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**Graduate School of Development Studies**

**From Desk to Discourse, Institutionalising Gender Justice in A Christian Organisation: A Case  
Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya  
(NCKK)**

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wasye' munanie Musyoni

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Members of the Examining Committee

Dr. Brigitte Holzner  
Prof. G. Lycklama à Nijeholt

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**Enquiries:**

*Postal Address:*

Institute of Social Studies  
P.O. Box 29776  
2502 LT The Hague  
The Netherlands

Telephone -31-70-4 260 460  
Cables SOCINST  
Telex 31491 ISS NL  
Telefax -31-70-4 260 799

*Location:*

Kortenaerkade 12  
2518 AX The Hague  
The Netherlands

## **DEDICATION:**

To the memory of **Bernice Munanie Mutisya**; Small sis, 'You were the wind beneath my wings'  
and to the 'clan'; they that were, you that are and them that will be. 'I am because you are and  
because you are therefore I am'<sup>1</sup>  
And to 'Junior'

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<sup>1</sup> An African Saying



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**And most of all, to God/ess be all the glory.**

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<sup>1</sup> Swahili word for adult education



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Recent years have witnessed an increasing awareness on the impact of gender<sup>1</sup> not only on the development process but also on organisations involved in development. It has come to the fore that development organisations as well as other social institutions embody gender characteristics of the individuals who form and participate in them. This increasing gender awareness is accompanied by a corresponding awareness that development organisations as agents for social change have to be made gender aware and sensitive for internal transformation before they can effectively change the society. This is what gave rise to the Gender and Development approach (GAD). The process of making such organisations gender sensitive and aware has come to be known by various names which include gender integration, mainstreaming, institutionalisation etc.

Since the introduction of the GAD approach much information has been generated to show how organisations have proceeded in adapting and appropriating the approach to their work. This information shows the different strategies that such organisations have utilised.

In 1996 the National Council of Churches of Kenya (hereafter the NCCCK) established a Gender Desk which was charged with the responsibility of responding to gender related concerns within the organisation and its membership.

Since its inception the Gender Desk and indeed the NCCCK as a whole has been grappling in search of ways and means through which to appropriate the GAD approach to its work. This paper is therefore an attempt to assess how the NCCCK has been able to incorporate the gender perspective and to adopt the GAD approach. The paper therefore aims to explore and analyze factors that have limited effective institutionalisation of the gender perspective within the NCCCK.

#### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Gender relations in Kenya are characterised by overt disparities between men and women. With the dice loaded in favour of men, women continue to face serious barriers to justice, equality and advancement due to social, cultural, religious and economic factors. Gender awareness and sensitivity remains very low amongst policy -makers with the term 'gender' remaining suspect in Kenyan society. The Gender and Development approach has been slow in gaining prominence in Kenya and even where it has been accepted problems of institutionalising and operationalising the

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of gender is one that continues to defy specific definition here it is taken to mean the social construction and polarisation of women into females and men into men and the power dynamics that this construction brings into play.

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approach have emerged leading to a very slow and often painful process and hence a continued marginalisation and subordination of women.

Despite the slowness with which the Kenyan society has responded in relation to gender concerns, several organisations have already realised the usefulness of the gender approach and have gone ahead to adapt and implement appropriate the approach. One such organisation that has put in place some institutional mechanisms to implement the approach is the NCCCK. This was done through the establishment of a Gender Desk in 1996 as well as the formulation of a gender policy (the policy is still a draft awaiting ratification).

Despite being seemingly ahead of other organisations in Kenya in this regard the NCCCK has not been able to develop adequate institutional mechanisms to institutionalise and operationalise the gender approach within its secretariat and its member churches. Like many other organisations else where the NCCCK finds itself caught with having good intentions but lacking the means to translate these intentions into practice.

This failure has put the NCCCK's moral authority accumulated over years for its stand on matters related to justice to severe test questioning its stand as a vanguard of the oppressed. This begs questions as to why an organisation that has stood for justice and peace would have problems with standing up for gender justice and equality? Similarly why would it continue to view women's concerns in a fragmented manner and with a marked slowness to adopting a gender perspective as an overall concern to be mainstreamed in all its activities and not confining it to one desk? Is it lack of expertise to translate intentions to practice? Is it something inherent in the organisation itself that hinders effective implementation or are external factors to blame?

This paper therefore aims at identifying the factors that have limited NCCCK's good intentions vis -a-vis gender from being fully realised. It will therefore identify and analyse, ideological, institutional and structural factors that have hindered and/or slowed the NCCCK from institutionalising gender and therefore limiting its ability to play an effective role in transforming structures that perpetuate unjust social relations and practices. The paper will also seek to identify ways and means through which the NCCCK can raise over the identified limitations to become a key player in the quest for social/gender justice and societal transformation aimed at the creation of a just and inclusive society.

## **1.2 Study Objectives**

This study will be guided by the following objectives:

- To critically analyse factors that make it impossible for the NCCCK to articulate gender concerns with the same prophetic authority as it has done with other socio-political and economic concerns.
- To identify factors on conceptual, ideological, institutional and structural levels which bar the institutionalisation of gender within the NCCCK and its member Churches.
- To identify ways and means based on the findings on how to institutionalise gender justice

## **1.3 Justification**

In Kenya there is a widespread lack of gender awareness and sensitivity on the overall. The country has been rather slow in designing policies that effectively address gender issues and women's concerns. The country is yet to formulate and implement a national gender policy. Thus the concern of institutionalising gender is one that is relevant and timely given this general context.

Though various studies have been undertaken on gender mainstreaming in organisations, no comprehensive study has been carried out in this regard in relation to the NCCCK. Similarly neither has there been an equally comprehensive study on how to make gender work in a church related organisation in Kenya and hence the importance of this study.

This study is more of a SWOT<sup>2</sup> analysis of the NCCCK with regard to gender and is based on the assumption that in identifying enhancing and inhibiting factors, a way can be suggested that will lead to a re-orientation of the Council's conceptualisation and implementation of projects from a gender perspective. This will enable the NCCCK to play a facilitating role in the transformation of gender relations and move on towards the creation of a more just and inclusive society of men and women in Kenya. Similarly it is hoped that the study will challenge policy makers particularly at the church level in their design and implementation of policies that are more gender sensitive.

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<sup>2</sup> SWOT is the acronym for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. This is often used in identifying characteristics that may either hinder or spur an entity in relation to a set objective.

Lastly it is hoped that the study will contribute to the body of knowledge aimed at liberating and empowering both women and men in the church to take a stand on issues affecting women's empowerment, their effective participation in church and society and on gender justice.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

- How is gender understood and reflected in discourses, attitudes and practice within the Kenyan church and how is this mirrored on the NCCCK?
- What reasons account for the gap between intention and practice with regard to gender within the NCCCK?
- In what ways can the gender approach and the practice of gender justice be institutionalised within NCCCK and its member churches?

#### **1.5 Scope**

This research will be limited to the NCCCK touching only briefly on the general Kenyan context. The NCCCK has been chosen for critical analysis due the regard and esteem it is held with by many within the Kenyan society. As an umbrella organisation, the NCCCK tends to be a trend- setter and role model for its member churches in particular and the Kenyan society in general leading to the replication of its programmes by the churches and other development actors. It is therefore assumed that effective institutionalisation and operationalisation of gender within the NCCCK will lead to a multiplier effect with other organisations being challenged to move towards the same direction.

#### **1.6 Limitations**

The fact that this is a desk study limits this research in a number of ways. There is a fear that the identified documents have not sufficiently answered the questions posed. This is more so given the fact that there is very little that has been written regarding the institutionalisation of gender in Christian organisations and more so in the view that gender is still relatively new within the NCCCK and so far very little has been documented on the process.

Making gender justice a core value in an organisation is not an individual crusade but a process that calls for the involvement of all stakeholders. This being a desk study therefore lacks the crucial input of others who are key to the process. My analysis of the concept of gender justice from a religious point of view is somewhat limited due to my lay background in theology.



These shortcomings are however compensated to a certain degree by my own insights on the subject drawn from my eight years experience working with women related concerns within the NCCCK first within the then Women's programme and subsequently with the current Gender Desk. I had also previously worked for five years for women and children under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Experience from these years has enlightened me to the challenges that exist in attempts to institutionalise gender in organisations. I have at the same time also come to realise the potential and possibilities that exist in using organisations to positively change the position of women.

### **1.7 Positioning Myself**

In talking about women and religion Mary Daly (1991) attests that women who are committed to achieving liberation and equality have tended to turn away from organised religion which they see either as irrelevant or as a stubborn and powerful enemy placing obstacles to all they seek to achieve. Others she however says have opted to continue their relationship with the religious institutions in the hope of changing sexist beliefs, laws and customs in these organisations. This second choice is based on a conviction that there are important values transmitted through these institutions that make it worth the pain and effort of staying and fighting the system.

Falling in with the second category, I have opted not only to stay in the church but also to work for a religious organisation. This is based on my conviction with faith and belief that religion is still a very powerful tool that can be effectively used to liberate women from subordination and oppression. I also believe that the institution of the church, which continues to hold sway over a great number of women in Kenya, can be transformed into an ally in women's quest for justice and inclusion. This transformation will not be achieved if feminists continue to leave the church.

The above summarises not only my motivation for working for the NCCCK but also my utopia for the church. This research will thus be of great help in the search for ways to transform the church in Kenya into becoming a model for greater social transformation leading to greater gender justice for women. The study will also be of great help to me as the person charged with the co-ordination of gender related activities in the NCCCK, by helping me start to identify and understand past shortcomings and to clarify and chart a way forward. It is my hope that this process will be continued with others within the organisation in the continued search for ways to make the NCCCK a more gender aware and sensitive organisation and hence a role model for other organisations.

In this research I seek not only to highlight the challenges of institutionalising gender in a Christian organisation but also the possibilities that exist for making the NCCCK a key player in transforming the Kenyan church in particular and the society in general leading towards greater gender justice.

## **1.8 Methodology & Data Sources**

This study will combine various approaches such as:

a) Descriptive: This will trace the historical evolution of gender within the NCCCK. The organisation's institutional structures and programmes and how these interact with the gender approach will also be described and (b) analytical: Making visible conceptual, ideological, structural and other mechanisms that limit effective institutionalisation of gender as a development approach within the NCCCK

This study will employ a feminist perspective using as a framework debates on:

Gender and development and (b) the process of transforming institutions to make them more gender aware and sensitive.

It therefore highlights relevant concepts from theoretical frameworks through an extensive literature review on the subject of gender and development and on institutional analysis from a gender perspective. Content analysis of NCCCK's policies, project and other documents will also be undertaken in order to make inferences on the Council's sentiments or intentions on gender in particular and women in general.

### **Data Sources**

Secondary Data: Reports and policy documents of the NCCCK

## **1.9 Structure of the Research Paper**

### **Chapter 2**

#### **Changing Perceptions: The quest for women's place in the Development Process**

This chapter will entail a critical review of various theoretical frameworks relating to involvement of women in the development process. It will thus entail a focus on the evolution of development thinking from welfare oriented programmes to the current GAD approach.

Emphasis will also be placed on frameworks developed for the institutionalisation of gender within development organisations.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The NCCCK, A Brief Introduction**

The Chapter will give an overview of the NCCCK with particular emphasis on the evolutionary process of its involvement and approach to women and gender issues.

### **Chapter 4**

#### **Institutionalisation of Gender within the NCCCK- Enhancing and Limiting Factors**

In this chapter the concepts and theoretical issues identified in chapter two are 'tailored' and used to analyse the NCCCK.

### **Chapter 5**

#### **From Desk to Discourse**

This chapter ties together the findings of the paper and identifies possible means through which the discourse of gender justice can be enhanced within the NCCCK.



## CHAPTER TWO

### SHIFTING DISCOURSES AND PERCEPTIONS: THE QUEST FOR WOMEN'S PLACE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

*Birds have a place, it is called a nest, and bees too have a place it is called a hive, but what is the name for women's place in development and for gender in organisations?*<sup>3</sup>

The recent past has witnessed an increasing recognition of the unique circumstances and contribution of women to the development of the church and society. Ironically the same period has also brought to the fore the recognition that women's lives and often those of their families particularly their children have more often than not been adversely affected by the very same development process.

In light of such recognition the question of gender and its impact on women and on development and the vice-versa has acquired significant importance. The search for answers to this question and in particular in relation to women in/and development has however been marked by shifting discourses, perceptions, policies and approaches. Caroline Moser (1989, 1993) captures these changes and classifies them into specific approaches, which run from welfare, to equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment as well as the underlying assumptions for each approach. Based on these perceptions and approaches policy interventions have been designed by development organisations, church related organisations included as well as national governments to address the therein-perceived needs and concerns of women.

In this chapter a brief synopsis of these approaches with their underlying assumptions and implications for women will be given. This will be related to the basic assumptions that these approaches hold about women and how this has influenced organisations in their formulation of policies and the implementation of programmes and projects with regard to women.

The paradigm shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) will also be highlighted, once more showing how this shift has influenced development organisations in their policy and programmatic approach towards women.

There after the issue of gender in / and organisations will be reviewed. Of particular interest are the debates on institutionalisation also known as mainstreaming of gender within organisations and the implications this has had not only for women but also on the implementing organisations.

Bearing in mind that this paper is looking at the institutionalisation of gender in NCCCK, a Christian organisation, we will therefore first look at discourses, structures and systems that have influenced views and debates on women in church and society from a religious (Christian) perspective. This is of importance since it sets the stage on which the other perceptions discussed later interact with the given organisation. I am aware and will show later that gender is not about women per se. However, to have a clear understanding of the concept of gender particularly in a church context one can not ignore the conceptualisation of women within a patriarchal discourse which shows women as subordinate to men and how this has shaped the relationship between women and men in the church. It is for this reason that the following section on women, gender and Christianity will place particular emphasis on the said conceptualisation of women.

## **2.2 Women, Gender and Christianity**

*"Gender and religion are closely interrelated as perceptions of ourselves are shaped by and deeply rooted in our culturally shared religious and philosophical heritage...religious traditions, beliefs and practices too are shaped by and perceived from the perspective of gender" (King, 1995:2).*

The above statement captures the correlation between gender and religion. Gender relations are to a large extent influenced by religion and the vice-versa. Together these two (gender and religion) then proceed to influence and shape social interactions significant of which, being the interaction between men and women in a given society.

A common characteristic of all world religions is that they are male dominated and patriarchal in construction (Cooey, 1997:xi). Patriarchy is a problematic concept to capture in one definition. Thistlethwaite, 1990:137 quotes Mary Daly in saying that "patriarchy appears to be everywhere yet it does not look the same everywhere." This therefore shows patriarchy as a phenomenon that is always in a process of transformation feeding from and shaping itself to fit in with a given environment which gives it form and meaning while at the same time influencing and shaping discourses, structures and systems of that same environment. This has thus made patriarchy a universal phenomenon but also one that is given to certain particularities and specificity as brought about by its interaction with different contexts and cultures. Patriarchy therefore can be defined in various ways (Cooey, 1997: ix). Cooey as cited here continues to say that one such way is the use of the term to "refer to the social organisation of a culture into systems that are hierarchical and male dominated in terms of value and power". 'Patriarchy' more or less she continues to show resembles "a pyramid in that an extremely small minority of people hold the greatest power over the remaining majority." The word patriarchy was however originally used to denote that "the fathers

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<sup>3</sup> An adaptation of quotation used by Palestinians to advocate for a Palestinian homeland

rule the system and the father in this case presupposes male supremacy. Patriarchal culture is characteristically androcentric in that the dominant norms and values centre on the male perceptions, interpretations, experiences, needs and interests" (Cooey: ix).

Feminist theologians have shown that scriptures as well as traditional Christian theology are ingrained in patriarchal-sexist cultures and share its biases and prejudices (Nasimiyu-Wasike, 1990). For this reason, women's participation in the ministry of Jesus Christ, the central figure in Christianity and the role they played in the establishment of the early church, is seldom recognised nor quoted by "church fathers and those who are instrumental in shaping, influencing and creating church theology and continuing its development of understanding the essential Christian elements of doctrine and rules" (Nasimiyu-Wasike: 59). Nasimiyu-Wasike further says that the church fathers instead chose passages and texts that confirm their cultural views on subordinating women and so they focus on passages that provide a rationale for restricting women rather than those that emphasise on women's liberation.

Patriarchal documentation and selective interpretation of scriptures have gone on to show women as the agent of the fall who caused sin to enter into the world and brought a curse upon humanity and nature (Mikhael, 1995, Daly, 1991). Church fathers and authority figures such as Tertullian and Thomas Aquinas have been known to call women the 'devils doorway' and 'occasional, incomplete being – a misbegotten male' respectively (Mikhael 1995:165). The impact of this has been the association of women with sin and their eventual relegation to the fringes of church leadership as well as the continued marginalisation and undervaluing of their experiences, perspective and contributions.

The patriarchal bias entrenched in Judeo-Christian thinking accompanied the advent of Christianity in Africa and compounded the already existing patriarchal tendencies within the African culture. The church that was established was not only a reflection of the already inherent male bias found in Christianity but one that also got support from existing social norms and practices particularly those that were discriminatory to women.

Christianity as a religion, has through its male dominated symbolism, rituals, language and leadership style marginalised women's experiences, perceptions and capabilities limiting their participation more or less to passive attendants while at the same benefiting from their services. Women's service role in the church has however often been limited to an extension of their

domestic roles, a limitation that has seen women cook, clean and fundraise for churches throughout the ages.

Much has been written about the existence of dualistic thinking within the church tradition (see Cooley, 1997, King, 1995, Mikhael, 1995, Daly, 1973, 1991, among others) and the ensuing significance of the masculine construction of the Godhead. Writing about this construction (Daly, 1991) says that the problem is not that God is made male but that male becomes God. Of this dual thinking has been the split between soul and body, between male and female and between spiritual and secular which is often accompanied by a value inscription over each of the identified category. The results of this dichotomised thinking we are told by Edwards (1995) has held disastrous repercussions for women who are identified with the matter (body) which is seen to drag down the soul or spirit which is identified as masculine. She continues to show that the logical conclusion of this type of thinking is that "as body was inferior to the spirit so woman was inferior to man, and as the body had to be subordinated to the mind, so the woman had to be submissive to man" (Edwards, 1995:180). This in essence gives all male a superior status vis -a-vis the female, a common characteristic of patriarchy. This has been institutionalised through the sacramental and decision making functions which until recently were in most churches a male preserve<sup>4</sup>. The significance of this has been that women have by and large been shut out of leadership and decision making levels which are reserved for the ordained thus denying women active representation at the levels where significant decisions are made.

Selective Bible reading and interpretation, the dominance of male symbolism and imagery as well as low numbers of women with theological education (to counter the biased interpretation) has meant that the church leadership in Kenya (as well as in the rest of Africa) has for a long time remained predominantly male. The impact of this has been that no significant efforts have been made by the church establishment to critically analyse the root cause of women's subordination. If anything women's continued subordination and marginalisation have been taken for granted and as King (1995:9) shows sexual inequalities have been passed and defended as natural and God-given.

