

Fellowship of the Least Coin



2021

Messages and Reports



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WE ARE WOMEN OF FAITH!

A Message from the ICFLC Chairperson

But we aren't the sort of people who timidly draw back and end up being destroyed. We're the sort of people who have faith so that our whole beings are preserved.

Hebrews 10:39

Greetings, my sisters!

Here we are, well into our second year facing the challenges, pain and difficulties due to a terrible pandemic that has affected all in every aspects of our lives. We just held our second virtual ICFLC Annual Meeting this past October with all the difficulties for a meeting lasting several days, and with participants coming from different time zones. But we had great joy of seeing each other safe and well! To experience once again the commitment of our sisters and to hear the testimonies of solidarity from our different regions gives us joy and strengthens our hope.

As I look at this report, I am reminded of this text in Hebrews 10. This portion is part of an exhortation to the believers that have faced great difficulties and tribulations. Here is an invitation to remember God's love and mercy, as well as the response in obedience and personal faithfulness. We all know why the call is to remember what they have experienced and as I read it, I realize that we too are called to remember what we have gone through.

If we remember how far God has brought us, how can we not be grateful?

If we remember the wonderful ways God has worked in our lives, how can we lose hope?

If we remember God's timely response in the moments when everything seemed to fall apart, how could we give up or doubt our faith?

If we remember the precise moment of God's provision, as manna from heaven in the moment of need and God's protection as from the open sea at the time of persecution, how can we doubt God's promises?

If we remember the prayers of the heart in nights of uncertainty and the timely and merciful response of the Lord, transforming our night into day, how can we turn our back on God?

Indeed, we remember, and for that reason, "we aren't the sort of people who timidly draw back and end up being destroyed. We're the sort of people who have faith so that our whole beings are preserved."

So my dear sisters, let us rejoice as we read these reports. Let us give thanks to God as we hear the stories of commitment and solidarity. Let us continue praying and setting aside our least coins, because God is at work in us and through us.

Blessings to all,

Rev. Yamina Apolinaris
ICFLC Chairperson (2021 – 2022)



Introduction

The projects, each year, give sustenance to FLC and provide strength and opportunity to recommit ourselves. Our prayers, giving and collecting FLC contributions will become meaningless if projects are not given more attention and importance. – Shirin Samuel (*Lifted from the Report of the Executive Secretary, 1998 FLC Messages and Reports.*)

Every year we come out with this document, the FLC Messages and Reports to let the FLC network and friends know what the FLC offerings were able to do in the past year, and what are the projects being supported for the current year. So, Shirin Samuel, the ICFLC Executive Secretary in 1998 was right! The FLC project grants and the reports/sharing that come from recipients are really our sustenance or inspiration that leads us to re-commit ourselves to FLC through incessant prayers and generous giving. You are free to share widely and to use this report for your personal and group activities.

If you wish to view the reports/sharing in pictures and to read inspiring stories from our project grant partners, you may visit: <https://www.fellowshipoftheleastcoin.org/reports>

Friends and siblings in Jesus Christ, receive this 2021 FLC Messages and Reports with your gracious receiving heart! Be blessed in the knowledge that you have a significant part in bringing to the lives of people unknown to you - some respite from pain or misery, joys, opportunities to make life better, or venues to learn and be in fellowship with others!

May you be blessed more passion, joy, energy and substance in your commitment to live out the FLC vision of justice, peace and reconciliation!

Dr. Liza B. Lamis
Executive Secretary, ICFLC



REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

to the 40thth ICFLC Annual Meeting, October 09 – 16, 2020, via Zoom

INTRODUCTION

This year 2020 is beyond the ordinary. It was difficult and challenging times for us in the Philippines, with our government's gross mishandling of the Covid19 crisis. Retired military generals led the government response team that ignored health and science experts' advice and prioritized accommodating China and its interests. Violators of lockdown protocols from the ordinary citizens were swiftly punished and jailed, while government executives or high-ranking military violators are treated lightly. Support for the low-income and those who lost jobs due to lockdown was very wanting with a huge accumulating foreign debt to supposedly support the Covid19 response. Freedom of expression was effectively stifled, and killings of dissenters and activists went on.

There was never a day that I did not fret in anger, or fear and desperation. For my Self, for my people, and for thinking that if I die, I die alone and my siblings will receive only my ashes. The best thing to do to keep one's sanity was to stop reading the news, start gardening vegetables, and adopting a dog. My adoptive dog Pawan comes with me to meetings in the office at the unusual hours.

As I prepared this report, Covid19 cases are still on the rise. We decided that our Office Assistant should not report to Office to get her salary and pay our bills for October as local lockdown is enforced in her town. So far, our little seminary/university campus community is still Covid-free. This is our context at the moment.

Every January of the year I submit a Work Plan with Objectives, actually a list of routine office and administration work for the whole year. My 2020 report covers the highlights with my reflections, and in three areas, namely: Communicating the FLC; Administrative Work; and some Reflections.

I. COMMUNICATING THE FLC

FLC Publications and Promotion are now more virtual, and thus easily accessible to those who are web-connected. The FLC website and Facebook page are updated regularly. The FLC Updates, Messages and Reports, the yearly In-gathering Liturgy and Circle of Prayer are downloadable materials. A considerable number of people and national women's organizations have requested the for an e-copy of the Circle of Prayer and the 2020 In-gathering Worship liturgy for their use. EFECW and WDP have asked these publication materials to share in their own website.

Hard copies are still available upon request, provided the shipping cost is taken care of by the requesting party. The hard copies for the CoP have been reduced to 7,500, with few takers even locally. To make the CoP more accessible to many, one reflection is posted every month at our website front page and

FB.

I think the ICFLC members have to tell me what more I can do to help in promoting the FLC in their region.

Working with ACWC

Executive Committee Meetings via Zoom, June 4 and July 16. As an ex-officio member of the ACWC General and Executive Committees, I am part of these meetings to help Asian church women strengthen their ministries, where FLC is one of the major mission outreach ministries that the ACWC committed to since the late 1950s.

I also helped put up the ACWC website (<http://www.acwc-women.org/index.html>) that took us for months, with the help of the FLC website administrator in the Philippines. My commitment now is to help edit news updates from the member countries. The website is a big help in broadcasting ACWC since it has done away with print for its newsletter.

My observation is that the ACWC leaders need to understand and internalize further the fact that it needs to step-up volunteer work since there is no more ACWC Executive Secretary to oversee and do the day-to-day work. Beyond doing the yearly routine, ACWC needs to imagine how it can mobilize ecumenical women into challenging themselves and their churches to make the ecumenical movement in Asia more vibrant and self-reliant with its currently embraced ministries (where the FLC is one).

In 2019 I was panel presenter on ‘Towards Revitalizing the Ecumenical Movement and Role of Asian Ecumenical Women’s Organisations’, at the Asian Ecumenical Women’s Assembly (AEWA) held in Taiwan and organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) on November 21 to 27. Historically, CCA has been one of the nurturers of the FLC movement in Asia until it went global, together with the ACWC.

In 20 minutes, I presented the FLC and its challenge to Asian women to close to 500 participants. To many participants the FLC was familiar but needs continued promotion to make the younger ones become aware of it. I met Nancy Lin from Taiwan, once the Chair of ICFLC in the early 2000s. Some older Taiwanese women shared to me about their support to the FLC.

Local FLC promotions continued virtually in the midst of lockdown in many areas the Philippines. I had two invites in September, which could have been more if we were under ‘normal’.

On Sept. 25 Union Theological Seminary had its FLC In-gathering Worship, where I learned how institutionalized the FLC is in the entire United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). The last weekend or Sunday of September is dedicated to the FLC for the UCCP. However, in other mainline Protestant churches, the women’s organizations still lay claim to the FLC as their exclusive ministry – which is counterproductive to the sense of other auxiliary church organizations. On this note, I pose again the challenge to the ICFLC of making the FLC an entire church involvement and not just of or by the women. Beyond making the FLC Offerings swell a bit, we need to welcome others who are

interested to be part of this unique prayer movement.

II. ADMINISTRATION

THE 2019 FLC Grants. Some projects were delayed in implementation or were postponed to 2021 due to delayed payments from WCC. I know this problem will be immaterial when we are settled with our banking system soon. The good news is that some PG reports for 2020 have already come in!

The following Emergency Grants were given this 2019 and 2020:

- 1) The Bahamas, c/o WDP Bahamas (Hurricane in Sept.2019)
- 2) India, thru CASA India (Floods in East India, Aug.2020)
- 3) Philippines, thru STREAM (a regional ecumenical partner of NCC Philippines, volcanic eruption, Jan.2020)

For Project, SAYW and Emergency Grant reports, refer to the pd files sent to all, which will be converted to video and uploaded to the FLC website.

May I reiterate for us to bear in mind the Project Grant guidelines in receiving applications. The guidelines are meant to help us promote widely the FLC movement and to abide by our conflict of interest policy in dispensing the grants. I must admit I do not fully understand but I am personally learning in the process how this Conflict of Interest policy guides us in helping spread the FLC movement. It is true that our affiliate organizations and networks are needing financial support in their programs. However, we need to find ways to promote the FLC beyond our FLC networks.

Office and Finance Matters

Office expenses in the past year were reduced significantly due to less international travels and reduced office work due to lockdown. For our health protection, the part-time office assistant works at home since June, and until the Covid cases go down. In March to May we were on total lockdown so she was not able to come to office.

Basing on my work experience in the past months and during lockdown, I think we can do most of our office work electronically and save on Office expenses. I am also looking at doing the FLC work home-based and having job orders (pay per work, e.g. packing and posting materials) instead of having a paid office assistant.

III. OUR CHALLENGES AND MOVING ON

One thing I learned in work with the pandemic as background is that we can do more and efficient work by working smart with technology. We can do less face-to-face meetings and carry out work electronically which is faster and easier, with its attendant risks, for sure. With the global health situation becoming more unpredictable we need to adapt. However, we need to still need to think of our older friends and partners who prefer to have hard copies of our publications. I am saying we still need to print our publications.

The tension between the FLC being a prayer movement and FLC as a funding partner is real. In

my report last year, I mentioned that the FLC as a prayer movement is a force in strengthening the ecumenical women's movement in Asia. We can see this in the fact that we are able to support community-based initiatives for justice and peace particularly for women and girls and to give out grants, simply because we are a prayerful community. And the proof that we are actively living out our being a prayer movement is our FLC Offerings.

The challenge I see here is as a learning organization, we need to always remind ourselves that we are a prayer movement, to live out this being a prayer movement every single day, and to continue to share this widely particularly to the younger ones. Not just as a church women's organization, but as a local or national church. The UCCP for example, is happy and proud to do the FLC as a year-round activity that culminates in a jurisdictional gathering for the FLC Worship every September. They 'own' the FLC as a national mission outreach, which makes them a strong FLC partner.

A question about sustainability of the FLC was raised at the World Mission Conference in 2018 in Tanzania. My response to that was, as long as we remain a prayer and a praying movement, the FLC will continue to thrive in working with God for justice, peace and reconciliation.

Liza B. LAMIS
Executive Secretary
October 2020



NARRATIVE REPORT

ICFLC Treasurer

ICFLC 40th Annual Meeting, October 2020

Dear sisters,

It has been an honor to serve as your Treasurer this year. I have learned a lot! My predecessor, Marilyn Lariviere, has been such a valuable and responsive resource, as we have transitioned to new accounts and as I have learned about the financial aspects of the ICFLC's work.

By far the most significant (and time-consuming) aspect of my work as Treasurer has been dealing with the banking relationship. At the October 2019 Annual Meeting in Ghana, the ICFLC decided to transition the primary bank account from the World Council of Churches (WCC) to a US-based account. Following much analysis and discussion, we decided to maintain the existing account held at Rockland Trust and transfer the WCC funds to that account. With Marilyn's help, I was added to the account and set up for on-line banking. We were then ready to transfer the funds and receive a final report from WCC. Unfortunately, this was about the same time that COVID-19 began to impact all of us, so the transfer of funds to the Rockland account was delayed until late May.

Our priority was to process the Project Grants which had been approved in Ghana in October 2019. I began initiating the wire transfers, but Rockland Trust notified us in early July that they would no longer be able to do international wire transfers and would need to close the account. The triggering activity was our request to transfer funds to a country under financial sanctions by the US Department of the Treasury. At that point, we stopped all further transactions in that account, and began to research other banking options.

Working with the ICFLC Executive Secretary and Officers, we explored several options and concluded that entering into an agreement with Presbyterian Women (PW) in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was the most viable path. ICFLC and PW share a long history and PW is now nominating the Treasurer for ICFLC. The fact that PW has a professional staff and uses the services of the PC(USA) to process financial transactions provides a level of expertise and control that ICFLC (and other organizations) cannot maintain with volunteers. Approval of this relationship was granted by the PW Board of Directors on September 24, 2020, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is pending.

In the meantime, ICFLC has not paid all the project grants (5 remaining) or the block grants approved in October 2019. We have the funds to do so, and all the funds from Rockland Trust have been transferred to PW but we are waiting for PW to set up a separate account and process our planned grants. I am working with the PW staff to move this along as quickly as possible.

Regarding the financial results for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, offerings were \$47,000 below the budgeted income which led to an overall budget deficit of \$37,000. Detailed financial reports were prepared assuming that the remaining 2019-2020 grant obligations will be paid from the funds received during that period, and these reports are attached. This level of loss obviously cannot be sustained and planning for the 2020-2021 budget will require hard decisions. Uncertainty about the impact of COVID-19 on offerings is a significant complicating factor in our planning.

Decisions will be made at the 2020 Annual Meeting about funding of the benevolences which are described in the ICFLC Bylaws: Block Grants, Project Grants, Scholarship for Young Women, and Bursary for Older Women. As noted above, the funds available continue to decline and the Committee will need to be conservative in our budgeting, as there is very little accumulated surplus to use to fund current expenditures. It is hard to project future income, and it is inevitable that COVID-19 will impact offerings in the year ahead.

Another opportunity for learning for me personally has been to work with the Executive Secretary and other Officers on a detailed review of the governance documents of ICFLC (Constitution, Bylaws, Guidelines). We identified a long list of proposed changes for consideration by the Committee at the October meeting, most of which are for clarification and to align our documents with current practice. One discovery was that the term “Honorary Treasurer” is only used once (in the Constitution); throughout the Bylaws the position is referred to as “Treasurer.” We are proposing a change to bring consistency in the use of the title “Treasurer.”

May God continue to bless the work of ICFLC and all those impacted by the least coins and prayers offered by our sisters around the world.

Blessings and peace,

Mary Martin
Treasurer, ICFLC



REPORTS OF ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS



Name of EO: ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (AACC)
Author of Report/ Position Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki- Director
For Gender, Women and Youth **Year:** 2020

1. Present Context/Thrust and new work of EO/Women's Desk:

Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) are enshrined in the strategic and programmatic work of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). Nevertheless, the global novel Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic, has paused a major threat to the gains already made to advance GEWE. Among other challenges, the pandemic has reinforced existing structural gender barriers and entrenched gender inequalities, where women and girls have been disproportionately affected by multi-layered challenges such as domestic violence, teenage pregnancies and harmful cultural practices. This has prompted AACC to postpone some of the earlier planned activities in order to respond to the current situation. We recognize that the gendered effects of the pandemic will linger for many years and are therefore developing responses beyond the pandemic.

Some of the activities already undertaken and projected for the rest of the year are:

- Advancing Gender Justice, Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihoods during and beyond covid-19 pandemic
- AACC lobby activities and Side Event on "Gender, Women, Peace and Security"- held in conjunction to the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of States and Governments of the African Union in Feb. 2020
- Celebration of International Women's Day (IWD)/World Day of Prayer - 6th March 2020
- Development of the African Out of the Shadows Index Leaflet to create awareness on child abuse and call churches to action. This has been done in collaboration with WCC
- Promoting AACC's Awareness Campaign for the Plight of Widows through a documentary-link:<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1pUkteYWXz-dCtnTviA3yzUvSh9j5EDo9>
- Zoom meeting on, "Gender Based Violence & Child Abuse: Focus on Teenage Pregnancy and the Role of the Church"- 19th May, 2020
- Zoom Consultation on, "The Role of Men in Enhancing Gender Justice in Africa"- on 28th July, 2020
- Online webinar on validation and dissemination of research findings on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)
- Launching Men's Campaign for Gender Equality in Pilot countries

2. Achievements in the last year relevant to practice of FLC (new organization/organization or new country where FLC is started):

We promoted ICFLC through:

- Hosting The 39th Annual meeting of the International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) in Africa.

