of our General Assemblies every four years. The Pre-Assembly gives space for the women to gather, to begin to get to know each other and to provide a safe environment for everyone. Sharing of herstories are one of the main objectives. Furthermore, it is crucial to discuss how to ensure female participation during the assembly. Unfortunately it is still important to discuss both the low participation of women in the assembly and in the discussions during the assembly, and also to remind ourselves of the importance of women in elected leadership positions. Another important issue to raise is the awareness of sexual harassment. The Federation has a policy on sexual harassment and it cannot be stressed enough how important it is to discuss the issues of sexuality and harassment in a safe environment.

Women Doing Theology (WDT)

The inter-regional women's programme that was established in 1970s is called "Women Doing Theology." At the moment only one of the regions, Asia-Pacific, has an on-going, regular WDT programme, even if the theme itself is also in the agendas of the other regions. All the movements belonging to the Federation are encouraged to incorporate the programme

into their local level activities and to work on alternative theological models that would stress the role of women.

During the quadrennial following the Chiang Mai General Assembly of 2004, the Federation re-established the inter-regional women's programmes. The first one took place in 2005 following the topic of "Violence against Women." The next inter-regional women's programme will reflect the role of women in conflict resolution.

Women's Perspective

We all have experiences of living as women in this world. This gives us a common ground of experience by seeing the world from a woman's perspective. One of the fruits of our work is that we can create a safe space for the women in our organisation, a safe space where we can share herstories of how we experience being a woman in this world, and stories from women's perspectives, and through this to be recognised by other women.

The Women's Commission hopes to coordinate the micro activities that happen in the local levels in the fields of the empowerment of women and hopes to make this globally visible, seeking to make it really true on the global level.

The article is based on minutes and experiences from participating in the Women's Commission from 2004-2007.

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