



Transformational Leadership of Women in a Post-COVID-19 World

Concept Note

Transformational leadership is the principle animating a leader who works with teams to identify necessary change, creates a vision to guide positive changes through motivation and encouragement, and implements tasks and responsibilities for transformation together with members of a group or in a community. Transformational leaders are enthusiastic, passionate, and involved in the process of metamorphosing a situation. Transformational leaders are those who have deeply embedded values, support collective concerns, and are capable of achieving extraordinary results. Wherever they work, women demonstrate the characteristics of transformational leadership. Women can play an active role in developing and inspiring changes, as women's leadership in all walks of life results in better outcomes.

The transformational leadership of women emphasises teamwork and authentic communication, rather than a mere accomplishment of goals. Such leadership promotes cooperation and collaboration rather than command and control. Evidence has shown that organisations led by inclusive leadership teams make effective decisions that deliver better results. The world today needs more of the skills that women bring to the table, such as the ability to collaborate, connect, empathise, and communicate.

Women's leadership can be beneficial for not only women and girls themselves, but for society as a whole—delivering progress in areas vital for growth and development, such as health, education, infrastructure, good governance, and the strengthening of democracy. The potential of women as leaders and change-makers cannot be undermined and must be fully realised. The transformation of society or community cannot be achieved if half the population is not wholly engaged in change processes, especially in decision-making. There can be no parity without diversity.

A significant barrier or challenge is the societal and political perception of the leadership of women. Although women and men are capable of good and genuine leadership, gender stereotypes persist. The gender differences in leadership effectiveness (what it takes to perform well) are out of sync with gender differences in leadership emergence (what it takes to make it to the top). Many paradoxes exist in the expectations of women's leadership—they are expected to be demanding yet caring, authoritative yet participatory, advocating for themselves yet serving others, and maintaining distance yet being approachable. Women are held to unusually higher standards and accountability than most men.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic posed even greater challenges to the leadership and participation of women. The deep social and economic impacts of the global crisis on the health, livelihoods, and wellbeing of women and girls have illustrated the urgency of placing women at the core of recovery and long-term development efforts, and of providing leadership opportunities to ensure their holistic empowerment, protection, employment, and education. Women need to have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives, from the international level to the grassroots.

However, the pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of women's leadership—the leadership provided by the women heads of state has been greatly appreciated around the world. Qualities such as integrity, empathy, and clear communication are helping women respond more effectively to the

pandemic. Women policymakers prioritise issues of inclusivity, which benefit the most vulnerable in society, leaving no one behind.

Women leaders and women's organisations have demonstrated their skills, knowledge, and networks to effectively lead the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Today, there is a higher acceptance of the different experiences, perspectives, and skills of women, who make invaluable and irreplaceable contributions to decisions, policies, and laws that work better for all.

The words of the United Nations Secretary-General, "Gender equality and women's rights are essential to getting through this pandemic together, to recovering faster, and to building a better future for everyone," are a strong reminder that our collective quest to achieve gender equality is a critical precondition for solving all types of global problems, including COVID-19, in a manner that leaves no one behind.

The observance of International Women's Day every year aims to recognise the remarkable contributions and hard work of women and girls around the globe for a more equal and just world. It also highlights the importance of creating conditions for the elimination of discrimination against women and for their full and equal participation in society.

In conjunction with International Women's Day on 8 March 2021, the CCA will organise an online webinar and use the platform to engage with churches, inviting them to be in partnership with like-minded groups in wider society for change and to work for the prevention of violence and exploitation of women during the pandemic as well as for the future. The goal is to create awareness regarding the necessity of affirming women's leadership while stressing equal participation and gender equality.

Objectives

- To invite people of all ages to discuss the transformational leadership of women in church and society and equip them to be agents for change and to work for gender equality;
- To emphasise the urgent need for women's leadership in public and private spheres of life; and,
- To call upon the CCA's constituencies to support initiatives for women's leadership and empowerment.