



Association of World Council of Churches related  
Development Organisations in Europe

## **APRODEV Policy Reference Document on Gender Towards shared gender principles in APRODEV <sup>1</sup>**

### **APRODEV context**

In policy or mission statements <sup>2</sup>, APRODEV agencies have committed themselves to gender equality as a priority and cross-cutting theme. They have expressed this commitment by providing financial support to the GOOD process, which aims at strengthening the integration of gender perspectives in the work of the APRODEV family. The assessment of gender policies and practices in the APRODEV agencies, as presented to the AM 2001, recognises that progress on gender equality in policies and practices within APRODEV is a complex and lengthy process and necessitates further political willingness to reduce gender gaps and inequalities in our work and our workplace. The findings of the evaluation reports on GOOD Phase II (2000) and Phase III (2002) have identified needs in the APRODEV agencies and the secretariat, which are presented in the recommendations made by the Gender Reference Group in its meeting on 5-6 March 2002 and endorsed by the PAG at its meeting on 20-21 March 2002.

The following document takes account of the recommendations of the Annual Meeting 2001, which discussed the APRODEV Policy Reference Document on Gender, and asked for a revised version to be presented to the Annual Meeting in 2002.

### **Purpose of this document**

As we are approaching the end of Phase III of the GOOD project (in March 2003), it is good to take stock of the lessons we have learned, to consolidate the results of more than 10 years of work on issues related to gender and development, and to formulate the basis for continued work in this area in the future.

To this effect, this APRODEV Policy Reference Document on Gender:

- Proposes a set of common goals and objectives, which is based on the shared views and principles on gender equality within the APRODEV agencies
- Provides an opportunity to present a joint commitment to future work in the field of gender equality
- Outlines a coherent approach in lobbying and advocacy activities as well as in gender dialogue with partner organisations
- Addresses questions of resources, expected results and conditions for effective implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Unanimously endorsed at APRODEV Annual Meeting, 3-5 June 2002, Bad Honnef (Ref: P-AM02.09).

<sup>2</sup> See Background Document: Comparative analysis of gender policies and practice in APRODEV agencies, presented to the Annual Meeting 2001

### **A common ecumenical concern**

APRODEV agencies will seek to engage with their partners in the struggle for justice with equality, peace, and respect for God's creation via gender-sensitive development and related policies, seeking to create space to listen to women's and men's unheard voices. This common concern is reflected in the (draft) Strategic Plan, which states: "APRODEV believes that all human beings are created in the image of God. In their work with and alongside the poor, they seek to underline the equal value of all human beings, irrespective of race, colour, sex, creed, national, ethnic or political affiliation".<sup>3</sup>

Similar statements have been made by other ecumenical bodies and gatherings, for example, the meeting on the ecumenical sharing of resources, which was held in El Escorial, 1987, said: "A fundamental prerequisite for equal and non-hierarchical relations is the independence and self-determination of all people involved". Attention should go to measures that "conscientize women of their rights and potential in their own societies and provide leadership- and skills training for women".<sup>4</sup>

Another example can be quoted from the Ecumenical Assembly on Peace with Justice in Basel 1989, which stated: "The oppression of women and violation of women's rights have been overlooked to an alarming degree. Women are marginalized and excluded from decision-making structures. Sexism is a contributing factor of the global crisis. The term 'feminisation of poverty' clearly expresses the way in which the cost is unfairly distributed. For women in the South, at the edge of subsistence, this is literally a matter of life and death"<sup>5</sup>.

### **European Union context**

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1998, art.3 paragraph 2) identifies gender mainstreaming as a general competence of the European Union, and the Union has a duty to promote equality between men and women, and work towards eliminating inequalities between men and women in all its activities. Gender mainstreaming is also designated as a principle of Community and Member States' development policy<sup>6</sup>. In its Programme for Action on gender mainstreaming in development policies (2001-2006)<sup>7</sup>, the Commission acknowledges the fact of 'gender policy evaporation' and provides an indicative timetable for effective implementation including annual reporting on progress made.

### **Common principles**

On the basis of an analysis of policy documents and mission statements of APRODEV agencies, and taking account of the joint work of the agencies in the work of GOOD, the following commonly shared principles can be identified:

A. Poor people are not a homogenous group but are divided, inter alia by gender, social and ethnic lines, religion, race, age, marital status, disabilities. Poverty is a multi-dimensional problem and a result of mutually reinforcing factors, which increase marginalisation and

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<sup>3</sup> Draft APRODEV Strategic Plan, p.3 March 2002

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for Sharing, results of the Conference on Sharing Life in a World Community, El Escorial, 1987

<sup>5</sup> Final document of the European Ecumenical Assembly Peace with Justice, Basel 1989, in epd Dokumentation, no. 24/89, p.5

<sup>6</sup> COM(2000) 212 final of 26.4.2000

<sup>7</sup> COM(2001) 295 final of 21.6.2001

vulnerability, such as lack of control over and access to property, resources and services and a lack of involvement in decision-making and effective and responsible stewardship.

B. No aid is neutral with regard to gender. Women make up a large majority of the poor and possibilities for the poor to improve their situation and to gain more self-reliance differ for women and men, for girls and boys. Women are exposed to various types of violence and discrimination, and lack the same opportunities and rights as men. Eradication of poverty cannot be achieved without addressing issues of gender equality and equity, justice and (women's) human rights.

C. Inequality and injustice are detrimental to sustainable development. Sustainable development needs women and men to share access and control over resources. Women's work is often made invisible, but plays a crucial role in sustainable development, in particular in environmental protection and resource management, food security and nutritional quality, education and health, conflict prevention and peace building. Gender-based inequalities often reduce productivity and affect the generation of the capabilities and skills needed for sustainable production for current and future generations.

