

EMSINSIGHTS

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EMPOWERING WOMEN

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Better protection, more empowerment *page 12*



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



EMPOWERING WOMEN

The New Testament is full of strong women. It was a woman, Martha, who first acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God: “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” (John, 11:27) And it was women who, after Jesus’ crucifixion, were the first to venture to his tomb and proclaim his resurrection. The Bible tells of the strength, wisdom and courage of these women – and often quite a lot about their self-will. Their encounters with Jesus changed their lives. Their stories are ones of liberation from the constraints in which they were previously trapped.

This issue of EMS Insights is about empowering women. „Empowerment“ in this respect means being able to live self-determined lives, to gain control over the decisions that guide one’s life. In the view of the World Health Organisation (WHO), empowerment is an essential precondition for leading a healthy life. It is about being able to influence the social, cultural, political and economic factors that determine one’s own life. And this not only concerns the lives of women, but also the entire community in which they live.

“My power is made perfect in weakness,” says Jesus. This is a completely different understanding of power than we are usually familiar with. It is not about the power of the strong, but the question of how we shape life together in such a way that everyone finds their place in it. As the saying goes, „To love power is to love oneself. To love freedom is to love others.“ The power that Jesus bestows to the weak is liberation for a better life.

Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary of the EMS

Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)

25 churches and 5 mission societies in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East form a network of well-established long-term partnerships – as a Christian fellowship they share resources, learn from and with one another and make decisions.

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FEATURE

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Violence against women has many different faces. It manifests itself not only in sexualised violence or physical assault, but also in the form of mental abuse, political disenfranchisement or economic exploitation. During the Covid-19 pandemic there has been an alarming increase in all its facets. In this issue, we report on encouraging examples of how EMS member churches are meeting this challenge.

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SOUTH AFRICA: WOMEN BREAK THEIR SILENCE

VIOLENCE IN THE SHADOW OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Gender-based violence is the most widespread, yet least visible violation of human rights worldwide. It particularly affects women and girls in South Africa. The violence often takes place behind closed doors, behind the façade of a seemingly intact family life. And in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic, the perpetrators have it all too easy. But one group of committed women from the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) no longer wants to accept this.

“Head throbbing... I could not distinguish if it were because of crying, not getting in a minute of sleep or the constant head slamming experience from the night before. Every single muscle in my body was aching. I had to compose myself because I was not allowed to feel anything, for I was in that position because of my own doing. Everything I went through was my fault, every obstacle we faced was because of me. I was reminded of this all the time and before he left that morning, “you look this way because you choose to go against me and my beliefs. If you would only obey me, your life would be so easy.” He got into the car and drove off and as he left a voice in my head said, “You will die here if you don’t leave right now”.

34-year-old Josephine* from Cape Town has often heard this inner voice. But this morning she can no longer ignore it. She packs her belongings and leaves. She finally manages to leave her partner – after more than ten years of humiliation, discrimination and violence. „I thank God for saving me. I could have easily ended up as a crime statistic,” she says in retrospect.

The number of femicides in South Africa is six times higher than the global average.

Not all women muster as much strength or are as lucky as Josephine. South Africa is a country where gender-based violence (GBV) has become an almost daily occurrence. One in five women is physically or emotionally abused by her husband or partner. According to police statistics, a rape takes place every 26 seconds and a woman is murdered every three hours. This puts the number of femicides (femicide: killing of women and girls because of their gender) in South Africa at six times higher than the global average. And Covid-19

has made things even worse. Since the beginning of the pandemic, gender-based violence in South Africa has reached alarming proportions. For example, the South African Police Service (SAPS) reported around 2,300 emergency calls from women in the first week of the lockdown in spring 2020 alone. Due to the lockdown, many were forced to spend the day and night with their partner in a confined space. The restrictions in public life offered practically no alternatives to avoid their situation. So, many men gave vent to their frustration, stress and fears of the future in aggression – often under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

MULTIPLE ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

In South Africa, GBV is now referred to as a „shadow pandemic“ and this points to a fundamental social problem in the country: the low status and low social standing of women. There is a lack of respect for their dignity, their lives and their safety. But why is GBV so widespread in South Africa in particular? Many studies found that the root causes of GBV result from imbalances of power between genders or discriminatory patriarchal practices against women based on individual, community, economic, cultural and religious aspects. Researchers are increasingly using an “ecological framework” developed by the WHO to understand the interplay of personal and socio-cultural factors.