- A circular letter sent to women leaders inviting them to join the FLC prayer movement, and creating awareness of the 39th ICFLC meeting in Africa hosted by AACC
- Through ICFLC emergency grant to Churches in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi after the horrible effects of cyclone Idai in March 2019
- Distributed FLC newsletters, messages and report in our network
- FLC projects were distributed widely and we coordinated the reception of the forms, collated, summarized and forwarded to FLC secretariat

3. Opportunities to promote or strengthen FLC:

- Through a reminder circular letter to gender desks raising awareness about FLC
- Distribution of FLC newsletters, messages and report in our network. FLC reports help in publicizing the FLC projects in Africa, through which churches learn about FLC
- Through AACC Annual Report from Gender, Women and Youth Department which partly highlights the work of FLC in Africa.
- Writing a thank you letter to churches which have sent a donation to FLC in order to encourage them to continue with their support

4. Results of use of FLC Block Grant:

(a) 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD52) and Celebrations of the 25th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

From April 29th –May 7th, 2019, the Director participated in the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD52), as part of Faith Delegation. Its 25th Anniversary was celebrated from 12th -14th Nov., 2019 in Nairobi called “The Nairobi Summit” or ICPD25, in which Dr. Mwaniki spoke in a Panel Session about “Keeping Faith in SHRH” and read the Faith Leaders’ Communique at the plenary.

Outcomes and impact

- CPD 52 ICPD 25 provided an opportunity for Faith Actors’ engagement in high level advocacy at the UN level.
- Through Faith Actors’ participation at the CPD and ICPD, governments and other Stakeholders are increasingly recognizing the role of Faith in the implementation of ICPD Program of Action (PoA) and the imperative need to collaborate with Faith Actors.



Faith Leaders reading their commitments to implement ICPD PoA in a plenary session; Nov. 13th at KICC Nairobi

(b) Sensitization forum on entrepreneurial culture and self-sustainability for women and youth entrepreneurs

This forum took place from 10th -14th June, 2019, at Kingsley Mwenda Centre-Lusaka, Zambia. It was hosted by the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ). It was attended by 32 participants among them 19 women and 13 youth. They were drawn from member churches in the Southern Africa Region.

Outcomes and Impact

- It was a Training of Trainers (ToT) module that equipped the participants to impart knowledge gained at the grassroots.
- Promotion of sustainable development (SDGs 2030) Goal 5, and the African Union Agenda 2063 aspiration 6, enabling the church in Africa to play the catalytic role in entrenching sustainable peace and development through the empowerment of women and youth

(c) Highlighting the Plight of Widows in the Continent and Launch of AACC Justice for Widows Campaign

In February 2019, a letter was circulated to leaders of women’s/gender desks in the continent calling them to commemorate the International Widows’ Day on 23rd June. The AACC, the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), in collaboration with the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Ruth Ministry of widows among other activities organized a big Ecumenical Service in which the AACC launched its awareness campaign for the Plight of Widows on 23rd June, 2019, at the Cathedral. The Guest of Honour was the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, H.E. Inonge Wina.

Outcomes and Impact

- Awareness campaign about the plight of widows was created to over 30 church leaders
- A safe space was created for 73 widows to share their stories and be enlightened about their rights.
- The AACC launched her awareness campaign for the plight of widows
- CCZ church leaders developed a communique through which they committed themselves to address the Plight of Widows in the country
- The CCZ national team of widows was formed with leaders to be drawn from each member church
- The Government of Zambia promised to continue collaboration with CCZ to address the plight of widows in the country



- A short documentary to create awareness of the plight of widows was developed by AACC and is being circulated through social media and AACC website
- Eight churches received an incentive of \$2000 dollars to run widows' programs. Some of them have shared success stories of ways in which the grant was used to support widows at the grass root, as indicated by example below:



20 widows received 2 goats each in Gatumba Anglican parish-rural Bujumbura. Some of the widows were helped by their children to pick the goats.

(d) 39th Annual meeting of the International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC)

The 39th International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) was hosted by The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), through Christian the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) from 11 – 19 October 2019. It was the second time for Africa to host this conference since its birth in 1956.

Outcome and Impact

- Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki was reelected as the Vice-Chair of ICFLC
- The Conference offered a golden opportunity to popularize FLC in Africa, and in particular Ghana. Some women leaders even sought clarification between ICFLC and WDP.
- AACC was allocated \$10,000 for Block Grant.
- Project grants were approved for 5 women’s projects who had applied for the grant.
- Intensified AACC’s collaboration with other stakeholders in different continents to engage in a movement of prayer to promote justice, peace and reconciliation in the world.
- Enhanced women’s economic empowerment initiatives through the ICFLC grant.



ICFLC Annual Meeting in Ghana 11-19 October 2019

(e) 16 Days of activism against Gender Based Violence

In collaboration with WCC EHAIA and EDAN, AACC launched the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism during a half-day seminar on 25th Nov., which brought together 100 participants from 17 interreligious organizations and Universities. Awareness of the 16 Days was created and capacity of religious leader built to fight against all forms of Gender Based Violence and stigma on people living with HIV/AIDS. On World AIDS Day, 1st Dec., AACC collaborated with the Mothers' Union of Namirembe Diocese in Uganda to commemorate the Day.

(f) Conclusion:

The All Africa Conference of Churches treasures its collaboration with the Fellowship of the Least Coin as a key partner in support of gender work to enhance gender justice through prayer and promoting acts of justice, peace and reconciliation, encouraging global and ecumenical relations as well as enhancing solidarity with others especially the most vulnerable. The grants offered to AACC by ICFLC in form of Block Grants, Project Grants and Education Scholarships for young women have been very instrumental to the work of AACC and transformation of the lives of women in Africa. Long Live FLC!



Name of EO Asian Church Women's Conference, ACWC
Author of Report/Position Supaporn Yarnasarn **Year** 2019-2022

1. Present Context/Thrust and new work of EO/Women's Desk:

Since our ACWC committee in term of 2019-2022 have been working together under a new structure, 7 elected Executive Committee shared the responsibilities to hold on the future of ACWC. Four Vice Presidents (VP) are the leaders and responsible for the sub regional countries in Asia. There is a President: Supaporn Yarnasarn – Thailand. Supaporn is responsible for all in general.

4 VPs are responsible as the chair of sub – regional countries. VPs will contact and work closely with the sub-regional country members. They also have been sharing responsibilities that used to be handled by the former ACWC Executive Secretary, Rev. Moon-Sook Lee.

South Asia: VP Daisy Roy - Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Daisy Roy is responsible for Networking.

East Asia: VP Tserendavaa Otgonbayar (Tseegi) – Mongolia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Tseegi is responsible for ACWC Website.

Southeast Asia: VP Dorothy Castro – Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia. Dorothy Castro is responsible for Administration.

Oceania & Southeast Asia: VP Repelita Tambunan (Ita) – Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Ita is responsible for Documents.

Assembly Secretary: Lynette Green – Australia

Treasurer: Saroja Sundaram – Malaysia

Ex-officio Member: Liza Lamis (Executive Secretary – ICFLC) – Philippines

During the year of 2019 we have started with the work shop of a new paradigm of ACWC work under the new structure on 7-11 February 2019 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. At the opening worship, FLC Executive Secretary inspired us with a beautiful and meaningful speech about FLC that encouraged us to keep praying for justice, peace and conciliation and put aside with the least coin. We also remembered Shanti Salomon who used to work at EACC-East Asia Christian Conference (now is CCA-Christian Conference of Asia). I myself as the ACWC President and the General Committee of CCA am working closely with the CCA General Secretary and staff because their office is located in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I have learned a lot about the history of FLC whilst sharing together with them and reading some previous reports.

2. Achievements in the last year relevant to practice of FLC (new organization/group or new country where FLC is started):

Our trip to Timor Leste did not push through so there was no new organization/group established.

3. Opportunities to promote or strengthen FLC:

Since we have started our new structure, we encouraged our VPs to promote and strengthen ACWC and FLC with their sub-regional country members. In South-East Asia, there is in the report that in the Philippines (ECWUP) we always invite the Executive Secretary of ICFLC to render a report during our ACWC General Assembly and she brings the Circle of Prayer for distribution to the different denominations comprising the ECWUP and reminds all of us to practice FLC Offering even among staff in our local churches. Except for this year we celebrate FLC month in September as a national organization and as local organizations. We are reminded that the prayer part is very important on justice, peace and reconciliation before setting aside our least coin. This year the United Church of Christ women's organization celebrated their FLC this September. We also use the FLC prayer circle during our weekly devotions.

4. Results of use of FLC Block Grant:

We were able to meet as Executive Committee fully utilizing the grant for our transportation, accommodation and workshop thus meeting our goals.

Conclusion:

It is a great privilege to accept the FLC Block grant to continue our vision and mission as ACWC organization and to help in reaching out new places, new organizations and groups for the promotion of FLC and to help improve the outlook of women specially in new areas where ACWC and FLC are almost unknown. When things are back to normal we will make it a point to visit a place where we can establish ACWC and FLC as partners in our endeavour to improve lives of women and children.

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Name of EO: Christian Conference of Asia
Author of Report/Position: Rev. Grace Moon, Program Coordinator

Programme Report of Christian Conference of Asia
September 2019- June 2020

1. Present Context/Activities of EO/Women’s Desk (new work):

1.1 CCA’s Programmes and Activities focused on the Asian realities

The Christian Conference of Asia has been focused its programmes and activities on the real issues the Asian ecumenical movement is supposed to address, which

are relevant and responsive to the needs and priorities of the churches and councils in Asia. There are numbers of issues in the socio-economic and political arena of Asia that need to be addressed. For example, the peace and security concerns in all over the Asia region, human rights, growth of religious intolerance and the emergence of religious fundamentalism, ecumenical leadership development and ecumenical formation, increasing HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, migration and its social implications are to be focused.

Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID -19 pandemic crisis has affected people and communities around the globe in manifold ways. As the situation unfolds, the world faces changes, challenges and opportunities. As the world continues to wrestle with the consequences of COVID-19, no part of our societies seems to be safe or left unscathed. Fears are mounting people at large in every society, about their health, security, livelihood, job, well-being as they experience dramatic changes imminent and are underway. The fear of economic fallout with job losses and prolonged recession worry as well as the fear that COVID-19 is hitting developing economies hard, critically stalling the progress they have been making slowly over the past decades. Many are anxious and fear of the possibility of another outbreak, as efforts to flatten the curve of infections continue to be unsuccessful in many parts of the world. Followed by lockdown, restrictions imposed on movements, especially tighter restrictions on the cross-border movement of people and goods, will have long term impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced organizations across the globe into a balancing act – protecting the health and safety of their constituencies and staff members while simultaneously continuing their activities. In the context of the outbreak of the COVID-19, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) postponed all the scheduled programmes and meetings as well as the CCA's 15th General Assembly which was scheduled to take place in September 2020. Offices of the CCA headquarters in Chiang Mai was closed and staff members worked from home for two months. Seeing many people use online communication through various virtual platforms and increased visitors to CCA website, facebook and Youtube channel, CCA conducted several online meetings and webinars focused on the pandemic COVID19. CCA also distributed the special prayer for Asia Sunday focused on COVID19 pandemic.

This report is to highlight the CCA's programmes and activities on women's concerns and issues undertaken in the year of 2019 and 2020.

1.2 Women in Asia

Women in Asia have been making significant progress in many areas of life. Their remarkable contributions to different fields especially in making substantial changes in making qualitative improvements in empowering women and ensuring gender equality, as well as promoting their dignity, have been recognised widely. Economic, social, and political developments have brought with them

profound changes in the status of women in different parts of Asia. Despite all these positive signs, achieving and realizing the rights, dignity and capability of a large number of women continue to remain a major requirement for attaining the goal of a just and sustainable society. Access to basic amenities in life, education, health care, employment are still unreachable goals for a vast number of Asian women. Forced migration due to war and conflicts or poor economic conditions are major factors threatening the dignity of Asian women. Women who live in vulnerable situations in Asia are trafficked and sexually exploited. Gender discrimination, discriminatory laws and harmful norms prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential as they face discrimination and violence in their communities and at homes.

The spread of COVID-19 pandemic across the world has already created a situation with a devastating impact on women. As the pandemic ravages every country and territory across the globe, health systems continue to be overloaded and regular health care facilities remain closed down or continue to restrict, affecting millions of people. In other words, the COVID -19 crisis hit millions of women in hardest ways. As this trend continues, and the pandemic sweeps through, the impact and consequences for women is likely to further deepen. Studies have shown from different areas about the potential threat of the COVID-19 even in the post crisis, as well as the imminent negative effects on women. For example, the consequences in areas such as ending of preventable maternal deaths, the ending of unmet needs for family planning, and the ending of gender-based violence and all harmful practices are growing concerns. In a situation of lockdown, women are under particular pressure. The economy of almost all Asian countries directly affected by quarantines and lockdowns. The ongoing crisis has crippled the informal and un-organized sectors; women are now even more vulnerable and are at greater risk of falling into poverty. As markets crash and businesses shut down overnight, the jobs that millions of women occupy have disappeared such as receptionists, housekeepers, restaurant service staff, hairdressers, domestic workers, are thus not covered by social protection plans. Trends in Asia reveal that even in paid employment, women are the first to lose their jobs. The lockdown in several Asian countries has left women more vulnerable to domestic violence. Since the crisis started, several Asian countries have seen increases in domestic violence. Economic stress on families at this time of COVID-19 crisis put children, and in particular girls, at greater risk of exploitation.

In Asia as in other developing countries, jobs in many informal sectors such as domestic workers, caregivers, household businesses are mostly managed by women. At the same time, women typically shoulder greater responsibilities including taking the responsibility and burden of child care, and care for the elderly in families. The crisis is not only adding more work load for women, but its impact on women's health and safety is manifold. Apart from

services as normal health care services are stopped in order to cater the essential medical needs of COVID-19 patients.

During the pandemic crisis, many women's groups and organisations across Asia are directly engaged in responding to the crisis. However, during the recovery phase, adequate measures need to be initiated with plans for future actions to ensure improved response capabilities to address the consequences of COVID-19 crisis among Asian women. Asian women and women's organisations evolve a call to action not only to combat the spread of corona virus but also to tackle its profound consequences. Such efforts must include coordinated health response to suppress transmission and end the pandemic. Effective measures to scale up health capacity for testing, and treatment of women and girls who are most vulnerable among the affected people. Women in church and society need to cooperate together to overcome the challenges in the pandemic period and beyond.

1.3CCA Women's Programmes and Activities: 'Churches Together in Empowering Women in Asia'

CCA has made efforts to play a crucial and instrumental role in promoting ecumenical formation awareness, education and capacity enhancement among member churches and councils in promoting gender justice, women's leadership development and ecumenical action to combat violence against children and women. Also to empower women's leadership and their full participation in all works of life in churches and societies, CCA promotes women's leadership; addresses gender inequalities; encourages empowerment for the realization of rights and dignity of women; advocates for the prevention of violence against women; and responds to the emerging concerns affecting women in Asia through various activities and programmes.

The followings are CCA's actions and programmes to uphold the dignity of women in Asia:

- _Women's leadership development;
- _Women's ecumenical action against violence;
- _Upholding rights and dignity of women;
- _Prevention of violence against women;
- _Women's Participation in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution;
- _Protecting the Rights of Women Migrant Workers;
- _Preventing Trafficking of Women;
- _Women combating HIV/AIDS.

1.4. CCA's programmes and activities on women's issues in 2019 and 2020 1.4.1. South Asia Sub-Regional Training on Church Women's Leadership Development and Capacity Building to End Violence against Women¹

10-13 October 2019/Dhaka, Bangladesh



A two days sub-regional training on the theme “Calling women of Asia; Arise, Be Awake to Reconcile, Renew and Restore the Creation” was held from 11-12 October, 2019 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The training was organized by Christian Conference of Asia in collaboration with National Council of Churches of Bangladesh (NCCB). Around 25 women from different churches and parts of Bangladesh and Nepal participated in the consultation.

To assert ecumenical women's action to end violence and engaging in God's mission of reconciliation, renewal and restoration of its creation, CCA provided a platform for women in South Asia to deliberate on the emerging concerns hindering women's participation in God mission of reconciliation, renewal and restoration and strategize on actions that can bring change and transform the world into a place for all creation to live in harmony. The consultation was held prior to CCA's AEWA in Taiwan in November to prepare women for meaningful participation.

In the training, through workshops and sessions on various issues, participants analyzed the regional and local contexts of women in South Asia regarding extreme violence against women, cultural barriers and discriminative practices hindering women's participation and leadership. They also discussed the strategies and actions to enhance the capacity of church women leaders to advocate and campaign for women's rights with a collective voice through ecumenical women networks and platforms. Group discussions gave women a space to ponder ideas and ways for Christian women to come together to combat violence against women and become partners in God's mission of reconciliation, renewal and restoration of broken communities and all of creation.

¹Originally this was planned to be conducted in Sri Lanka. However, due to the horrific bomb attacks by terrorists in three churches in Sri Lanka on 21 April, 2019, its venue is switched to Dhaka, Bangladesh.