Writing about the church in Kenya, Njoroge 1992 says that the most tragic thing is that the church has by and large failed to take women's issues seriously and has gone on to marginalise women from effective participation in leadership and decision making levels. She also accuses the church

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<sup>4</sup> This continues to be so in churches that have refused to ordain women for sacramental functions



of imposing teachings that aggravate injustices done to women as well as reinforcing the status quo. Musimbi Kanyoro quoted by the above author says:

"The Christian church taught men that they are the heads of the home. It taught wives to obey their husbands and children to obey their fathers. But the church failed to emphasise the gospel of husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Some Christian men in the service of the church inflict violence on their wives and children. The church has not taken a strong stand against this evil behaviour. What is the reason for the church's silence? Is it because the church is male in structure ... Is it because women's issues are not at the forefront of our church's agenda?." (Njoroge, 1992:134).

The irony of all this as Amoah, 1995:3, says is that any discussion of the church in Africa as an institution should start from the basic observation of the numerical preponderance of women in all the churches. Women are the pillars of the church but as alluded, they are silent ones. The women's silence as well as answers to the questions asked by Kanyoro is at the heart of the convergence between religion (Christianity) and gender. The institution of the church has come to mirror the society of which it is part of and so it stands to reason that gender and social stratification have therefore come to be reflected in it much the same way Cooley, (1991) This mirror reflects the convergence of patriarchy in its various guises that shaped the institution of the church in Kenya. It reflects the Victorian gender and social stratification of the societies from which the majority of the missionaries came from, the oppressive colonial culture in which the missionaries operated, in addition to reflecting the effect of the African (Kenyan) cultures in which the church was 'planted'.

### **2.2.1 Breaking Free from the Patriarchal Discourse in Religion**

The above section shows that Christian religion has for a long time been held captive in a patriarchal system and discourse which gives men power and privilege<sup>5</sup> and validates a male interpretation of the Bible and marginalises women's views and roles in the church.

Discourse according to Foucault 1981, is defined as "ways of constituting knowledge together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which adhere in such knowledges and relations between them (cited by Weedon 1987:41). Discourse is however more than ways of thinking and producing meaning." It is "seen as a structuring principle of a society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity. Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not an abstract system but is always socially and historically located in discourses"(Weedon: 107-108). And hence the saying that, 'meanings are in people'.

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<sup>5</sup> I am aware that not all men hold equal power equally but in this regard I speak of men as a group relative to women

This therefore means that a patriarchal discourse is one that not only gives men power over women but one that also shapes women's response to the male power. Discourse therefore constitutes what is viewed as the 'right' behaviour and relationship between persons as well as the systems that are put in place to ensure the perpetuation of those particular behaviours and relationships.

Weedon as cited above continues to show that most powerful discourses in our society have a firm institutional base. In this regard the church can be seen as one of the institutions that has given patriarchal discourse such a base and indeed a home for a long time.

Discourses are not static nor do we have only one particular discourse at any given time but a multitude of discourses each representing particular interests and in consequence each constantly vying for status and power (Weedon, 1987:91). Discourses therefore while transmitting, producing and reinforcing power, will also at the same time undermine it and expose it thus making it fragile and possible to thwart (Ibid.: 111). This aspect of discourse is what has made it possible to witness the emergence of a counter discourse or what Foucault calls reverse discourse in the form of feminist theology which has come as a resistance to the dominance of the patriarchal discourse in religion. Weedon 1987:109 shows that reverse discourse "enables the subjected subject to speak in their own right." Feminist theology emerged from the recognition that traditional theology is grounded in the experience of socially and politically dominant men. As such traditional theology is believed to assume that men's experience is normative for all of humanity. This androcentric and patriarchal bias is considered a serious theological challenge and feminist theologians attempt to develop alternative norms (which I here refer to as *discourses*) for theological reflection.(<http://www.ptsem.org/femtheol.html>). It is important to note that just like in secular feminism where there is no one feminism similarly there is no one predominant feminist theology but rather a variety of feminist theologies based upon women's experiences of life and God/ess. This type of theology is also known by other names such as womanist theology, Akina Mama theology, Mujerista theology etc (see Williams, 1994, Isasi-Diaz, 1994)

The challenge of the Feminist theology to reverse the patriarchal discourse is guided by what O'Connor 1989 calls the:

"three Rs of rereading, reconceiving and reconstructing religious traditions'.

By reading she means 're-examining religious materials and traditions with an eye attuned to women's presence and absence, women's words and women's silence, recognition given and denied to women."

"Reconceiving women in religious tradition requires the retrieval and recovery of lost sources and suppressed visions ...reclaiming women's heritage...."

"Reconstruction is described as involving two tasks:(1) reconstructing the past

*From Desk to Discourse- Institutionalising Gender Justice in a Christian Organisation: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches (NCCCK)*

on the basis of new information and the use of historical imagination and  
(2) employing new paradigms for thinking, seeing, understanding and valuing. (cited by King 1995:14)

The discourse of feminist theology also seeks answers to the question 'Why have women remained loyal to an institution that has dealt unjustly with them for nearly two thousand years?' There are several answers to the above question. Mary Daly (1991) gives some of these answers when she says that women have stayed in the church in the hope that their continued presence will help transform the institution that they see as having some positive values.

It can also be said that though women may remain in the church because they are caught up in a powerful discourse that has shaped their subjectivity in relation to the institution, they also recognise the liberative power of the gospel. And that they still hope that this power will transcend the patriarchy found in the institutional church and free the church to become the true inclusive church that its architect the Lord Jesus intended it to be as is captured in the proclamation he made at the onset of his mission saying:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he has anointed  
me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim  
liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at  
liberty those that are oppressed and to announce the acceptable  
year of the Lord. (Luke: 4:18-19)

This proclamation and the positive relationship that Jesus had with women have inspired many women to stay on in the church. It is still their hope that the church will one day rise above the influence of prevailing male dominated cultures and traditions and to become the model ideal of the church that Christ came and died for.

The mission of Christ as stated above and the Old Testament prophetic paradigm is the heritage upon which the true church should be built but this has for centuries been compromised by the domination of patriarchy as the dominant discourse in Christianity. The prophetic paradigm as is captured clearly in the books of prophets Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea heralded in a significant shift in religion from a focus on the powerful to a social criticism which call the powerful to account on the basis of their unjust and oppressive use of power (Ruether, 1991:282). It also criticised the use of religion to "sacralise such oppressive power" (ibid.).

Feminist theologians have therefore come to challenge the church to reclaim its prophetic role based on this prophetic paradigm as well as on the example of Christ. Writing about this prophetic paradigm, Ruether, 1991:283 says:

"The prophetic paradigm contains the language of radical social transformation  
God is seen as active in history, overthrowing oppressors, bringing in a new social  
order of justice and mercy...Feminism is a restatement of the prophetic paradigm in  
It's modern form, in the context of women's oppression and hope for the liberation of

*From Desk to Discourse- Institutionalising Gender Justice in a Christian Organisation: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches (NCCCK)*

women. Women cry against oppression and stand in judgement of religious systems that justify oppression. But unlike the Hebrew prophecy it is the patriarchal oppression of women that is decried and liberation of women which is envisioned."

It is not only feminist theologians who are taking the church to task but also ordinary Christian women guided by scripture who have come to challenge the church to live up to its prophetic role. In Kenya this is reflected by the enthusiasm with which ordinary churchwomen responded to the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1987-1998. This 'decade' which originated from the World Council of Churches had as one of its objectives a challenge to the churches to free themselves from sexist teachings that were oppressive to women (See Appendix 1 for more on the 'decade').

Based on the above we therefore see that the church is called to the task of unmasking oppression and in the establishment of a new social order based on justice and mercy.

### **2.2.2 Gender Justice as a Reverse Discourse**

The concept of justice is one that has generated a lot of interest and debate amongst people of diverse backgrounds and within various disciplines. This is so because the concept is interdisciplinary and cuts across disciplines such as theology, economics, law, anthropology, philosophy, history, political science etc. Interest in justice goes back to ancient times as we have seen in the involvement of the prophets mentioned above. Great philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato also engaged with the concept.

The question what exactly is justice has been met with varying and diverse views. Much of which is as a result of the influence from the various emphasis found in the disciplines listed above. Aristotle for example, according to Cullen, 1992:15 distinguishes between "general justice and particular justice. Particular justice according to him "consists in acting so that each has '*his*' own, treating equals equally and unequals unequally but in proportion to their relevant differences." Of this type of justice (particular) he further distinguishes between " '*rectificatory Justice*' which he says aims at impartial preservation of social order and the general welfare...by relation of dealings between individuals"(ibid.) He also identifies " '*distributive justice*' as the type of justice that is concerned with the distribution or allocation of wealth, rights, honours and other benefits and also duties" (ibid.).

Aristotle's conceptualisation of justice has been taken on by disciplines such as law, which is engaged mostly with aspects derived from his '*rectificatory justice*' while economists have taken on his '*distributive justice*' aspects.

Other theorists such as Rawls, 1971 have added on to the debate by linking justice to fairness. Others as shown by Cullen, 1992:17 such as Nozick (1974) have identified justice as entitlement, Nielson (1979) sees it as equality while Barry(1989) see justice as impartiality. Others still have added on to the criteria by seeing justice as respect for rights, as a form of merit etc.(ibid.).

All these competing views show that the concept of justice has generated a plurality and multiplicity of definitions and understandings. Justice is therefore all the above and more. A common characteristic of these views however is that justice no matter what definition it takes, has in most instances taken a gender- neutral stance, that is it has been taken to be a concept that does not distinguish between persons when it comes to application. To show the relation between gender and justice Jagger, 1983:112 as cited by Mohowald, 1994<sup>6</sup> shows that:

"The differences between males and females and between men and women which are key to understanding sex and gender<sup>7</sup> are commonly seen in terms of privation or negation. Furthermore [these] differences are commonly constructed as connoting inequality"

Mohowald continues to show that the connotation of inequality between men and women is invalid since the reference point, which is sex, is not the same and hence there is no common basis for comparison. She continues to show that, gender injustice, sexism and sex inequality does not necessarily occur when men and women are regarded or treated differently but when they are regarded and treated in a manner by which the essential differences of one sex are interpreted as implying their inferiority to the other and are treated accordingly. According to Mohowald, gender justice on the other hand occurs when men and women alike are judged according to the standard of their common humanness, respecting the differences that they embody as gendered individuals without imputing inferiority to one or the other on that basis.(p2 of 11)

In Christian theology, the concept of justice runs through as a recurring theme in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. It is the basis of the prophetic paradigm as well as at the very heart of Christ's message, in his proclamation of the Kingdom of God as discussed earlier. Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God means freedom and justice (Luke 4: 16-20). Ramalho, 1980:52 shows that to proclaim the kingdom means to make it present in history. It also means setting the captives free as well as to facilitate their attainment of life in all its abundance (John: 10:10). This implies first and foremost a labour and struggle for justice on behalf of the oppressed, an effort aimed at liberation which in turn finds its full meaning in the recognition of the presence of God's liberating love in history (ibid: 53). Justice means putting relations right between people and God (whose attributes

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<sup>6</sup> Internet Abstract on her book Reproductive Genetics and Gender Justice. <http://www.med.upenn.edu/bioethics/8.mohowald.reproductive.html>

<sup>7</sup> We will return to this point later in the paper.

include just and merciful) and between persons. Justice in this case implies a relational aspect in a community<sup>8</sup> (Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalms 11:7, Isaiah 9:6-7, the Books of Jeremiah and Amos, Mathew 5 & 6:33, Romans 6: 13-23 etc), a community that is free from domination, oppression and discrimination of any nature.

While once more we see justice as a gender-neutral concept in traditional theology, feminist theology has helped in grounding the concept in gender specific terms by identifying the oppression of women and the injustices dealt to them (see Thirislewaite, 1990, King, 1994 among others) as some of the factors that contribute towards the creation of unjust and oppressive relations in the community of women and men. This grounding of the concept is what has given rise to the discourse of gender justice not just as a challenge to the patriarchy found in Christianity but also as a theological mandate to which the church is called to profess and proclaim. Gender justice is seen by the United Church of Canada as one of the fundamental ways to transform systems and structures which have historically perpetuated the discourse of patriarchy and institutionalised male domination in the social, cultural and religious practices of societies<sup>9</sup>. Gender Justice therefore aims at establishing mutuality and reciprocal relationship between men and women and just relations that are empowering to all.

In summary one can say that the 'gendered' nature (portraying characteristics which reflect the unjust and unequal relations between men and women) of organisations and institutions as will be subsequently discussed, has not escaped the church as an institution. This has compromised its role as the facilitator of the 'good news' of the gospel. It is only when the church frees itself from the throes of patriarchy and sexism that we will see the beginning of the actualisation of Jesus' mission as captured in John 10:10 'I came that all may have life and have it more abundantly'. Gender Justice is the praxis<sup>10</sup> upon which the theory of justice acquires meaning and relevance to the church in the face of the challenge to free itself from patriarchy and sexism.

I am aware that there is a lot more that can be said on justice in general and gender justice in particular but space limitations bar a prolonged elaboration on this. I will however revisit this concept from time to time in the section on the NCCK as well as in the analysis.

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<sup>8</sup> The term community here is used in its broadest sense

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.uccan.org/gjpg 10.html>

<sup>10</sup> Praxis is defined by feminist theologians as the struggle to link theory and practice in action through a reflection upon the world order in order to transform it for women. (Hume, 1989)

## **2.3 From 'Priest' to 'Caesar': Policy Approaches Towards Women and the Underlying Assumptions**

The changes and challenges that continue to rock the church vis - a -vis women are not a singular process but can be seen to be accompanying similar changes and challenges that are taking place at other spheres of the society, that of development included. This as already indicated has been marked by shifting discourses, perceptions and changing policies and approaches. In the section below we will trace this change within the development arena and see how the shifting discourses have impacted on the conceptualisation of women and how this has influenced policy approaches and programmes designed for women over the years. This impact has not escaped the NCCK which has tended to formulate its programmes and activities guided by the paramount thinking of the day.

In the following section I will highlight the five policy approaches to women from welfare to empowerment as categorised by Moser (1993) showing how the different conceptualisation of women has resulted in different approaches and activities. I will then show how the last four approaches (equity to empowerment) have come to be viewed as the WID approach which set the preamble to the GAD approach which is the focus of this paper.

### **2.3.1 The Welfare Approach**

According to Moser (1993)<sup>11</sup>, the welfare approach is the earliest policy approach towards women in developing countries. This is an approach that emerged in the 1950's but gained prominence with both governments and development organisations in the 1960's.

The approach according to Moser is based on three basic assumptions, "that women are passive recipients of development and not active participants in the development process, that motherhood is the most important role for women in society and that child-rearing is the most effective role for women in all aspects of economic development" (1993:60).

The Welfare approach seeks to meet what Moser classifies, as practical gender needs<sup>12</sup> through top-down handouts of material goods. Its acceptance and reification of women's reproductive role led to the development and implementation of programmes that sought to assist women as providers of family welfare and wellbeing. The approach's most important concern is with family

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<sup>11</sup> Caroline Moser is a development consultant whose work on gender has greatly influenced thinking on the subject.

physical survival through the provision of handouts particularly as food aid. The approach also promoted programmes geared towards combating malnutrition especially amongst children and hence the ensuing emphasis on nutritional education leading to the establishment of Mother –Child Health (MCH) programmes which distributed food and nutritional education at feeding and health centres (Moser 1993:60). Welfare programmes also promoted family planning programmes that aimed at population control (Ibid.).

The approach "identifies 'women' rather than the lack of resources as the problem and places the solution of family welfare in their hands without questioning what is seen as their 'natural' role" (Moser, 1993:61). As a result welfare programmes did not question the existing division of labour, in fact they tend to 'naturalise' it nor did they question existing allocation of resources. Ultimately they ended up in creating women's dependency to external aid instead of assisting them gain autonomy and control.

### **2.3.2 The WID Approach**

By the 1970s, there was increasing critique of the welfare approach which resulted in the search of other alternative approaches to women and this saw the genesis of what has come to be known as the WID approach. This approach incorporates various policy approaches that have been classified by Moser<sup>13</sup>(1993) as ranging from equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment as will be briefly discussed consequently.

Moser's classification borrows from dominant development discourses of the day in relation to development and should be recognised for not being 'new' as such. For example there is a clear correspondence of the equity approach to liberal feminists theory which emerged from the Libertarian discourse of equality. As an approach **equity**, emerged in the 1970s<sup>14</sup>. The approach proceeds from a basic assumption that women's subordination stems from their unequal status relative to men. The approach proceeds to show that as a result of this skewed relationship, men have over the years been the major beneficiaries of the development process. The approach adopts a very liberal perspective of calling for transformation of this inequality through progressive legislation and affirmative action to ensure that women are integrated into the development process equally with men to enable them to enjoy the benefits of the process as well.

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<sup>12</sup> Moser's classification of women's needs into practical and strategic is flawed. Categorisation of these needs as Moser does can be problematic when contrasted with reality given the fact that women's needs are in most instances interrelated often without distinctions.

<sup>13</sup> Moser classification builds on two approaches (welfare and equity) which had previously been identified by Buvinic



The **anti-poverty** approach, which emerged at the heels of the equity approach, is often seen as its toned down version. As an approach it corresponds to the Alternative Development approach particularly in its Basic Needs strand which the ILO propagated in the 1970s (Brohman, 1995). The approach, which gained prominence from 1975 onwards, recognises inequality but emphasises more on income inequality as opposed to inequality between women and men. The approach thus challenges poverty and aims at facilitating women to meet their basic needs through the promotion of income generating projects for women. The approach further assumes that women's participation through such income generating projects is a mark of their integration into their countries economic development.

Following the anti-poverty was the **efficiency** approach which gained prominence from the 1980's onwards. As with the previous approaches this too corresponded with the dominant development discourse which in this case was neo-liberalism and which gained impetus with the subsequent dawn of the era of Structural Adjustment Policies. During this era efficiency became the buzzword in development discourse and it is no wonder that the approach upholds the efficient use of women's productivity with the rationalisation that this will lead to greater economic gains not only for the women but also for their countries.

The efficiency approach conceptualises women as producers and community managers but fails to recognise their reproductive role. This failure forms a basic critique to the approach, as we now know that women's lives are intrinsically merged with their role as bearers and nurturers of life both in reality and symbolically.

The fourth and final WID approach following Moser's categorisation is the **empowerment** approach. Unlike the previous approaches which all had their origins in the North, this one emerged from the South. It is also the only bottom-up approach and also the only one which recognises the importance of conscientisation and mobilisation of women. As an approach empowerment emerged from the Alternative Development discourse which upholds people's participation as one of its central creeds. People's participation aims at giving the approach a popular base from which to launch demands and to institute changes. The empowerment approach takes into account the three roles of women as reproducers, producers and community managers. It thus seeks to have women as full participants not in an already defined development process but in a development process that women help in conceptualising and implementing.

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<sup>14</sup> The description of the approaches used here is built up from my paper written for the Gender Planning Exam.