South Africa continues to be an unequal society based on social class perspectives. The apartheid system made sure that people were placed in different racial groups.

In many cases, people were forcefully removed depending on their racial groups and relocated far away from their original places of residence and employment. Many suffered the impact of these removals and expressed their anger and dissatisfaction through violence.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL IMPACTS

Gender-based violence often has many health risks for the women affected and it sometimes impacts on women’s well-being throughout their entire lives. In most cases, their mental health also sustains deep wounds. Mental illnesses such as

post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety are widespread among the victims of violence. Survivors of sexual violence also repeatedly experience ostracism, stigmatisation and victim-shaming by their communities. They may also have to cope with the health and emotional consequences of sexually transmitted diseases – around seven million people in South Africa live with HIV.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety are widespread among victims of GBV.



The South African justice system often fails the women who are victims. The courts are piled high with 82,000 unresolved cases of gender-based violence that have not yet been scheduled for trial. The police often play down the problems relating to domestic violence, regarding them as a private matter. In cases of sexual assault, many women experience that the perpetrators are protected by the legal system and get off scot-free. The mere attempt to report a case to the police authorities can therefore be deeply humiliating for female victims of violence and result in further traumatising.



GROWING PUBLIC PROTEST

So far, the Republic of South Africa has failed to successfully curb the rampant epidemic of violence. However, the unimaginable brutality against women and the apparent inability of the judicial system to effectively help the victims and hold the perpetrators to account are causing increasing outrage in South African public opinion. Numerous women’s rights organisations and church groups are now raising their voices. One of them is the „Anti-GBV Resource Group“ of the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA). It was founded in August 2020 at the height of the first coronavirus wave by theologian Angelene Swart, nurse Lettice Joemath, social worker Eleanor Slamet and entrepreneur Rozan Newfeldt.

„Our women are rightly terrified, exhausted and frustrated that men weaponize their physical strength and sexuality against us,“ say the four women. “Our women who are gripped with fear and pain are part of our families, friends, communities and congregations. Why then are we and our church so silent on this matter? For us it was time to stop talking about GBV and

Mother and child in Elim, teenager in Cape Town: During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a sharp rise in domestic violence against women and children in South Africa. Due to the lockdown many victims had no way of reporting the perpetrators or escaping the danger.

As several photos were taken before the pandemic, some of the people depicted are not wearing masks.

Activists demonstrate against gender-based violence in front of the police headquarters in Cape Town in June 2020.



femicide and take action. Enough is enough.”

The Anti-GBV Resource Group has made it its goal to support the MCSA in overcoming this intolerable situation – a „mammoth task“, as the group members themselves point out. The need for action is great. „Violence against women is a reality even in our church and our congregations. We want to raise awareness about this and provide a forum for exchange.“

SHARING INFORMATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

The four women meet at their homes about once a month, in person or virtually as the pandemic circumstances dictate. The group is still in the starting phase: “First, we gathered information from our local NGO’s, from newspapers, media networks, United Nations, WHO and interviewed individuals. We wrote up our findings to have the most up to date information and to educate ourselves.”

Among other things, they were in contact with Dr Genine Josias at the Karl Bremer Hospital in Bellville, South Africa. In the treatment and rehabilitation of rape and violence victims, Dr Josias and her team use a holistic therapy approach with the aim of

restoring the dignity and self-respect of the victims.

In November 2020, the Anti-GBV Resource Group hosted the first session of its newly started “Shadow Conversations” reading and discussion group. This offering focuses on reading and sharing literature on GBV. The book they started with was “No visible bruises... what we don’t know about domestic violence can kill us” by the American author Rachel Louise Snyder. According to the initiators, the response to the literature circle was extremely encouraging: “The 15 participants, men and women, find the content and discussions insightful, inspiring, hopeful and motivating. They enjoyed the interaction, but also felt guilty for not taking action or speaking out against this onslaught on our women. The reading inspires the participants to take action.” Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the reading group was unable to meet as often as originally planned. However, the „Shadow Conversations“ will definitely be continued.

Currently, the group is supporting their church in preparing and planning workshops for male and female pastors on violence against women. An Anti-GBV programme for theology students of the Moravian Church Seminary has already taken place. They are planning more workshops for presentation in the 10 districts of the MCSA when funds become available. The Anti-GBV Resource Group works purely on a voluntary basis and is not funded.