1.4.2. Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly

21-27 November 2019 / Hsinchu, Taiwan

The Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) was held in Hsinchu, Taiwan from 21 to 27 November 2019 on the theme, "Arise, be Awake to Reconcile, Renew and Restore the Creation". More than 250 churchwomen representatives of churches/councils and ecumenical organisations/ institutions from Asia and around the globe as well as local participants attended the AEWA. It was hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). This AEWA was Asia's first historic women's gathering of this scale in its ecumenical history which enabled the Asian Christian women to be prime partners in God's mission of healing the wounded and the broken world and to be catalysts of reconciliation, renewal and restoration of creation.

Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, Chairperson of the Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (PGI) and former General Secretary of the CCA delivered a homily in the Opening Worship of AEWA based on the text Isaiah 32:9-20 in which she described the biblical text as a "disturbing call to repentance", stating that the complexity and interconnectedness of today's problems inherently affect everyone. Due to growing polarization, competition, and pervasive individualism, the "whole creation is suffering due to the greed of a few people who exploit all others and nature beyond its limit" she added. "In this Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly, we are called by the prophet Isaiah to pause for a while, to look at the face of our world today, the suffering of many people due to injustices," said Dr. Lebang to the participants.

A young Taiwanese indigenous woman theologian Vavauni Ljaljegean delivered the first thematic presentation on "Arise, Be Awake to Reconcile, Renew, and Restore the Creation". She demonstrated parallels from the story of the "voiceless Tamar in her suffering" and the suffering of Indigenous women in Taiwan. "Like Tamar, a young lady who had suffered from the loss of dignity, Taiwanese indigenous women suffer.

No one hears their crying; even their closest brothers and family wouldn't hear their cries and voices.” Explaining the systemic and systematic oppression of the indigenous people, Vavauni also visualized the daily realities many indigenous women face as victims of trafficking and forced prostitution. “Indigenous women experience ‘strongly doubled marginalisation’ and ‘collective stigmatisation’. Their inherent gender coupled with male chauvinism and outmoded philosophies relegates them as the silent minority,” she pinpointed, and implored participants asking, “Where is the voice of Taiwan Indigenous girls on this journey of justice? Where is their crying in the miserable history of my people? Their voices are still unheard, but their crying is clear to my ears.” According to her, the aim of reconciliation was to reveal the truth which was covered and obscured, to heal those who suffer from the realities of injustice, and to transform those wounded to be recovered in the love of Christ. “Therefore, without truth, there is no true reconciliation; without justice, there is no reconciliation,” affirmed Vavauni.

Dr. Sawako Fujiwara, a feminist theologian from the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ), spoke on the subtheme “Be Awake to Reconcile”. “Reconciliation has to be understood not just as a biblical-traditional category of ecclesial discourse, but as a principle that guides Christian life and service. Thus, the brokenness of our communities needs to be discerned and tirelessly addressed by women,” said Dr Sawako Fujiwara. Further, she called upon the participants to be agents of reconciliation: to reconcile with their sisters first, then to share what they witness with their brothers, and finally be catalysts for the reconciliation of the whole community. “We need to ensure safety and security of all in our communities, and realize the full participation of all, regardless of gender or sexual identity. We need to properly focus attention on transwomen who too often remain ignored in our society, knowingly or unknowingly.” Dr Sawako concluded her presentation by providing positive examples and lauded the development of the Asian feminist theological movement.

Delivering an address on the sub-theme “Be Awake to Renew”, Dr. Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia said, “Many of our churches are inclusive in their theology and approaches to ministry but there are still sisters in Christ, those in other religious communities, and the wider society who experience discrimination.” In her presentation, she reminded all churchwomen of their call, which was to stand in solidarity with all women, advocating for equality and justice for them, and contributing to the renewal not only of our churches, but our world and the whole creation. Dr Deidre Palmer then elaborated upon the need for renewal of the participation of women as disciples, apostles, and leaders in the Church, which had been present in the Jesus movement and the early years of Christianity. She emphasized that renewal emerged in the partnership of women and men, and that being awake to renewal included listening deeply to one another. She spoke of the significance of an intergenerational community where the young and the old were a source of nurture and encouragement to each other.

Rev. Irene Umbu Lolo, a young woman theologian from Indonesia's far-flung and remote Sumba region, delivered the fourth thematic presentation on the fourth day of AEWA. She spoke on the subtheme "Be Awake to Restore". She drew parallels between the experiences of women weavers in her native Sumba and the restorative actions of God. "The patriarchal social and cultural systems put men in primary positions with special rights as owners and leaders, while women are categorised as second-class citizens and their lives are controlled by men. However, Sumba's women weavers respond to violence with non-violence, and resist in a conciliatory manner. They have proved that they are problem-solvers and peacemakers," explained Rev Irene. In her presentation, Rev Irene elucidated the symbolism and meaning of weaving as a restorative process. "For Sumba, weaving is the process which entails empowering those who are part of it to restore their communities, restore nature, and restore their own inner peace." The act of collective creation, she said, was vital to the process of peaceful restoration.

Analysing and presenting their respective Asian contexts of struggle for peace with justice and women's participation, four panellists stressed the need for collective engagement in advocacy in the session on "Towards Participation and Solidarity in Struggle for Peace with Justice". Helen Grace Salatandre Paris from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines emphasized the need for Asian countries to "develop our own remedies for conflict management and resolution to pursue justice, contain conflict and replace violence and war with peaceful and effective means to address injustices and resolve disputes". She reiterated that solidarity required that people think and act in terms of the obligations as members of a global community, despite differences of race, religion, or nationality.

Rev. Hemalatha John from the Church of South India based her presentation on the re-reading of the Scripture from a womanist perspective to reveal the role of women and men in violence and peace. "The need of the hour today is the discerning ability of the Wise Woman as in the book of II Samuel. We live in a world filled with war and conflicts; women from every city must take courage to initiate and participate in conversations during antagonizing situations and people", asserted Rev. Hemalatha.

Focusing on women in labour migration and the multi-layer struggles of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, Yusmiati Vistamika Wangka, who works among migrant women workers in Hong Kong shed light on the struggles of migrant workers as well as the factors that affect the feminization of migration to Hong Kong. Touching on the role of the Church in this matter, Yusmiati encouraged churches to raise awareness about migrant workers issues and disseminate information about safe migration and the risk of human trafficking.

The last panel session of the AEWA was on the topic "Towards ensuring an inclusive

Rev. Dr. Eun Ha Kim from Korea took the participants through the history of Asian women's participation in the ecumenical movement and called for new strategies for women leadership to emerge in church and society. Rev. Romella Robinson from Pakistan shared a moving testimony on the many challenges of Christian women in her country. She shared the experiences from her own denomination. Although women were ordained, they were asked to "stay silent as much as possible", and their gifts were limited to volunteer work. Wellorich Anderson Sokhlet from India said that much progress had been made in the context of increased women's participation in her church. However, she noted that male leadership always had the final say, even if women were empowered to make decisions. Despite her community being matrilineal, she said that patriarchal customs had crept into church practice. Her church had seen the decades-long struggle for the ordination of women, and she hoped to see that change in the near future. She said, "As women, we must voice out our support for each other, and not criticize and bring down anyone. We must seek first the kingdom of God – righteousness and inclusivity will then follow."

An open dialogue with officers of various women's organisations took place on "Towards Revitalising Ecumenical Movement and the Role of Asian Ecumenical Women's Organisations". Panellists representing various ecumenical organisations shared unique roles and contributions of women's organisations within Asia's ecumenical journey, and unanimously agreed on the pressing need for collaboration and action. The respondents opined that more concerted efforts of collaborations and cooperation among Asian Christian women's organisations had to be ensured by those who were in the leadership of their respective organisations in order to avoid competition among Asian women's organisations.

Supaporn Yarnasarn from the Asian Church Women's Conference (ACWC) talked about how the ACWC had been a space for Asian women ever since it was started six decades ago. The organisation was marked by its work beyond the barriers and binaries of women and men, poor and rich, and racial or cultural differences. Nirmala Gurung from the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) delivered a stirring presentation. "We believe that when women rise to leadership, they transform power structures and policies around human rights, gender equality, peace, and justice. When women lead, they are empowered to address global agendas of sustainable development," she said. Dr Liza B. Lamis from the International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) spoke of her own passion for working with those women, who, in transforming themselves, transform the world. Rev Moumita Biswas from the World Day of Prayer (WDP) drew AEWA's attention back to the transformative power of the simple prayer.

Aside from thematic and panel presentations, three workshop sessions were conducted to facilitate dialogue among Asian women on specific concerns and issues. The concerns and issues addressed in the workshops included: spirituality and

wisdom of Asian women, ecofeminism and climate change, women in church ministry, migration and trafficking of women in Asia, interfaith marriages, society and culture, poverty and hunger, reconstruction of women's bodies, resisting patriarchy and family values, health and wholeness of life, also objectification, sexualization, and commodification of women.

At the conclusion of the Assembly participants adopted a *Communique* affirming the need to stand together in solidarity towards realizing justice and peace at this Kairos moment of their planet earth, and that they were with one voice in asserting 'NO' to a culture of violence and exploitation of earth's resources. The Communique, stated that humanity is in a critical time when the whole of God's creation is groaning due to irresponsible human action, greed and continuing discrimination, violence and exploitation of women and children. Without repenting from the sin of greed, and without reconciling and doing justice to God's creation, women and the marginalized communities, in particular, the world will not experience justice and peace. The Assembly called all the participants to nurture their roles for the liberation of the whole world and to commit themselves to work together for upholding the rights and dignity of all women; initiate common actions to strengthen the ecumenical movement, avoid fragmentation of the ecumenical movement, and duplication of programmes and action as they need to work for the common goal of supporting and accompanying women in Asia.







Christian Conference of Asia

ASIAN ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY



*'ARISE, BE AWAKE TO RECONCILE,
RENEW, AND RESTORE THE CREATION'*

21-27 November 2019
Hsinchu, Taiwan

1.4.3. CCA Webinar on Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia: Vital Needs and Post-Crisis Recovery

21 May 2020

The CCA facilitated a virtual conference on 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia: Vital Needs and Post-Crisis Recovery' on 21 May 2020, which attended by about eighty participants registered on Zoom and was viewed by over 5,500 people across the world on the CCA's social media platforms.

The webinar aimed to serve as a forum wherein the magnitude of the issues and challenges faced uniquely by women amidst the COVID-19 crisis was understood, the endeavours of Asian churches and women's organisations in serving women to deal with and respond to the pandemic are shared, and deliberations on the redressal of the vital needs of Asian women as well as the design of the post-crisis recovery are initiated.

Melissa Alvarado (UN Women Asia Pacific); Basil Fernando (Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong); Deekshya Illangasinghe (South Asians for Human Rights in Sri Lanka); Maya Dania (Lecturer at Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand/Indonesia); Rev. Kyrie Kim, (Anglican Church of Korea and Chairperson of CCA's Programme Committee); Sotheavy Srey (Alliance for Conflict Transformation, Cambodia, and CCA's Programme Committee member); Nirmala Gurung (YWCA and CCA Executive Committee member, Nepal) were the esteemed panellists. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the CCA General Secretary, moderated the session.

The webinar, structured in five segments, focused on the impact of COVID-19 on women in Asia; the emotional and physical well-being of women; the response of churches in ensuring women's safety and needs in the time of crisis; the post-crisis recovery challenge; and, the way forward to ensure women's rights and well-being post the COVID-19 crisis.

In his introductory remarks, Dr Mathews George Chunakara said, "The spread of COVID-19 is not only a global health pandemic but is also drastically affecting people's livelihoods, especially those of women. Women in Asia are likely to suffer greater economic and social impacts during any crisis, and urgent and pressing needs of women must be addressed not only during the crisis but should be made part of the post-pandemic crisis recovery. Gender-sensitive policies that recognise and respond to women's needs will benefit not just women but society at large."

Melissa Alvarado (UN Women Asia Pacific Office) emphasised the violence against women and girls. She said that during times of emergencies and crisis, gender inequalities worsened and intimate partner violence (domestic violence) tend to increase. Thus, the ability to address violence against women, from the start of any emergency, was essential and lifesaving. This necessity was to be stitched into the national- and local-level responses and prevention plans, and could not be neglected to be dealt with only once the crisis had tided over.

Alvarado added that gender equality was a priority and gender sensitisation needed to be deeply integrated into all decisions, security, and design of recovery. Women needed to be part of discussions at the table and participate in decision-making, given that women think differently and provide unique solutions and innovation. For recovery in the post-COVID-19 period, women's voices must lead the decisions about women's lives.

Maya Dania, (Lecturer at Mae Fah Luang University) spoke on how the COVID-19 pandemic had spawned a 'new lexicon' in the description of gender relations. She analysed the intersection of gender concerns with language, pop-culture, and social media during the crisis, highlighting certain COVID-19-related sexist cultural phenomena, where cartoons and memes were used in Malaysia and Indonesia as advisories on soft-spoken and mild demeanours that women could model to

‘prevent’ domestic violence against themselves and appease their frustrated partners.

Dania brought to light the trend of ‘COVID-divorce’ in China, induced by lockdown boredom. She also mentioned WHO’s observation, that lack of access to contraceptive measures could lead to a spike in unplanned pregnancies, thus pushing a large number of women towards greater health risks (pregnant women were among the most susceptible to contracting COVID-19).

Nirmala Gurung, (YWCA Asia, Nepal), focused on the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis on women working in the informal sectors of the economy. Women formed the majority of the workforce in the informal economy, often taking up low-paying, high-risk jobs. Given their social disadvantages, poor working conditions, and negligible social security, they had fewer resources at their disposal. As such women workers depended on their daily earnings to survive, closures of industry (and by extension, the economy) would result in them falling into extreme and persistent poverty, she warned.

Srey Sotheavy (Cambodia) spoke of the widespread human rights abuse occurring under the COVID-19 crisis. She said that around 80,000 Cambodian migrants had returned home from Thailand due to COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of income pushed many families into micro-finance debts and the women of such families were being exploited by private moneylenders. COVID-19 bore serious implications in both the short- and long-term, making vulnerable communities the target of social and political exclusion, isolation, and stigmatisation.

Deekshya Illangasinghe (Sri Lanka) shed light on the issues of women migrant workers’ rights in the host and home country, internal migration, and phenomenon of reverse migration. She said that COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges migrant women workers already encountered such as gender-specific restrictions in migration policies and insecure forms of labour. She further elaborated that women migrant workers were mostly essential workers with insecure contracts, and generally fell through the social security net.

Rev Kim Kyrie (South Korea) shared the initiatives taken by churches and women’s groups during the COVID-19 crisis in the country. “It is the role of the Church and Christians to ensure solidarity against the discrimination of those who are socially disadvantaged, those who are vulnerable, and those in the minority – such as women, children, migrant workers, single mothers, abused women, vulnerable women in refugees camps, disabled women, and sexual minorities,” said Rev. Kim, hoping that the ‘new normal’ meant abandoning vested interests in favour of *sangseng*, or living together in cooperation, solidarity, and information-sharing.

Basil Fernando (Asian Human Rights Commission) said, that the CSOs must realise their full potential and persist with greater advocacy despite the shrinking of civil

spaces. He also laid stress on the successes of women leaders of states who had led swift and appropriate government responses against COVID-19. Fernando said that the participation of women must be escalated to leadership and that that leadership model was to be all-inclusive.

The panellists unanimously stressed the pressing need of tailoring inclusive responses, ensuring the participation of faith leaders in shaping the opinions and attitudes of people and securing cooperation between FBOs and CSOs to champion the rights of women.



1.4.4. CCA Statement on International Women’s Day 2020

6 March 2020

CCA released a statement on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2020, “Ending prejudice against women is a prerequisite for securing their fundamental rights.”

In the Statement, it was commented on the importance of the IWD 2020 theme, *An Equal World is Enabled World: Each for Equal*, and the UN women’s theme *I am generation equality: Realising women’s rights*, which emphasized the mutual duty of all humans in building a just and fair world. The CCA stated, “Asian women have always been motivated to work for renewal and restoration within the ambit of generation quality” and appreciated the leadership and restoration.

The CCA urged its member churches and councils to continue on acknowledging and accepting the equality in the leadership of both men and women at all levels and reiterated the CCA’s commitment to the gospel message of equality towards an equal and enabled world.

2. Achievements in the last year relevant to FLC practice:

CCA uses every opportunity to strengthen and promote the spirit of ICFLC in its constituencies during visits, programmes and communication through email and disseminating the ICFLC Prayer Circle. During weekly devotion with all the staff members of CCA, offerings are set aside for Fellowship of Least Coin.

CCA has made efforts to play a crucial and instrumental role in promoting education and capacity enhancement among member churches and councils in promoting gender justice, women's leadership development and ecumenical action to combat violence against children and women. Also to empower women's leadership and their full participation in all works of life in churches and societies, CCA promotes women's leadership; addresses gender inequalities; encourages empowerment for the realization of rights and dignity of women; advocates for the prevention of violence against women; and responds to the emerging concerns affecting women in Asia through various activities and programmes.

The Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly was the first major ecumenical women's gathering to affirm God's calling to renew and restore God's creation, to seek ways to rebuild the communities of justice and peace and to build up a diverse range of Asian women leaders to renew and restore the ecumenical relationship and its global network.

3. Opportunities to develop or strengthen FLC:

CCA as a regional ecumenical organization and facilitator will play its role to develop and strengthen the prayer movement of Fellowship of Least Coin by encouraging constituencies to involve in national level activities of FLC; and in popularizing the FLC movement at all levels such as Sunday schools, women and youth activities.

4. Results of use of FLC Block Grant:

The prayerful support of FLC Block Grant for CCA was used to organize national consultations on "Ecumenical Women's Action Violence", Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly and leadership development programmes for Asian women .

5. Conclusion:

ICFLC has been a committed supporter and partner of CCA Programmes especially with regard to gender justice and women concerns. In the coming year CCA will continue to play its role as facilitator of empowering its constituencies in promoting gender justice, women's leadership development and ecumenical action to combat violence against children and women.

On behalf of CCA, I would like to record my sincere gratitude for the continued support and encouragement of ICFLC for CCA. ICFLC is indeed a unique prayer movement that provides opportunity to all women to pray for each other, show solidarity and be partners in God's Mission. Thank you.



CLAI Report 2019- 2020 to the International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin

The period of 2019-2020 has been a very special time in many ways. On the one hand, CLAI has continued strengthening this model of participation and representation of CLAI in the International Committee with the collaboration of Rev. Yamina Apolinaris and Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí, member of the CLAI Volunteer Support Team, who maintain communication networks with the CLAI Executive Committee.

There was also the creation of a think-tank called Re imagination; with the task to take CLAI to a new level of relationship and work as we face tremendous challenges as well as the opportunities to shape CLAI in new ways. Being the Fellowship of the Least Coin an important partner in our ministry, our CLAI representative, Rev. Yamina Apolinaris was called to be a part of this task force as a way to bring to the table the global perspective of the women's active, creative and supportive work.

As an important basis for the work carried out in the last period, we highlight the dissemination of updated bases and forms for projects and scholarships for young women, with wide dissemination through our various networks of churches and civil society in the 20 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean where CLAI has a presence ensuring the timely application of projects and scholarships. We are also working in new guidelines and strategies to follow up on the process of applying and approving the projects, as well as accompanying them, to the process of sending reports of their realization to the ICFLC.

We are pleased with the prayers, the trust and the constant support we continually receive from the ICFLC, especially the support that manifests itself in a concrete way with human and economic resources in the face of the current situation that we live as an ecumenical body in LAC.

As for all of us, the pandemic has made us find new ways to meet, share concerns, participate in new experiences and make an effort to continue connected in the midst of great difficulties because of the limited technological resources available to women in poor suburban as well as rural communities. In Puerto Rico, we were looking forward to our time together, which had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. We trust that sometime in the near future we will be able to have you all visiting and meeting at our beautiful Country. It will be an honor to have you all here. We hope and pray for your health and wellbeing.

Grace, peace and hope in Christ Jesus,

Rev. Yamina Apolinaris, Representante CLAI ante la HMMP

Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí, Integrante Equipo Voluntario de Apoyo a CLAI

Rvdo. Jorge Daniel Zijlstra Arduin, Presidente en funciones de CLAI



Name of EO: Church Women United

Author of Report/Position: Mira J. Washington, National resident

Year : 2019

October 5, 2020

Greetings ICFLC Sisters!

Church Women United of the USA is privileged to be able to support the International Fellowship of the Least Coin. Each year we write materials for three Celebration Days, which are distributed to our Local and State Units across the country. They include World Community Day, held on the first Friday in November, May Friendship Day held on the first Friday in May, and the Human Rights Celebration held at any time during the year. A central theme runs through the Celebrations and the **2020 theme** was:

Human Rights Day – Unite to Serve

May Friendship Day – Agree to Differ

World Community Day - Resolve to Love

Due to pandemic outbreak across the global world it impacted our mission work since March 2020. Church Women United continue to adjust to a virtual environment that hasn't been easy for our organization to adopt so that we could continue our programs and initiatives. Our May Friendship Day was impacted by covid-19 and the mandate social distancing being regulated by the Center for Disease Control.

May Friendship Day always includes material about the Fellowship of the Least Coin and serves as the in gathering for the Least Coins collected by Local Units throughout the year. Each year we retell the story of Shanti Soliman's vision for peace and reconciliation. The use of creative skits enhances the telling of the story and helps women new to the movement to understand what this International Prayer Fellowship is all about. We continue to reach out to new women's groups and/or organizations to enlist their participation in FLC.

We continue to promote the sale and distribution of all FLC materials, especially the new book, "Shanti Means Peace."

Our 2020 Quadrennial Assembly scheduled in Atlanta, Georgia was postponed due to covid-19 outbreak. We hope to begin planning for our 80th Birthday celebration in 2021.

In conclusion, this has been a challenging year for our nation. In times of crisis, such as the coronavirus pandemic, it reminds us to be intentionally spiritual so that

we continue to pray and minister to the brokenhearted, oppressed and depressed people. We must be proactive in prayer!!!

Let us continue to pray for hope, strength, and healing for ourselves as well as for our families, friends, neighbors, church and nation.

Please refer to ppt for 2021 Church Women United FLC plans

Many thanks to Liza B. Lamis for her continued support and leadership.

Respectfully submitted,

Mira J Washington

Mira J. Washington
National President
Church Women United, USA

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ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN

Author of Report/Position: Martina Heinrichs, ICFLC Regional Coordinator for Europe on behalf of EFECW **Year:** 2019

In this report, we are happy to inform you about the following events and meetings that enriched, inspired and challenged us during the year of 2019, and that we hold in dear memory especially during the times of confinement and "lock-down" that we are living now:
EFECW Coordinating Committee (CC) meetings: In March 2019, we took the opportunity to have our spring meeting in Corfu alongside the French-speaking Mediterranean neighbourhood meeting. Together with our sisters, we published a statement and call to action in support of the Istanbul Convention against violence against women, which was the topic of the neighbourhood meeting. In October 2019, the CC met again in Uppsala, Sweden, for its autumn meeting, and had the honour of meeting many Swedish women ecumenists.
The Jackie Stuyt Legacy Fund supported the following events this year: The neighbourhood meeting in Corfu (March 2019); the Baltic neighbourhood meeting in Tallin, Estonia (May/June 2019); the Russian-speaking neighbourhood meeting in Yerevan, Armenia (September 2019); the conference of the European Society of Women in Theology and Religion (ESWTR) in Louvain, Belgium (September 2019), and finally the two-year project on interreligious learning in Serbia, which had its second encounter in June 2019.
EFECW was represented at the following international conferences and assemblies: Andante (April, in Romania); 10th Assembly of Religions for Peace (August, in Germany); International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) (Ghana, October); Global Program on Prevention of Son Preference and the Undervaluation of Girls (October, in Armenia).
The Financial Report 2019 closes our annual report.
Although the last year is only a few months behind us, it already seems very far away. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world completely, and we do not yet know of all the consequences that it will bring us. Let us hope that this common experience helps sharpen our view even more for the burning issues of our times, that it nourishes our passion to build solidarity among women in Europe and beyond, that it encourages us to advocate even more fervently for those who have to live in particularly fragile situations and face violence and persecution.

Evelyne Zinsstag, EFECW CC member

Spring Coordinating Committee meeting

27th February – 3rd March 2019, Corfu, Greece

The second meeting of the Coordinating Committee (CC) of EFECW was held in Corfu, Greece. This meeting was a good opportunity to the CC to continue to work together and to develop activities on different areas, as well as to join the neighbourhood meeting for Mediterranean countries organised by the Greek Forum and to share the CC message on the topic of violence against women.



Message of the EFECW Coordinating Committee at the Mediterranean Neighbourhood Meeting

The Coordinating Committee and members of the Mediterranean countries of EFECW gathered in Corfu, Greece to engage with the topic of violence against women. We reflected firstly on the theme in the Bible, with presentations by Myrto Theocharus (Professor, Greek Bible College, Athens) and Despoina Michalaga (Faculty Member, University of Athens). We then considered the current reality of women across Europe as reflected in the Istanbul Convention, presented by Maria Koutatzi (Head of Social Policy and Advocacy, Caritas Greece).

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally-binding instrument to create a comprehensive legal framework and approach to combatting violence against women.

Our call to action

The World Council of Churches released a Statement on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in November 2018 in Uppsala, which was a call for new commitments and contributions to stop, prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Reflecting on this and the presentations during our meeting:

1. We urge our members to condemn sexual and gender-based violence and any form of violence against women, children and vulnerable people; to declare such violence a sin;
2. We urge our churches and ecumenical partners to continue working with local organizations and groups in opposition to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence;

During these three very busy and enriching days, the new CC members, after sharing news from local forums and other activities undertaken by the CC since the last meeting in Vienna and being presented of different aspects of the work of the CC (including a session on finances with the presence of Treasurer Gabi Kienesberger) shared the duties and responsibilities among group members, after setting and deciding on the future activities, as follows:

1. Communication among and with the member Forum organisations of EFECW:
 - a. Next CC and National Coordinators (NC) meetings and General Assembly (GA) preparation (when and where);
 - b. New effective ways to develop "inter-forums" relations and to be well informed about each other;
 - c. Renew and re-establish contacts with all national Forum members, especially those with less contacts, through neighborhood meetings and visits;
2. The empowerment of young and active women in EFECW, by continuing to commit ourselves to the young women's strategy;
3. Larger visibility and presence of EFECW especially in churches, religious, and civil organisations both at national and European level.
4. Develop spiritual guidelines for EFECW.

Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President

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3. We support the creation of new and more effective ways for communication and collaboration among churches, and local advocacy groups on gender justice issues, for example the Thursdays in Black Campaign;
4. We urge all remaining European countries to ratify the Istanbul Convention, which focuses on preventing domestic violence, protecting victims and prosecuting accused offenders;
5. We urge all European governments to move quickly to implement the policies and practices that will enable states to enact the Convention;
6. We call for EFECW members to engage nationally on advocacy for the implementation of the Convention.

As the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women, we seek to be voices for peace and reconciliation within our churches, communities and the wider world, and we continue to pray for wisdom, peace, justice and compassion to prevail.

Autumn Coordinating Committee meeting

24th-27th October 2019, Uppsala, Sweden

The third meeting of the Coordinating Committee of EFECW was held in Uppsala. During these four days, the CC members shared news from local forums and other activities undertaken by the CC since the last meeting in Corfu and being presented of different aspects of the work of the CC (including results of two neighborhood meetings (in Estonia

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and Armenia), representations in ANDANTE, European Society of Women in Theological Research (ESWTR), Conference of European Churches, World Council of Churches, and the International Committee of Fellowship of the Least Coin, results of two working groups within the CC (Forum strategy and Safe space), discussed the planned Young women's seminar, as well as effective communication within the Forum (incl. website, social media, newsletters).

A session on finances was held by the Treasurer Gabi Kienesberger and the NC meeting 2020 in Armenia was discussed in details and tasks shared among the CC members.

The highlight of the meeting was the participation of the reputable Swedish ecumenists: Inger Lise Olsen, Adviser on gender issues for the Church of Sweden, (Nordic Ecumenical Council of Women); Joanna Lilja, Policy Advisor, Church of Sweden; Annika Lindé, Thematic Advisor, the Church of Sweden; Esther Kazen, General Secretary of the Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council; Cecilia Ralfe-Stelander, National Coordinator; Nausikaa Haupt, the Roman Catholic coordinator in the Christian Council of Sweden; Kajsa Berg and Maria Stjernedorff, Forum for ordained Women in the Church of Sweden; Maria Rengård Sivertsson, Ecumenical work in the University Church in Uppsala; Anne-Christine Lindvall, the Serbian Orthodox



French-speaking Mediterranean neighbourhood meeting

28th February – 3rd March 2019, Corfu, Greece

The 2019 Neighbourhood Meeting was held from February 28 to March 1, 2019 on the Greek island of Corfu. Hosted by the Greek Forum 32 representatives from Armenia, Austria, Cyprus, Greece, France, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Ukraine together with the EFECW Coordinating Committee, we all enjoyed the meeting in a beautiful surrounding and glorious weather. The Greek Evangelical Church of Corfu as well as the Catholic Archdiocese of Corfu collaborated in this project. The meeting's theme was from John 8:10-11 "Has no one condemned you? ...Neither do I condemn you". The keynote speakers were from the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Church and their speeches were about violence against women and the prevention and protection described in the law of the Bible and modern secular law.



During the neighbourhood meeting, participants had the unique opportunity to attend two other very important and special meetings:

Church in Sweden. Anna-Tora Martin, chair of the Uppsala Ecumenical Women's Council/Forum, Inger Jonasson, Chair for the Swedish WDP, Amanda Björksell and Hanna Lindh, Swedish Change makers. They provided a profound insight into ecumenical work in Sweden.

Natalia Horbal and Carin Gardbring, EFECW CC members

Jacqueline Stuyt Legacy (JSL) Fund Projects

*French-speaking Mediterranean neighbourhood meeting
"Damaris the Athenian", Corfu, Greece*

*Russian-speaking neighbourhood meeting
Ecumenical Forum of Women in Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia*

*"Gender, Race, Religion: De/Constructing regimes of In/Visibility"
European Society for Theological Research of Women (ESWTR), Louvain, Belgium*

*"Butterflies for peace"
Baltic neighbourhood meeting, Tallinn, Estonia*

*"When two or three are together"
Serbian Forum interreligious dialogue project (completed in 2019)*

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- The world day of prayer joining in prayer Corfu women from all denominations, and
- The 200th anniversary celebration of the Hellenic Bible Society, with speeches about the founding of the Ionian Bible Society in Corfu and a concert with music based on the Bible by Corfiot musicians. Corfu is very well known for the numerous excellent bands, orchestras and choirs as well as the great musical tradition they have.

Ersie Antoniadou, Treasurer of Greek EFCW "Damaris the Athenian"

"Butterflies for peace"

Tallinn, Estonia 29th May – 3rd June 2019

The neighbourhood meeting "Round the Baltic sea" took place for the 9th time and was organised by Pille Mägila and Lii Lilleoja. As the wonderful meeting venue, they chose the convent Piritä, one of the convents of the Swedish Brigidine Sisters.

22 women from 8 different nations (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Finland, Sweden, Scotland and Germany) took part in the meeting. Just as multi-cultural were the denominations (Methodist, Baptist, Finnish Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran and Presbyterian).

The Neighbourhood meeting took place under the biblical saying from Romans 14:19: "So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another."

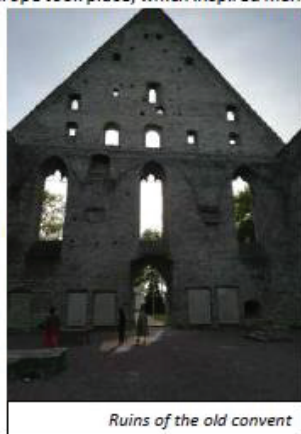
Participants prepared the morning and evening prayers. Therefore hearing the texts and prayers in different languages was very impressive.

The program was exceptionally diversified:

On the first day the topic of the bible study was introduced by Helina-Diana Helmdorf, after that we learned something about the history of the monastery and went on an excursion to the old ruins.

In the afternoon we worked with Dr. Einike Pilli on the issue "How do we find peace?" In the evening a workshop organised by the German women on the topic of peace in Europe took place, which inspired many discussions and showcased very divergent views and experiences.

On the second day, we were surprised by Holger Oidjäv's task, which really required craftsmanship. Butterflies using thread tension techniques should be designed. It was a lot of fun and inspired conversations and laughter. The colourful butterflies should symbolise networking on long and intertwined roads. Butterflies don't recognize borders and are symbols of freedom!



Ruins of the old convent

Afterwards we visited the old town festival in wonderful summer weather, before there was a cultural "farewell evening". The women from Belarus taught us the technique of traditional straw weaving. The people there are still suffering from the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe and are using art as a coping strategy.

On Monday it was time to say goodbye!

Our differences enrich us

These were touching days for all of us. Especially in the lectures of the Estonian speakers we came across our different approaches, faith practices, experiences, images of women etc. Exactly this is the precious particularity about these meetings: Our differences enrich us and this treasure has grown steadily in the course of the ongoing Neighbourhood meetings (since 1995!) and has become an important fundament for intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Europe.

Europe as a peace project is not yet an issue in the countries, not even in Sweden or Finland, but all events have sparked and stirred up discussions, a truly ecumenical fellowship was felt, we prayed together and enjoyed singing together.