From the above we see that each development epoch has witnessed a shift in approach with regard to women. This shift often corresponded to the dominant development discourse/ paradigm. Development organisations have therefore over the years been influenced and guided in their work with women by the approach/es that they choose to adopt. This has either gone on to reinforce existing division of labour and resources or to empower women to challenge the biases found in the development process itself. The last four approaches in the Moser's categorization have commonly come to be known as the WID approach.

In looking at them combined one can identify two strands within the WID approach which are classified by Gallin et al., (1989:5) either as reformist or redistributive strands. This classification we are cautioned is not rigid as both strands hold some ideas in common. It is however based on the understanding that they "tend to be translated differently into practice"(Ibid:5)

According to these authors (Gallin et al), the reformist strand holds that though established institutions were not currently working in the interest of women there was still hope that such institutions could be transformed to address women's issues better. This strand thus calls for legislative changes to transform women's position as well as for an increase in women's access to the means of production to enhance " a more effective, efficient and equitable development process" (Gallin et al 1989:5). The same authors continue to show that this strand calls for the modification of development organisations to facilitate the integration of women in the development process. In practice this strand was to be implemented through a top-down approach in which policy makers played a key role in the design and supervision of development projects that utilised women's efforts effectively and efficiently and which would lead to "long-term economic growth with equity". This strand did not question the development process itself neither did it challenge what it saw as a "sound social and economic order" nor did it challenge power relationships within institutions or between men and women (all quotations are taken from Gallin et al, 1989: 5- 6). In relating this to the Moser classification one can see it as what was functional as the anti-poverty and efficiency approaches.

The redistribution strand on the other hand, holds that women's subordination and disadvantage does not stem from a faulty system that fails to recognise women's importance but from the "structural features of the global economic order". This strand thus denies the alleged exclusion of women from the development process showing that women had and continued to bear a disproportionate and unrecognised share of contribution towards the growth of capitalist world system. What needed transforming therefore were the "relationships among nations, classes and

genders" and not just the development institutions and aid agencies. This strand also differed from the reformist in its emphasis on a bottom-up approach and in the fact that it had no faith in institutional structures as avenues for social change but saw them as instruments caught up in maintaining the status quo. It thus called for increased consciousness raising and empowerment of women on the basis that "conscientised and mobilised women" would on their own challenge institutions and powers that marginalise them. Unlike the reformist strand, the re-distributive one focussed on groups as opposed to individuals as the means to achieving structural social change (Quotes from Gallin et al, 1989:7).

In addition to the conscientisation and mobilisation aspects, the redistributive strand also recognises the inter-relationship and linkages between women's strategic and practical needs. It sees the addressing of the so called practical needs as a necessary point of entry or a short term strategy with a long term aim of achieving women's strategic gender needs. This strand therefore can be seen as a summary of what Moser classified as the empowerment approach. It also has some elements of the equity approach in that it challenges structures and claims equality for women. As a strand it also questions not only the structures and power relations but also the notion of development itself. Unfortunately when it came to implementation this critique of structures and power relations is not further developed and instead the strand concentrated solely on women.

Despite the above differences the strands as already stated had some shared understandings. For example both recognised the gendered impact of the development process as well as the fact that even in this, the impact was also experienced differently by different women given the differences that exists amongst them on the basis of class, race, region, and stages in the life cycle. In addition both also acknowledged women's multiple roles in production, reproduction and community management as well as the recognition that household power relations between men and women tended to be projected in relationships outside the home defining "women's position and social relations of production" (Gallin et al, 1989: 8).

Based on the above perceptions of what each strand saw as the origin of women's marginalisation and / or disadvantages within the development process, different policy approaches were formulated which formed the basis of the specific approaches identified by Moser and which commonly acquired the name WID approach.

With the passage of time the WID approach, like the preceding welfare approach too came under increased critique which resulted in the emergence the GAD approach. Of importance of such

critique as shown by Razavi and Miller (1995) was the fact that the WID approach was more concerned with what women had to offer the development process and not what development could do for women. The approach therefore focussed on showing how the utilisation of women's productivity could benefit the development process and did not adequately address the issue of power and relationships that in the first place had seen women relegated to a back seat by development planners and implementers and hence by the entire development process.

In its efforts to distance itself from the welfare approach, the WID approach considerably neglected women welfare concerns. This neglect however went contrary to the reality lived by many women in Southern countries as their welfare concerns are always inter-linked to their reproductive and productive roles. Women as bearers and nurturers of life more often than not get into productive activities to meet the needs of their children and families.

Despite the adoption of WID by various development actors, it soon became apparent that something was amiss. There was a growing pessimism particularly amongst Southern women that "despite considerable success in raising awareness and expertise in gender issues and increasing the number of WID projects and programmes, poverty and inequality continued to grow as donors and their development partners failed to address their structural causes. They (donors) had also failed to monitor the gender impact of macro-policies while in the final analysis it was these gender blind macro-policies that determined women's choices and opportunities" (Jahan: 78). By the 1980s, the WID approach had been faulted too many times and the search for a new approach was on.

### **2.3.3 The Emergence of GAD**

Like any other development paradigm the WID approach had its critiques right from the start. Whitehead (1990) among others critiqued the approach of making exaggerated claims of women's contributions, claims which when proved otherwise could adversely affect women. By the late 1970's, it was getting increasingly clear that focusing on women alone and what they had to offer towards their countries economic growth as the WID approach did was not going to bring about the desired solution to women's subordination. It was also realised that the WID approach had also failed to address women's reproductive and welfare needs and also that it had not sufficiently analysed the root causes and processes leading to women's subordination (de Bruyn: 1995)

There was an upsurge of many feminist works which showed that women's subordination as well as the basis of their integration into the development process needed to be analysed in relation other concepts such as power, conflict and gender relations (see, G. Lycklama a Nijeholt, 1987 among others)

From this growing critique of the WID Approach, evolved the GAD approach. This approach focuses on gender relations and roles as they constrain or advance efforts to promote economic development and reduce poverty and seeks not only to integrate women into development but to look for the potential in development initiatives to transform unequal social / gender relations and to empower women,( Raenda, 1999).

The shift from WID to GAD has been a gradual one and one often hears both terms used interchangeably. It is however, important to note that for our purpose here, a clear distinction between the two approaches is made and wish to state that this shift had more in it than just mere shift in semantics. Having said this it is also important to note that GAD is a complex approach. As an approach it does not completely break away from the aims and intentions of the earlier WID approach and hence the mentioned inter-change. Like the WID approach the gender approach is also concerned with women. It however goes further than just reflecting and wishing for women's integration into the development process to questioning the basis of the integration through an analysis of social structures and relations which have over the years contributed to women's marginalisation and subordination. This is done with an aim of instituting social transformation leading to equality between the sexes and hence the creation of a more egalitarian society.

The GAD approach takes as its starting point a differentiation between gender and sex "which are distinguished on the grounds of the difference between socialisation and biology or nurture and nature. Sex is biologically determined and gender although based on sex assignment, is established through socialisation". (Jagger, 1983, cited by Mohowald, 1994<sup>15</sup>)

Gender here is therefore taken to mean the social construction of male and female through widely shared ideas and expectations (norms) about women and men. Such ideas and expectation are learnt from a wide array of avenues and institutions such as through religion, the media, from schools, the family etc. These same ideas and expectations determine the status, economic and political power and roles which women and men play in a given community and at a given point in

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<sup>15</sup> From internet source: <http://www.med.upenn.edu/-bioethic...icles/8.mohowald.reproductive.html>

time (de Bruyn, 1995:22). Gender is not a constant given but is influenced by other variables such as class, ethnicity (race), life cycle (age) and time.

Gender can also be seen as the process through which human beings are socialised into becoming females and males. By looking through what Bem, 1993 (cited in King, 1995:8) calls 'gender lenses' one is able to identify the hidden assumptions about sex and gender and through which the process of 'gendering' is actualised. Bem (all reference to Bem are as cited above) identifies three lenses which affect the construction of femininity and masculinity. The first is gender polarisation which provides mutually exclusive scripts for being male and female and defines any person or behaviour deviating from this script as problematic. The effect of this is to construct and naturalise a gender polarising link between the sex of one's body and the character of one's psyche and one's sexuality. The other two lenses are androcentrism, which considers men as inherently the dominant or superior sex, as providing the exemplary norm for being human and biological essentialism which maintains that male-female difference and male dominance are natural (Bem, 1993:8, cited in King, 1995:8). These lenses we are told by King as cited above are deeply embedded in our cultural discourses, in social institutions and in the psyche of individuals. As such gender construction has transformed the male-female differences into sexual inequalities to female disadvantage and has become ingrained in androcentric (patriarchal) discourses and institutions which has not escaped much of religious life. (King, 1995:9)

While acknowledging gender as the social construction of male and female, Holzner also acknowledges that " the relational and structural aspects of women and men's positions and actions is determined by this construction". (1996:2)

According to de Bruyn (1995:27) the concept of gender can be utilised in two ways, descriptively and analytically. When utilised descriptively it concentrates on describing and explaining how socially inscribed differences between women and men change over time. Used analytically it examines how socially constructed power relationships between women and men lead to female subordination.

Understanding the concept of gender and the process of 'gendering' men and women into male and female therefore assists us in tracing the root causes of the inequalities between the two sexes and thus the root of women's subordination and how this can be overcome.

Like the preceding approaches, GAD too has been critiqued. The approach according to Wieringa, (1994:1) has de-politicised women by down playing their sexual oppression.

The approach she continues to state has "reduced women's issues to the socio-economic components of women's lives". By not going deep enough the gender approach as currently used is seen by the same author as "applying palliative care where major surgery may be needed". While largely agreeing with the above critique, we must realise that the problem does not lie with the understanding of the concept of gender and how this shapes people's views and interactions but with the process of how this understanding has come to be translated into the GAD approach. The GAD approach has not applied the understanding derived from the concept to its logical conclusion but has instead ended up been caught up in the current dominant discourse of neo-liberalism which has reduced almost every thing to economic maximisation. This has therefore seen the GAD approach reduced to focusing "on gender relations and roles as they constrain or advance efforts to promote economic development and reduce poverty" Raenda, 1999.

The current concentration by the GAD approach on women and men's roles in economic development has the danger of getting the approach too embroiled in economics to the marginalisation of its ultimate goal which is to seek the transformation of unjust and oppressive structures and processes which marginalise and subordinate women on the basis of their socially constructed gender.

For the purpose of this paper I will therefore use the concept of gender as the social construction of women and men into females and males recognising the power dynamics which accompany this process to the detriment of women. I will also use gender as not only the construction but also as the process through which this construction is achieved. On the other hand the institutionalisation of gender that is sought for the NCCCK is therefore the recognition of these mechanisms and how they can be transformed to change the position and status of women and to spur men to understanding how these mechanisms have unjustly granted them power and privilege over women, which has through the years robbed them of the ability to live in a reciprocal relation with women and hence robbed both women and men the capacity to be truly human. A way out of this vicious cycle would therefore be the institutionalisation of gender justice.

### **2.3 Organisations and Gender**

By the late 1980's gender as a development approach had already gained prominence in most international and bi-literal aid agencies such as the USAID, CIDA, SIDA and within the UN system. It was also getting increasingly accepted in many southern development organisations particularly those that had international connection either through networking or funding.

As an approach the initial activities were geared towards awareness creation and raising sensitivity. Many development organisations then went into a spin to produce gender policies and guidelines and it became almost mandatory a criteria that all proposals for funding had to have a gender impact clause showing how the intended activities would involve and impact specifically on women and on men respectively.

It may appear that gender was finally on the agenda but it soon became apparent that despite the policies and guidelines, it was still business as usual and that the gender clause in proposals was there only to appease the donors. Gender relations and the development process still remained male biased, retaining a gendered impact.

The fact that results were not forthcoming and that development organisations as well as their activities continued to produce gendered outcomes (which perpetuated the gender differentiation between men and women ) led to calls to investigate organisations from a feminist perspective (Goetz, 1997). In undertaking this investigation and making proposal for change, concern for gender equality and justice became core values.

The institutionalisation of gender in organisations became the focus of many studies (see Razavi and Miller, 1995, Goetz, 1997, Jahan, 1995) and factors which enhance or limit the process have been identified. In this section a focus will be made on some of the factors that have been identified as limiting the institutionalisation and operationalisation of the gender approach in development organisations hence limiting the said organisations' overall impact.

Analysing organisations from feminist perspective shows that development organisations are not gender neutral as had previously been assumed. Their structures are in fact found to be a reflection of the gendered nature of the social environment in which the organisations are based and operate. For example men dominate in most organisations just as they dominate in society at large (Macdonald, et al., 1996). Gendered outcomes also emerge from organisations where women dominate as in women organisations due to the already stated fact that gender is often deeply embedded in the psyche of all individuals.

The process of understanding the gendered nature of organisations involves what Goetz calls "archaeological' investigation" which involves..." reinterpreting histories and scrutinising artifacts such as favoured concepts, terms of inclusion and exclusion and symbols of success or failure" (Goetz, 1997:16).



In the section below I will mainly rely on Goetz's identification on areas / elements which assist to reveal the gendered nature of organisations. This will be supplemented with additional areas identified by Macdonald et al 1997 and by Razavi and Miller, 1995. The latter two particularly Macdonald et al have come up with areas very similar to those of Goetz with only some few exceptions which will also be considered.

Goetz proceeds on to identify eight elements which can be dug out of the gendered archaeology of organisations and which can account for limiting the successful institutionalisation of gender. Such elements include:

- **Institutional and Organisational History**

In undertaking an evaluation of an organisation's institutional and organisational history one is able to identify gender interests which have over the years shaped the organisation's institutional frameworks. This way one is able to understand how particular groups have entrenched their interests through the exclusion of other groups. Goetz, 1997:16 shows that, "attention to gendered institutional histories also illuminates the gendered sub-texts of apparently neutral organising structures, practices and ideologies to help explain why these prove so resistant to women and their interests new interpretations of established histories can be empowering for change process when the historical construction of contemporary 'givens' or 'facts' is understood". Thus by looking at how an organisation has developed over time helps reveal how certain issues and concerns have acquired prominence over time and why others have remained in the background.

- **The Gendered Cognitive Context**

An understanding of this brings into light the ideology goals and objectives that drive an organisation. This understanding therefore shows the importance attached to specific discourses, issues and concerns within a given organisation. It also shows that an organisation's ideologies, practices and approaches can "institutionalise strong biases" (Goetz, 1997:18). I will not go into details here as I have already shown how the dominance of a patriarchal ideology (discourse) has instituted a strong male bias within the church as an institution.

- **Gendered Organisational Culture**

Here we see how organisations can inherently be male biased by having a "strongly masculinised and hierarchical" modes of operation, values and practices. For example

particular professions have over the years been sex-typed either for males or females. Certain practices in particular such as "hierarchical and top-bottom command and communication systems as well as aggressive and goal oriented management styles" have contentiously been said to "represent innate sexual characteristics". In this we see how an organisation's culture and the value it assigns to certain practices and behaviour can either promote/demote the interests of certain groups and lead to the exclusion/marginalisation of particular groups which are assumed not to possess the valued characteristics.

- **Gendered Participants**

Goetz 1997:19 says that all institutions have privileged participants showing the groups that are included and those that are excluded, showing those who are superiors and who are the subordinates. She further shows that the identification of the gender of the dominant group will often show whose interests an organisation is bound to serve.

Men tend to dominate in the upper echelons of most institutions and organisations and hence the result that most organisations have historically served in men's interests. There is therefore a need to bring in more women so as to ensure that women's gender interests are taken into consideration. Some case studies shown that the presence of conscientised women can change an organisation's outlook and put women's issues and concerns on its agenda (see also, Razavi & Miller 1995).

- **Gendered Space and Time**

Here we see how the physical and social capabilities of those who dominate in organisations is reflected in the organisation's reward and punishment systems and in what Goetz, 1997:20 calls "physical and social or spatial and temporal structures of an organisation". She continues to show that the fact that men enjoy relative freedom from reproductive roles allows them more time for work thus giving them undue advantage over women who often have to combine their productive work with their domestic chores. Men's social mobility also allows them time for networking which serves them well in their work while women are in most instances limited in their social mobility.

The physical location and facilities within organisations have also been of concern to women particularly when an organisation does not take into consideration women's security and physical needs. Similarly working hours which fail to take into consideration women's multiple

roles have also proved detrimental to women's chances for advancement. Thus contributing to limiting women's inability to compete effectively with men. Making organisations friendly to women by providing child care facilities and flexible working hours can greatly advance women's empowerment.

- **The sexuality of the organisation**

"One aspect of the gendering of public spaces is the way in which the sexed body is perceived in that space"(Goetz: 1997:21). This will be reflected in how organisations view sexuality and whether women's "physical security and ability to gain respect as equal participants rather than sex objects" is ensured (Ibid.). Men's negative reaction to the presence of women in their midst or harassing and teasing can greatly impact on women's productivity.

- **Gendered Authority Structures**

In most organisations men's authority is "entrenched in hierarchies, command and control systems". This dominance by men is further translated into greater significance assigned to men's forms of expression and is "reflected in organisational value systems, the gendering of particular skills and in particular the gendering of authority symbols" (all quotations refer to Goetz, 1997:21-22). Women have to become what Fukuyama (1997) calls 'men like women' or sociological males as Goetz calls them in order to be accepted as authority figures.

The association of men with authority is also seen at play at project level where male staff have been known to seek the permission of husbands before working with women (Goetz, 1997:22) hence reifying the existing status quo which views authority as embodied in men.

Macdonald et al 1997 adds to this by saying that gender theorists have shown that organisational structures tell more of an organisation's ability to institutionalise the GAD approach. The more male dominated, hierarchical, bureaucratic and top-down command driven, the harder it is for the organisation to fit in with the GAD approach.

- **Gendered Incentive and Accountability Systems**

In addition to the above Macdonald et al., (1997) identified following areas which can also assist in revealing the gendered nature of organisations but which I will not discuss in details since most of what they show has already been discussed under the Goetz's criteria. They however include the following:

- Job Descriptions
- The Expression of Power
- Images and Symbols

As areas which can be analysed to reveal the extent to which gender is reflected in organisations.

Razavi and Miller (1995) add to the list by giving two other areas through which an organisation's ability to respond to the change envisioned in the GAD approach is pegged. These include:

- **Response to External Pressures and Influences**

This relates to a given organisation's degree of independence from external pressures and its responsiveness to other actors outside its internal environment. Of importance here is an organisation's governance structure as well as its interaction with its funders/ donors. There is a growing wealth of empirical evidence showing the power of governing boards in determining priorities for organisations. The same is also true of funders. Quoting Kramer, Van Der Heijden (1987) reminds us that "if you have your hand in someone's else's pocket you must move when that person moves". This in essence shows that an organisation's financial reliance on external sources for funding is often accompanied by the donor's influence over the organisation's priority activities. We therefore see that responsiveness of both the governing body and funders of a given organisation to gender concerns can either propel or limit the organisation's ability to institutionalise gender.

