

**Women Doing Theology**  
**November 14-22, 2009**  
**Jakarta, Indonesia**  
**Theme: Women's Liberation and Transformation**

**Background**

Women Doing Theology (WDT) is one of the most significant and distinctive programmes of the Regional Women's Programme (RWP) of WSCF AP, since its inception in 1991. Since then this workshop has become a unique space for many young women from Asia and the Pacific to come together, share life stories, commonalities, and challenges, then reflect and articulate their experiences as women in their own context. Their experiences of the androcentric<sup>1</sup>- mainstream- theology have challenged them to do theology from the feminist perspectives. Consequently a series of WDT workshops have been conducted, which provided space enabling women to question and critique the androcentric theology and explore alternative ways of doing feminist theologies which are empowering and liberating.

**WDT Workshop 2009 – “Women and Identity”**

This WDT 2009 workshop is planned to organize in the regional level. Around 22 young SCM women leaders from Asia and the Pacific will participate in the said workshop. The 9 days workshop will focus on the general and broad theme “Women's Liberation and Transformation” with a specific focus on the concern of “Women and Identity”. This theme/focus was recommended by the Regional Women's Committee (RWC) after a deep reflection on the issue of women leadership in SCMs, followed by a critical feminist analysis on the issues/concerns of women in SCM, Church and Society during the RWC meeting in Bangkok early 2009. The committee strongly felt that we must address the issue of women's liberation and transformation among ourselves as SCM women who struggle also for emancipation, equality, justice and peace in church and society.

This WDT workshop will be hosted by the SCM Indonesia (GMKI) in Jakarta from November 14-22, 2009.

**Rationale**

Our reality in general is still very much a gender-based reality dominated by patriarchy. Women's lives are constructed, shaped and reinforced by patriarchal culture and religions - values, religious teachings, traditions and customs, etc. Though they are discriminated, devalued and marginalized, it is accepted as “normal” and “natural” in our societies.

In this regard, Christian women are no exception. Our lives are very much shaped by our Christian faith, traditions, and customs which are influenced and dominated by the androcentric theology. Consciously and unconsciously we have inculcated these values as norms and our lives are deeply rooted and shaped by these norms. Our identity as “woman”/“female” is dominantly a gendered identity by social, cultural and religious construct and socialization. More than this, it is confused and complicated by the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, culture, class, caste, nationality, age, sexual orientation.

We live in the dominant system of kyriarchy<sup>2</sup> which determines the power relations – the power differences between men and women, men and men, women and women. We as women often experience abuse of

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<sup>1</sup> Literally “male –centeredness” (from the Greek word andro- “male”). A linguistic and cultural system that understands male/man as the norm and wo/men as secondary, peripheral, and deviant.

<sup>2</sup> A neologism coined by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and derived from the Greek words for “lord” or “master”(kyrios) and “to rule or dominate”(archein) which seeks to redefine the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination. Kyriarchy is a socio-political system of domination in which elite educated propertied men hold power over wo/men and other men. Kyriarchy is best theorized as a

'power over' as domination in our every day encounters with our religion, family relationships, schools/learning institutions, social/working places and churches, etc. However, through gender socialization most women as subordinates have also submitted themselves to live under the claws of kyriarchy. They are self-alienated beings/persons whose identities are mixed, multiple and complicated. They are robbed of their subjecthood and hence are not subject selves.

In addition, our religion plays a very important role in the norms that are set for us in the society. The existing discrimination and violence against women today in our society has been largely either influenced by our religion or has its sanction. Unfortunately like every religion, within Christianity the Holy Scripture and Christian theology has been and remains androcentric. This mainstream androcentric theology has changed our perception towards women which is often 'sexist'. Women are sidelined and women's leadership and authority are not recognized in the Bible. Rather women are projected as powerless, inferior, impure, 'objects'. Women's body and sexuality are being considered as sinful, and offensive. Thus it is justified to exclude women to identify with the main stream and they are deprived of being leaders in the religious institutions or otherwise. The patriarchal model of Church has pushed women into the periphery and women's identity as subject is suppressed and disregarded. She is a non-person who is expected to live for others except for herself. Though we experience this as a reality, the majority of us do not question or critique this discrimination. Rather we accept it as natural because discrimination and violence against women are sanctioned by the religion and our mindset is set to affirm the dominant mainstream theology. Even the way we read the Bible, our mindset or frame of mind is also based on patriarchy and hierarchy. Hence, Christian women's faith experience is often oppressive and discriminative, rather than liberative and transformative.

In this context we must go beyond and critique the dominant theology which affirms androcentrism and becomes a stumbling block for women's liberation and transformation. This androcentric theology need more comprehensive analysis. And women's experience which is socially constructed and must also be critically analyzed by doing critical feminist theology of liberation – liberation and transformation of self, society and structure. Therefore, the WSCF AP women through this Women Doing Theology workshop envision to:

- seek for self-liberation and transformation;
- build an inclusive non-violent community,
- break the structures of domination and subordination,
- promote equality and build up women leadership within SCM and the Church.

### **Objectives:**

1. To initiate a process for young women leaders of SCM to articulate their life experiences, struggles, challenges with critical analysis in relation to the workshop focus/theme.
2. To create awareness of the social, political, cultural and religious implications on women's identity in the Indonesian context.
3. To re-define a woman's identity and reclaim self as subject self towards liberation and transformation through A Critical Feminist Hermeneutics of Liberation.
4. To re-read the Bible together as young women centred on the focus/theme from critical feminist perspectives.

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complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, or ruling and oppression.

5. To promote and practice “Doing Critical Feminist Liberation Theology” in SCMs on all levels as well as in Asia and the Pacific.
6. To form a working group with a two-fold aim of i) making a critical evaluation of the significance of the ongoing “Women Doing Theology” programme of WSCF AP; and ii) coming up with a guide book for the National Movements to encourage and enable the young women and men to promote “Doing Critical Feminist Theology” in the SCMs.

### **Methodology and Components**

The process of the workshop will use a methodology based on the steps/tools of a critical feminist hermeneutics of liberation in the following components:

- Using feminist critical analysis, participants will share/tell HerStory of their life experiences, struggles, challenges as women in their own context.
- Thematic inputs by the resource persons on:
  - socio-political, cultural and religious implications on women’s identity in Indonesian context;
  - Doing Critical Feminist Liberation Theology and A Critical Feminist Hermeneutics of Liberation.
  - Re-reading selected Biblical texts using critical feminist hermeneutics.
- Exposure to the local communities to understand and experience the struggles and challenges of women in Indonesian context.
- Prepare feminist liturgies and conduct creative worship by the participants around the theme of the workshop.

### **Criteria for selecting Participants:**

1. We invite young women leaders of SCMs who are already in the position of the women’s coordinator or who is in charge of the women’s programme of their own SCMs, or who are preparing to take the leadership position in the National Movements.
2. Participants are required to do homework and must write an essay on the theme before the workshop. Guidelines for this essay homework will be sent to the participants.
3. Participants should be willing [upon request] to contribute to the working group to produce the guide book for the National Movements.
4. Participants are expected to organize the WDT workshops in their respective SCMs on national level in 2010.

**Dates and Venue:** November 14-22, 2009 (14<sup>th</sup> arrival, 22<sup>nd</sup> departure) in Jakarta, Indonesia.