D. Unequal gender power relations and silence about sexuality are among the root causes for the further spread of the HIV virus and increased infection of AIDS.<sup>8</sup> Churches have yet to overcome their contribution to stigmatising people living with HIV/AIDS and the dominant culture of silence.

E. Gender based violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation cause tremendous harm to individuals and to the social fabric of society. It is detrimental to all development efforts.<sup>9</sup> Religious institutions and church related organisations play a crucial role in interpreting religious and cultural values, and are called in particular to redress the value systems which fail to condemn gender based violence and discrimination.

F. Decision-making bodies which are dominated by a group composed of one category of people (eg gender, ethnicity, class, religion) often result in systems of hierarchies and leadership, which express exclusion rather than inclusion and are detrimental to the vision of transformation in which women and men are equal in freedom, responsibility, rights and stewardship.

G. Specific forms of exercise of power contribute to violence and war. Socially and politically constructed gender roles and identities are often used to legitimise domination and subordination, and lead to humiliation, discrimination and oppression of less powerful men and women.<sup>10</sup>

H. Neo-liberal macro-economic policies with their roll-back of social sector programmes put an additional burden on women's unequal share of unpaid work, assuming that women will pick up health, education and social services. Current models of trade liberalisation fail to address gender gaps in access to economic resources, opportunities and outcomes, and risk further marginalising women and privileging men in the race for limited resources.

I. A twin-track approach is necessary which integrates a gender perspective into all policy areas, practices and advocacy as a cross-cutting theme, and includes positive action and gender-specific measures to achieve gender equality.

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<sup>8</sup> See APRODEV GOOD Conference Report on HIV/AIDS and Gender, Oslo 2000

<sup>9</sup> See Press release Diakonie/Bread for the World, 1/03/02 ref allegations on sexual exploitation of refugee children, and ACT Update: Ecumenical Team's Mission to West Africa concluded, 16/04/02.

<sup>10</sup> See APRODEV GOOD Conference Report on Gender and Violent Conflict, Uppsala 2002

### **A shared commitment**

The commonly shared principles can be translated into the following set of commonly shared commitments, which APRODEV and its associated agencies are invited to endorse:

A. To engage more actively in addressing the root causes of poverty by using gender analysis to better understand and to challenge the mechanisms of unequal power relations which result in unequal distribution, access and control over resources and unequal participation – taking into account the likely positive or negative impact and benefits for poor women as compared to men in their development programmes and policies.

B. To pay special attention to equal land rights, heritage rights, reproductive rights, the right to literacy and basic health services, to food, to access to credit, and to participation – recognising that advocacy for a rights-based approach without a gender approach becomes meaningless.

C. To develop and support development approaches which seek for equal participation of women and men in the design, implementation and evaluation of development interventions – given the fact that development interventions have proven to be more effective, sustainable and show increased ownership if needs and priorities of women and men are equally taken into account.

D. To make sure that policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS address gender specific needs and challenges for women and men, and include an empowerment approach for women.

E. To speak out in cases of gender based violence, sexual abuse or exploitation of women and children, and to seek effective responses in their dialogue with partner organisations – knowing that this requires an ongoing and coherent partner dialogue in support of women's empowerment and challenging the culture of silence in many churches or church related organisations.

F. To review our organisational cultures and to promote a working environment which adheres to principles of inclusiveness and of learning from each other; to appraise progress made on gender equality in internal and external policies and practices – acknowledging that changes in gender relations cannot be addressed in isolation, but will depend on political willingness, which allows for increased sharing of women and men in decision-making processes.

G. To contribute to challenging dominant forms of femininity and masculinity which justify violence, domination and subordination, and to create space for alternative forms of gender identities which are based on shared responsibilities and stewardship- accepting that church-related organisations are themselves powerful normative institutions and that more men are needed to participate actively in challenging unequal gender power relations.

H. To contribute with their research and advocacy work to address issues of unequal access of women and men to economic resources, opportunities and outcomes, and to analyses of the social processes in which trade policies are enacted as well as on the impact of trade liberalisation.

I. To ensure that financial and human resources are made available which allow for a meaningful gender mainstreaming approach in their policy, programme, and advocacy work – acknowledging that church-related organisations can [are called to] make a significant contribution to justice with equality, and to create space for voices otherwise not heard.

**Recommendations for the future work of APRODEV**

We consider that further institutional anchoring in the APRODEV secretariat and its policy and decision-making bodies is necessary to put in place strategies and mechanisms, which are effective and ensure meaningful progress on gender equality within the work and programmes of the APRODEV family. We believe that increased understanding of the relevance of gender analyses in development cooperation and advocacy activities, increased gender competence and capacities of staff, and increased commitment to gender equality of senior management are key factors to challenge existing inequalities and bring about change.

The Policy and Advocacy Group will be responsible for ensuring the inclusion of gender equality in APRODEV's advocacy and lobbying work on development cooperation and related policies.

The Policy and Advocacy Group will work in close cooperation with the Gender Reference Group and will ensure that mechanisms are established to make sure that effective progress on the institutionalisation of gender within APRODEV's policy bodies and secretariat is made. The APRODEV secretariat will support and facilitate these efforts.

The Gender Reference Group will have a coordinating role on knowledge sharing and exchange of best and worst practice. They will play a supporting role in institutionalising gender within the APRODEV secretariat and the APRODEV agencies and their field offices. They will have an initiating role in activities in the field of partner dialogue, in policy formulation, issue-related and process-related input on advocacy, and research activities.

The Executive Committee will ensure the implementation of effective mechanisms to further institutionalise gender into the APRODEV secretariat, its policy and decision-making bodies.

If an APRODEV agency is willing to report to the Annual Meeting on progress made on gender equality within their work and their workplace, the Executive Committee will make every effort to accommodate this.