- **Existence of Capacity of Internal Policy Advocates and 'Entrepreneurs'<sup>16</sup>**

Successful institutionalisation of the gender approach is a complex task. External pressure alone, as Razavi and Miller tell us, is not enough to influence on an organisation's responsiveness to the GAD approach. This needs to be accompanied by internal pressure. Building up this internal pressure requires the presence of committed staff who are able to promote the issue and who need to be equipped with a wide range of skills including technical knowledge of the subject matter, analytical, bargaining, lobbying and advocacy skills. Quoting Kardam, (1991), Razavi and Miller show that policy-making is both a technical and political process and that actual policies are an outcome of a combination of factors which include facts and power.

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<sup>16</sup> According to Kardam (1997), Policy entrepreneurs are staff members who actively identify new issues and specialise in acquiring new knowledge about them. In addition to knowledge, Razavi and Miller (1995) add that the policy entrepreneurs must also have bargaining skills.

Institutionalising policy change of any nature is often met with resistance in many organisations. This becomes even more so for gender policies which unlike other policies often include a challenge at personal level as well as a threat to existing resource and power bases. This therefore calls for added tact and 'entrepreneurship' to use Kardam's terminology.

From these areas, we see that organisations as Goetz (1997), tells us do not just mirror gender differences, they also produce gender differences through their structures and in their every day practices. The public/private split which often sees the family and hence the private as the culprit as far as gender inequality is concerned often hides the fact that socially constructed gender norms, values and practices goes beyond the family to influence organisations which are wrongly viewed as gender-neutral.

Due to their often hidden gendered nature, development organisations have been unable to translate their good intentions into practice. This has also had a bearing on how they formulate or appropriate development policies and implement programmes. Depending on their levels of gender awareness development organisations can be gender blind<sup>17</sup> in their approach. Alternatively, some organisations have moved a step further to formulate and implement policies and programmes that to a certain extent begin to take gender into consideration. These policies will however reflect the level of gender awareness in an organisation as well as the extent of the 'genderedness' of the organisation relative to the criteria listed by Goetz (1997), Macdonald et al(1997) and by Razavi and Miller (1995) respectively.

Kabeer (1994) shows that the degree of gender awareness in organisations will often lead to three approaches to policy which she lists as:

- **Gender- neutral policies:** These are policies which are aimed at the realisation of pre-determined goals and which do not alter the existing division of resources and responsibilities. As policies they do not attempt to disaggregate the target actors/communities nor do they address the gender relations within and outside the organisation. An organisation with such policies rates very low in gender awareness.
- **Gender-specific policies:** These are policies with a very strong women oriented focus. They acknowledge past neglect of women's gender related needs and try to address this by targeting activities and resources with a view of improving women's access, control and benefit from the development process. The policies however fall short of being transformative and thus

by and large leave the existing division of resources and responsibilities intact. Such policies show a certain level of gender awareness but fall short of transforming of existing structures.

- **Gender-redistributive/ transformative policies:** Such policies on the other hand aim at transforming the existing gender relations. They therefore go beyond channeling resources to women to challenging existing division of resources and responsibilities and the overall power relations between men and women. These policies have characteristics which tend to create resistance and opposition (Goetz, 1997) and they therefore have an arduous task as they call for a clear change in gender relations which entails "men giving up certain of their privileges and to take<sup>17</sup> on certain responsibilities in order to achieve greater equity in development outcomes" (Kabeer, 1994:81). An organisation with such policies can be graded as a gender aware organisation.

Going back to our earlier classification we see how this is reflected in the policy approaches identified. The welfare approach was clearly a gender- neutral approach. The WID approach on the other hand can be cast as a gender-specific approach due to its focus on women while the GAD approach has the potential of being a gender-redistributive/ transformative approach due to its emphasis of transforming structures and gender relations.

#### **2.4.1 Gender Mainstreaming / Institutionalisation in Organisations**

Moving organisations beyond gender blindness, neutrality and specificity to making them effective vehicles for transforming society calls for serious examination of the organisations as well as for means with which to ingrain the GAD approach in these organisations. This in essence means in Goetz's terminology "getting institutions right for women" (Goetz 1997).

The process of getting institutions right for women is one that has generated a lot of debate. Various approaches and strategies have been advanced as the best way to make organisations more responsive to women's gender interests. These have ranged from integration strategy as was fronted by the WID approach as already shown to the current mainstreaming/ institutionalising strategy as will be discussed here below.

The strategy of institutionalisation or mainstreaming as is sometimes called, aims to promote gender sensitive institutional change to routinise gender equitable forms of social interaction and to

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<sup>17</sup> .By gender blindness we use Kabeer's, (1994) definition which refers to policies which while appearing neutral are couched in abstract and generic categories like communities, the poor etc and are implicitly male biased by taking the male as the norm.

challenge the legitimacy of forms of social organisation which discriminates against women (Goetz, 1997).

Razavi and Miller (1995) tell us that the process to routinise gender can be achieved through the introduction of new procedures and by making each and every staff in an organisation responsible for gender.

Gender mainstreaming or institutionalisation has also been defined as the "(re) organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy process so that a gender equitable perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and in all stages by the actors normally involved in policy making" (EG-S-MS (98) 2, 1998). Through this process the male bias found in most organisations as well as the structural character of gender inequality is challenged (Ibid.).

We have already said that the gender concept is a very complex one. It is therefore not easy to institutionalise an approach based on a complex concept. This therefore means that the process of institutionalising gender is a complex one as well and there is no one given way of doing it. Broadly speaking however the process may involve 'gendering' the policies of an organisation to make its activities gender equitable. It may also involve going beyond the policies to transforming the organisation entirely to make it more gender aware and sensitive.

When it comes to 'engendering' policies, Jahan (1995:13) identifies two strategies namely, 'integrationist' strategy which she says involves building in gender issues within the existing development paradigms. Gender is thus added on existing sectors and programmes but does not alter their already defined priorities. Through this process the development agenda of an organisation is not radically transformed.

The second strategy she identifies is 'agenda setting'. This involves the "transformation of the development agenda with a gender perspective" (Jahan, 1995, P.13). This process does not only mean the formulation and implementation of gender policies but also goes beyond to seek the transformation of the organisations themselves as well as the transformation of the entire society.

Policy transformation on its own will not make an organisation gender sensitive. It has to be accompanied by other processes which include the transformation of the organisation itself. This long process starts with the creation of a mandate which can be externally or internally originated. Where this is not forthcoming change agents within an organisation have to activate a process that

will lead to one emerging. This will involve awareness creation, lobbying and gathering support and allies (Macdonald et al 1997).

Once the mandate has been established, different organisations will then choose whatever path they may adopt to institutionalise or mainstream gender. Various studies have been undertaken to show the various paths that different organisations have taken. (See Razavi and Miller, 1995, Holzner, 1996, Goetz, 1997, among others). Some organisations have taken mainstreaming / institutionalisation to mean that women /gender issues have to be brought out of the 'ghetto' of women's desks or bureaus and made every ones business. This has led to the scraping of such desks as well as specific women/gender function staff positions. Other organisations have retained a gender focal point while at the same time encouraging other sectors to take on and include the gender perspective into their work.

Given that there is no single way to the process of mainstreaming / institutionalisation and that different organisations do different things in the name of institutionalising the approach, the process continues to defy definition and this has not been without problems as shown here below.

Though a considerable number of organisations have already embarked on the process of mainstreaming/institutionalising gender using any of the above strategies or others, the approach has not been without critique. Mainstreaming is seen to have come to replace the integration strategy that was dominant during the WID era and which had aimed at bringing women into the centre stage of development especially their macro-level concerns such as SAPs, environment and poverty alleviation (Anderson, 1990 cited in Razavi and Miller, 1995).

Razavi and Miller (ibid.) continue to state that the change in terminology from integration to mainstreaming does not resolve the tensions that had marked the integrationist approach. This is further compounded by the stated lack of proper definition of what mainstreaming really is given the fact that it has come to mean different things to different people at different places and times.

To some mainstreaming has come to mean what Razavi and Miller call the " incremental approach" which recognises the importance of development organisations as vehicles for change and hence the need to make them responsive to gender issues even if this is done "piecemeal". This in essence means a realisation that orienting organisations to the gender perspective is a slow process. The strategy therefore starts with 'engendering' policies as well as in the production of gender guidelines accompanied by awareness creation to enhance sensitivity. It has also involved the development of gender sensitive tools for the analysis and evaluation of projects and strategies.



This however, is critiqued by proponents of the "disengagement strategy" who see development organisations as too entrenched in maintaining the status quo to have the "ability to promote women's concerns". (Razavi & Miller, 1995). Opponents of the incremental and hence mainstreaming approach are of the opinion that the 'mainstream' is too polluted. It would thus be folly to try to bring women/gender into it and hence the call for disengagement and a re-definition of the entire development process itself as well as a total transformation of development organisations.

Mainstreaming/ institutionalisation has also been problematic when it has been reduced to making gender the business of every staff member without proper coordination and monitoring. When this has happened situations of buck passing have been witnessed where this every one's business has turn out to be no one's concern.

Mainstreaming/institutionalisation has also been used as an excuse of cutting costs while appearing politically correct by saying that gender is well on board and hence no need for staff with 'gender' specific job function.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Women are heiresses to a long tradition of subordination, domination and oppression. Social institutions, the church, included have not only invented but have also perpetuated this tradition for centuries. It is only in the past few decades that the situation of women has begun to feature prominently in social and religious discourses.

The presence of feminists both within and outside the church have led to the emergence of a reverse discourse which has began to question the conceptualisation of women in social institutions and to demand for gender justice. Gender analysis helps to reveal injustices done to women that have remained hidden all along. The institutionalisation of this process which not only reveals the injustices done to women but also assists in the transformation of society through increased justice and equality for women is of paramount importance.

It is the aim of this paper therefore to try not only to identify the obstacles that stand in the way of this process within the NCCK but also to also try and identify ways and means through which the identified obstacles can be overcome.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE NCCCK, A BRIEF BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The church in Kenya plays a very instrumental role in the country's development process. In a country where Christians are a majority in the population<sup>18</sup>, the church also serves as the moral conscience of the nation. It is in these roles that the NCCCK has come to be a key player in Kenya's history.

The NCCCK is a complex and dynamic organisation with a long history which cannot all be captured in a paper of this nature. The following chapter will therefore only highlight some of these complexities and dynamics paying particular attention to the organisation's involvement with women/gender issues.

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK or the Council) is a fellowship of Protestant churches and other Christian associations with a mandate to 'facilitate the united mission of the Christian Church in Kenya in the proclamation and demonstration of a holistic witness of the Church through Cooperative activities and enabling community programmes'<sup>19</sup>.

The NCCCK traces its origins to the formation of an Alliance of Missions Forum established by several missionary societies working in Kenya in 1918. At this juncture the missionaries sought to establish Christian cooperation in service and witness of the Church. In 1924, the forum expanded and was renamed the Kenya Missionary Council (KMC) with an extended mandate to 'promote cooperation and fellowship among the missionary societies in the evangelisation of Kenyan people' (Kobia, 1989). In 1943, the KMC resolved to give way to the CCK the precursor of the present day NCCCK.

The NCCCK has been described as a theological instrument of the churches in Kenya through which in unity they endeavour to promote peace, justice, understanding and unity in the Kenyan society. (Kobia, 1989: 15).

The NCCCK which also describes itself as an enabler or facilitator of the church and Kenyan community at large seeks to increase and deepen its members' involvement in community and national development. The NCCCK can also be viewed both as an organisation (and to a large

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<sup>18</sup> Forming about 60% while the rest of the population is composed of people from other faiths. Daily Nation, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1999

<sup>19</sup> NCCCK's Mission Statement

extent as an institution) and a movement. These characteristics(organisation, institution and movement )often lead to what Kobia (ibid.) calls creative tension in its mission.

### **3.2 Internal Organisation of the NCCCK**

#### **3.2.1 Mandate**

The NCCCK is guided in its work (commonly known as mission) by the concept of 'fullness of life' as promised by the Lord Jesus Christ in John: 10:10: "...I came that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly". A search for this fullness of life is a question of justice and anything that hinders the attainment of the fullness of life is of a grave concern to the mission of the church. (Kobia:, 1989: 20).

Mission to the NCCCK has meant a holistic approach to the total person encompassing the spiritual as well as the physical well being. Guided by this holistic picture of its mission, the NCCCK has over the years been intimately wedded to the day to day struggles of the Kenyan people responding to their needs be they of spiritual or material in nature.

Broadly speaking the work of the NCCCK can be categorised in four phases namely, the Missionary Era, the Post-independence Era, the Post-Kenyatta Era and finally the current Restructuring Era. Each of these periods have had a specific focus often determined by what was perceived as the needs of the day and are to a certain extent also due to staff changes in the top management of the organisation. This however is not a rigid categorisation as there are overlaps as well as the fact that there has been no marked departure from the organisation's initial commission which can be summarised as Evangelisation, Mission and Service.

Following the above categorisation the Missionary Era runs from the organisation's inception to Kenya's independence in 1963. During this era the main focus areas were Church Unity, Evangelism, Bible Study, Christian Education, Health and later Family Life Education and Christian Service. Towards the end of this era due to the problems occasioned on the people of Kenya by the war for independence and the ensuing state of emergency imposed on the country by the British colonial government, the NCCCK was involved in work in the detention camps where the freedom fighters were incarcerated. Later it also got involved with their rehabilitation and resettlement as well as with the resettlement of all those who had been displaced during the war (Chepkwony, 1987).

The second phase is the Post-independence Era, roughly running from 1963-1978. This phase was characterised by the NCCCK's focus on national development often in support and complement to government efforts geared towards the improvement of the Kenyan people's lives. Significant of NCCCK's contribution at this period was its influence and input to the country's development plans formulated during the period. Its innovative programmes such as its development work in rural areas particularly in areas that had been marginalised by the colonial government (Northern Kenya for example) as well as with the youth formed the basis of government programmes (Chepkwony, 1987). During this phase the NCCCK also developed its first development plan in which it identified development be:

' more than just economic growth....It embodies such tangible aspects as seeking to bring about equality and justice.. development involves growing: not doing things for people, but by helping them to be conscious of their needs and problems and removing obstacles; by helping people to acquire the means to do this; giving all the same chance; involving the participation of all, both the weak and strong, in interdependent effort. Development is a comprehensive process aiming at the whole person and the wholeness of human beings. We cannot allow distinction between man's<sup>20</sup> spiritual needs and his physical needs' (Chepkwony, 1987:171).

During this period its focus areas can be divided as those featuring prominently in the 1960s which included: Christian Education and Training, Rehabilitation, Relief and Resettlement, Christian Service and Urban Development which had components of social services, community development, church, industry and commerce.

In the 1970s the focus remained as the above but also included emphasis on Rural Development through the development of rural training and growth centres, village polytechnics, work in the northern Kenya and establishment of children homes. In addition a programme to address urban concerns was also established under the name "Urban Community Improvement Project"(UCIP). Similarly a small Business Scheme was also initiated.

The third phase of NCCCK's work is the post - Kenyatta<sup>21</sup> period 1978-1995. During this period it's work with the marginalised in Kenya continued to grow. Its programmes increased in response to the issues of the day, significant to this paper is the establishment of the a Women's desk in 1986. It was during this period that NCCCK grew to be the largest Christian Council in Africa. This period of NCCCK's work is marked by its increased advocacy on behalf of the marginalised in society. The NCCCK increased its political activism and began to critically question the causes of people's marginalisation leading to a growing chasm between it and its previous ally in the government.

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<sup>20</sup> Use of inclusive language is yet to be institutionalised in the NCCCK.

<sup>21</sup> Jomo Kenyatta was Kenya's first president who ruled the country from independence in 1963 to 1978 when he died.

*From Desk to Discourse- Institutionalising Gender Justice in a Christian Organisation: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches (NCCCK)*

The fourth and continuing phase of the NCCCK is the period from 1995 that I opt to call the Restructuring Era. By 1995 the NCCCK had grown in leaps and bounds having 15 different programmes. Positive as this may have been, it soon became apparent that in the light of changing economic and donor situation marked by dwindling funds, the organisation was too large administratively for sustainability. It was also realised that there were a lot of overlaps in its projects and programmes. It was also felt that despite the services that the Council offered it had become distanced from its constituency due to its governing and decision –making procedures which were far removed from the grassroots and hence the decision for restructuring to make the organisation more efficient, relevant and easily accessible (Enabling Consultancy Phase 11 Report, 1995). This resulted in a restructured NCCCK which was trimmed down in size but not in focus. The NCCCK also changed its approach from being an implementor of projects to a facilitator of its member churches. This meant that the NCCCK would no longer implement projects but enable its membership to undertake this task through skills training and provision of material and / or any other necessary support. Currently the NCCCK carries out most of its work through its four core Units namely: Theology, Advocacy, Development and Capacity Building. Significant of this restructuring process was the establishment of the Gender Desk under the Advocacy Unit in 1996.

### **3.2.2 NCCCK's Constituency**

As already stated, the NCCCK is a membership organisation bringing together some 26 Protestant denominations, nine associate members and six fraternal associate members<sup>22</sup> composed of Christian oriented organisations and has an outreach running into millions of people in Kenya (Kobia, 1989).

With a membership that is not only widely diverse but also one that is also geographically spread and mingled with the rest of the Kenyan society, the NCCCK has since its inception undertaken programmes that were geared towards the development and improvement of the entire society. The NCCCK thus works for the well being of all, including those who are not directly its members. The holistic nature of the NCCCK mission is not limited to its approach but also extends to a holistic definition of its constituency to include the entire Kenyan society. This is borne of the recognition that its membership is not a separate entity entirely divorced from the rest of the Kenyan society<sup>23</sup>. This is also supported by the fact that a prophetic church is not only a church of believers but also a

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 2 for NCCCK Membership List

<sup>23</sup> This is a source of some of the tension alluded to earlier, being a membership organisation there are some members who feel that its first and foremost focus and benefits should go its members and not the entire society. However the nature of its work which includes evangelisation through service makes it hard if not impossible for the Council to discriminate against non-members.

church that is always outward bound reaching out to embrace and convert others outside its fold. This is what gives the NCCCK the movement characteristic mentioned earlier.

NCCCK's historical legacy as a champion for the rights of the marginalised as well as the geographical spread and distribution of its constituency have made it a key player in national development in post-independent Kenya. The NCCCK has also been described as a path-finder in terms of its innovative projects which others in the civil and public service have replicated (Chepkwony, 1987).

### **3.2.3 Organisational Structure and Decision-Making Procedures**

Due to its nature, the NCCCK can be said to have a two level organisational structure. For clarity purposes we will call these policy-making (membership level) and administrative (secretariat level) structures as shown in the diagrams in Appendix (3). Both these structures work hand in hand to guide and influence NCCCK approaches and activities.