“We volunteer our time, our experience and resources.”

Anti-GBV Resource Group of the MCSA

Furthermore, the four women are in the process of compiling a handbook for distribution in the congregations of the Moravian Church. The handbook contains the definition, cycle of violence, root causes, risk factors, impact and possible action steps and resources of GBV. They are also considering a video to complement the handbook.

Angelene Swart, Lettice Joemath, Eleanor Slammat, Rozan Newfeldt

We would like to thank the Sonke Gender Justice organisation for providing us with visual material for this article.
genderjustice.org.za

ANTI-GBV RESOURCE GROUP

Angelene Swart is theologian and educator, former MCSA President and served as President of World-wide Moravian Church.



Lettice Joemath is a retired community health nurse and is passionate about uplifting women.



Rozan Newfeldt is an entrepreneur who contributes to the equality of women through her “Lead to Inspire” programme



Eleanor Slammat is a registered social worker and an acolyte of the MCSA.



MORAVIAN CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) is one of two EMS member churches in Africa. It has just under 45,000 members in 90 congregations. Its church leaders consist of delegates from the twelve church districts and a three-member Executive Board elected by the Synod. Reverend Martin Abrahams is President of the MCSA. David William Daniels from the MCSA has been sitting on the EMS Mission Council in an advisory capacity as a youth representative since June 2021.

www.moravianchurch.co.za

EMPOWERING INSTEAD OF CONDEMNING

In the well-known story from the Gospel according to John (John 8:1-11), a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery is brought before Jesus. According to Jewish law, she faced the death penalty by stoning.

Unlike the scribes and the Pharisees, however, Jesus does not condemn the woman for her deed. Quite the contrary. He even asks her accusers to throw the first stone – if they are without sin. Jesus’ approach is relevant for all times and has the potential to salvage the maltreatment and disempowerment of women who are humiliated, disfranchised and often killed in several communities.

Jesus argues that ethical and moral judgements must ensure that the vulnerable in society, especially women, are treated fairly and they are not deprived of their rights. Instead of condemning the adulteress, Jesus encourages her to repent and fundamentally change her life. Through Jesus, she experiences the merciful love of God.

“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

The scribes and Pharisees are trying to engage Jesus in a theological discussion, to ask him a trick question so that they could accuse him. Many women find themselves in between power tussles like the woman in the text. Her accusers see only the law and her moral guilt. Jesus, on the other hand, holds a mirror up to the scribes and confronts them with their own guilt. In doing so, he makes them aware that it is wrong to accuse and condemn the adulteress as a person. For this violates her femininity, her integrity and human dignity, which are, after all, a gift from God. And why does no one speak about her partner in adultery, who apparently got off scot-free? The strength of the woman is seen in that she is not pathetically standing before Jesus, the Pharisees and the crowd. She courageously faces her accusers and expects justice to be done. Jesus strengthens her courage as he questions the obvious bias and also the integrity of the accusers.

And Jesus declared, “Then neither do I condemn you.”

With his call to the witnesses to cast the first stone at the condemned woman, Jesus in a sense changes the perspective. He takes a broader view of sin – with the result that the scribes and Pharisees are guilty by their own consciences. No one is without guilt. This realisation ultimately moves the accusers to go their way and leave the condemned woman with Jesus. Such action restores the dignity of the person and empowers the powerless. It affirms that God does not condemn the sinner who is willing to turn over the page and start a new life, no matter the intensity of the crime.

Marceline Yele Lambiv



Rev. Marceline Yele Lambiv is lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kumba, Cameroon. She is also pursuing a PhD at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Ghana.



SOUTH KOREA: COVID-19 DOES NOT AFFECT EVERYONE TO THE SAME EXTENT

The economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic affects women and men in South Korea very differently. One of the main reasons for this is the firmly entrenched norms and social expectations that are hardly ever questioned.

Traditionally, young working women are seen as second-class workers in South Korea's patriarchal society. The role assigned to them is that of future housewives and mothers. They are expected to leave the company, marry and start a family by their early thirties at the latest. As a result, young women are still often hired on worse terms and can be dismissed more easily than their male colleagues.

