



Christian Conference of Asia

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CCA's Statement on International Women's Day–2021

“Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World”

Around the world, we now see greater participation of women in all walks of life. The leadership of women who serve, care, and provide leadership during the COVID-19 crisis—as healthcare workers, innovators, community organisers, and even as leaders of some nations—in combatting the pandemic is admirable. The crisis situation that has paralysed the world during the past one year has underscored both the exemplary role and contributions of women in serving humanity in every context. Women leaders and women's organisations have proved that they are skilful and knowledgeable and can contribute efficiently in COVID-19 responses and recovery efforts. Today, their contributions and leadership are more accepted and recognised than ever before. However, women continue to remain underrepresented in leadership positions in almost all sectors, including churches and faith-based organisations.

Each year, International Women's Day (IWD) serves as an opportunity to recognise and appreciate the contribution and leadership of women and how they have shaped the societies, communities and the world. The theme of International Women's Day (IWD)–2021, 'Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World', is very significant in the contemporary context. The focus of this theme hails the remarkable contributions by women in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also in line with the significance of the theme of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

The leadership of women should be recognised as “transformational” given its role in developing and inspiring change for the good of all. Qualities of empathy, authentic communication, and teamwork, coupled with resilience, respect, and enthusiasm are the hallmarks of the leadership of women. Such leadership promotes cooperation and collaboration rather than command and control, benefitting not a select few but society as a whole.

In the quest for ensuring gender equality, representation is critical. The leadership of women in all situations today is urgent and necessary; no significant or meaningful progress can be made if women who constitute more than half the population of the world are not wholly engaged in change processes, especially in decision-making. It is only through the equal and immediate participation of women that we can all benefit from the experience and insights of all of humanity. The experiences in many contexts in today's world prove that the leadership of women is critical for building inclusive and robust societies in order to effectively address common challenges, such as the current global COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, women have led the way with rapid and successful responses to flatten the curve. However, the unique challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic now need renewed leadership, partnerships, and mobilisation, with women placed at the centre of the recovery efforts.

Just as the women of the early church—Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Julia, and the sister of Nerus—were commended in Romans 16 for their transformational leadership, guidance, and hard labour grounded in faith during tumultuous and uncertain times, so do we remember and uphold all the women who with their gifts and service have paved the way for a more equal and inclusive future. As we begin to rebuild in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, let us empower and promote women to be leaders and change-makers in all levels of decision-making, from the international level to the grassroots.

International Women's Day is a reminder for us all to augment the voices of women and to recognise the leadership of women. On this International Women's Day, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) calls upon its member churches and councils to recognise the gifts of women and enhance their leadership and decision-making capacities. The CCA also encourages all its member constituencies to put in place those practices and systems that enable women to demonstrate their leadership. Gender equality has always been a core tenet of the ecumenical movement, and CCA has been committed to upholding the value of gender equality. The CCA will continue to strengthen its efforts towards advocating for and achieving gender equality in its constituencies.

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