#### **3.2.4 Policy and Decision Making Procedures**

Policy and decision making procedures at the NCCCK are undertaken in line with the two level structures following a two way approach. This means that issues and concerns can originate in any of the two structures and be passed on to the other for discussion. Ultimately however, all key decisions are made at the Executive Committee level and are later ratified by the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee is composed of the executive leaders of the member churches, associations and fraternity associations, chairpersons of the various mandated committees of the Council, as well as women representatives drawn from all nine regions of the NCCCK<sup>24</sup>

The secretariat is represented by the General Secretary at Executive Committee meetings who acts as its sole spokesperson. Senior Management staff (Deputy General Secretary, Unit Directors, the Personnel Director, Legal Officer, Programme Auditor and the Communications Officer) also attend the meetings.

#### **3.2.4 Staff Establishment**

The NCCCK has always been an equal opportunity employer and currently there is a near parity between sexes in its staff establishment of 360 employees, however the presence of women at

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<sup>24</sup> For administrative purposes the NCCCK works through a regional structure. Its nine regions cover the whole of Kenya in some instances following the country's provincial boundaries.

senior management levels is still limited with a ratio of one to every two male. This is contrasted with the middle management level where women are in the majority and a leveling out at the support level ( 54<sup>th</sup> NCCCK General Assembly Report, 1998).

### **3.3 The NCCCK and Women**

One of the challenges of the mission of the church is the role and place of women in church and society. Women are not only in the majority in the Kenyan church, but have in fact been described as the pillars of the church (See Kobia, 1989, Njoroge, 1992). Spurred by this challenge the NCCCK has over the years made moves to address women's issues and concerns.

NCCCK's initial programmes for women dealt with what Goetz (1997) calls mothers and their dysfunctional families. This can be traced to its social work right from the 1950s. Starting first in Nairobi and later to other urban areas, the Council's social workers were able to identify destitute women, especially prostitutes, single mothers and the unemployed who they directed to craft centres where they were involved in handicraft production. For example, at the Salvation Army Centre women were involved in home industries, performing tasks such as banana fiber work while at the Eastleigh Centre (a Presbyterian centre) they were involved in weaving and tailoring (Chepkwony, 1987:199). This project later acquired the name Family Life Education Programme and was concerned with "increasing number of divorces, pre-marital pregnancies, single parent families, drunkenness and the spread of social diseases"<sup>25</sup> (Chepkwony, 1987:199)

In the mid 70's, a research by University of Nairobi medical students on the health situation in the Mathare valley (the largest slum in Nairobi) revealed a grave situation on the lives of the inhabitants there. The NCCCK responded by establishing a nutrition and Family Education Project which aimed at providing meals and health facilities for children under five years and in educating mothers on nutrition and family planning practices (Chepkwony, 1987:201). From this we see that the initial conceptualisation of women within the NCCCK was primarily in relation to their family and their role within this institution and was greatly influenced by the welfare approach discussed earlier.

Subsequently other programmes were initiated which continued in line with this conceptualisation such as the "Maternal Health Care Project" and the "Women and Children in Stress Project" both initially under the Urban Community Improvement Programme and which still continue to operate under the Development and Advocacy Units respectively.

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<sup>25</sup> Especially STDs and other communicable diseases



By 1981 the NCCCK felt the need to establish a structure to deal specifically with women issues. A committee for women was thus instituted with one part time worker. Following the third UN conference on women (1985) which took place in Nairobi- Kenya, this committee was upgraded to a full time Desk in 1986 but still with one worker. This was as a result of pressure and lobbying by churchwomen who felt that the absence of a fully operational office had denied them the chance to actively participate in the conference under the auspices of the NCCCK (Mkangi and Owiti, 1997).

The Women's Desk<sup>25</sup> stated with an overall goal of "empowering women for full and equal participation in church and society". To achieve this goal the desk was guided by the following objectives:

- To extend women's awareness of their potential through participatory training,
- To promote, support and train women's groups in a holistic approach to development
- To communicate the present situation of women, including their accomplishments, struggles, hopes and concerns to the churches and general public.
- To create communication links and networking between and among women and women's groups for the sharing of ideas and experiences
- To advocate on behalf of women's rights to the church, the government and the general republic (Women's Programme Annual Reports 1991-1995).

The Women's Programme's(hereafter referred to as the Programme) objectives above show that its work was directed more towards women than to structures. This to an extent shows the influence of initial WID thinking which focused sorely on women ignoring the fact that women's empowerment need to be accompanied by a challenge to the structures and forces that keep them in subordinate positions.

Despite the above, an evaluation of the programme carried out in 1997 revealed that the programme had had some positive impact on the Kenyan church. Through its advocacy work as well as being a model, some NCCCK member churches went ahead and established women's desks within their churches. Women issues particularly the impact of poverty on their lives (a situation that was later exacerbated by the imposition of SAPs by the World Bank and IMF and their eventual implementation by the Kenyan Government) also became visible. Women were also increasingly getting incorporated into church and other social committees. Through its seminars and workshops the patriarchal nature of the church, the use of exclusive language and the misinterpretation of

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<sup>25</sup> It later became a fully-fledged programme in 1993

scriptures was laid bare and the exclusion of women in the life of the church brought to light (Mkangi and Owiti, 1997).

The same evaluation also brought to light the problems and challenges that the programme experienced in its interaction with the Kenyan church. Some of these included: instances in which the church leadership which was predominately male and still under the influence of patriarchal traditional, cultural and doctrinal discourses did not understand the importance of women's empowerment. They thus responded with hostility to the Programme's activities and inclusion of 'their' women in such activities. The fact that the Programme was enlightening church women of their rights and urging them to claim their rightful place in the life of their churches made the Programme unpopular with some church leaders who were not used to having their authority questioned, least of all by women, (Ibid.)

Different denominational practices and doctrines also limited the Programme's impact. An example of this is epitomised by some denominations (particularly those with Pentecostal or Evangelical orientations) which emphasised that the role of the church should be limited only to spiritual matters, hence their suspicion and hostility toward a Programme that was geared towards a more holistic view of the church's mission which they saw as being too secular.

As with other programmes working for the empowerment of women in Kenya, the NCCCK Women's programme was also accused by some, (as cited by Mkangi and Owiti, 1997) of being elitist and working from an 'imported' premise and with ideas that were out of tune with the rural women's aspirations. An accusation that I must add was out of tune in itself given the positive response and support that the Programme got from the very same rural women.

Largely, the Programme can be credited with the creation of a nationwide churchwomen's movement through its establishment of women committees that covered most of the regions in Kenya. The establishment of these committees was of great help to Kenyan churchwomen. In their meetings they were able to share information, learn from each other's experience, gain support from other women in their personal as well as in their social struggles. Ultimately churchwomen were able to break their denominational barriers and to start viewing themselves as 'sisters in Christ' across denominations and hence enhancing ecumenism. Women from these committees also found ways of getting integrated in other activities of the council, for example the Chairperson of the National Women's Coordinating Committee was incorporated in other decision making

committees of the council where she lobbied and advocated on behalf of women and the Women's Programme.

The declaration of an Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in 1987 and its launch in Kenya in 1988 not only gave the Programme an added impetus but also in a way expanded its mandate. In fact the objectives of the decade were added on as objectives of the Programme and this saw the programme increasingly shift its strategy of focusing solely on women to a focus that included the wider church particularly the structures and practices that marginalised women. This was also in line with later thinking within the WID approach.

While recognising that the Programme played a key role in relatively improving the position of women in NCCCK member churches and in Kenya in general, the Programme was limited in its impact vis -a-vis the NCCCK secretariat. There was very little interaction and linkages between the different NCCCK's programmes in existence then and so women issues continued to be fragmented and were often marginalised in Programmes that did not deal directly with women. For example, there was no interaction between women representatives of the Theology (interfaith) department and the women theologians in the Women's Programme network (Mkangi and Owiti, 1997, 1997, 1996). There was also some unacknowledged rivalry between the Programme and other Programmes whose work involved women, such as the Family Life Education Programme, the Women and Children in Stress Project among others stemming from the different conceptualisation of women and the ensuing strategies that each of these Programmes adopted vis -a-vis women. The Programme could thus be seen as having had an outward orientation but failed to institutionalise women issues within the secretariat. (This was not a problem of the Women's programme only. The NCCCK at this point had a very strong 'my project' mentality institutionalised mainly by Programme Directors who acted with suspicion towards any one outside their programme who showed interest in 'their constituency'). By the start of restructuring in 1995 different NCCCK programmes did not seem to have a unified approach to enable them to view their respective programmes as forming a whole within the NCCCK's total mission and hence the duplication and / fragmentation alluded to earlier, (Mkangi and Owiti, 1997,1996:3, Enabling Consultancy 11 Report, 1996).

On the overall, the NCCCK women's programme can be seen to have succeeded mainly with the women. Kenyan churchwomen leaders acquired both local and international visibility through the exchange programmes and study tours organised by Programme. Many acquired new knowledge and skills from various training workshops (such as those organised around leadership development, on issues relating to the economy and its impact on women, on the issue of violence

against women etc), they also gained hands-on experience in practical skills such as tie and dye, food preservation and security etc. Their confidence and self-esteem was boosted and to a certain extent their issues and concerns started to be articulated and addressed at various fora (Women's Desk/Programme Annual Reports 1990-1995). Nonetheless, there was very little change in the structures that had initially marginalised women. The church was still far from being free from sexism and practices that discriminated against women. Women's their presence in churches still continued to be more quantitative than qualitative (Mkangi and Owiti, 1997, 1996), the relationship between men and women both in church and society was also still far from being equal. And the NCCCK was yet to have a policy on women.

### **3.3.1 From Women's Programme to Gender Desk**

The restructuring of the NCCCK in 1995 saw the demise of the Women's programme and the birth of the Gender Desk. Given the low awareness and expertise in gender theory within the NCCCK and its membership at this point in time, the Gender Desk was seen to be a 'carry over' of the Women's Programme. There was therefore no marked shift in approach and emphasis with the Gender Desk adopting four out of the six objectives of the Women's Programme that were to guide its work as revealed here below:

- To undertake projects and activities geared towards the mobilisation and facilitation of the NCCCK secretariat and membership for systematic involvement in social transformation of gender relations.
- To communicate the present situation women including their accomplishments, struggles, hopes and concerns to the church and general public.
- To advocate on behalf of women's rights to the church and the government and to lobby for shared decision-making and representation at all levels of leadership
- To extend women's awareness of their potential through participatory training
- To mobilise the churches to respond to the issues raised by the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.
- To act as a service programme that resources all other NCCCK programmes and member churches in gender related matters (Gender Desk Concept Paper, 1996)

Apart from adopting the Women's Programmes objectives the Gender Desk also continued with the implementation of the activities initiated by the Programme. In addition, the Gender Desk also retained most of its predecessor's strategies and networks.

The above was largely due to the fact that Gender Desk started work without any guidance in form of policy or job description for the programme persons. This was also influenced by the fact that the person charged with the responsibility of overseeing gender work was also 'carry over' from the previous Women's Programme.

There was however some limited shift in focus as shown in the first and last objectives of the Gender Desk. The two objectives show that there were attempts by the Desk to move beyond focusing only on women towards a conscious and calculated move to include men. Reports of the Gender Desk 1996-1998 indicate that most of its sensitisation and awareness creation work was directed to both men and women. The Desk also envisioned itself as a service department of the NCCK where it would resource all other council departments in gender related matters. Attempts would also be made by the Desk to address structural causes of women's marginalisation as envisioned through its first objective that aims for social transformation from a gender perspective.

Despite these small shifts the Gender Desk continued being similar to the Women's Programme in that it started its work with an outward-bound orientation. For example its gender sensitisation and awareness creation activities were targeted at the churches and none so far has taken place for the secretariat staff (this does not include one gender sensitisation workshop for secretariat team leaders carried out by the Women's programme just before the restructuring).

Given the above scenario it has been hard for the Gender Desk to break away from the legacy of the Women's Programme limiting its bid to acquire an independent identity and baring the gender approach from acquiring the significance it deserves. The GAD approach has therefore to a large extent come to be seen as WID but with some attention paid to men's interests. At the secretariat level the following factors account for this:

- Lack of a clear conceptual understanding of gender as a development concept accompanied by limited internal expertise and technical know-how in gender theory.
- Organisational culture with its 'my project' mentality which makes gender to be viewed as a sectoral concern for only the Gender Desk and thus having no relevance to the other council departments. This is accompanied by the 'traditional' fear by those not directly related to the Gender Desk of not wanting to be seen as encroaching on another's 'territory' should they show some interest in gender related work.
- Lack of an operational gender policy and the continued fragmented approach towards women.

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- Equating the presence of women both at the secretariat and in NCCCK committees with gender sensitivity and hence the belief that gender awareness was already onboard.
- The looming shadow of the Women's Programme with its WID orientation.

At the church / membership level the work of the Gender Desk is received with mixed responses. On one hand there is a growing awareness and some positive responses. There is in fact a palpable excitement that is coupled with a 'can we dare to change' attitude as people begin to make the connections between the overall subordination of women and their continued marginalisation in church and society. On the other hand gender still continues to be viewed with suspicion by a substantial majority with the notion of equality being seen as going against God's ordained order (Gender Desk Workshop Reports, 1996-1998). On the overall the following factors account for the latter response and include:

- Doctrinal conflict in relation to women's participation in church leadership and decision making particularly regarding women's role in ordained ministry. Reference is usually made to 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 where the Apostle Paul forbids women from talking in church and hence limiting their participation.
- Assumptions that the quantitative participation of women particularly at congregational level is sufficient proof of the church's meaningful involvement of women.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The NCCCK's involvement with the marginalised in the Kenyan society has a long history. Of this has been its involvement with women. We however see that this involvement has by and large been influenced by many factors such as religious, cultural as well as the prevailing development discourse and global perceptions on women. We have also seen that NCCCK's approaches have changed over the years from relief and rehabilitation to the current emphasis on development in general. The shift from women to gender is thus a result of this historical legacy.

Similarly these shifts can also be seen through the shifts in NCCCK's focus through the phases discussed earlier. NCCCK's distinct involvement with women during the early Missionary Era was very limited. Towards the end of this era we however begin to see some attempts made towards women. These attempts were however limited around welfare programmes. During the Post-Independence era the same approach continued but with some little changes and a continued assumption that only destitute and or 'fallen' woman needed to be targeted for charity and or salvation. It is not until eight years into the Third Era (Post Kenyatta period) that we see the establishment of the Women's Desk and with it a definite identification of women as a target group

for NCCK's activities. The Restructuring Era is in this regard marked the shift from women to gender.

Three years down the Restructuring era finds the gender approach still tottering within the NCCK. Internal as well as external factors have limited the organisation's institutionalisation of the gender perspective and approach. In the following chapter we will try and analyse these factors in relation to the conceptual and theoretical setting identified earlier.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### INSTITUTIONALISATION OF GENDER WITHIN THE NCCK- ENHANCING AND LIMITING FACTORS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The concept of gender as a unit of analysis as well as the GAD approach it promotes is relatively new in most of the development organisations in the South and particularly in Africa. At the onset the approach generated a lot of debate with issues around its conceptual definitions and its relevance and suitability to the African Context being questioned and challenged by various actors in the development arena and within the society at large.

The above notwithstanding the concept of gender is getting increasingly accepted and used in many of the development organisations and the debate has moved from the above to a new phase in which strategies to advance the approach are now the topical concern. One of the strategies that have dominantly emerged from this ongoing debate is that of institutionalisation or mainstreaming.

Sandler (1997) shows that the process of institutionalisation or mainstreaming cannot be reduced to a recipe or step by step process. It is a very 'situation-specific' process that often requires different entry points and strategies. This is more so since gender touches power relations which are 'dangerous waters' to trend.

There are however some general truths that have emerged about the process and various factors as shown in chapter two have in the meantime been identified as either inhibiting or enhancing to the process. I shall therefore use these as a frame of reference in analysing the institutionalisation of gender within the NCCK.

The NCCK is one of the organisations that accepted the GAD approach and has put in place some institutional mechanisms to guide the approach as is evidenced in its establishment of the Gender Desk in 1996. Unfortunately so far gender issues and concerns have somewhat been limited to the Gender Desk alone and have not permeated the rest of the organisation. Even within the Gender Desk the concept of gender has not been fully utilised but has been reduced to its descriptive component which as we saw only concentrates on describing and explaining the socially inscribed differences between women and men and how these change over time (de Bruyn (1995). This means that the Desk and hence the NCCK has not engaged the concept of gender in an analytical manner. This has led to a limitation by failing to bring into understanding the impact of the social construction of power relationships between men and women and how these lead to female

subordination and how such can be changed, which is the ultimate aim of the gender and development approach.

In this chapter we will look at the factors that have contributed to this limited utilisation of the concept of gender and hence leading to a 'half measure' understanding and application of the GAD approach within the NCC. The analytical framework described below will assist us in identifying some of these factors, an identification which will assist in freeing gender from the confines of the Gender Desk and moving it to a discourse and application level within the entire organisation.

#### **4.2 Towards an Analytical Framework**

Successful institutionalisation of gender in an organisation is dependent on a number of factors as identified in chapter two. I will therefore heavily rely on the criteria developed respectively by Goetz, 1997, Macdonald et al, 1997 and by Razavi and Miller, 1995.

To evaluate / analyse factors which hinder or enhance successful institutionalisation of gender in organisations calls for critical understanding of three things which constitute an organisation which I choose to call the 'who, the why and the how' of organisations. The 'who' component leads to an understanding of who comprises/forms an organisation that is, it helps in identifying the various stakeholders of a particular organisation and how they influence thinking within an organisation. The 'why' component leads one to understand the reason behind the formation of an organisation. In this regard one looks at the organisation's ideology, its goals and objectives that is its very reason for 'being' and how this fits in with the gender approach. The 'how' on the other hand contributes to understanding the processes through which an organisation translates its mandate, ideology and goals into practice mainly for the interest of its stakeholders. This will thus show the approaches, discourses and paradigms that influence the nature of programmes, strategies and activities given prominence by the organisation.

Despite the distinction made here of the three components, it is important to note that the three are mutually reinforcing and often combine to give each and every organisation its unique character. The order in which these components are presented here is arbitrary and of no significance as they all combine to determine the 'lens' or perspective through which an organisation either sees the issues and concerns it aims to address or the role it foresees itself playing in relation to its identified issues and concerns. An in depth analysis of these components will thus help reveal an organisation's capacity to successfully institutionalise the GAD approach.

The three components identified will assist in the analysis of the NCCCK looking at its stakeholders as well as the historical evolution of its work (focusing mainly on its work with women and / gender). This will be related to the paradigm, perception and approach's shifts vis -a-vis women as has already been recounted in chapter two and which I have now taken to be the 'how' of an organisation. Here I will try to determine factors which have influenced NCCCK's conceptualisation of women and gender or the basic assumptions that the organisation has held in this regard and the extent to which this has influenced its formulation of policies and implementation of activities vis -a-vis the same. Particular emphasis will be laid on analysing the NCCCK's understanding of the GAD approach and how this understanding may account for the gap between intention and practice as far as its work from a gender perspective is concerned.

#### **4.2.1 The 'Who' of the NCCCK- A stakeholder analysis**

The who component captures the institutional and historical factors identified by Goetz 1997 as shown in chapter two. It does this by showing how the composition of the stakeholders<sup>27</sup> influences institutional/organisational and historical processes within the organisation and how these in turn shape discourses.