The goal of getting women talking, learning about the realities of each other's lives in their contexts, taking suggestions, and working on them has been achieved, and the desire for another meeting was clearly felt. A special goal which was reached was that the Estonian women whisper translated for the Belarusian women. Russian is a language, but not equal with Russia. It is the single woman in the foreground.

In the afternoon Mari-Ann Kelam talked about peace on our continent. We learned something about her background and history from her birth in a German refugee camp to growing up in the USA.



In the evening we visited the Baptist community nearby, where we held the evening prayer.

On the third day Pia Ruotsala presented the peace process in the context to family life.

Afterwards an excursion to the Estonian Open-Air-Museum took place, where we learned a lot about the early history and life in this country.

Later on, Co-President Fiona Buchanan gave an overview on the European Coordinating Committee. She reported on the latest CC meeting of the Forum on the Greek Island Corfu.

On the fourth day (Sunday) we attended church service in a big Methodist church and enjoyed lunch together. In the afternoon we had the chance to visit the Ukrainian Centre of culture and its creative writing workshop.



The Swedish pastor Evelina Hermansson returned highly motivated, with the idea of founding an EFECW group in northern Sweden.

From Bonhoeffer's "Letters and Papers from Prison", which Pia Ruotsala presented to us, we took the following message of reflection back home: "We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or do not do, and more in the light of what they suffer".

Acknowledgements: We would like to sincerely thank particularly Waltraud Liefekett for the private donation and the many donors, the Gustav-Adolf-Werk, the Landeskirchen Braunschweig and Hannover as well as the Jaqueline-Stuyt-Legacy-Fund of EFECW, who steadily supports and encourages our organisation and its endeavours.

*The report was created jointly by women of the German group -
Mechthild Böcher
Translation from German: Agnes Kienesberger*

Russian-speaking neighbourhood meeting

20th-22nd September 2019, Yerevan, Armenia

Armenia welcomed us with sunny, warm, real summer weather. Equally warm was the neighbourhood meeting of EFECW in Yerevan. I liked



everything: interesting, informative speeches of the participants about the role of women in the formation and development of Christianity, the role of women in the church and society of Armenia, Moldova, Georgia; productive discussions; trips to monasteries; a master class on Armenian folk dolls; walk through the city; singing fountains you can watch for hours; Armenian sweets... A special impression was made by the visit to the Hor Virap monastery at the foot of the majestic Mount Ararat, where for 13 years the founder of the Armenian Church – St. Gregory – was kept. It was extremely interesting to meet and talk with the Armenian bishop!

The event was attended by the coordinators of the ecumenical forum from Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia. The theme of the meeting was "Woman and good news." The Union of Armenian Women of Georgia "Shushanik" of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Georgia in the Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women participated for the first time, so the interest in the Neighbouring Meeting of Russian-speaking forums was huge. Georgian representatives of the Catholic (Noem Tharzian) and Lutheran churches (Pastor Irina Solej) also took part in the meeting.



Yes, the Soviet Union collapsed, where all the above countries were together, created together, but after the acquisition of independence by all republics, everything went in a different way. After that, unfortunately, we do not know much about each other, except that these are Christian countries, and that people of other faiths also live here. How do they live, how do they cope with their problems, what are they happy about?

Amazing Armenian hospitality, a cosy atmosphere in which thousands of kilometres from your home, you feel at home, were stunning. To tell the truth, I had the feeling that I lived here once; in a past life. I discovered Armenia as a high-spirited, religious country inhabited by hospitable people.

For the first time participating in EFECW's neighbourhood meeting in Armenia, me and the Forum's CC from Ukraine Natalia Horbal presented Ukrainian traditions and customs, religious practices, denominations in modern Ukraine, existing temples and monasteries, as well as the role of Ukrainian women in the development of Christianity and in the struggle of Ukrainians for independence; contemporary problems of Ukrainian women in society, in particular in the conditions of the ongoing war with Russia.

We are extremely grateful to Marianna Apresyan and the participants of the Forum for the warm, inspiring meeting, unforgettable impressions and memories of sunny Armenia!

Uliana Kohut, EFECW Armenia



The Union of Armenian Women of Georgia "Shushanik" took part for the first time at the neighboring meeting of the Russian-speaking Forums of the Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women, hosted by the Armenian Forum of Christian Women.

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Taking in consideration the fact that it was a meeting of Christian women, the interest in everything was twice as strong, because in addition to the topic of our meeting "Woman and good news", at the forum we became participants and good messengers of each other, following the words of John the Baptist "Go to my brothers and say...".

Coordinators of Armenian, Ukrainian, Moldovan forums, as well as Georgian representatives talked not only about their church traditions, culture, role and activities of women in society and in the church, but also discussed the issues that women in all Christian countries face – these are some national traditions, a huge burden of women in preserving the family hearth, which they carry on their fragile shoulders, many problems not only in their families, but also in the society as a whole.

Personally for me, this meeting was fruitful, interesting and a great discovery, and I learned a lot about Moldovan Christian women, the pain that Ukrainian mothers carry within, how they struggle with the various challenges of the modern world, what their achievements are, what they rejoice, where is that universal gap that we all have to fight (contend) with, uniting around the universal Christian faith and the commandments, we have tried to understand how to help each other, so that not only our prayers, but also the demands were heard by the all-powerful men of all countries and stopped fighting each other, not accepting weapons, not dividing humanity, but uniting against various artificial and natural destructive disasters.

On the second day of our meeting there was a discussion, and all the above mentioned issues, which we discussed together, brought us all

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Russian-speaking Christian women (Armenian, Moldovan, Ukrainian, Assyrian) from Orthodox, Catholic, Apostolic, Lutheran and other churches, to one thought: we women should unite again around one goal, in the prism of the Christian faith and commandments, in order to preserve peace on earth, so that all can create and live in friendship and brotherhood, so that our children do not cry because of war, cold, famine, persecution and natural disasters. It is necessary to help each other, and not to divide the land, to unite around one idea – to preserve our long-suffering land, for having created it God said: "Love each other", and by creating the woman, He laid upon her a great responsibility, as a woman, a mother, creator and the beautiful half of humanity in order to save our planet by all means.

P. S. That's what actually the "Neighboring Meeting of Russian-speaking Forums" ecumenical forum of Christian women in Yerevan gave me.

It was also proposed to establish an ecumenical women's coordinating council in Georgia, which was welcomed by representatives from Georgia. At the end of the meeting, several topics were proposed for the following meetings. I would suggest words from the prayer that was heard at our meeting in Yerevan: "Oh God, open our hearts to love each other as You are able to love us..." And finally, I will say the wonderful words of the poet Marina Tsvetaeva from "Requiem": "I address with a demand for faith and a request for love..." People of our planet, love each other!

Gohar Mkhitarian-Mazmanian, participant from Georgia

for members to inform others what sort of research they are doing, what kind of findings they had and what issues are still in need of further investigations. People from all sort of backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities and religions gave papers.

In the afternoon, we loaded everyone on two busses and went to the Africa-museum, in which we had a seminar on post-colonial thinking, led by Bambi Ceuppens and Judith Gruber. We of course also visited the museum which has over the past years dealt with its colonial history and has reinvented itself.

In the evening, we were welcomed by the Peeters family in their lovely back-garden and celebrated the 2019 issue of our journal!

The third day we turned to our Muslim sisters and their perspective on race and racism. We also addressed the processes of sexualisation, gendering, and 'religionization' that shape our social regimes of in/visibility. It was Shirin Amir-Moazami who offered the key note lecture with Nadia Fadil formulating her response.

The last day was dedicated to Christian theology and we sought to address questions related to the ways it has shaped regimes of in/visibility through gender and race narratives. The key note lecture was given by Eske Wollrad with Elzbieta Adamiak formulating a response.

Importantly, all mornings there was a morning ritual, led by Bess Brooks, Jane McBride and Susan K. Roll. With creativity they poured out their wisdom and invited the participants to pray-fully engage with the complex issues that were ahead of us.

European Society for Theological Research of Women

12th-15th September 2019, Louvain, Belgium



About 110 women participants attended the 2019 conference in Louvain which dealt with the ambiguity of visibility and invisibility of women and the functionalisation of representative of

particular groups that are often unseen.

On the first day, the question addressed was: Which interests are behind the mechanism of power and suppression? And how does this relate to gender roles and privileges and how does hypervisibility relate to the invisibility of power and how does visibility sometimes a way of concealing other aspects? The key note lecture was given by Kristine Suna Koro and a response was given by Silvia Martinez Cano. This interaction set the tone for the conference. We could not have selected a better team!

After this good start, we had a series of committee meetings which were open to all the members so that all the members could participate in the making of the decision of our society. That is very important to us!

The next day we touched on issues in political philosophy, racism and gender, and we had a particular focus on the Jewish perspective, with Anya Topolski given the key note address and Teresa Forcades given an absolute brilliant response.

Following the key note address and response, we had created time for four parallel short paper sessions—short paper sessions are important

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To give an idea of what sort of issues were addressed in the short papers sessions, I can only give a couple of titles: Aleksandra F. Michalska talked about Reverend Stoyne – the blind seeing with (de)constructive power; Trees van Montfoort talking about The Invisibility of the non-human world; Teresa Toldy on the Myth of the caravels and the invisibility of a feminist post-colonial theology in Portugal; Olga Ruiz Morell on Presences and Absences of Women in the Didactic Texts of Classical Judaism; Silvia Lilian Ferro on Hacia una Teologia del Cuidado como etica cristiana absoluta; Zilya Khabibullina on The image of a Muslim woman in the Russian information space: Stereotypes and attempts to overcome them in Islamic media; Maria Andrea Gonzales Benassini on La In/visibilidad de las mujeres a 50 anos de la II Conferencia Latinoamericano de Medellin.

The conference had many wonderful moments: powerful rituals, challenging lectures, intense discussions, loud out laughing, and emotional super moments: I recall one Belgian nun who participated in the conference and who had lived her entire life in South America. She started talking to Maria Andrea Gonzales Benassini who had given her insights about Medellin. The two women grabbed each other's hands, tears in their eyes, recognizing each other and recognizing the importance and the value of each other's work. Then these two ladies set down and pulled out their calendar to jot down each other's email address. Just brilliant. And we all stood there and enjoyed the moment.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Kristin De Troyer

“When two or three are together”

2-year interreligious project in Serbia

The project goal was to gather Christian and Muslim women to learn about traditions, religions, fears, expectations and hope.



The first meeting was organised at a Serbian spa (Banja Vrujci) from 14th to 16th December 2018, with 30 women from Zemun, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Novi Pazar, Ljubovija and Osjek, Croatia. Our group spent nice time discussing and learning about and from each other. A Muslim (covered) business woman shared her experience. It was an interesting experience swimming together (We had to reserve the swimming pool only for our group). The 3-day discussions concluded with the following message which was published in Christian and Muslim media:

“Christian and Muslim women after a 3-day workshop, sharing knowledge, skills, experiences, and hopes have shown that learning, respecting and understanding of otherness could be a safer road that leads to prosperity and peace not only in the community to which they belong but also to the world in general.

At the conference, we specifically discussed the fact that in these modern times and globalising challenges, special attention should be paid to getting to know, respect and accept the diversity with the clear message to the faithful women, regardless of the religion they belong to, that they should be aware being the agents of change in society. Recognising motherhood as a common determinant of the identity of women, not necessarily biological, it was concluded that the training and care of society depends on the woman. Therefore, we are aware that our value-system based on empathy and prioritising peace and love among people, could be achieved by introducing interreligious dialogue and learning, which contributes to fostering a culture of peace. Active need for faith in God, opposing any form of discrimination and violence contributes to the normal coexistence, will be implemented through a series of conferences and meetings both in Christian and in Muslim communities in the Balkans, organising traditional events and workshops that will engage young people in order to spreading awareness of the ecumenical and interreligious unity as an imperative of our time.”

At the second phase, our Christian-Muslim group spent three marvelous days in a Jesuit monastery in Sarajevo. 25 women from

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Zemun, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Novi Pazar, Tutin, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Osjek, Croatia met from 21st to 23rd June 2019.



It was very interesting, for the Muslim members of our interreligious group, being in a Muslim country but meeting in a Christian monastery. So, it was sort of double learning. As a group we met people from different communities that support peace initiatives. We had promotion of the book “Path to Peace” written by Amra Pandzo, and a very challenging discussion about Islam and Feminism. Free time we spent visiting the main

Mosque, the Orthodox Church and the national park Vrelo Bosne.

We concluded our 3-day meeting with the following message which was again published in Christian and Muslim media:

In Sarajevo, in the Jesuit monastery (21-23 June 2019), was held an international women regional interfaith conference with the title: *Where are two or three together...* which was the 2nd part of the conference which started in December 2018, held in Banja Vrujci. The organiser of the conference is MAH – Time Admirer Club (Belgrade) in cooperation with the Association of Women from Islamic Community in Serbia (Novi Pazar). With the presence of representatives from the EFEK (Ecumenical Forum of European Christian, Croatia), TPO Foundation (Sarajevo, BiH), IOC (Muslim youth club, Novi Pazar) and Karuna - center

for peacebuilding (Sarajevo, BiH). This meeting is just a step in our work nurturing peace and learning about different traditions, fears and hopes in the region. The meeting was a JSL-funded project.

Participants, Christian and Muslim women, through discussions, presentations on various topics and exchange of knowledge and experience once again testified that true beauty is the beauty of the diversity of the contemporary society in this region still represents big challenge. Participants said that women should strive to preserve the dignity and through a series of such activities contribute to peaceful coexistence in the region. We will work on building bridges of lasting friendship, understanding and respect for each other. We expand our awareness, first in our local communities, and then beyond. Traces of these encounters are a testimony to the contribution to building peace.



Marijana Ajzenkol, EFECW Co-President

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EFECW representation work

ANDANTE, Study Days and General Assembly

"Women in the Church make the difference"

24th – 28th April 2019, Snagov, Romania

Andante includes 19 associations from 12 different countries. The mission of the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations is to be a Catholic women's voice and be an actor in building a living Europe that works for the common good and gives a more human face to Europe and the world. Andante works, through its networks in Europe and through local initiatives, for the just participation of women in society and in the church, and for the common good of all people. Andante encourages and empowers Catholic women in Europe to reach their full potential, both in society and in spiritual life. It brings strength and inspiration to Catholic women in their daily lives and encourages them to be active in their communities and in the church. Andante wants to be a platform for Catholic women to express their ideas, to discuss them frankly and with trust, even if they arrive at different conclusions. *"We need to establish common values across our different cultures; we should be able to respond to current and emerging issues in a way that reflects Gospel values and our experience as women. We can offer the female vision of the Common Good."*

The theme of the Study Days of Andante, held in April 2019 in the Carmelite monastery in Snagov, Romania, was "Women in the Church make the difference".

network empowers and encourages women in working together in Europe.

The mission of Andante is to work for the common good and a human-oriented Europe. The importance of women taking part in the forthcoming European elections was emphasised.

The speakers

Tina Beattie, professor of Catholic Studies and writer at the University

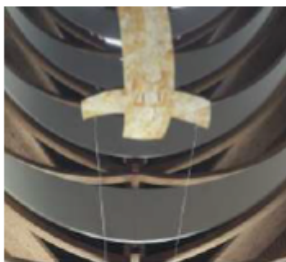


of Roehampton in London, spoke on "the Church of the Future - a home of Hope".

Boroka Béké, pastor of the Reformed Church of Romania, her lecture was on: Female Disciples - The Need and Possibility of Training Women in the Church.

Zuzannes Flisowska, general director of the "Voice of Faith", developed the theme: New Strategies for the Inclusion of Women in the Church.

60 Catholic women from 13 different European countries met for five days to discuss this subject.



Since the beginning and through the centuries women have been making a difference in the Church and in the spread of the Gospel. They have been disciples, saints, scholars and educators. Women today want the Catholic Church to become a home where all are welcome and all can flourish. A Church which looks outward and which uses the gifts of the Spirit in all its members. But many women do not feel at home in the Church. They often feel silenced, marginalised and excluded from decision-making. Women are able to use their special gifts in service in many respects, but often find themselves unable to use their expertise and experience in leadership roles within the church. Here the contribution of religious women could be most profitably employed. The appointment of a token number of women to decision-making posts is not sufficient. There needs to be a change to a more inclusive culture at all levels. We can learn from experiences in other Christian churches.

In order to impose changes in the Church, the participants of the Andante Study Days exchanged ideas for current and future activities. The diversity of cultures and spiritual traditions inside the Andante

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The different workshops focused on spirituality and the practical engagement of women in the Church:

For the first workshop a 'strong' film "Habemus Feminas: for a Church with women" was screened. In 2016, Catholic believers from German-speaking Switzerland made their way to Rome to make their voices heard. They walked 1,200 km from St. Gallen to Rome to demand greater equality of women and men in the Church. They wanted to express the hope that in the future, men will no longer think and make decisions without women. They hoped to be received by Pope Francis but were only able to hand in a letter.