The social pressure this puts on working young South Korean women has been intensified by Covid-19. They were among the first to lose their jobs in the crisis. According to a study by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in South Korea, depression has increased significantly since the beginning of the pandemic, especially among young women in their twenties. For example, the suicide rate in this age group has risen by 25.5%.

For a long time, South Korea was regarded as a leading example in the fight against Covid-19. The government's top priority was to restore public life as quickly as possible. But this strategy hardly paid any attention to women's concerns. A return to normal daily life as far as possible is viewed almost exclusively from the traditional male perspective. For example, the South Korean government's emergency disaster relief was paid to „heads of households“ – usually men – rather than to needy individuals. Unmarried young women were at the losing end.

Covid-19 leaves no one unscathed, but young women face a far greater crisis than anyone else. The assistance that has been implemented so far by the South Korean government is not reaching many of them. A change of direction, a rethink, is urgently needed. We need to focus on protecting women's lives, not the economy or the male-centred social order. We should finally start listening to women's voices.

Sohyun NAM

Rev. Sohyun NAM is Liaison Officer for the two Korean EMS member churches, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK).

MISSION MAGAZINES AS FREE APP

EMS Insights is now also available as an electronic option for downloading to laptops and smartphones. Developed by the „Evangelische Mission Weltweit“ (EMW), the „Missionspresse“ app (mission press app) makes magazines such as EMS Insights, the Schneller Magazine and many others available for mobile devices.

The Missionspresse app can either be used in a web browser or downloaded free of charge from popular app stores. Besides the content of the printed issues, the app offers additional media, further links and supplementary information on individual issues. „Our new Missionspresse app has been well received and it is impressive to see how much is on the market in the print sector within the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions,“ EMW Director Rainer Kiefer is pleased to say.

The EMW, based in Hamburg, is an umbrella organisation of German Protestant churches, organisations and associations in mission and ecumenism. In addition to the EMS, eight other mission organisations as well as five free churches, five associations and the Evangelical Church in Germany belong to it. Among other things, the EMW works for members and associated organisations as a professional association for ecumenical world mission and mission theology.

app.missionspresse.org



EYVP: CERTIFICATION PASSED WITH FLYING COLOURS

The Ecumenical Youth Volunteers Programme (EYVP) of the EMS has once again been awarded the “Quifd” seal for its compliance with high quality standards.

„Anyone who does voluntary service has a right to good organisation and supervision during their assignment.“ This is what the Agentur für Qualität in Freiwilligendiensten “Quifd” (Agency for Quality in Voluntary Services) says and this statement coincides with the self-image of the Ecumenical Youth Volunteers Programme. That is why the EYVP regularly undergoes an external audit and has now received the quality seal from „Quifd“ for the fourth time in a row. The seal confirms compliance with precisely defined quality standards – from organisational handling to the training and professional supervision of volunteers and seminar work. All applicants and volunteers can therefore be sure that the work of the EYVP is based on a professional concept. Adhering to the high quality standards sometimes means that difficult decisions have to be made. This year, for example, the EYVP had to cancel the North-South

year for the second time in succession because the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the general conditions did not ensure the safety of the volunteers during their assignment. Now we are looking forward with hope to the departure of next year’s group. The volunteer agencies in the EMS member churches are eagerly waiting for volunteers to finally come again. And there is still enormous interest among young people to take an active part in international solidarity. The EYVP team is prepared and looking forward to the next cycle of assignments.

Kathrin Lehrbach
www.quifd.de

NEW BOOKLET FOR CHILDREN ON PEACE

Peace is a topic that concerns children all over the world. But what is peace actually? What does peace mean for us all personally? What does peace mean for children in various countries of the world? And what does the Bible actually say on the topic of peace?

The international team of the YOU + ME: FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD children’s programme has now published the booklet “Peace”. On the beautifully designed pages, eight children from India, Indonesia, South Africa, South Korea, Ghana and Germany share what peace means to them. One focus lies on the country of South Korea and the topic of pressure to perform.

The booklet can be used individually depending on the group of children. Whole parts or just modules such as

showing photos, doing handicrafts, playing, praying, singing or reading something aloud enrich the work with groups of children. All methods and ideas are easy to implement and open to many different forms of Children’s Service. There is a lot of background information for Sunday School staff, such as a statement from South Korea on the topic of pressure to perform and also a theological reflection on peace in the Bible. The booklet has 16 pages, is in A4 format and can be ordered free of charge from info@emsfriends.org. The German version is available either in print or electronically online. The booklet is available electronically online in English, Indonesian and Korean.