The NCCCK is a membership organisation made up of Protestant churches and other organisations with a Christian orientation towards their work as described in the preceding chapter. These form the core stakeholders of the organisation since the NCCCK exists to serve their interests and to respond to their articulated issues and concerns. We are also aware that no organisation is an island. Forces outside its membership will affect its work and performance and with regard to the NCCCK we have identified the government as one such force. Other key stakeholders in the NCCCK are its donors who through their financial support make its work possible. We also have another general group composed of the other social groupings within the Kenyan public who on one hand are impacted upon by the NCCCK and who in turn also impact on its work. We have left this group as 'others' in the chart below since all the forces within this group cannot be brought to mention here. The chart presented here below provides a summary of these various groups of NCCCK's stakeholders. In it I have tried to capture their influences in form of a modified SWOT analysis which will also be applied to the other two components identified earlier. I am aware that the SWOT as a tool for analysis is better suited for group work and that used by an individual it is bound to be caught up in the individual's subjectivity. I have therefore tried to be as objective as I possibly can in

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<sup>27</sup> Stakeholders are individuals or groups of persons who have interests and relations in/with any given organisation. At times such interests and relations conflict and or overlap which in turn impacts on the overall performance of the organisation. Often prominent or powerful persons or groups within the stakeholders influence the outlook of the given institution/ organisation.

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the analysis here below. However, much of what is revealed here is based on what I know of the organisation and I acknowledge that this can be enriched by undertaking the same exercise with others within the organisation.

**Table 1. The 'who' of the NCCCK**

The 'Who' of NCCCK	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Stake holders: a) Member-churches	Have a popular base.  Represents diversity.	Low levels of gender awareness.  Doctrinal differences.	Arena for exchange of ideas.  Profess Justice as a central tenet of Christianity	Patriarchy in Christianity.  Influenced by Traditional / Cultural practices some of which are detrimental to the gender cause.
b) Government	Partner in Development	Lack of political Goodwill & policy towards gender issues.  Not open to articulation of an alternative point of view	Has previously adopted NCCCK's approaches, e.g. in Youth Work & Development	Is also influenced by the prevailing traditional and cultural practices.
c) Donors & Other Ecumenical Partners	Have clout drawn from the material support they provide. Provides fora for networking and sharing of ideas.  Some have progressive gender policies and guidelines.	Most are from abroad <sup>28</sup> and hence the view that some of the issues they advance are foreign to the Kenyan context.	Have influenced NCCCK's Programmes in the past	Fears of being Accused of cultural imperialism & interference with internal affairs of a partner organisation
Others, including social organisations	Looks upon NCCCK as a role model and path-finder	Provides the Social-cultural environment which affects the NCCCK	Can change with increased awareness	Presence of 'die -hard' traditional / cultural practices

From the above we see that the NCCCK is an organisation with multiple categories / groups of stakeholders. Among these are its constituency (which includes its member churches and associate members), the government with which the NCCCK has collaborated with over the years in development activities, various donors who support the NCCCK's work, other ecumenical partners who are linked to the NCCCK through networking and sharing of experiences as well as the general Kenyan public. A common characteristic of these groups is their heterogeneity with each category being representative of various other groupings. For example, the church membership category lumps together some 26 Protestant denominations which are individual members of the NCCCK. Here below we will only discuss the church membership but we will return to the other categories of the stake holders later when we look at the influence of external forces on NCCCK's work.

<sup>28</sup> From outside Kenya, mainly of European Origin

The multiplicity of stakeholders within the NCCCK gives the NCCCK its strength as captured in the adage 'unity is strength and safety is found in numbers'. Its also from this multiplicity and diversity of its stakeholders that the NCCCK gets its unique character and multiple identity as an institution and movement as stated by Kobia (1989) as well as its identity as an organisation. The institutional characteristic of the NCCCK's is what ensures its stability while its characteristic as a movement we are told by Kobia (ibid.) is even more challenging in that it calls the NCCCK to always be at the frontiers of mission. This characteristic as a movement is also boosted by the nature of its work particularly its mobilisational work and by its cooperation with other social groups and networks and with the government as partners in development. The organisational nature of the NCCCK is captured by its secretariat which oversees the organisation's day to day activities.

Relating the above to gender we see the inherent tensions that emerge from a lack of clear identity of the enigma that is the NCCCK as well as from the diversity of its membership. NCCCK's members are not a homogeneous whole. As individual churches, each comes to the NCCCK with its own identity, agenda (interests) and priorities. Of importance here are the doctrinal / ideological differences which exist within this wide spectrum of membership as is reflected in differences that exist in the conceptualisation of women and hence their allocated role/s, responsibilities and status within the church hierarchy. Such differences stem from interpretation of Scriptures which varies from one denomination to another and at times even within the same denomination. For example, whereas the majority of NCCCK member churches have by now in principle if not in practice accepted the ordination of women in sacramental functions, there are still some member churches which continue to view women's leadership and sacramental work as a negation of Scriptural teaching. Reference to this is often made to Apostle Paul's injunction to women to be silent in church and to ask any questions that they may have to their husbands at home (1 Timothy, 2:12-14, 1 Corinthians, 14:34-35). It is also argued that this would go against divine ordinance which gives men dominance over women. (1 Corinthians, 11:3) The Anglican church in Kenya is a true reflection of such intra-denominational differences on doctrinal matters with some of its Dioceses' accepting and having women serve as ordained ministers while others still adamantly or technically refuse to allow the ordination of women<sup>29</sup>.

To avoid problems that may threaten the unity of the Council, the NCCCK has steered clear of doctrinal matters and has instead used its meetings in which all the members are represented as 'gatherings that brought (*bring*) churches together to have fellowship and (*to*) discuss social work

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<sup>29</sup> The Anglican is not the only example, there exists other within the NCCCK membership who bar women from ordination and who deny women leadership and decision-making roles in the church.

and not to engage in issues like doctrinal matters...". (Chepkwony, 1987:281). She continues to say that the NCCK like most ecumenical bodies finds it easier to "dwell on social matters because they are more uniting while doctrinal / theological matters are dangerous waters. (Ibid. ) (*italics added*).

Here we see yet another tension within the NCCK. Gender relations are social matters and avoiding them shows a hierarchy in the issues given prominence by the organisation. We also begin to see why the institutionalisation of gender in a Christian organisation can be and has been difficult as is with regard to the NCCK. Successful institutionalisation would entail a deep theological reflection not only on the role of women but also on the very concept of gender itself as well as on other related concepts such as gender justice and gender equality. This process would in essence challenge the male bias found in some doctrines, a challenge that would expose the patriarchal and discriminatory nature of the orthodox Christian discourse.

By steering clear of engaging in doctrinal matters which are the heart of the religious discourse the NCCK has compromised its ability to influence and challenge the patriarchal discourse that still reigns supreme in most of its member churches and this has to a very large extent compromised its capacity to institutionalise gender.

#### **4.2.2 The 'Why' of the NCCK- an institutional analysis**

The 'why' component of the NCCK is captured through an analysis of its *raison d'être* as shown through its stated mandate, mission, goals and ideology.

As shown by Goetz (1997), Macdonald et al (1997) and Razavi and Miller, (1995) successful institutionalisation of gender depends on how the aims and objectives of the gender approach readily fit in with the institutionalising organisation's mandate, goals, ideology and procedures. This is more so with organisations like the NCCK which predate the GAD approach and in which the GAD perspective will always be a 'add on' which has to find its niche in an already established arena. How then does the NCCK's Mandate, goals, ideology and procedures fit in with the gender approach?

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Table 2. The 'why' of the NCCCK

The 'Why' of NCCCK	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Mandate</b> <b>NCCCK's Vision</b> "Sharing and acting together in the experience and extension of the Kingdom of God witnessing to Jesus Christ. This vision will be guided by the Holy Scripture empowered by the Holy Spirit and informed by tradition"	Vision is broad enough to accommodate the gender perspective	Use of gender neutral language. Holy Scripture and tradition can / have been used to the detriment of women/ gender.	The 'sharing and acting together' has the potential for including women as well as for mobilization and unified action towards social transformation	Priorities of those with power determine the agenda and basis of 'sharing and acting together'. Continued influence of patriarchal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and tradition.
<b>NCCCK's Mission</b> "Facilitating the united mission of the Christian Church in Kenya and the proclamation and demonstration of the holistic witness of the Church through corporate activities and by enabling community programmes"	'United mission and holistic' are concepts that accord space for the gender perspective while 'enabling' which is another term for empowering is in synch the gender approach.	Not gender specific	Affirms an integrated approach which is conducive to the gender approach	Activities and programmes can continue without incorporating the gender perspective due to the prevailing male bias in church and society
<b>NCCCK's Ideology</b> Committed to Social Justice and acts as a theological instrument of the Kenyan church in the promotion of peace, justice, understanding and unity. Guided by the biblical principle of fullness of life ref. John 10:10	Has a ready 'fit' with the gender objectives.	No link between general justice and gender justice or equality.	Great potential when the link is made.	Concept of gender equality threatened by limited orthodox perception which sees it as going against God's order

As shown in the table above NCCCK's mandate as captured in its vision and mission statements is broad enough to accord space for the gender perspective. It thus has a potential for the incorporation for an empowering conceptualisation, mobilisation and inclusion of women and men in a unified action towards social transformation. This however is threatened by the possibility of having those in leadership and decision-making positions majority of whom are men continuing to determine the agenda and hence reducing the participation of women to a spectator's role. The guidance afforded the organisation by the Holy Scripture and tradition may continue to be caught up in the current patriarchal interpretation which is detrimental to women.

Successful institutionalisation of gender will be reflected in the organisation's willingness to revise the two statements to make them more gender specific hence equipping them with transformatory characteristics.

The ideology of the NCCCK which is based on the extension of the Kingdom of God and on the concept of 'fullness of life' is not contradictory to gender justice principles. The Kingdom of God as

shown by Chepkwony (1987) relates to the present as well as to the future and is presented in two dimensions in the Old Testament one of which is liberation. In this regard she continues to show the emergence of prophets such as Amos and Jeremiah advocating for justice and peace and challenging those who wield and abuse power. Chepkwony shows that the arrival of Jesus Christ marks the realisation of the Kingdom in history and that Jesus follows the prophetic tradition which was recounted in chapter two by denouncing the powerful people's hypocrisy, exploitation and the injustices they inflicted on those they perceived as weak. In contrast to the Sadducees and Pharisees who were the religious authorities of the day, Jesus stood with the poor and the marginalised who included women and whom he empowered. The church being a follower of Christ is thus mandated to continue in this tradition by challenging oppression of any nature and standing with the marginalised and empowering them to experience the Kingdom of God that is liberation in the present as well as in the future.

Chepkwony, 1987, continues to show that a theological reflection on the part of the NCCCK in understanding of the Kingdom and life abundant would show:

"That by using the Jesus praxis, people would be made aware of their conditions, given hope and new understanding of their place in society. Thus the need to gain a new relationship....Through the preaching of the Gospel that is, the announcement of God's love, people would learn that they are rescued from self contempt....Since the process of liberation is an on-going one, it demands change and assessment. The Kingdom of God results from social change. Reference to the Kingdom should therefore operate as a motivation for change which calls for commitment rather than revitalization" Pg. 283

The NCCCK's stated mandate of facilitating the extension of the Kingdom of God as well as its ideology of enhancing people's attainment of 'life in all its abundance' is put to test by its failure make a conscious and sustained identification of gender injustice as a hindrance to life in all its fullness and a limitation to the actualisation of God's kingdom here on earth. Such an identification would lead to gender justice concerns being included in the organisation's priority concerns and the search for ways towards social transformation incorporated and enhanced to make the church community (and the rest of the society) more just and inclusive.

As we have already seen the NCCCK is concerned with social justice what is lacking however is a full expansion of its understanding of justice to include gender justice. To do this the NCCCK has to resolve the contradiction found within the church where a gender-neutral notion of justice is upheld while the idea of gender justice and of equality between men and women continues to be viewed with suspicion. It therefore has to seek for ways to make gender justice a core priority and bring this to the attention of its membership.



#### **4.2.3 The 'How' of the NCCCK- An analysis of its approaches & /processes**

The 'how' of the NCCCK is seen through its conceptualisation of its beneficiaries and the influence this has on its formulation of policies and in its design of programme and activities and the strategies adopted in the implementation of such programmes and activities.

The NCCCK has a rich and long history through which little but significant changes have taken place with regard to its approaches and strategies. This has seen the NCCCK evolve from being basically a charitable and welfare organisation to relief and rehabilitation and on to its current role as a development organisation. Through these shifts the NCCCK has also changed its strategies from welfare to community development from a social work perspective and from direct implementation of projects to the current empowerment or facilitation strategy<sup>30</sup>. Here we will however restrict ourselves to the historical evolution of its work from women to gender.

NCCCK's involvement with the marginalised in the Kenyan society has always involved women. What has changed over time is the way women are viewed and hence the strategies used and the programmes that the organisation has undertaken to address their issues and concerns. It is however of importance to note here that a characteristic of these changes within the NCCCK has been a lagging 'hangover' over previous conceptualisation and approaches towards women which have meant that women and their role in church and society has never been fully defined or identified. This has therefore seen competing discourses and at times conflicting strategies and programmes. For example, the organisation still has some programmes with a welfare orientation towards women like its "Women and Children in Stress" Project while the rest of the organisation has moved towards an enabling or empowerment approach.

As already shown, the changes in the organisation's conceptualisation of women have been as a result of influences from various factors some of which were identified in chapters two and three. These included changes in the dominant development discourses, religious discourse on women as well as changes within the surrounding social-cultural discourses. This in essence means that the definition of the role of women in church and society has been a shifting one. These changes have seen women change from being victims and dependants as they were conceptualised by the welfare approach and hence its influence on the initial programmes of the NCCCK which as we saw looked at women primarily in relation to their family and the role they performed within this social institution. This was followed by women being viewed as needy both spiritually and materially as

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<sup>30</sup> In the present strategy, the NCCCK does not directly implement development projects but supports its members with material and technical support to undertake this role.

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well as in a sense of needing to be integrated into development which marked the WID approach. Once more this conceptualisation influenced the NCCCK as was evident with the initial programmes of its Women's Desk which included support for women's income generating projects as promoted by the WID approach. Later, the Programme appropriated the redistributive strand of WID and the issue of women's empowerment became of utmost concern. Unlike the earlier conceptualisation of women as dependents, women were now seen as having agency and consequently the need to empower them so as enable them to play an active role in defining their place and role in church and society and thus in the development arena. This shift in conceptualisation was both influenced by changes in religious discourse concerning women and was evidently given a boost by the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women 1987-1998.

Focussing on women without focussing on forces that marginalised them was soon found to be inadequate as far as changing women's subordinate status was concern. This led to a shift in discourse from WID to GAD and once more the NCCCK also shifted by replacing its Women's Programme with a Gender Desk.

This shift as we have already shown has however not been marked by a clear departure from WID and hence the already alluded phenomenon of a lagging 'hangover'. Despite the shift the organisation still remains at a point of intention as the gender approach is yet to permeate and take root in the organisation.

**Table 3. The 'how' of the NCCCK**

The 'How' of the NCCCK	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Approaches, strategies	Innovative Usually participatory	Ad hoc approach towards Women / gender  Strong 'sectionalism' Culture	Open to change from external influences	Heavy reliance on the goodwill of church leadership and funders, some of who may not be sympathetic to the GAD approach

NCCCK's programmatic approach has in the past been innovative and 'daring'. This led the NCCCK to being described as a 'path finder' and 'pace setter' in Kenya's development arena, (Kinyanjui, 1981 cited by Chepkwony, 1987). Its work with refugees and its innovative approach and programmes for out of school youth have been replicated by other development actors including the government over the years. Unfortunately this innovative and path finding aspect of NCCCK's work has never emerged in its work with women where the NCCCK has tended 'to be a dancer and not the

drummer', often dancing to the tune of 'others' but out of tune with women's true aspirations. The late shift from WID to GAD in 1996 by the NCCCK and given the fact that the GAD approach had been in existence for over a decade before the NCCCK made the shift is a sign of hesitation which needs further investigation.

#### **4.3 Seeing the 'Gendered' Side of the NCCCK**

The above characteristics of the 'who, the why and the how' of the organisation show the NCCCK as a highly gendered organisation reflecting a strong male bias but one that has a great potential for change. The present state however is one which have contributed to the situation where the issue of gender has at best only attracted superficial attention (limited to the creation of a Gender Desk) without an in-depth analysis of the root causes of gender discrepancies and hence women's subordination and their continued marginalisation. This gendered nature of the NCCCK is very well and symbolically reflected in the composition of its Executive Committee membership( its governing structure) which shows a clear male domination. This in turn has given rise to or compounded the gender blindness of the organisation. To capture this we will look at the NCCCK through some of the areas identified earlier which are used to reveal the gendered nature of organisations particularly in the following areas:

- Authority structures/ images and symbols
- Organisational culture
- Participants
- Incentive and accountability structures

We will therefore take the composition of the Executive Committee as shown in the chart below as our point of reference in analysing the gendered nature of the NCCCK. This is chosen due to the following reasons:

- a) The committee is a reflection of leadership within the NCCCK membership,
- b) It is also a reflection of the Kenyan Society from which the NCCCK and its membership draws its followers,
- c) It is the highest decision-making body of the organisation,
- d) It greatly influences the issues/ discourses given priority and prominence within the organisation
- e) Its statements and utterances are credited as 'authority' influencing the thinking of its entire membership as well as the rest of the Kenyan society.
- f) It also captures the tension within the NCCCK as a male dominated organisation but one which has in principle made a commitment to the gender approach.

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**Table 4. Composition of the NCCCK's Executive Committee**

Category	Male	Female	Total
Officers of the Council	5	0	5
Regional Representatives	23	21	44
Sub-committees of the Executive committee: Finance, Personnel & Programme	2	1	3
Chairpersons of Unit / Departmental Advisory Committees	3	2	5
Group B: Member churches	76	4	80
Group C <sup>31</sup> :	2	5	7
Associate Members	8	1	9
Ex-Officio: Trustees, Patrons	8	2	10
Senior Management Team	5	4	9
Regional Coordinators	9	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>181</b>

*Source: Membership List of NCCCK Executive Committee, 1999*

The above composition of the NCCCK Executive Committee shows the NCCCK as a male dominated organisation particularly at its decision-making levels with men forming 77.90% and women a mere 22.09%. The above scenario gives us a catch 22 situation in which male domination at this crucial level gives the NCCCK its gendered character which in turn goes on to perpetuate the same pattern of male dominance. Here below we identify some of the features which show this gendered nature of the NCCCK borrowing from a combination of areas drawn from the Goetz (1997) and Macdonald et al (1997) criteria earlier.

#### **4.3.1 Gendered authority structures**

The church as we have seen is a highly patriarchal institution in which men's authority and domination over hierarchies, command and control systems is the norm. Of the 26 member churches of the NCCCK none has a woman as its executive head. This is captured in the table in the church membership category where we have a total of 76 men to 4 women<sup>32</sup>. Similarly only one of its 9 associate members, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has a woman for a head. Of the nine regional coordinators of the NCCCK none is a woman.

