

GENDER POLICY DOCUMENT

Preamble

We, the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students, are committed in playing a part in being a platform of transformation of the Youth in Southern Africa. This transformation implies a deep-seated change, that will enable all young people regardless of colour, gender, race, and sex to benefit by participating in a just society where everyone has the opportunity to develop their full potential and contribute to a common good.

Introduction

2.1 What is Gender ?

Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Relations between men and women in the family, the workplace or in the public sphere reflect society's understanding of what are appropriate behaviour and characteristics of women and men. Gender therefore differs from sex in that it is social and cultural rather than biological. Gender attributes differ from society, change with time. The economy, religion, cultures and traditional attitudes shape some of these attributes.

2.2 What is gender equality ?

Gender equality or equality between women and men means the equal employment by men and women of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Because what is valued differs among societies, a crucial aspect of equality is the empowerment of women to influence what is valued and share in decision making about societal priorities. Equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but that opportunities and life chances will not depend on their sex.

2.3 Why does promotion of gender equality focus on women?

Women are mostly excluded or disadvantaged in relation to social and economic resources and decision making. Attainment of gender equality therefore has to focus on the situation of women. But both men and women have to be brought on board for effective equality to be achieved. The role of men in achieving equality implies changes for both men and women. It requires equal relationships based on a redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of women and men in all spheres including the family, workplace and society at large. The key challenge is to motivate men to become equal partners in the process of defining the strategic vision for a more equal society.

2.4 Why is gender equality an issue?

The limitation of women's access to resources and decision making limits their ability to develop and exercise their full capabilities for their own benefit and that of society. Development cannot take place if it excludes half of the human race. In working towards transformation of gender relations, the rights and responsibilities of women and men at

all levels need to be redefined.

3. Contextual Situation

The struggle for Gender Equality continues to be one of the most important human rights issues in South Africa and the world. Women in South Africa were not only oppressed as blacks, they were also subject to a system of gender domination that is best described as patriarchy, a system of male domination that was inscribed in different institutions, such as law, cultural practices and social attitudes.

Despite the achievements which have been made by various NGO's, gender equality remains a distant dream for the majority of South African women. Preliminary results of a study on Gender and the Private sector, by the Commission on Gender Equality, indicate that the South African business community shows scant interest in promoting gender equality. This is despite the country's constitution and statutory requirements obligating the private sector to address issues of inequality between men and women.

Therefore there remains the need to address the issue, and as the youth we have an important contribution to make. We need to join hands and empower woman to challenge the system of patriarchy. In the same way that all South Africans will benefit from the transformation of South African society, men as well as women will benefit from the elimination of patriarchy and achievement of gender equality. Gender equality means that rights and responsibilities will be recognised as more equal for both men and women will have more choices and freedom to experience the range of human alternatives.

4. Goals

- 4.1 To develop a culture of human relationships and tolerance between women and men
- 4.2 To raise awareness among our membership on issues of gender
- 4.3 To develop a gender sensitive leadership
- 4.4 To move towards a popular understanding of gender equality
- 4.5 To empower men and women through information sharing about gender issues
- 4.6 For strategic involvement of women and men in the transformation of gender relations
- 4.7 For the holistic integration of gender considerations into our programs
- 4.8 To facilitate the realization of freedom and security of women as people.
- 4.9 To dispel the concept that gender issues are female issues.

5. Functions and roles

In order to achieve the objectives/goals referred to in this document, the organization:

- 5.1 Shall hold discussions to raise awareness, inform and educate which in turn will better the relations of members with the rest of the society.
- 5.2 Shall bring men aboard with gender issues through discussions.
- 5.3 Shall have a quota to ensure that there is full participation of women in leadership roles at national, provincial and branch level.

- 5.4 Shall facilitate actual participation and active championing of gender issues by all members.
- 5.5 Shall use ACTS publication to advance the course at provincial and branch level

6. Implementation

In the process of programme development it is important to identify indicators or pointers with which to assess whether there is progress in terms of stated objectives or not.

- 6.1 By liaising and interacting with any organization which actively promotes gender equality.
- 6.2 Formation of a Gender desk at National level.
- 6.3 Gender officer should liaise with gender offices at provincial and branch level to monitor the progress
- 6.4 Gender officer should give a quarterly report at NEC meetings on the progress of gender issues..
- 6.5 A task group should be elected at conference to monitor and investigate cases brought forward and give advise to the branches where necessary.
- 6.6 The duties of the task team shall be to investigate any gender-related issues of its own accord or on receipt of a complaint and shall endeavor to resolve any dispute or rectify any act or omission by mediation, conciliation or negotiation as laid down in the National Constitution.

7. Glossary of terms

It is important for readers to have an understanding of what the concepts used in this document refer to.

- 7.1 Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female . Relations between men and women in the family, the workplace or in the public sphere reflect society's understanding of what are appropriate behaviour and characteristics of women and men. Gender therefore differs from sex in that it is social and cultural rather than biological. Gender attributes differ from society, change with time. Some of these attributes are shaped by the economy, religion, culture and traditional attitudes.**
- 7.2 Gender awareness refers to a state of knowledge of the differences in roles and relations of women and men, and how this results in differences in power relations, status, privileges and needs**
- 7.3 Gender equality or equality between women and men means the equal employment by men and women of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Because what is valued differs among societies, a crucial aspect of equality is the empowerment of women to influence what is valued and share in decision making about societal priorities. Equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but that opportunities and life chances will not depend on their sex.**
- 7.4 Gender issues are revealed when the relationships between men and women, their roles, privileges, status and positions, are identified and analysed. Gender issues arise where inequalities and inequities are shown to exist between people purely on the basis of their being female or male. The fact that gender and gender differences are socially constructed is itself a primary issue to deal with.**
- 7.5 Gender sensitive refers to the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between women and men, including their different needs, and use of such knowledge to identify and understand the problems arising from these differences and to act purposefully to address them.**
- 7.6 Patriarchy a system of male authority that oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions, and is based on beliefs of men's superiority that gives them decision-making power**