Annette Schumm

www.ems-online.org/get-involved/childrens-programme



WE MUST ACT!

BETTER PROTECTION, MORE EMPOWERMENT

The EMS Fellowship supports numerous projects that promote the protection and empowerment of women. „We also strive for a just community of women and men and in all generations.“ This is already stated in the EMS Theological Guidelines. Everyone should have the same rights, protection and opportunities.

Many of the EMS member churches are in countries where women and girls are still disadvantaged. Even if they are equal before the law, the reality is often quite different. Prejudices are still deeply rooted in social awareness. Women continue to experience discrimination and violence in everyday life. Their rights are mainly defined by their husbands and fathers.

For example, women in Ghana are more often affected by poverty than men. They receive lower wages for the same work and are repeatedly exposed to discrimination. The Upper East Church Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) has therefore devised a programme that provides women in the communities with sustainable empowerment. By raising livestock such as sheep, goats or pigs, women can create their own source of income and become more independent.

A total of 100 women are participating in the two-year programme. Each woman who is selected receives two animals to raise. At the beginning of the project, the participants learn how to handle the animals in training sessions. They work together with local veterinarians and exchange information about problems and difficulties. „Helping people to help themselves“ is the motto of the project. The PCG project leaders accompany and support the women for two years. After that, they continue their small businesses on their own.



„The project is a blessing for my life and the lives of my children. By raising the animals, I can finally earn enough to feed us all. In less than a year, I already have three goats and not just two. Meanwhile, my two eldest girls are going to school and will have a better future.“

Maria Chirapaari (43), widow

EMS CORONA RELIEF

More than one billion women and girls worldwide have no protection by law from domestic violence. It is often difficult to imagine what it is like to be economically and socially dependent on people who repeatedly hurt you physically and mentally, up to and including rape and severe violence. It is an enormous step for the girls and women concerned to confide in others and ask for help.

Domestic violence is a problem that has increased worldwide during the pandemic - and also affects women in EMS member churches.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, domestic violence has increased worldwide. This is a problem that affects women in all EMS member churches. Therefore, the empowerment of women and children is also a focal topic of the EMS Corona Relief. Thanks to our donors, several projects in Africa and Asia



The livestock project of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) improves the living conditions of a total of 100 women and their families.



The EMS Fellowship supports numerous projects that promote the protection and empowerment of women worldwide.

are already working successfully. This has encouraged many EMS member churches to initiate similar projects in their home regions. For example, the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH), Indonesia, reports that, in the province of North Maluku, there were over 11,000 cases of personally motivated or domestic violence in 2020, over half against wives, almost a quarter against underage daughters.

„We are all equal before God, so our human dignity must be respected as a whole person,“
says Demianus Ice, Church President of the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH).

„We must act,“ says Church President Demianus Ice. „Every human being is valuable, is an image of God. We are all equal before God, so our human dignity must be respected as a whole person. Women, girls, the whole family need to be educated about the existing laws, and also trained in how to deal with conflict, and above all ministry is urgently needed for the victims of domestic violence.“

The GMIH has planned that it will take a year to embed domestic violence policies in all its communities. Often victims remain silent because they are ashamed or under threat from the perpetrators. Therefore, the pastors are trained to build

trust and create a safe haven. Victims of domestic violence are first provided with accommodation in the house of the pastor’s family. The pastors of GMIH and psychological specialists give them counselling. Victims who leave their families are accompanied and supported in the long term so that they can support themselves independently. If they want to take legal action against the perpetrators, the legal department of the GMIH Synod provides them with legal assistance.

What is achieved in these projects will continue to have an effect in the time after Covid-19 and will help women and children threatened by violence to lead a life in dignity and security again.

Fundraising Team

Donation account: EMS,
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CNI: HOLISTIC AID IN THE PANDEMIC

The Church of North India (CNI) has been a guest member of the EMS since 2021. Covid-19 poses major challenges for the church. Thanks to its charitable institutions and social services, the church is able to respond to the specific needs of its parish members. Ministry, prevention and medical care go hand in hand.

The spiritual counselling of its approximately 2.2 million congregation members is maintained through online services, Sunday schools and Bible studies. For the families of pastors who have died, the church offers financial help, job opportunities and free schooling for children.