<sup>31</sup> The scale 'C' category of the executive committee is composed of professional persons chosen by the committee to give professional guidance on various matters.

<sup>32</sup> The member churches are represented in this committee by their executive heads or their selected representatives. This shows that only four women have so far been selected by their churches to represent them in the committee.

The above table shows the marginal state of women's representation in the authority structures of the NCCK. Dominance by male as is the case above is known to allow for men's forms of expression and the gendering of authority symbols within an organisation (Goetz, 1997). This as we shall show below impacts on an organisation's culture, symbols and images and ultimately on its priorities, programmes and approaches.

NCCK's Executive Committee meetings which take place quarterly sets the tempo for the organisation by articulating what the membership views as priority areas of concern. The domination of men in this committee has often led to identification of areas which, have always been associated with the public sphere and with men as the pressing issues and have often revolved around issues related to politics and economics. (Minutes of the Executive Committee meetings 1995-98). Gender issues which are often viewed as 'private' matters have therefore not been given prominence in such meetings. They have instead been confined in the lower levels of decision-making within the organisation i.e. at the Unit Advisory Committee level giving validity to the metaphor of 'glass ceiling' for women and their gender concerns.

#### **4.3.2 Gendered organisational culture / images and symbols**

The expression of an organisation's culture is reflected through its images and symbols which show what is valued and held in esteem by the organisation. As shown by the table, the NCCK through the composition of its leadership is inherently masculinised and hierarchical. This in turn has contributed to making the organisation inherently male biased. The domination of men in church leadership has been translated to an organisational culture which equates leadership with the male giving rise to male as the symbol and image of authority. A prominent factor accounting for this is the preeminence of patriarchy inherent in Christianity as well as in African traditions and practices. This has therefore institutionalised a 'male gaze' within the NCCK which has impaired its sight as far as gender issues are concerned

Another aspect showing the 'genderedness' of NCCK's culture is the historical confinement of women/gender issues to Desks solely responsible for such issues (previously to the Women's Programme and currently to the Gender Desk) while the rest of the organisation only superficially integrates such concerns. This stems from what I had previously called 'my project mentality', which has resulted in sectoral boundaries being drawn preventing 'cross-pollination' of ideas and shared concern over what is seen as departmental issues across board.

At the Executive Committee level this is reflected by the presence of women whose designation in that committee is 'the women's representatives'<sup>33</sup> once more confining women's issues to women. Given the marginal numbers of women in the committee as well as the low status accorded to women on the overall, the presence of the so called women's representatives in the Executive Committee have not made significant changes in the agenda of the committee and hence the continued marginalisation of gender concerns at this level.

#### **4.3.3 Gendered Participants**

The identification of the gender of the dominant group we are told by Goetz (1997) shows whose interests an organisation is bound to serve. The table above clearly shows men as the dominant group within the NCCK leadership. This is appalling given the fact that women are in the majority within the churches in Africa (Amoah, 1995). The privileged participation of men in the organisation's leadership means that the dominant agenda of the organisation is one which is reflective of men's concerns as already shown and hence one which has resulted in the marginalisation of gender issues and even when such issues emerge they are trivialised e.g. as was done with the issues of marital rape during the 1997 General Assembly where the raising of the issue was met either with mirth coupled with hostility towards the woman who raised the concern.

#### **4.3.4 Gendered Accountability Structures**

Accountability by and large is reflected through an organisation's ability to live up to its stated mission and goals and by delivering on its promises.

The presence of various groups of stakeholders in an organisation results in what is termed by Edwards and Hulme (1995) as 'multiple accountability'. Kardam (1991) shows that organisations are often more accountable to their dominant constituency at the expense of the socially defined subordinate groups. Edward and Hulme (1995) also show that organisations accountability tend to be more upwards oriented. The NCCK had not shown a divergence from this typical behaviour of organisations. Its accountability therefore is to its membership which as we have seen is male dominated and hence there has been no concerted challenge to the NCCK to be more accountable when it comes to gender related concerns.

Male domination of NCCK's leadership coupled with a general low awareness of gender as well as emphasis on church unity have all combined to give the NCCK its gendered character. This is

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<sup>33</sup> This category of women is found within the regional representatives

reflected in the organisation's policies majority of which are either gender-neutral and hence do not attempt to disaggregate the target population nor do they address gender relations within the organisation or its membership. At best the NCK through its Women's Programme and the Gender Desk has designed some gender-specific policies through which past neglect of women's gender related needs have been acknowledged and thus the allocation of resources and the undertaking of activities geared towards improving women's access and benefit from the organisation. These policies have however not gone far enough to become transformative in that they have by and large left oppressive structures and practices such as the existing division of responsibilities intact. This has led to a situation where women from the NCK membership are well informed and aware of their subordinate status but have not been fully equipped with the necessary skills and tools to effectively challenge the church and society. This then leads us to the question of the organisation's internal capacity to institute and steer the gender approach as will be discussed below.

#### **4.3.5 Evaluation of NCK's Internal Capacity vis -a-vis Gender**

Successful institutionalisation of gender as we have already seen is a very complex task and as shown by Razavi and Miller (1995) is dependant on both external as well as internal pressure bearing on an organisation. In relating this to the NCK we will look at its internal capacity on two levels;

- a) the secretariat level: where we look at the staff capacity to articulate and advance the gender approach and,
- b) the membership level: where we assess the capacity of the churchwomen's movement to lobby and advocate for inclusion of gender issues and concern.

- **Secretariat Level**

Successful institutionalisation of gender is dependent on the existence of staff committed to the gender cause. Similarly commitment alone is not enough but needs to be accompanied by a wide range of skills including technical knowledge of the subject matter, analytical, bargaining, lobbying and advocacy skills, Kardam, (1991) cited in Razavi and Miller, (1995).

The relative 'newness' of the gender approach within the NCK has meant that the organisation has had only a limited opportunity to develop internal gender expertise with regard to the skills identified above within its staff cadre. The organisation has therefore had to rely mostly on external facilitators in this regard. This has meant that despite the commitment of its staff to the gender approach, their lack of the necessary skills and tools has impinged on their ability to translate this commitment into practice. The staff of the Gender Desk are 'recycles' from departments that

existed prior to the restructuring<sup>34</sup>. Commitment to their previous working premise is reflected in the nature of activities that the Gender Desk has instituted so far as shown by their emphasis on women as opposed to gender and in particular to women's economic empowerment. The outward bound orientation of the NCCCK which sees its programmes being directed to its membership without internal linkages between departments has meant that other staff within the organisation but outside the Gender Desk have not been targeted for gender awareness and sensitisation. Gender has thus so far remained as 'property' of the Gender Desk and by extension of the Advocacy Unit where some limited linkages have been made with the rest of the Desks within the Unit<sup>35</sup>. This is translated to low levels of gender awareness and a limited understanding of the gender approach within the organisation which leads to lack of what Razavi and Miller call internal "gender policy entrepreneurs."

The fear by the NCCCK to engage in what may be termed as doctrinal matters as shown earlier has meant that its staff have institutionalised a form of self censorship as far as issues that may rise controversy and fragmentation within its membership are concerned. This has seen NCCCK workers steer clear of radical approaches that may be deemed with disdain by the church leadership or which may bring a rift within the membership. The Women's Programme and the Gender Desk are examples of this par excellence. Both as we have seen have adopted reformatory / policies and strategies which are conservative (aimed at minimal changes without radically changing the status-quo) in nature as opposed to strategies which are by design transformatory and hence radical. Gender work has therefore so far been limited to its descriptive form which is mere scratch at the surface and has not gone deep enough to seek structural changes both within the organisation or its membership.

- **Membership Level**

*"Comparative studies of institutional response to gender have highlighted the need for sustained external pressure from an organised women's movement if institutional change is to come about" (Sawer, 1996 cited by Razavi, 1997)*

Following the above quotation, NCCCK's internal capacity to institutionalise gender can also be measured against the existence of a strong women's lobby within its membership. With this regard it is important to note that churchwomen's movement is the oldest form of women's organisation outside the traditional women's solidarity groups in the country. Most of the NCCCK's member churches have women's wings such as the Mothers Union within the Anglican Church, the

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<sup>34</sup> One from the former Women's Programme and the other from the Small Scale Business Enterprise Programme

<sup>35</sup> In addition to the Gender Desk, other Desks within the Advocacy Unit include: Public Affairs, Desk for Persons with Disabilities, Family Life Education and Peace and Reconciliation.



Woman's Guild of the Presbyterian Church, Women's Connection of the Methodist Church, etc which are almost as old as the churches ( almost 100 years old). The leadership from these groups is what formed the Women's committees of the former Women's programme as discussed earlier and what has now come to be called the Women's Network of the Gender Desk.

These groupings have played both a liberative as well as a restrictive (controlling) role as far as women and church relations are concerned. For example the Woman's Guild was very instrumental in lobbying the church to take a stand against female circumcision Njoroge, (1992). On the overall however, churchwomen's organisations have mainly focussed on women's spiritual wellbeing placing emphasis on the attributes of good Christian womanhood tailored around the wise but stereotypical woman's image found in Proverbs: 31<sup>36</sup>. With this image in mind the churchwomen's seek to assist women to become better housewives and have until quite recently acted as a control mechanism against women taking a radical stand against injustices in the family and the church.

Nevertheless, over the years there has been some significant and radical changes within the churchwomen's movement which have witnessed an emerging and growing awareness by women of their subordinate status in church and society. The creation of the Women's Desk as already stated acted as an energiser to churchwomen's movement and led to a relative radicalisation of the churchwomen's movement. I call this relative radicalisation since the churchwomen's movement has not very actively engaged itself with the question of power relations and thus has not outrightly challenged the power structures which marginalise women both within the church and in the society at large. Nonetheless this movement can be credited for contributing to the changing situation of women in the church which it achieved through some lobbying and advocacy. By and large however, the movement has adopted what Razavi and Miller, 1995, call the incremental strategy which involves getting women and their concerns into the existing structures without radically overturning the said structures.

Outside the churchwomen's movement, the arena is marked by low gender awareness and sensitivity within the church leadership. Majority church leaders have equated gender sensitivity to

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<sup>36</sup> Proverbs 32: 10-31, Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is above rubbles. The heart of her husband safely trusts in her, so that he shall have no need to spoil. She will do him good and not evil all days of her life. She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships: she brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still dark and gives food to her household and a portion to her maidens. She considers a field and she buys it, with the fruits of her hands she plants a vineyard. She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She knows her merchandise is good: her candle does not go out at night. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretches out her hand to the poor: yea she reaches forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes herself coverings of tapestry: her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes fine linen, and sells it: and delivers girdles to the merchants. Strength and honour are her clothing: and she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom: and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed, her husband also praises her. Many daughters have done virtuously but you excel them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain but a woman that fears the Lord shall be praised. Give her the fruits of her hands and let her own works praise her in the gates.

having a women's desk / wing (which most NCCCK member churches have by now established). But like their counterpart Desk/ bureaux in the secular world, the desks are under staffed, under funded and often marginalised.

We therefore see that the NCCCK is still very limited as far as its internal capacity with respect to skills and a strong lobby to advance gender is concerned. In the following section we will try and see how the organisation has fared with regard to its relationship with external forces / influences and if this compensates for the internal deficit identified above.

#### **4.3.6 NCCCK's Responsiveness to External Influences**

Organisations like human beings are very much influenced by their surroundings. In this section we will analyze the influence of external forces which have impacted on the NCCCK's capacity to institutionalise gender. Such forces are divided into:

- (a) forces within the local scene: which include the influence of the Kenyan government as well as the surrounding social-cultural environment and
- (b) forces within the international scene: which include donor influence as well as the influence of their ecumenical partners

- **The Local Scene**

The gendered nature of the NCCCK can not be solely attributed to the internal dynamics identified above. It is also as result of NCCCK's interaction with the surrounding social cultural / political and economic environment. In this regard the NCCCK mirrors the Kenyan society's views on women / gender issues. This is seen against a backdrop of Kenya's government slowness to respond favourably to women particularly when it comes to their involvement in leadership and decision making bodies. The Kenyan society continues to manifest high patriarchal ideology which has resulted in men's domination in all spheres of influence and in women's internalisation of their subordinate status. A quick look at Kenya's political leadership reveals a dearth of women in positions of influence. Of the 192 elected members of parliament only four are women while of the nominated twelve only three are women. This is further compounded by the fact that the Kenyan government has not seen it fit to appoint any of these women to full cabinet position. This paucity of women in Kenyan politics, we are told by Nzomo, (1991: 233) "merely reflects and results from the secondary place to which they are assigned by customs and attitudes of our society". A similar picture runs through the rest of the political, social and economic establishments where women continue to be found only within the rank and file and hardly in the leadership.

The Kenyan government's treatment of women is characterised by patronism, manipulation and exploitation, (Nzomo, 1991) and this treatment has come to be reflected in most public dealings with women in all spheres in spite of the contrary rhetoric. This has resulted in a hostile policy environment as far as gender issues are concerned. For example, Kenya still remains without a national gender policy to date. The above scenario could have been improved had Kenya had a strong women's movement. Unfortunately, the women's movement in Kenya is fragmented and has been open to co-option and political manipulation by the male leadership Nzomo (1991). This has contributed to the creation of a national culture where women's issues and concerns are deemed of secondary substance and this has had bearing on the general thinking within the country. NCCCK's lukewarm response to gender issues can thus also be attributed to the above given scenario.

On the positive side, we have seen that the NCCCK has very much been influenced in its conceptualisation of women and in its programmatic approach and strategies towards their issues by dominant development discourses of the day. The shifts that the organisation has made over the years as far as women are concerned can to a large extent be credited to this influence which has come to the NCCCK through the various studies it commissioned, and from its interaction with development and academic practitioners. This is clearly seen in the shift from women to gender which came about from recommendations made by the Enabling Consultancy Phase II of 1995 which directed the NCCCK's restructuring process.

- **The International Scene**

Other key players who are of importance as far as external influence on the NCCCK is concerned are its donors and various other ecumenical partners. The NCCCK gets the bulk of its funding from such ecumenical partners, majority of who are from Europe. These donors have traditionally supported the work of the Women's Programme and of the Gender Desk over the years but have steered clear of making gender considerations a standard criteria while funding the rest of the organisation. Thus the NCCCK has not faced serious donor pressure to institutionalise gender , an aspect which has worked with other organisations (see Holzner, 1996, Macdonald et al. 1997) .

Having said this there has however been some positive external influence on the NCCCK as far as gender is concerned. This has included influence from its contact and networking experience with other ecumenical organisations which have gender justice as an over riding consideration for their work such as the United Church of Canada which has shared its gender Justice statement and guidelines with the NCCCK. Interaction with the other ecumenical organisations have also challenged the NCCCK in its work with women such as its partnership with the World Council of

Churches which gave the global church the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. On the continent ecumenical organisations such as, the All African Conference of Churches and Fellowship of Christian Councils in Eastern and Southern Africa (FOCCESA) have also had a positive influence on the work of the NCCCK. Their involvement with gender issues has been a constant challenge to the NCCCK to match such efforts. Their Women's Desk / Gender Departments have also been role models for the NCCCK and have also offered fora for exchange of ideas much of which have nurtured the corresponding Desks within the NCCCK.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Institutionalising gender is a process and not an end. It is also a very long process which entails transformation of not only the institutionalising organisation but also individual stakeholders of the organisation. It is a personal as well as a political process.

From the above analysis we see that the NCCCK has taken the first step in this process but the journey is still long and the process so far has been rather slow and encumbered with contradictions and tensions. These contradictions and tensions are hinged on the following:

- **The NCCCK is 'Capsuled between Christian and Local Patriarchal Discourses**

The NCCCK as a Christian organisation has not escaped the patriarchy imbedded in Christianity. This type of patriarchy has given men a privileged position over women and led to the marginalisation of women's issues and concerns from the paramount agenda of the church Njoroge, (1992). It also justifies and 'naturalises' women's subordinate position as God given. This has also led women to internalise their subordinate position and to be complacent with the existing status quo therefore blunting their role for self-advocacy.

The NCCCK is also caught up within a 'local' patriarchal order which allocates men the public sphere and women the private a fact which shields women's / gender issues from entering the public arena for discourse. Caught up in this intersection of patriarchies which is manifested in the areas identified earlier as well as in personal practices makes the institutionalisation of gender a monumental task. How do you move an agenda on matters deemed private in a public organisation?

- **The NCCCK is a Gendered Organisation**

The patriarchal nature of the church compounded by the patriarchal nature of the African society has made most Christian organisations in Africa a male preserve. Once more this has

not escaped the NCCCK which as we have already seen is a very male dominated organisation. The impact of this has been the invisibilisation and exclusion of women, their concerns, experiences and perspectives. The presence of the few token women found in its leadership and decision –making organs have made the organisation complacent as far as serious involvement of women is concerned. This is compounded by the fact that the majority of the rank and file in the churches in Kenya are women but the church has settled for numbers and not quality involvement of women. How then does one transform this silent majority into an active and participating membership?

- **The NCCCK has a 'my project' mentality**

The institutionalisation of gender does not allow for 'sole ranging'. It involves the building of alliances and linkages. This has been problematic within the NCCCK where there has been a history of 'owning' activities and approaches by individuals and programmes leading to strong 'sectorism' and sectionalism. This as we have seen has made internal linkages of issues problematic and has confined gender issues only to the Gender Desk . How will the NCCCK break out of this 'my project' mentality mode and allow for general ownership of concerns and processes?

- **The NCCCK Lacks Expertise in Gender and Development**

Much of the slowness in the process can also be attributed to the general limited gender expertise:-knowledge and skills of the GAD approach within the organisation. The organisation therefore has not developed the necessary technical knowledge, tools and skills needed to enhance the gender approach. For this reason the organisation has applied a very general and descriptive use of gender which has not gone far enough to challenge the status quo. This however is hidden behind the fact that there exists a Gender Desk and hence the assumption that gender issues are well taken care of. It is however important to note that since successful institutionalisation of gender calls for change of attitudes as well as for political /goodwill of those holding and controlling the instruments of power; book or theoretical expertise alone will not suffice. Important as it is, technical know-how needs to be accompanied by a willingness and commitment to change as individuals and as an organisation How then can the NCCCK be made into an organisation willing and committed to change from a gender perspective?

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The above section has traced the NCCCK's involvement with women and or gender issues over time. It also captured some of the factors that have limited the organisation's ability to effectively institutionalise gender. In this we saw that internal as well as external factors have acted as a hindrance to the process.

Analysis of the organisation's mandate, ideology and goals however revealed that the NCCCK's mission can be further enriched by its inclusion of gender justice among core areas of concern.