The 2nd workshop moderated by theologian Dr. Angela Büchel Sladkovic was a Bible study: Lydia, an important woman in the first Church.

3rd workshop facilitated by Joanne Seldenrath: How to make a homily?

The Statutory Assembly and the elections concluded the time of the conference and reflection. Sabine Slawik was elected to form with Vroni Peterhans the new presidency. Mary McHugh was warmly thanked for her nine years of presidency.

These five days were rich in sharing and exchange, the Eastern countries still have many ways to go in terms of social assistance and education.

The stay ended with the cultural visit of Brasov, a city in the center of Romania.

More information and reports on Andante [website](#).

Anne Marie Schott, EFECW CC member

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Religions for Peace (RfP), 10th Assembly

19th-23rd August 2019, Lindau/Bodensee, Germany

Women share leadership at Religions for Peace. At the 10th Assembly of Religions for Peace (RfP), the world's largest and oldest interfaith network, in Lindau/Bodensee Germany from 19 to 23 August 2019 women became more visible than ever. In the new board they represent 37%. And the next Secretary General is a woman. This is for the first time in the history of this global peace movement which started in 1970 and grew from 39 to 125 member countries. 900 to 1000 men and women took part in the assembly titled "Caring for Our Common Future – Advancing Shared Well-Being".



Dr. Azza Karam was born in Egypt, lives in the USA, is a Dutch citizen and researcher at the Free University of Amsterdam besides several other tasks as an adviser to the UN. Her main issues are religion, development, population, women's rights.

RfP has a global and some regional Women of Faith Networks which lobbied for these results during preparatory conferences in their own region and during the women's pre-assembly which was held one day before. About 150 women from all over the world and different religious backgrounds came together. From a women's perspective they worked on the five main issues of the assembly: positive peace, preventing and transforming conflicts, promoting just and harmonious societies, working for sustainable and integral human development,

depending on her husband. "We have to deal with the patriarchal nature of all our societies. Men and women should be partners."

A delegation of women from the MENA region – Middle East and North Africa – had undertaken an impressive trip to Jordan to meet with Syrian and Iraqi refugee women and those who help them find a better life. They showed an impressive video report of this encounter – supported by RfP - in solidarity with those women, inspiring by the hopeful projects which are set up in this region.

Among the lightning talks showing concrete and practical narratives of peace making among religions was Leila Hasandedic, a young Muslim woman from post war Bosnia. Having grown up in Mostar and having lost several family members including her grandmother, she never had crossed the famous rebuilt bridge to the other part of the town. A project "Two schools under one roof" was set up after the war to overcome prejudices among Muslim and Catholic youth. A Catholic young man of this group is now one of the leading peacebuilders in Bosnia. He is the son of a colonel who is most probably responsible for the murder of Leila's grandmother. He asked for forgiveness. They started a network and became peacebuilders together.

The assembly emphasised time and again that we should not stay with beautiful words. They have to be followed by actions on different levels. Every plenary was closed with a concrete action point to which the assembly members committed themselves: reduce or stop eating meat, stop or reduce the use of plastics and paper. Don't waste water. Struggle against the injustice of the huge richness of some two thousand

protecting the earth. They emphasized the important role of women in the peace building process. Many women are activists in the urgent struggle to protect our Mother Earth, shoulder to shoulder with indigenous people. Just in the days of the assembly the rainforests in



Brasil were heavily burning. The European women met on Thursday and closed their meeting by a photo in black clothes, thus connecting to the campaign to end all violence against women "Thursdays in Black".

Important female speaker and longstanding board member of Religions for Peace is Ela Ghandi, 81 year old granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi. She grew up in South Africa and was as social worker very much involved in actions to overcome violence against women. She held a strong plea to change the beliefs around the role of women



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billionaires in the world over against the big crowd which has not enough even to survive. Talk to your governments to encourage them in creating just and fair structures. So that we can leave a sustainable world to our children and the generations to come.

You can read the entire final declaration [here](#).

The Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women EFECW is member of the RfP European Women of Faith Network. From 2013 to 2019 Martina Heinrichs (EFECW Co President 2006 – 2014) was Co President in the RfP World Council. She attended the 10th RfP Assembly together with Fiona Buchanan, currently one of the EFECW Co Presidents.

Martina Heinrichs, former Co-President EFECW



International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC)

14th – 19th October 2019, Ghana

The International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) met in Ghana, from 14th to 19th October 2019.

'Where I live, I share the land with a coco tree, a cinnamon tree and other plants. I water them. I feed the birds in my garden. Taking care of nature keeps me calm and disciplined.' These are the words of Mama Mercy Amba Oduyoye (born in 1934 when Ghana was still under colonial rule), as they call her respectfully here in Ghana. She gave the sermon during the opening ceremony of the 39th ICFLC Annual Conference, October 14th 2019 at the Abokobi Women's Training

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Center, Accra. Mercy was the first woman president of the ecumenical



Martina Heinrichs and Mercy Amba Oduyoye before the opening ceremony, Abkobi Women's Training Center

association of third world theologians EATWOT. Also she had worked at the World Council of Churches for many years. She is called one of the mothers of African feminist theologies. Today she speaks about the difference between husbanding and dominion of Mother Earth. 'Husbanding is equal, dominion is exploitive. Thanks to colonial behaviours based on the translation of Genesis 1, 26 by 'dominion', peoples and nature have been exploited and ruled over in Africa.

Most African countries have forest reserves, which are no go areas. The ancestors and elders were buried there. But now the tropical forests are burning in Brazil and some other places in the world. We should all care for them. If not, one day God will kick us out. When I was young I had to walk from Accra to Cape Coast to fetch water. The hills were green, but now they are dark and full of houses. Ghanaians depend on fish, we love it. But fishers are not interested in little fishes and leave them traumatized in the net. They will not become part of the food chain. When you are dying to give life you are part of god's plan. But when you are dying for nothing, it is a shame and a sin.' We are losing our integrity and the integrity of creation. And God depends on us to keep the integrity of creation.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye and other women, including a Muslim, founded the Centre with the name "Thalita Qumi" coming from the biblical story of the little girl rising up. 'We women empower ourselves by telling our own stories and by learning to speak up. Normally we are trained not to



Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Director of the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana. Known affectionately as the "mother of African women's theologies." A renowned theologian, educator, writer, mentor, and poet, she has worked tirelessly to address issues of poverty, health care, youth empowerment, women's rights, destructive cultural and religious practices, and global unrest.

MAMA MERCY AMBA ODUYOYE



do so, this behaviour would be considered as disrespectful.' The center is a baby of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians which has meant a lot to women. Some members got a high position in society or became a professor. It aims at doing research as well as integrating the grassroots through education. Women

from all religions and cultural backgrounds, also Muslims come to visit the courses. The work is mainly done by volunteers. Items are: migration and girl child trafficking; violence against women through language; domestic violence; women's health; HIV/aids and women; violence against women and girls connected to traditional practices; Female Genital Mutilation; Trokosi (an African traditional slave system which is still present in some rural areas and in the Volta region: girls are token for the sins of an elderly family member, an uncle for example; cross generational marriages: a young girl of ten years old has to marry an elderly man); widowhood rights (traditionally the heritage

What is FLC?

The Fellowship of the Least Coin is a worldwide women's prayer movement which started in 1957. Shanti Salomon, a woman from India, was on a peace mission together with American Presbyterian women in post war Asia. According to the biblical story of the widow who gave her least coin which was much more in the eyes of Jesus than the rich young men had given, each woman can participate by setting aside the least coin of her country every time she prays. Quickly the movement spread out through all the other continents. From the collections projects throughout the world as well as scholarships for young women and emergency grants can be given out.

The place

Our Annual Meeting is hosted at an important place of Ghana's Women's Her-Story, the Abokobi Presby Women's Training Centre which was established in 1992 by Rev. Rose Akua Ampofo (1948 – 2003). She was the first woman to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Later she moved to Switzerland to become the director of Mission 21 in Basel. The Abokobi centre is for women in particular and has the vision to foster women's fellowship and empowerment. It facilitates guest groups like us, the ICFLC, but has also an own program, targeting at women, youth, agents of the church and elderly people.

Women's studies and education in Ghana

Another highlight of the stay in Ghana was the visit to the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, one of the oldest in West Africa and the oldest in Ghana. In 1999

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goes to the man's family, so widows are poor. In some traditions they suspect her to have killed her husband. They leave her in the room with the dead body until she confesses); comprehensive sex education to prevent teenage pregnancies (when a child is hungry, she gives her body for something to eat); raising awareness trainings for the parents and the children (the elderly generation was brought up with many taboos not to discuss these things at home)... Rape and incest are important issues to tackle. Girls don't want to report because it brings shame to the family. The centre encourages them to speak out about what has happened to them. This project received an FLC grant in 2011 which helped to publish a book about Gender Based Violence.

Bible studies from the perspective of African women



Lydia Mwaniki, the African representative round the ICFLC table, led a bible study based on her PhD research "Gender and Imago Dei – a postcolonial African reading Corinthian 11:1-16." Which is a Pauline text about Christ being the head of everyone and man being the head of a woman. She should cover her head, a man ought not. This is one of the most difficult passages in the bible: Paul and women, a very complicated and controversial relationship. The context of Lydia herself: her grandparents were among the first Christians when the missionaries came. Her grandfather became an evangelist. Women had no leadership roles. The bible was used as reason why women cannot be leaders. As women they were only allowed to become deaconess, a lay ministry, not ordained. After her PhD Lydia offered

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herself for the position of bishop. But she did not even get at the point of the interviews. The elected one was a man and a student of hers. Nowadays there are three women bishops in Africa. In the constitution of the Anglican Church of Kenya there is no discrimination, nor a gender difference. In theory! Lydia researched how these difficult Pauline texts were taken up by Church Fathers and later on in the colonial Church history. When the missionaries came in 1844 to Kenya, they kept the rules of the church of England: no ordination of women. But they also did good things, e.g. acting against cruel traditional practices like the killing of twins who were seen as a bad omen and thrown in the forest to be eaten by the hyenas. The missionaries worked with men. They realised only late that women should participate. Now women rise up in Africa claiming that they are also pastors. In 1978 women could be ordained in Kenya, in 1992 in Lydia's diocese. It is a slow process. There are still less women than men. There is no woman Archbishop. There is still quite some resistance. A moratorium of five years was installed not to discuss the issue anymore. There is a postcolonial feminist approach saying that the Pauline texts have also potential. Paul has a struggle because of his culture. He was confronted with a context where women could not be equal to men.

The second issue tackled by Lydia is about widows most of them living in poverty and bad conditions. In 2 Kings, 4:1-7 there is the powerful story about a woman whose husband was a scholar of the prophet Elisha and had died. A creditor wanted to take her two sons as slaves. Elisha gives her the advice to fill jars with oil. A miracle happens, she has enough oil to start a business and become economically independent.

Like many other faith based organisations, FLC has to struggle with declining donations coming from the collections. In 2019 fewer applications were granted compared to former years. The maximum amount for a grant had to be reduced. Because of high shipping costs the bi-annually sent 'Circle of Prayer' will be only available for download on the website. Probably from next year Annual Meetings may change into Bi-Annual Conferences. And more measures were decided.

But the commitment will go on: to pray and be in solidarity with women and children around the world for the cause of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation with human beings and the whole creation!

Martina Heinrichs, ICFLC Regional Coordinator for Europe on behalf of EFECW Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women

Global program on prevention of son-preference and the undervaluing of girls

17th October, Etchmiadzin, Armenia

On October 17, in Gevorg Chorekchyan Hall of Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the WCO Armenia Round Table (ART) Foundation and the UNFPA Armenia Country Office held a workshop on "Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls in Armenia and the Church". The event was funded by the European Union in the framework of the Global Program on Prevention of Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls, implemented by UNFPA. Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President presented a project implemented by Armenian EFECW.

The AACC started an empowerment campaign for widows to support them with shelters and safe spaces in their vulnerable situation. The 23rd of June was proclaimed as International Widows' Day. In some African countries widows are not treated well. When a husband dies, they assume that the wife has killed her husband. She has to prove that she did not.

African women and slavery

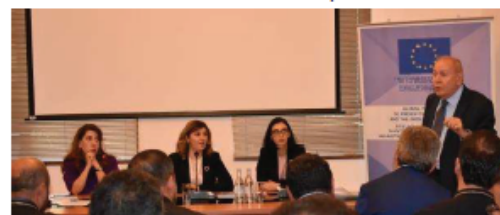
Being a country of the West African coast Ghana had to suffer enormously from slavery. The excursion of ICFLC to Cape Coast and Fort Elmina – places where captured men and women were brought to be shipped to the receiving countries - shows how this big injustice effected people's lives deprived from any dignity, becoming a number as their names have been wiped out, having to walk in chains all the way from the inner land to the coast, starving from hunger, thirst and complete exhaustion or dying in the dungeons or on the ships during the long transatlantic journey to the America's. Especially women's lives have been effected by sexual violence, by rape and forced sex slavery to the colonial white masters.



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"The Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women of Armenia five years ago started its social activity by a project 'Give Me Life' which was against sex selective abortions in Armenia. This project was financed and supported by JSL fund of EFECW and the World Council of Churches' Round Table Foundation. During our eight months project activities in different villages situated at the Armenian borders, we understood that this problem is part of our national mentality and that instead of healing the results of this problem, we should start from its origin.

In Armenian reality, the sex selective abortion has deep roots and is related with national mentality. Marriage is the foundation of family and social life which serves to ensure the reproduction of humanity. For



us Armenians, marriage is one of the most significant events that are mandatory, prestigious, and respectful, as marriage is the foundation of a new family that implies generation. The entire Armenian wedding ritual is filled with numerous religious-magical rituals dedicated to the bridegroom's reproduction.

In the past, maybe even today, in the village at the time of the boy's birth, his bed was surrounded by elderly women who used all their

magical knowledge to keep the mother and baby's lives from evil and so on. When the boy was born, all celebrated and congratulated each other, but when a girl was born, people wished patience and comfort to family members. They even wished them the next baby to be a boy.

This mentality has usually been linked to the hard and preoccupied life of Armenian women. In the past girls got married at an early age and took the whole care of family on their shoulders patiently and silently. Women could speak out and express their opinions only later in their life (50+) as mothers of a big family. This was also the reason for not wanting a baby girl. In the big Armenian family, every new girl's birth was undesirable, so in order to suspend or limit the birth of a baby girl, they gave her special names which has special meaning.

This mentality was due to the following factors:

- The boy or son considered as Armenian family keeper, he is continuing the family name; his birth is considered as happiness.
- In case of girl-birth the heritage of the family will be transferred to the husband of daughter, which is undesirable.
- The son is a working hand and supporter of the family, so stability and prosperity of the family economy are expected from son.
- The Armenian nation and families had been permanently endangered and targeted by attacks by Turkish rule, so they have seen their protection and security under the patronage of a man, meaning from the family man and son. Therefore, giving sons an advantage in our environment was also conditioned by a sense of self-protection.

In the context of sex selective abortion, I would like to draw the attention of our priests to enhancing the role of women in relying on the Bible. In the Old Testament we have numerous examples of women who, regardless of their age or social status, were chosen by God to serve His divine plan: Sarah, Deborah, Anna, Esther, Ruth, Judith, etc., as well as prophesying in the name of the Lord, Moses' sister Mary, Huldah, the wife of the prophet Isaiah. A remarkable argument for honouring a woman and raising her role is found in A Ezra 4,13-29, where Zerubbabel had spoken of women and truth: "...Gentlemen, is not the king great, and are not men many, and is not wine strong? Who is it, then, that rules them, or has the mastery over them? Is it not women? Women gave birth to the king and to every people that rules over sea and land..."

I would like to appeal our attention to the fact that when Jesus first gave his hand to Mary Magdalene and delivered her from a life of total bondage. She was an outcast in society. Jesus treated women in a manner far beyond the cultural expectation and traditions of the day, respecting them fully as persons and considering them a necessary part of his ministry.

Now, following Jesus' example, we should estimate the role of women, mothers, and daughters in the family, encourage their born, because they give birth to future heroes, intellectuals, clergy and they up bring and educate them to be a human in the society. So let increase the value of life and let change the mentality of sex discrimination and accept everyone as a creature who has the image of God.

Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President

FINANCIAL REPORT 2019

	Budget 2019	Reality 2019		Budget 2019	Reality 2019
EXPENSES			INCOME		
General			General		
CC/Working groups	€ 12.000,00	€ 7.332,05	Membership Fees	€ 7.500,00	€ 6.048,00
Accounting & Auditing	€ 2.600,00	€ 2.600,00	FLC block grant	€ 8.600,00	
Office costs	€ 400,00	€ 3,75	Ref.Ch.Bern-Jura	€ 5.400,00	€ 5.199,40
Representations	€ 2.000,00	€ 2.177,77	Donations	€ 300,00	€ 400,00
Website	€ 300,00	€ 338,00	Other income	€ 7.300,00	€ 125,25
Printings	€ 300,00				
Assistant to CC	€ 6.000,00	€ 4.500,00			
Bank charges	€ 200,00	€ 280,11			
Other costs	€ 300,00	€ 34,00			
Reservation GA 2022	€ 5.000,00				
Total expenses	€ 29.100,00	€ 17.265,68	Total income	€ 29.100,00	€ 11.772,65

Financial Report 2019 – overview

SHORT OVERVIEW		Budget 2019	Reality 2019
General	income	€ 29.100,00	€ 11.772,85
	expenses	€ 29.100,00	€ 17.265,68
	balance	€ -	€ 5.493,03

Auditors' Report

The Financial Report 2019 was prepared by EFECW ex-treasurer Hannah Golda and treasurer Gabriele Kienesberger.

Excerpt of the external auditor's report (KOBRE Wirtschaftsprüfung GmbH):

"We have conducted the audit in accordance with Austrian Standards on Auditing. In our opinion, the accounting records and financial statements comply with Austrian law and the Forum's articles of incorporation."

The Financial Report was approved by the Co-Presidents and the Co-ordinating Committee members.

PLEASE REMEMBER to support the:

Ruth Epting Fund (REF)



Every time you think of the members of EFECW, remember that with your donation to REF encourage all women to participate in the life of the Forum.

Details in: <http://www.efecw.net/Epting-Fund/>

Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC)



When you pray, have the little box ready for the least. FLC relates us European women to our sisters around the globe. Details in: www.flc.net.ph

EFECW anniversary book



You can order at: gabriele.kienesberger@gmx.net

Minimum price: 8 Euro (+postage) - Solidarity price: 12 Euro

Contact

Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women

Website: www.efecw.net

Email: info@efecw.net

Follow us on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/efecw.net/>

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Austrian EUR account number

IBAN (since May 2013): AT64 1919 0000 00269688

SWIFT Code: BSSWATWW

Account Name: Oekumenisches Forum Christlicher Frauen in Europa

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Name of EO: Middle East Council of Churches-MECC

Author of Report/Position: : Karineh Sahakian Cholakian/MECC Representative to ICFLC **Year:** 2020

As of Oct. 2019 Lebanon has gone through anti-government demonstrations, resignation of the government, economic and banking system collapse and inflation after which the covid-19 pandemic hit the country. Knowing that the country would not be able to handle the spread of the coronavirus, the newly formed government shot down the whole country beginning of March 2020. This led to more financial crisis and uncertainty. The last and worst disaster was the Beirut port explosion that shocked the country in the beginning of August. This came during the second lockdown when the numbers of coronavirus cases skyrocketed once again. This blast not only took more than 200 lives, injured more than 6,000 people, left 300,000 people homeless, dozens of schools and many hospitals dysfunctional and thousands of jobs lost, it also left many in a great despair and sorrow. However, the most touching thing the people of Lebanon experienced in the

middle of this chaos was the flow of the youth coming from all over the country to the affected area to help, to clean up, to feed and to console the broken-hearted.

Yes, as St. Paul reminds us in his second letter to the Corinthians 4:8,9 “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

We experienced God’s grace and mercy through many people, organizations and countries who reached out in the midst of this chaos.

This is a good opportunity to thank ICFLC for reaching out to the MECC and provide an Emergency Grant for Lebanon. We gratefully appreciate your support and continue to pray for justice, peace and reconciliation mostly needed in our own country.

1. Present Context/Thrust and new work of EO/Women’s Desk: (Presented by Nina Hallak)

Women are at the core of MECC Projects.

The following are women’s projects at MECC:

- Women empowerment/capacity building through life skills, communication skills, mental health

- Literacy

Livelihood:

- Vocational training: home care, soap making, make up, cooking...

- Food security

Other:

- Psychosocial support

- GBV (Gender-Based Violence)

- Parenting

- Marketing skills

- Health awareness

- Drama therapy

- Recreational activities

For the detailed reporting please visit <https://www.mecc.org/diakonia>

2. Achievements in the last year relevant to practice of FLC (new organization/group or new country where FLC is started):

Due to an unusual year in Lebanon (Revolution, Pandemic, Explosion), most of the church activities, gatherings and even worship services were cancelled starting October 2019. This situation did not help to introduce the FLC to new organizations or groups or countries.

3. Opportunities to promote or strengthen FLC:

This year FLC was promoted only through individual church leaders who contacted their members to encourage them to pray for peace, justice and reconciliation in the world while under the lockdown and collect their least coins. The offerings were sent to FLC on May 2020.

4. Results of use of FLC Block Grant:

The FLC Block Grant for 2019 has yet not been transmitted to the MECC.



Name of EO: Pacific Conference of Churches

Author of Report/Position: Tamalesi S. Makutu **Year:** 2019

Greetings from the Pacific Region. This year has been challenging to so many of us since we have all been affected by COVID 19. In Fiji, we had quite a number that came into contact with the sickness but have all fully recovered with the exception of one who could make it through.

In relation to this pandemic, many people lost their jobs, especially for the hoteliers, flight attendants, and many others. We had curfews, restrictions of travelling, borders closed within the country and even as to now with the outside world. We had a lot of places closed down during the pandemic – nightclubs, cinemas, sports, schools and churches.

But we see some advantages that was brought by COVID 19, the strengthening and bonding of families. Homes were used as places of worship. In the course of lockdown, media played a very crucial role in relating messages either by preaching, hymn singing, praying, testimonies whereby many people were able to access and were encouraged during this difficult time.

As of now, we are picking up slowly but there are still some places that has not been open yet. We are still taking precautionary measures.

ICFLC IN THE REGION

Not much has been done because the desk of Women's Animator was still vacant. But this year the post was advertised and PCC have nominated Sierra Bird who have been very much involved with Gender Equality. She is from the Solomon Islands and an advocate on this subject. And we have nominated a Woman Enabler also to work with the Women's Animator. I will attach their short CV and the work that they will engage in. Because now the position has been filled, awaiting the opening of the borders, we are looking forward to the possibility of having a Regional meeting to discuss on the way forward of ICFLC in the Pacific Churches.

It is my pleasure to introduce you to new appointments in our Secretariat to strengthen our work on Gender-based Violence and Gender Equality.

Mrs. Siera Tion Bird of the Solomon Islands has been appointed as the Ecumenical Animator for the Just and Safe Pacific Communities of Women and Men programme, which as part of PCC's commitment to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. The role, in partnership with SPATS will also include coordinating the WEAVERS programme.

Siera is has extensive experience designing, planning and facilitating materials and workshops for churches and church communities on gender equality, peace-building, health and safe families, child protection & care and gender-based violence. Previously, Siera was responsible for Implementing Gender Equality Theology and

Child Protection & Care Theology' within United Church in Solomon Islands, also working closely with the Solomon Islands Christian Association.

Siera holds a Bachelor in Theology degree from the Pacific Theological College, as well as Undergraduate Certificates in Peace-building and Social Analysis.

Siera will be a valuable asset for the Pacific Conference of Churches, helping women and men in our churches and communities through-out our region to be just, safe and to enjoy the abundant of life that God intended. She has begun work and will be based out of the Solomon Islands until borders open.

Ms. Mereani Nawadra of Fiji has been appointed as Ecumenical Enabler for the for the Just and Safe Pacific Communities of Women and Men programme, to assist Mrs. Bird. Mereani has just completed her term with the Methodist Church in Fiji's Women's Fellowship Department as their Project Officer for the Gender Equality Theology Institutional Transformation: Women's Dignity and Safety Project. She is experienced on wide range of gender equality issues including updates from regional partners/churches and rural Fiji with reflections of the biblical theology which respect all human dignity and human rights.

Wishing the best in this ICFLC Annual Meeting 2020.

Tamalesi S. Makutu
PCC Representative

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Name of EO: The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada **Author of Report/Position:** Awit Marcelino, WICC's ICFLC Representative **Year:** 2019

The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) is the only national ecumenical women's organization in Canada. It was founded in 1918 and its council is made up of representatives from 10 church partners: Canadian Baptist Ministries, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, United Church of Canada, Society of Friends (Quakers), Mennonite Central Committee, the Salvation Army, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada.

WICC's vision is to restore hope to women touched by injustice. Its mission is to empower Christian women to pursue justice, peace, and reconciliation by standing together in prayer and in action. WICC's main activities are to promote the work of World Day of Prayer (WDP) and the Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC) in Canada by

producing and distributing materials, and coordinating with organizers and volunteers across the country.

In the past year, in addition to least coin offerings from FLC groups, WICC received an online donation designated for the FLC. A Canadian woman made a donation in memory of her sister on her 1 year death anniversary. Her sister had never been part of an FLC group but, throughout her life, she was a strong supporter of women. Also, for many years, she worked in a transition house for battered women and children. The woman wanted to honour the way her sister lived and what she believed in. Although this isn't a least coin offering, it's still a gift from the heart that can support and uphold women's and children's dignity and rights.

Since my term at WICC will be ending next year, this will be my final report and last ICFLC annual meeting with you. For the last 5 years, it has been humbling to be at the ICFLC table with such strong women of faith. May God be with you as you continue to work together on Shanti's vision of peace, justice, and reconciliation for all.

Your sister,

Awit Marcelino



**World Council
of Churches**

Name of EO: World Council of Churches

Author of Report/Position Isabel Apawo Phiri,

Deputy General Secretary

Year: 2019-2020

1. Present Context/Thrust and new work of EO/Women's Desk:

Ecumenical Advocacy for Gender Justice –

- The WCC Gender Advisory Group (GAG) completed its proposed Gender Justice Policy and awaits the new meeting of the Executive and Central Committees for its adoption within WCC.
- With the completion of the policy, the Human Resources unit has been more intentional about mobilizing resources to ensure the practical outworking from a staff perspective.
- The WCC continues to be represented at the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women meetings in New York each March

Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) – The Thursdays in Black campaign for a “world without rape and violence”, continues to be adopted by more and more churches and ecumenical partners. Activities included:

- Meeting with the Botswana Council of Churches in July to speak to matters of GBV

- Attending the ELCA Thursdays in Black launch at the August Church-wide Gathering
- In December 2019, the Just Community of Women and Men hosted a solidarity pilgrim team visit to Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa in response to the rising cases of femicide and overt acts of violence against women in the country.

Collaboration with other Ecumenical organizations/networks

- Collaboration with the YWCA resulted in WCC's Just Community of Women and Men inclusion in worship planning for the November 2019 World Council in Johannesburg.
- WCC attended the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly in Taiwan to strengthen relationships and in solidarity with Asian women's networks.
- Human Rights Training – 50 participants from around the world were trained in November 2019 in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Mission 21, Swedish Church Aid, Finn Church Aid and others.
- Orthodox women's consultation in Albania

2. Achievements in the last year relevant to practice of FLC (new organization/group or new country where FLC is started):

The WCC has continued in interacting with member churches, ecumenical partners, regional organizations and persons of goodwill. Among the achievements of 2019 are

- Valentine's Day Thursdays in Black campaign
- Participation through presentation on Thursdays in Black at the Kirchentag in Dortmund, Germany
- WCC was awarded for its support of, and participation in the work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians at the awards ceremony in Botswana, July 2019.
- Connection with persons at grassroots to effect transformation via Thursdays in Black Campaign
- Connection with ecumenical partners for 16 Days of Activism campaign
- Inclusions of prayers for less fortunate on fourth Wednesdays in the midday chapel prayers (prior to Covid-19)

3. Opportunities to promote or strengthen FLC:

Reference to FLC in the Wednesday prayers

Inclusion in reports to WCC

Additionally, under the leadership of Nicqi Ashwood, the following areas were the main focus of the JCWM in 2019:

- Centering the experience of women in the WCC (T301)
- Women's experience of home, church, and community (T302)
- Sexual and Gender Based Violence (T303)

4. Results of use of FLC Block Grant:

The block grant provided by the FLC, along with its project grant support, helps to achieve the overall work of the JCWM with regard to key areas:

- Advocacy and policy development – particularly within work of Gender Advisory Group in finalizing the Gender Justice Policy.

- Human Rights Training – 50 participants from around the world were trained in November 2019 in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Mission 21, Swedish Church Aid, Finn Church Aid and others.
- Orthodox women’s consultation in Albania
- SGBV resistance – in 2019 Thursdays in Black was adopted by the ELCA and a recommitment made by UCC (USA) along with participation at the German Kirchentag in Dortmund.
- PTV plans and collaboration with ecumenical partners in Africa and Asia.

(The complete 2019 narrative report is available upon request)

Conclusion:

The WCC and particularly, the JCWM, is grateful for the leadership the ICFLC and vision of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, particularly for its commitment to gender justice and its support of women’s peace building movements. The FLC is an important partner on the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

Though much progress has been made toward gender justice, it is important to continue developing a holistic vision and approach to building intergenerational just communities of women and men. Plans are underway to effect this among: (a) church leaders, (b) church groups, (c) theological networks (d) ecumenical leaders and (e) women and youth on the margins of the church and society and (f) from churches which are on the margins, especially during the challenging season of COVID-19 and physical distancing.

We remain thankful to God for sustaining our common vision and cooperation in building a just community of women and men and for equipping us as disciples, individually and collectively, for the continued transformation of the world.



Name of EO: World Day of Prayer International Committee
Author of Report/Position ROSÂNGELA OLIVEIRA, Executive Director
Year: 2020

1. Present Context/Thrust and new work of EO/Women’s Desk:

The WDPIC office started the conversations to organize the writing process with the committees selected at the International Meeting in 2017, in Brazil. As the process starts way ahead of the year of the celebration, 2019 was the time to reach out to two of the selected committees: Taiwan, WDP 2023 and Palestine, WDP 2024. Thus, in December of 2019, WDPIC Chairperson, Laurence Gangloff, went to Jerusalem and WDPIC Executive Director, Rosângela Oliveira, went to Taiwan.

The Strengthening National Committee Workshop in Taiwan gathered more than 30 participants. Through various creative activities and dialogue, the three-day workshop

aimed to strengthen fellowship, build relationships, and brainstorm on the worship service materials for WDP 2023.

As all travel and in-person gatherings were canceled after March 2020, the two major workshops related to the writing of the materials were replaced by Zoom meetings. WDPIC had planned the writer committee workshop with WDP Taiwan in April 2020, and a Strengthening National Committee Workshop with WDP Palestine.

We had started a very enthusiastic year with the 2020 program written by WDP Zimbabwe. The action oriented theme 'Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk' was a great theme for the context of women in Zimbabwe. However, the Coronavirus outbreak declared by WHO on March 11, 2020, cut short WDP plans around the world. Programs organized for after March 11, were cancelled, including in Zimbabwe, as the countries started to shutdown to slow the spread of the virus.

We held a series of Zoom conversations with committees around the world. The vulnerable situation of women during the pandemic was noticed. Families were separated by the lockdown, curfews and closed borders; unemployment, hunger, and domestic violence against women increased. There is shortage of medications and treatments in overflowed public hospitals with COVID-19 patients. In the USA, Democratic Republic of Congo and Brazil, the denial of the health crisis exposed the population to the uncontrolled virus transmission. Jyothi Singh, WDP India, talked about the concern with the rural communities who do not have easy access to the internet to engage in online initiatives. Also, in Costa Rica, Rebeca Cascante commented on how the priority is being given to family members who work from home to use the internet rather than women who want to connect with their community activities.

There is real pain in the communities with the death of loved ones; an intense feeling of powerlessness to fight the disease and all its consequences. However, there is also strength in being united in prayer. There is trust in God, the sustainer of all times. We lift up in prayers the families and communities who are mourning. May God heal our body and soul.

2.Achievements in the last year relevant to the practice of FLC (new organization/group or new country where FLC is started):

We do not have a particular initiative to report in terms of organizing FLC in new countries. What we consider relevant to the practice of FLC to report is in the realm of our common ecumenical efforts to empower women and bring peace to the communities.

In that sense, it has been really inspiring to learn about the ecumenical efforts of women in the midst of so much disruption and anxiety caused by the pandemic. WDP leaders are committed to carrying on a message of hope and being present during this difficult moment. There are local initiatives emerging like sewing face masks for essential workers or communities in need, educating about the precautionary measures over the radio, sharing food and other vital supplies, following up with each other, praying or mourning together over mobile chats, and having Zoom conversations to continue the organizing work in the communities.

Every year, we learn about the context of women living in situations of violence. This year we listened about women in Zimbabwe, next year we will hear about women in Vanuatu. "Gender-based violence is a serious issue affecting women and girls.