Covid-19 patients receive medical care in the CNI's 65 hospitals. School and church buildings have been converted into quarantine and vaccination centres. The church provides regular meals for needy children to ensure they are properly fed. School materials are also distributed to children from poor families.

The CNI organises self-help groups so that women learn how to earn an income by making and selling face masks. Information campaigns and telephone hotlines specially set up for Covid-19 are intended to raise awareness of how to behave correctly during the pandemic. In all of the CNI's aid programmes, special attention is paid to marginalised groups such as migrant workers or people living in leper colonies.
Shirley Lall, pastor at the CNI



FREE FOR THE FUTURE EMS STRATEGY 2021 – 2026

In November 2020, the EMS Mission Council and General Meeting adopted a new strategy for the years 2021-2026. This was preceded by an intensive consultation process with EMS members and networks.

Against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, the key question while devising the strategy was: What is the special "mission" of the EMS in such extraordinary times? In this case, our deliberations began to gradually centre on the Biblical message of liberation because in the EMS we experience time and again, especially in difficult times, how the Gospel liberates us to become a new community (Galatians 5:1). The experience of a new fellowship in Christ is also at the foundation of the EMS.

With a view to making our fellowship ever richer and more varied, internationalisation will be expanded in all working areas of the EMS. For example, networking within the EMS (youth and women's network, children's programme, etc.) will also be transferred to other areas of cooperation.

Solidarity will remain the hallmark of the EMS: With this solidarity, the EMS shows what it means to belong to the Body of Christ worldwide. „The fellowship supports its members especially in crisis situations and in areas where the churches and mission societies alone are overstretched.“ This is how the EMS Strategy describes the future task. Finally, the strategy states the common commitment of the churches and mission societies to continue on the path they have begun.

The EMS Strategy 2021-2026 is available at <https://ems-online.org/en/about-us>
We look forward to your feedback.

Dr Dieter Heidtmann



EMS STARTS ITS JUBILEE YEAR

The EMS is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a Jubilee Year that will take it around the world with many events right up to autumn 2022.

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) was established in 1972 as the „Evangelisches Missionswerk in Südwestdeutschland“ (Evangelical Mission Society in South-West Germany) comprising six churches and five mission societies. Today, it is called the “Evangelical Mission in Solidarity”, an international fellowship of 23 churches, two guest churches and five mission societies in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The solemn opening service for the EMS anniversary took place in the Eben-Ezer Presbyterian Church in Osu, Accra, Ghana on 19 September. The venue connects the EMS with one of its roots. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) was founded in 1828 by missionaries of the Basel Mission. Today, both the Basel Mission and the PCG are members of the EMS. The Director of the International Department of the PCG, Rev. Nii Armah Ashithey, clearly stated how important these connections are for his church: „In the EMS, all churches are equal members who decide together how to cooperate. This becomes visible and tangible especially in this historic place.“

In the days before, a theological conference had already taken place to start the EMS jubilee year. The EMS had invited young people from all member churches to discuss what „mission“ means today.

In their conference statement, the conference participants called on EMS members to engage more courageously in so-

cial conflicts: „We cannot stay silent on the issues that dishonour Christ and contradict his teachings. We are convinced that now is the time to act! Action means engaging in mission as a society-changing movement. It means the church must be a witness as a mediator of God’s mission in the world to order in make it a reality here.“

For the EMS, this year is not only a reason for celebration but also for reflection and action. In so doing, it takes up the tradition of the biblical Jubilee Year: a year to proclaim justice for the poor, to set the oppressed free and to bring recovery of sight for the blind in a new vision of the world (Luke 4:18-19).

Dr Dieter Heidtmann





BMDZ

MALAYSIA: A STONY PATH

The church still has a long, stony path before it can achieve gender equality. At least that's how Rev. Jollify Daniel sees it. She heads the women's ministry of the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) in Sabah, a close partner of the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ).