The 'who, the why and the how' components of the NCCCK discussed earlier and the areas that show its gendered nature reveal an organisation that is struggling and groaning in search for harmony within itself as far as gender is concerned. It is hoped that this struggle will herald a new dawn in which the NCCCK emerges as a champion for gender justice as it has done with other social concerns. This however can only be achieved by shifting the issue from the confines of the Gender Desk to a discourse level within the entire organisation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FROM DESK TO DISCOURSE: PUTTING GENDER JUSTICE ON THE AGENDA AND MAKING IT A PRACTICE

#### 5.1 Introduction

The limited institutionalisation of gender within the NCCCK stems from multiple factors as shown and is manifested in some of the features identified in the preceding chapter. These are however symptoms of the deeply embedded problem of power relations between men and women inherent in most societies.

Within the NCCCK the dynamic aspect of power and the way it controls not only individuals but also discourses is seen in the way that women have been conceptualised and how this has influenced the overall discourse on women and on gender within the organisation. It is also evinced in the self-imposed censorship by NCCCK staff who shy away from challenging the prevailing discourse which emphasises church unity over and above the problematic conceptualisation of women and marginal involvement with in gender related concerns.

Institutions such as the church play an important role in giving certain discourses their institutional base, Weedon (1987:109). This way, certain ways of thinking and practices are institutionalised within the very psyche of persons and/ or the organisations they form. As already shown the church global as well as specific churches in Kenya have institutionalised patriarchy as a dominant discourse.

Within the NCCCK we see the embodiment of certain if not all characteristics of patriarchy. We see male domination of structures of power, we see male interests, perspectives and experiences given prominence and hence see men as the dominant group. In an organisation so skewed towards the interests of one sex, gender interests of the sex not so well represented get not only marginalised but this very process of marginalisation is 'naturalised' or given a divine rationalisation. With regard to some NCCCK member churches doctrinal 'excuses' and a male biased interpretation of Scriptures has been used to justify the continued marginalisation of women. This as we have seen has impacted on the NCCCK where in the form of a 'silent discourse' has led the organisation to steering away from issues that may 'offend' some of its membership.

Having said this we however have to bear in mind that discourses are not static nor are they permanent. The establishment of the Women' Desk in 1986 and its evolution to a Gender Desk ten years later in a way shows the emergence of a counter discourse or as we saw in Foucault's

terminology a reverse discourse<sup>37</sup>. This means that by and large there is a slow but sure move away from a totally encompassing patriarchal discourse. Churchwomen's organisations as well as the growing prominence of feminist theological thought has given this move a boost as has already been discussed.

For successful institutionalisation of gender, the NCCCK will thus have to raise above the patriarchal discourse by further and fully developing the emerging counter/reverse discourse which takes into consideration the needs, interests, perspectives and experiences of all God's people.

Such a discourse is not counter to fundamental Christian teaching. If anything it is central to Christianity but has historically been eclipsed as we have seen by patriarchy. This is a call to going back to the discourse of justice. This is the discourse of the prophetic paradigm discussed earlier. It is also the discourse which was historically reflected in the life and practice of Jesus Christ, the architect of the Church. This was the discourse of the early church. In reverting to the discourse of justice ( from a gender perspective), the NCCCK will become true to its mandate and that of the church in general of facilitating the attainment of life in all its abundance for all God's people and not just for those with power and privilege

Justice as a theological concept as already shown means putting relations right between people and between people and God. Putting such relations right will entail addressing gender relations between women and men which means addressing the power relations between the two categories as well as within the categories.

The NCCCK being a Christian organisation will have to combine a theological approach to gender but also borrow 'tactics' which have worked with the secular organisations. In the section below I will identify some of the ways or means through which the NCCCK can build on to shift gender from the confines of one desk to a discourse level

## **5.2 UNUTILISED SPACE: FACTORS TO ENHANCE THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF GENDER JUSTICE WITHIN THE NCCCK.**

As already stated earlier, the process of institutionalising gender in an organisation is not a one-person process. It involves a concerted effort of all the stakeholders of the organisation. I will therefore not allocate myself the responsibility of giving advice in the form of recommendations on how this can be achieved. It is my hope that the process of identifying ways and means of enhancing the institutionalisation of gender justice will be continued with my colleagues in the



organisation and with the involvement of the other stakeholders. What I offer below are areas on which the NCK can build on to further the process. As will be shown these areas span and address the Kenyan context, institutional and ethical factors as well as the issues of empowerment and consciousness raising, and include but not exhaustively:

#### **5.2.1 Changing Social Cultural Environment and the Emerging Women's Lobby within the NCK.**

As we have seen successful institutionalisation of gender in an organisation is influenced by the existing social-cultural environment. While this maybe so, we are aware that this environment is not static. Within the Kenyan context there is an emerging albeit slow awareness of the impact of gender on social and cultural mores of a people and there is a growing willingness (mostly among women) to change the social relations to reflect women's issues and concerns. There is also a growing embryonic but articulate women's lobby within the church which is calling for gender justice. The NCK can therefore play a role in developing and accompanying these forces in this quest. In so doing the organisation will be 'killing two birds with one stone'. In that it will be legitimising its involvement with gender issues and concerns as well as building alliances that will assist the organisation in its quest for just gender relations. To influence further awareness of the issues at hand the NCK needs to intensify its gender sensitisation and awareness creation work particularly targeting the church leadership as well as other community leaders so as to change the prevailing religious, social and cultural discourses. It will also have to heighten its mobilisation and conscientisation of the churchwomen so as to empower them for self-advocacy.

#### **5.2.2 Increasing Gender Expertise within the NCK**

Three years since the establishment of the Gender Desk has witnessed growing acquisition of some gender expertise within the Desk. This has come through various workshops and training undertaken by the concerned staff.<sup>37</sup> Learning has also come through experimentation (trial and error). This expertise will however be of limited use if it continues to be confined within the Gender Desk alone. Ways and means of sharing this knowledge with the rest of the organisation need to be of priority concern for the Desk as well as the willingness of the other departments to appropriate and make use the expertise emerging within the Desk. Acquisition of knowledge and skills is a dynamic process, there is no end to

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<sup>37</sup> Reverse Discourse is very similar to the concept of heterodox in P. Bourdieu's work (1972). (English translation 1977).

<sup>38</sup> My training here included.

learning. This therefore calls the NCCCK to continue building the professional capacity of its staff to meet the challenges involved in successful institutionalisation of gender justice.

### **5.2.3 The On Going Restructuring Process**

The on-going restructuring process is an apt opportunity to institute change. This is already in process as the situation has created an environment in which the culture of the organisation is slowly changing. This has witnessed a growing sense of 'togetherness' which is challenging the previous 'sole ranging' of departments and individuals. This needs to be nurtured and advanced so that departmental concerns become the concern of the entire organisation. This in turn will contribute towards closer identification and linkage of issues and concerns which have previously been confined to Desks. The NCCCK is therefore challenged to make gender justice a across cutting theme and practice in the entire organisation and should seek ways of incorporating this in its day to day operations and practices. This process also needs to be accompanied by a 'personal' willingness and attitude change. In addition there is need for overall incorporation of gender considerations in the organisation's policies and practices.

### **5.2.4 The Enabling Environment Created by the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.**

Of the most energising force that have 'rocked' the church in recent years has been the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1987-1998. In addition to bringing to the church's attention the plight of women, the 'decade acted as a mobiliser and consciousness raiser for women in particular and other progressive persons (some men and youth) within the churches. The decade in a way is what has given the already mentioned counter-discourse its momentum. A discourse which is aptly captured by the words of Oduyoye speaking at the end of the decade festival which was held in Harare, Zimbabwe in December 1998, where she said:

"We come together to struggle against the marginalisation of women from synods and councils that determine the ethos of the churches that baptised us.  
We come together puzzled by the question, "And where do women come in?"  
We come together to say: "We do not play roles in the church, we are participants."  
We come to say: "No" to the absence of women's voices in Christian theology..."  
(The Decade Festival Report, 1998:58)

The 'decade' challenged the churches to free them selves from sexist practices, theology and teachings that marginalised and oppressed women. The 'decade' gave the women space, tools and the skills needed to bring women's issues (of violence, poverty, marginalisation, etc,) to the attention of the institutional church. The decade' can therefore be credited to having succeeded in breaking the silence on the 'question of women' in the

churches globally. Given the environment created within the church by the 'decade', the NCCCK can ride on this momentum to further advance dialogue within the church on gender issues.

### **5.2.5 Feminist Theology as a Counter Force**

Recent years have seen the growth of feminist theology as a counter discourse to the orthodox male biased theology as discussed earlier. This is of importance to the NCCCK since as we have seen its slow institutionalisation of gender can also be attributed to the orthodox male biased interpretation of Scriptures by some of its membership. To counter, this the NCCCK needs to support women to acquire theological education as well as to lobby theological institutions to include feminist theology in their curricula. This is a long term strategy that will not only see women rise in church leadership (which is currently reserved for trained theologians) but will also raise gender awareness amongst graduates from such institutions and hence change their thinking.

### **5.2.6 Expanding the Link Between NCCCK's Theological Mandate and Commitment to Justice to include Gender Justice**

The NCCCK as we have already shown is heir to a tradition that upholds justice as one of its central tenets. Through this tradition the NCCCK has come to be viewed as a champion for justice and just practices within the Kenyan society. To be true to the total cause of justice the NCCCK needs to link this with a quest for gender justice. This need not be hard given its theological mandate which is the facilitation of the attainment of life in all its fullness. This life is promised to all regardless of sex or gender.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion we see that successful institutionalisation of gender in any organisation is a very context as well as time specific exercise. There is no blue print nor should there be, to which all organisations have to faithfully adhere. However, for a Christian organisation like the NCCCK, the concept of justice should be the guiding principle. Not the 'blind' justice of 'balancing scales' as propagated by lawyers not the distributive justice that is advanced by economists but Justice that sees gender as a mitigating factor. The discourse of gender justice has the capacity to act as the bridge between the radical approach which calls people (particularly women) concerned with challenging patriarchy to leave the church and reformists who still believe in transforming the institution and the organisations that stem from it from within.

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The concept of gender justice also has the potential to free the GAD approach from its current position where it has been compromised by the dominant neo-liberal discourse which has seen it reduced to analysing women's and men's economic and social roles or what others have called its 'Moserisation'. It will also give back to the GAD approach its cutting edge which has been blunted by attempts to make it 'safe' by conforming and making it accountable to the powers that be. Gender justice may in fact lead on to a new approach all together which would go by the name GWAD (Gender, Women and Development). This approach will in addition to recognising the social construction of women and men to females and males and the power dynamics that this construction entails, will also bring back women into the picture as a category that still needs special and particular attention by paying specific attention to their sexual oppression. There is therefore need for further development of the concept of gender justice bearing in mind that gender justice is not a general concept but one that is specific and contextual though having a universal appeal.

I wish to end with the words of Rev. Samuel Kobia, the second African General Secretary of the NCCK who once said " The search for a peaceful, just and environmentally and socially sustainable society is a journey that the church is called to make. This is the pilgrimage of all God's people" (Kobia, 1989). To which I add this is the process that the NCCK is called to institutionalise by upholding gender justice.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ***THE ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN***

#### ***1987-1998***

Women constitute the largest majority in the Churches world- wide. This statistic and the fact that women in Churches have started and run their own women's associations and fellowships with little interference from their male counterparts hides the fact that women continue to be marginalised from the mainstream of the Church.

Their overwhelming majority becomes a minority the higher the level of Church hierarchy and the number of women in positions of hierarchical responsibility is insignificant. Their contributions to the affairs of the Church remain at the level of service provision and most Churches still persist in upholding doctrines and practices that discriminate against women and women's perspectives and experiences are found on the borders of the Church's life and history.

In an effort to redress the above and to ensure women's full and active participation in the Church, the World Council of Churches (WCC) designated the years 1988-1998 as the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.

The aims of the Decade were:

- To empower women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their Church.
- To affirm through shared leadership and decision making, theology and spirituality, the decisive contributions of women in Churches and communities.
- To give visibility to women's perceptions and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace and integrity of creation.
- To enable the Churches to free themselves from racism, sexism, classism and from teaching that discriminate against women.
- To encourage the Churches to take action in solidarity with women.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Decade Objectives got from a WCC Ecumenical Decade pamphlet

## APPENDIX 2

### NCCK'S AUTHORITY STRUCTURES

Figure 1- Membership Level

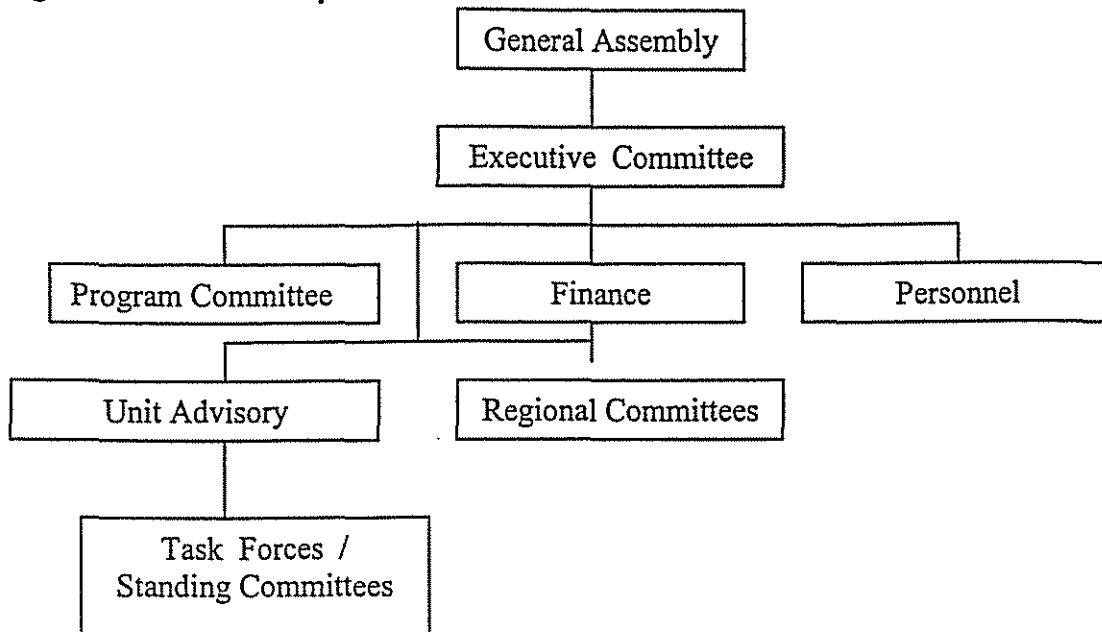
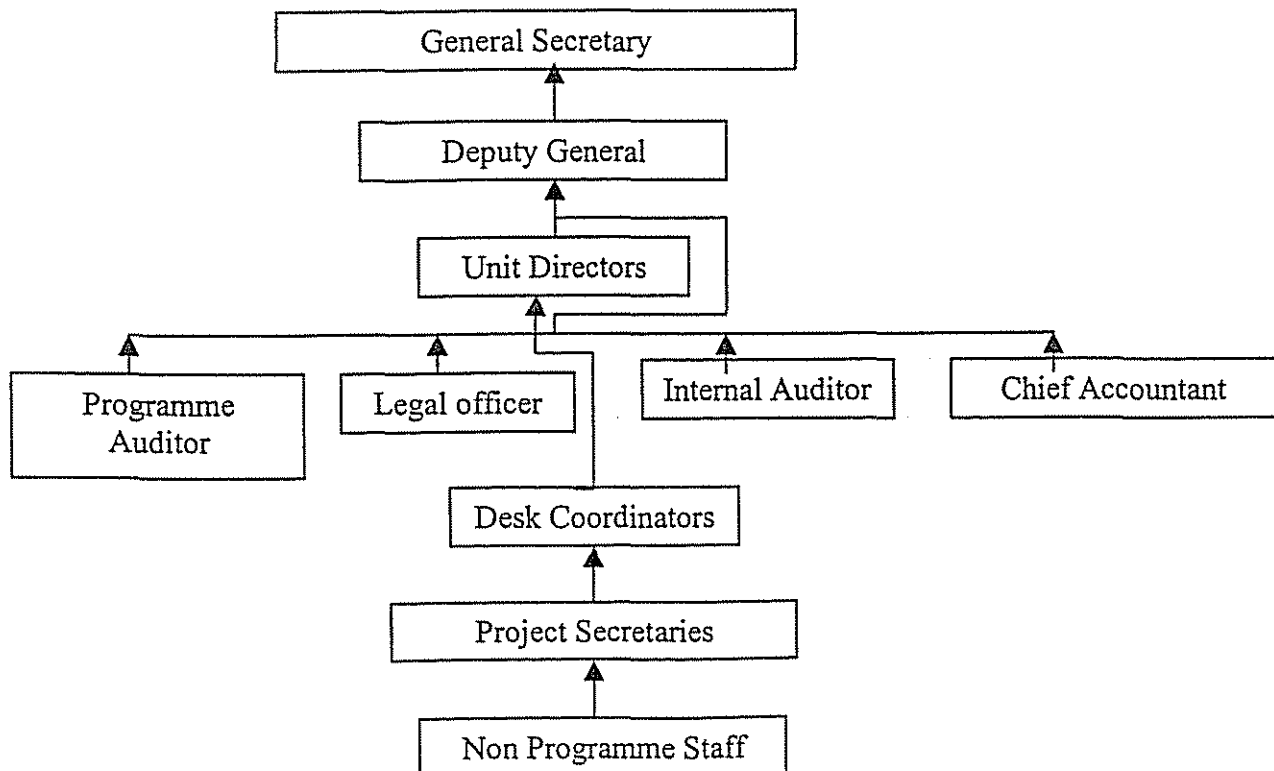


Figure 2- Secretariat Level



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **List of NCKK Members**

#### **Member Churches:**

1. African Brotherhood Church
2. African Christian Churches and Schools
3. African Church of the Holy Spirit
4. African Interior Church
5. African Israel Nineveh Church
6. Anglican Church of Kenya
7. Church of Africa Sinai Mission
8. Coptic Orthodox Church
9. East African Yearly Meeting of Friends ( Quakers)
10. Episcopal Church of Africa
11. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya
12. Kenya Assemblies of God
13. Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church
14. Kenya United Independent Churches
15. Kenya Mennonite Church
16. Lyahuka Church of East Africa
17. Maranatha Mission
18. Methodist Church in Kenya
19. National Independent Church of Africa
20. Overcoming Faith Centre Church of Kenya
21. Pentecostal Evangelist Fellowship of Kenya
22. Presbyterian Church of East Africa
23. Reformed Church of East Africa
24. Salvation Army
25. Scriptural Holiness Mission
26. Zion Harvest Mission

#### **Associate Members**

1. Bible Society of Kenya
2. Christian Churches Educational Association
3. St. Paul's United Theological College
4. Young Men's Christian Association
5. Young Women's Christian Association
6. Kenya Students Christian Fellowship
7. Public Law Institute
8. Christian Health Association of Kenya
9. African Evangelistic Enterprise

#### **Fraternal Associate Members**

1. World Vision
2. Trans World Radio
3. Trinity Fellowship
4. Fellowship of Christian Unions
5. Daystar University
6. Church of East African Union (Seventh Day)

Source: 54<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly Report, 1998