Approximately 60% of women in Vanuatu have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence in their lives, of which 21% were left with permanent injuries. The Family Protection Act is the legal framework that protects and supports women in cases of domestic violence.” (WDP Vanuatu - Country Background)

We join FLC in the promotion of the Thursdays in Black Campaign through our social media. On our Facebook and Instagram we either post photos of WDP members or we re-post WCC campaign materials. WDP France and WDPIC will send squares to contribute to the Waterfall of Solidarity and Resistance.

3.Opportunities to promote or strengthen FLC:

WDP, joined FLC at the panel Towards Revitalizing Ecumenical Movement and Role of Asian Ecumenical Women’s Organisation, at the Asian Women’s Ecumenical Assembly in Taiwan, organized by the Christian Conference of Churches. Moumita Biswas, who represented WDP at the panel, highlighted the Asian countries that have been the focus of the WDP annual celebration, and the connection of prayer and action with its rippling effects on the situation of Asian women.

During the pandemic, we started to post a prayer on Friday under the hashtag #WDPUnitedInPrayer. We are collecting prayers from WDP members and ecumenical partners. We will join ICFLC in prayers for the Annual Meeting through posting a prayer from the Circle of Prayer 25 on Friday October 9th and a reflection on the WDPIC website, linked with the FLC website, on Monday 12th.

Results of use of FLC Block Grant:

FLC Block Grant is used to support the international coordination of WDPIC and participation at the ICFLC annual meeting. The last grant received was used to cover the expenses of the Executive Committee Meeting in New York in the summer of 2019 and the travel cost to the FLC meeting in Ghana.

Conclusion:

We appreciate the opportunity to sit at this table of ecumenical partners. “Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk”, is an action-oriented healing message for this time of uncertainty. We believe in God, the healer of us all, in Jesus who meets us in our anxiety, and the Holy Spirit, who give us power to fight the injustices exposed in this time of the pandemic.

Note: The photos will be introduced by Laurence Gangloff via a power point oral presentation.

Grant Report (It is the same of 2019, as there is no income and expenses to report for 2020)

Grant	Purpose	Received	Expenses	Complemented by WDPIC	Details
Block Grant 2018	Executive Committee Meeting, NY, July 28-	\$10,000 Dec 2018	\$ 29,486 Aug 2019	(\$19,486)	Travel, room and board

	August 3, 2019				
Air ticket	ICFLC Meeting, Ghana, October 2019	\$ 455.27 Aug 2019	\$ 903.50 Aug 2019	<i>(\$448.23)</i>	International travel ticket
		\$10,455.27	\$ 30,389.50	<i>(19,934.23)</i>	

Report made by Rosangela Oliveira, WDPIC Executive
Director. Sep 16, 2020



2021 FLC GRANT PROJECTS

AFRICA

- 1. Dzitukule Project, Malawi, US\$ 3,200.00**
To empower vulnerable women and girls while positively responding to Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2. Combating Violence Against Women, Togo, US\$ 3,200.00**
To raise public awareness on the issue of violence against women and girls.
- 3. Kuseniseni Farming Solution, Zambia, US\$ 3,200.00**
To help prevent teenage pregnancy and for the empowerment of girls.

ASIA

- 1) Advancing women migrants' agenda in Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration/Global Compact on Migrants (GCM) and their aspiration for a post-pandemic situation, Hong Kong, Australia and the Philippines, US\$ 3,200**
To promote women migrants' voice in the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration or GCM review process amidst the pandemic crisis and their aspiration for a better post-pandemic situation through sharing of stories, holding national consultations/dialogue; developing advocacy and lobbying materials for women migrants during the GCM process review.
- 2) Ecumenical Women Leadership in Myanmar, Myanmar, US\$ 3,200**
To mark the 50th year milestone through a consultation on the role of women in the Ecumenical movement of Myanmar now and in the future.
- 3) Have fun with the dishes of the Women's Shelter!, Japan, US\$ 3,200.00**
To enhance the tableware and healthy food served at the Japan Women's Protection Long-Term Admission Facility, Kanita Fujin no Mura, that provide shelter and healing for women survivors of domestic violence and sexual damage.
- 4) Sleep Bus Canberra, Australia, US\$ 3,200.00**
To assist with the on-going maintenance of the SleepBus which provides shelter and accommodation for women in crisis in Canberra.
- 5) Advocacy Training for Church Women on the Rights of Women in Pakistan, Diocese of**

Multan, Pakistan Women Literacy/Educational Programme, Pakistan, US\$ 3,200.00

To educate women on their rights as guaranteed by constitution of Pakistan and on women protection measures and mechanisms available in the system; and to build the capacity of Christian women as advocates addressing issues of gender-based violence in church and society.

6) National Training on Women Leadership Development: “Women Rising for Justice and Dignity”, Cambodia, US\$ 3,200.00

To develop and strengthen women leadership in the church and society, and provide women leaders the opportunities to raise their voices to address violence against women and for gender justice.

7) National Training for Women Church Leaders on ‘Tools to Combat and Prevent Trafficking of Women and Children in Nepal’, Nepal, US\$ 3,200.00

To create awareness on trafficking of women and children, and to build the advocacy capacity of Christian women to address human trafficking of women and children and prevention of violence.

EUROPE

1) Summer Camp for mothers and children from poor families affected by the earthquake, Albania, US\$ 3,200.00

To help children who are living in poor rural areas cope with the after-effects and trauma from the earthquake; and to help the children’s mothers to learn skills how to speak out, solve problems in daily life, to fight for their rights, and take care of themselves and the community.

2) Children and Emotions 2, Slovenia, US\$ 3,200.00

To acquaint Roma children with emotions, behavior in certain emotions and situations, what is socially acceptable and desirable, to encourage empathy for the emotions of others.

LATIN AMERICA

1) Mujeres Hilando Historias (Women Spinning Stories), Argentina, US\$ 3,200.00

To strengthen the productivity of the developing textile entrepreneurship managed by women for their economic empowerment, while producing materials and resources needed for health workers.

2) Women Cooking, Argentina, US\$ 3,200.00

To train women survivors of sexual abuse in micro-cooking ventures towards their economic self-reliance and empowerment.

3) Women with Wings, Cuba, US\$ 3,200.00

To provide women an ecumenical and safe space for reflection and empowerment for conflict mediation, action for peace and healthy interpersonal relationships, with emphasis on self-care

and self-assessment.

- 4) **Sembradoras de Esperanza (Sowers of Hope Masaya), Nicaragua, US\$ 3,200.00**
To provide biblical-theological formation and empowerment courses for women in the churches on self-care, building sisterhood and alliances, and entrepreneurship.
- 5) **Holistic Spirituality, Puerto Rico, US\$ 3,200.00**
To provide lay leaders and pastors from impoverished areas the skills to analyze the socio-economic and spiritual challenges in the midst of the social crisis in Puerto Rico.
- 6) **Juntas Creamos, Juntas Celebramos (Together We Create, Together We Celebrate), Chile, US\$ 3,200.00**
To offer a space of self-care and leisure to women leaders and activists to help nourish and strengthen their wellbeing, as they develop and provide support and sustainability to diverse networks working for social transformation.

PACIFIC

- 1) **Combat HIV and AIDS Stigma and Discrimination, Papua New Guinea, US\$ 3,200.00**
To build community awareness to help stop stigma and discrimination against women and girls and people living with HIV and Aids, including victims and survivors of violence.
- 2) **Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, Papua New Guinea, US\$3,200.00**
To raise awareness in communities among women and girls, men and boys towards changing attitudes and behavior to women; and to work with other groups that advocate and promote women and girls rights and issues.

WCC

- 1) **CAMARADA, centre d'accueil, de formation et d'intégration professionnelle (Welcome Center for Education, Training and Professional Integration), Switzerland, US\$3,200.00**
To facilitate the social integration of migrant and refugee women through the development of specific skills (gardening, sewing) and in the process enhance their French language skill, tailoring this to the contexts of gardening and sewing, and through sharing of stories, experiences and knowledge from their respective countries.

CANADA

- 1) **Indigenous Parenting After Violence (I-PAV), Canada, US\$1,500**

To provide parenting and family literacy education to Indigenous mothers who have been impacted by domestic violence through the Indigenous Parenting After Violence (I-PAV) program, which was developed in consultation and feedback from Elders and Indigenous communities and learners. The program incorporates culture, tradition and the support of Elders and community leaders.



ICFLC APPROVED BUDGET JULY 2020 TO JUNE 2021

Block Grants	87,000.00
Project Grants	68,700.00
Young Women Scholarship Award	4,000.00
Bursary for Older Women	1,000.00
Emergency Grants	10,000.00
Annual Meetings	500. 00
PH Office Administration	15,000.00
Circle of Prayer Booklet	2,500.00
Wire transfer & ATM fees	2,500.00
Administrative expenses	150.00
Salary, Executive Secretary	25,765.00
Pension, Executive Secretary	2,150.00
Treasurer's Honorarium	2,000.00
TOTAL	\$ 221,265.00



THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN (FLC)

WHAT IS THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN?

The Fellowship of the Least Coin is a global ecumenical women's movement of prayer for peace, justice and reconciliation. Through this movement women around the world seek fellowship with each other and are reminded to live a reconciled and forgiving life with others.

HOW AND WHEN IT BEGAN

The idea for the Fellowship of the Least Coin emerged as a vision from God to **Mrs. Shanti Solomon** of India. She was part of the Pacific Mission Team of seven women from different countries that traveled in Asian countries after World War II, in September 1956. The Pacific Mission Team was organized by Dr. Margaret Shannon on behalf of the women of the Presbyterian Church of the USA. Shanti Solomon, who was refused a visa to Korea, went to Manila in the Philippines while other members of the team proceeded to Korea. She reflected on the experiences of their travel in the war-torn countries of Asia and was inspired to promote justice, peace and reconciliation.

On the return of the team, Shanti suggested that prayer could transcend every national boundary. She challenged the Christian women of Asia and the women from the Presbyterian Church USA to combine their efforts and resources and launch a project of justice, peace and reconciliation on an international level. It was to be a project of Christian prayer and positive action in which every Christian woman could participate, no matter what her economic position was. Every time a woman prayed she was to set aside a "least coin" of her currency. It was an encouragement to the women of the team to demonstrate their unity in Christian faith, regardless of their country or economic circumstances. They all accepted it as their sincere desire to express their solidarity with suffering humanity and with women of every nation.

In 1958, at the first Assembly of the Asian Church Women's Conference (ACWC) held in Hong Kong, the ACWC agreed to launch the Fellowship of the Least Coin. The second ACWC Assembly in Thailand in 1962 voted to make the promotion

of the FLC a basic outreach programme of the ACWC. *Regarding funds allocation, it was decided that the World Council of Churches (WCC) would be better placed to disburse the monies that had to be credited around the world.* The East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), now known as the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) administered the FLC fund from 1958 to 1970. In

1970 Mrs. Shanti Solomon, the founder, was named the Executive Secretary of the FLC and of the ACWC. From then on ACWC took the responsibility to administer the FLC Fund.

THE FLC LOGO



The idea for the FLC logo came from the late Mrs. Rayann Ma from Hong Kong, the first Chairperson of the first Assembly of the ACWC. The actual design was the gift of her brother-in-law, James Ma, a commercial artist. It is folded hands in prayer, encircling a small plum flower, and which form a lotus flower. Lotus plant grows in the muddy pond but its flower rises above the murky water and opens beautifully and without blemish, fit as offering to God. As the movement has grown global, the praying hands are now in different colors of the races.

CIRCLE OF PRAYER

Feeling the need to reaffirm prayer as the vital element of the FLC, the ACWC asked the women of Hong Kong to prepare a booklet of prayer: “Circle of Prayer” to be used as prayer is offered and the least coin is set aside. Since then, the “Circle of Prayer” has become an important part of the FLC. Twenty to twenty-four meditations and prayers are written by women around the world and published by the International Committee for the FLC every two years.

IT'S GROWTH

The idea of the FLC quickly gained acceptance not only among the women of Asia to whom it was first presented, but among women of all the continents in the world. In 1966 when the FLC celebrated its 10th anniversary, women from 24 countries participated in the movement. By 1980, at the time of its Silver Jubilee, women from 75 countries had already joined the FLC. In 1986, women from over 80 countries around the world celebrated the 40th anniversary of the FLC; and in 2006, its Jubilee Anniversary.



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE FLC (ICFLC)

Because the FLC prayer movement became truly worldwide and the grants were made to the programmes and projects all over the world, an International Committee for the FLC (ICFLC) was formed in 1979 to administer the promotion, the interpretation of the movement and the allocation of the FLC grants. The International Committee comprises representatives of worldwide ecumenical women's organization and of regional ecumenical Conferences/Councils of the Churches. The ICFLC decides what programmes and projects are to be funded each year. Year after year the ICFLC learns to trust God more and more and to work in faith. The Committee meets every year to share the miraculous work of the FLC around the world and to decide on FLC grants for the following year. Application forms for project grants are received four months prior to the meeting. The members of the Committee study the application forms, pray about them, and discuss and decide on each project without knowing how much FLC funding will be available for the grants they wish to allocate for each year. The least coin offerings from around the world come in with prayers, quietly and gradually, to meet the needs for each year. Our gentle, loving and compassionate God never fails us. God does great work through the humble, the least, the marginalized and the poor. That's the strength, the promise, the beauty, and the surprise upholding the FLC prayer movement.

Every year ICFLC is invited by different regions to hold its meeting in their country. An exposure and a visitation programme is added to the regular business meeting in order for the representatives to know more about the region and to be aware of the issues and the concerns of the people there. The ICFLC considers linking its meeting every 4th year with the Quadrennial Assembly of the ACWC.

FLC GRANTS

Each year about 20 to 25 projects are supported from around the world through the **Project Grants**. Regional ecumenical organizations women's programme, the World Council of Churches Just Community of Women and Men, and the World Day of Prayer International Committee (WDPIC) are given **Block Grants** to enhance their work and to strengthen ecumenical solidarity. **Emergency Grants** for disaster relief and rehabilitation are given to show loving concern to disaster-stricken countries. Two scholarship grants are given



to women: the **Scholarship Award for Young Women (SAYW)**, and the **Bursary for Older Women (BOW)**.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE FLC

The FLC Prayer Movement is simple, yet significant and unique.

- 1) It brings Christian women together in a fellowship of prayer without any discrimination of race, nationality, culture or denomination. The Christian women of the world are in solidarity with each other through their common concern and love for humankind and creation. Women throughout the world are bound together in both giving and receiving.
- 2) The offering is unique because all, whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, urban or rural women, give only the smallest coin of their currency. All are within the same discipline and share the common concerns of women around the world.
- 3) It is stewardship, both of the idea as well as of the Fund. These least coins, when put together, become a large amount in the same way individual prayers offered by many members throughout the world become a strong force in bringing about reconciliation, peace and justice.

The uniqueness of the Fellowship in prayer, which binds us together in both giving and receiving, teaches us to appreciate differences; to understand and forgive one another; and to live and work together inter-dependently as equal partners. The Least Coin teaches us to be humble, to value the least and to trust that nothing is impossible for God who can do great things from out of the least and the unexpected.

Our concern and yearning for peace in a wounded and broken world, which moves us to spontaneously pray and give, becomes a powerful healing source for our own pain as well as for the pain of those whose lives have been touched by our prayers and gifts.

The inclusiveness of the Fellowship, which embraces us in a simple, yet profound act of prayer accompanied by a gift of love – the “least coin” – encourages wider participation and provides resources for making justice and peace and restoring broken relationships.

The God who promises to be with us always provides for our needs and never fails to love, to guide and protect us.



YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

with Christian Women, Men, Youth and Children
of every continent in the

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN

THE BASES OF BELONGING

are concern for justice, peace and reconciliation; and
intercession for those in special need of God's grace.

THE TOKEN OF PARTICIPATION

is a "**Least Coin**" offering set aside whenever prayer is offered and contributed annually to a common Fund which is given in the name of Christian women without identification of its original source. This fund is used as "**gifts of love**" for ministries of mercy on every continent; for experiences which creates Christian community among those of different national, racial, cultural, economic and denominational backgrounds.

The least coins are tangible token of our prayers offered individually and collectively. Those contributions - Gifts of Love - however small or large, may be sent in the name of the **FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN** to:

Name of Beneficiary:

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Inc.

Address of Beneficiary: **P. O. Box 643652, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3652 USA**

BANK DETAILS:

Bank Name: **PNC**

Bank Address: **249 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 USA**

Tel. Nos.: **+1-877-287-2654**

Routing number: **083000108**

SWIFT code: **PNCCUS33**

Account Number: **3009084582**

Name of Account Holder:



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A., INC.)

FOR CHEQUES, please make in the name of:

Name of Beneficiary:

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Inc

Address of Beneficiary: **P. O. Box 643652, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3652 USA**

Remember to make a note the payment/cheque is intended for the FLC, by email:

Mary Martin, ICFLC Treasurer

Email: marymckeemartin@outlook.com; copy to: icflcph@gmail.com



Fellowship of the Least Coin