Malaysia is a multicultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic country. Patriarchal structures and values are still strongly anchored in society there. In the opinion of Rev. Jollify Daniel, issues such as gender justice or equality have not really reached many people yet. „In our church, we try our best to campaign for more equality and create awareness about gender issues among our members,“ she says. „In order to achieve this, we also go to the local churches. Since our church members live with other faith groups in their communities, this can be an effective way to promote gender justice and equality everywhere.“ A key role is played by multipliers who are selected by the church. They attend trainings and seminars, learn about human rights and Malaysian law, as well as how

to deal with victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

„We will continue to raise awareness of gender equality in all our church activities, whether at local, district or national level,“ Jollify Daniel stresses. Still, she fears that it may take several more generations to change mindsets and embedded cultural behaviours that underlie injustices against women and children. „Sometimes it saddens us when gender equality is not accepted even in church circles,“ the pastor regrets. „Some don't even realise that they are discriminating against the opposite sex and treating them unfairly.“

The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia was founded in the 19th century. It works mainly in remote areas of the state of Sabah for marginalised population groups who lack state support.

Sabine Eigel



DOAM

THE STATUE OF PEACE MUST STAY!

The Statue of Peace is a life-size bronze sculpture on the Unionsplatz in Berlin's Moabit district. It commemorates the so-called „comfort women“ – girls and women who were imprisoned in Japanese military brothels during World War II. The memorial was initiated by the „comfort women“ working group of the Korea Association and was unveiled on 28 September 2020.

It is said that art is not a luxury but a necessity. Once again, this applies to the life-size bronze sculpture of a young girl in Korean costume created by the Korean sculptor couple KIM Seo-Kyung and KIM Eun-Sung in various casts. The first of several of these sculptures worldwide was erected in 2011 in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, South Korea, where to this day the so-called „comfort women“ demonstrate week after week to commemorate the injustices committed against them. During the Second World War, some 200,000 mainly Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese women were forced into prostitution in Japanese military brothels. To this day, their fate has

not been adequately addressed in Japan.

The peace statue has been standing in Berlin-Moabit since the end of September 2020. Only a few days after its ceremonial unveiling, it began to cause diplomatic tensions between Japan and Germany. The political pressure became so great that the district mayor revoked the permission for the bronze statue to remain there for twelve months and set a prompt ultimatum for its removal. However, thanks to many discussions, especially between representatives of the Korea Association and political leaders, the ultimatum was soon withdrawn. The statue was allowed to stay – initially until October 2021.

In August 2021, the District Authority of Berlin-Mitte decided that the peace statue could remain in Moabit for another year. Beyond this date, however, its future is completely uncertain. The Japanese government continues to demand its removal. But regularly, on every third Friday of the month, there is a demonstration for the permanent stay of the peace statue. The German East Asia Mission also supports this cause.

Carsten Rostalsky



AT LAST, WATER FOR THE SHOWERS

The Theodor Schneller School in Amman used the forced break caused by Covid-19 to install completely new water pipes on the campus. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) provided the institution with €120,000 from donations for this purpose.

„There’s no more water in the showers again,“ the last EMS volunteers at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Amman told us many a time before the lockdown. Indeed, the entire 60-year-old water network on the huge campus was dilapidated and full of holes. And it was not only the volunteers who could not shower but also children at the boarding home. For the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS), it was clearly obvious that help was needed here and so, in January 2020, it provided a sum of €120,000 from donations for a new water pipe system.

Then came Covid-19. The long lockdown. School life at the TSS was cut back drastically. For many weeks, the

children were looked after by the TSS team at home; then again, only some of them – mainly the trainees – were on the school premises. In the meantime, the representatives of the EVS and the EMS in Germany were unable to attend in person three meetings of the school board in Jordan.

The report of the Director of the TSS for the spring meeting in June 2021 was finally presented in writing by Rev. Dr Khaled Freij, illustrated with many revealing photos. And a justifiable pride speaks in every line: With bee diligence, the local staff had made the most of the quiet time on the school campus. In the meantime, the new water pipe system has been completely installed.

But not only that. The sewer system was also repaired. Several workshop buildings on the compound were repainted and renovated, and a new teaching kitchen was fitted. The site’s perimeter walls which had collapsed many years ago were rebuilt. In addition, the dangerous areas that are difficult to see are now under surveillance with cameras donated by the Schneller Foundation. But the most important thing is: everyone can take a shower again. The children as well as the volunteers who will hopefully be sent again in the near future. And that means a totally new quality of life.

Dr Uwe Gräbe



THEOLOGICAL PIONEER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

INTERVIEW WITH DR RIMA NASRALLAH

Dr Rima Nasrallah has been an Evangelical pastor in Beirut for the past three years. The theologian finds that the fact that women can also hold church offices has not yet arrived in the minds and feelings of many Lebanese Christians.

Dr Nasrallah, please describe briefly your career. What made you decide to study theology? Originally, you chose a completely different career path.

Yes, indeed I have studied Electrical Engineering at the American University of Beirut. Theology was not really an option as a career, I did not know women theologians nor did I see myself as a Christian educator – which was the only option for women in the Church back then. I was however, interested in the world of theology and after starting what was supposed to be a hobby study at the Near East School of Theology, I realized I did not want to do anything else.

How did you continue your studies?

After my graduation with a Master in Divinity (2003), my church created a department called Spiritual Life and Christian Education and asked me to manage it. I did it with joy for five years but I always felt that my theological role was limited. My male class mates had all been ordained and were taken more seriously in their context of ministry. I then went to the Netherlands with my husband and children and continued studying receiving two more Master Degrees and eventually a Doctoral Degree in Liturgical Studies.

In November 2018, you were ordained pastor of the National Evangelical Church of Beirut (NECB) –the first and so far only woman. Was that a courageous step for your church?

When I returned in 2014 to Lebanon, I came as a professor at the NEST. But I continued to volunteer in the church helping out wherever I can. In 2018, my church called me for ordination, it was in a way a bold step. Of course, the bolder step was already taken by our sister Presbyterian Church which had ordained two women the year before that.

Was there any resistance at all?

I did not experience much resistance from my own congregation. I think for many people it was a long overdue ordination as I had been active in the church for a long time. For members of the church who are in the margin, seeing a female pastor in weddings and funerals was surprising and maybe uncomfortable but I never experience great resistance.

What does it mean for you to be one of only three ordained women pastors in the entire Middle East? How are you seen in this role – also outside the context of the church?

I think around the time of the three ordinations, there was a lot of sensationalism in the press. For many in the Middle East, this was unthinkable and even revolutionary. However, Protestant Churches are a minority within a minority and those that ordain women are even a smaller minority. So after a first buzz about it, many calmed down and classi-

fied it as an internal Protestant matter. I have very good contact with Orthodox and Catholic priest, nuns and monks and there is mutual respect between us. But for people outside the church this remains a bit bizarre.

I think it takes local congregations vision and courage to entrust themselves to female leadership.

Do you see yourself as a pioneer? What will it take for more women to follow your example?

I see myself as lucky! I think the Middle East has seen and still has many qualified women who can fulfil the role of pastors in their communities and dare I say, can do a better job than many men. Many of the NEST female graduates in the past, had to travel outside Lebanon to be ordained in Canada or the USA and are doing a wonderful job there. I was just in the right place at the right time. I think it takes local congregations vision and courage to entrust themselves to female leadership.

What is the role of women in Lebanon? Has it changed in the past one-and-a-half years due to the political and economic crisis? And if so, how?

The last year and a half have been very difficult on all of us, particularly on women. The job market is not fair to women neither in wages nor in chances and the current crisis combined with Covid 19 meant that more women were losing their jobs or getting even less pay. With children following online classes for so many months the situation became exasperating for many. Despite all this, it is the women who are on the forefront of humanitarian aid and still ready to look after those in need.

Interview conducted by: Stefan Schaal



Dr Rima Nasrallah is pastor at the National Evangelical Church of Beirut (NECB), one of the two EMS member churches in the Middle East. She has been the spokesperson for the international EMS Women's Network since 2018.

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A young girl with long dark hair, wearing a red dress, is the central focus. She is holding a lit candle in a yellow and red decorative holder and a white book. The background is a blurred crowd of people, some holding lit candles, suggesting a church service or a community gathering.

RADIANCE OF HOPE

Sometimes hope is the only language strong enough to fight despair. Hope radiates from the depths of the soul, and is often born from dark situations. When situations are chaotic and confusing, hope arises.

Our hope lies only in Jesus Christ, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

In a few weeks' time we will be celebrating Christmas. We are reminded, especially during this advent period that Jesus Christ is our saviour and the light that illuminates our path through this "pitch dark long tunnel". With that assurance we can reflect our radiance of hope to the world. This means to be one who stands in this world to proclaim hope, love, joy and peace throughout our life.

*Mega Kamase Sambo,
Pastor of the Toraja Church (GT), Indonesia*

