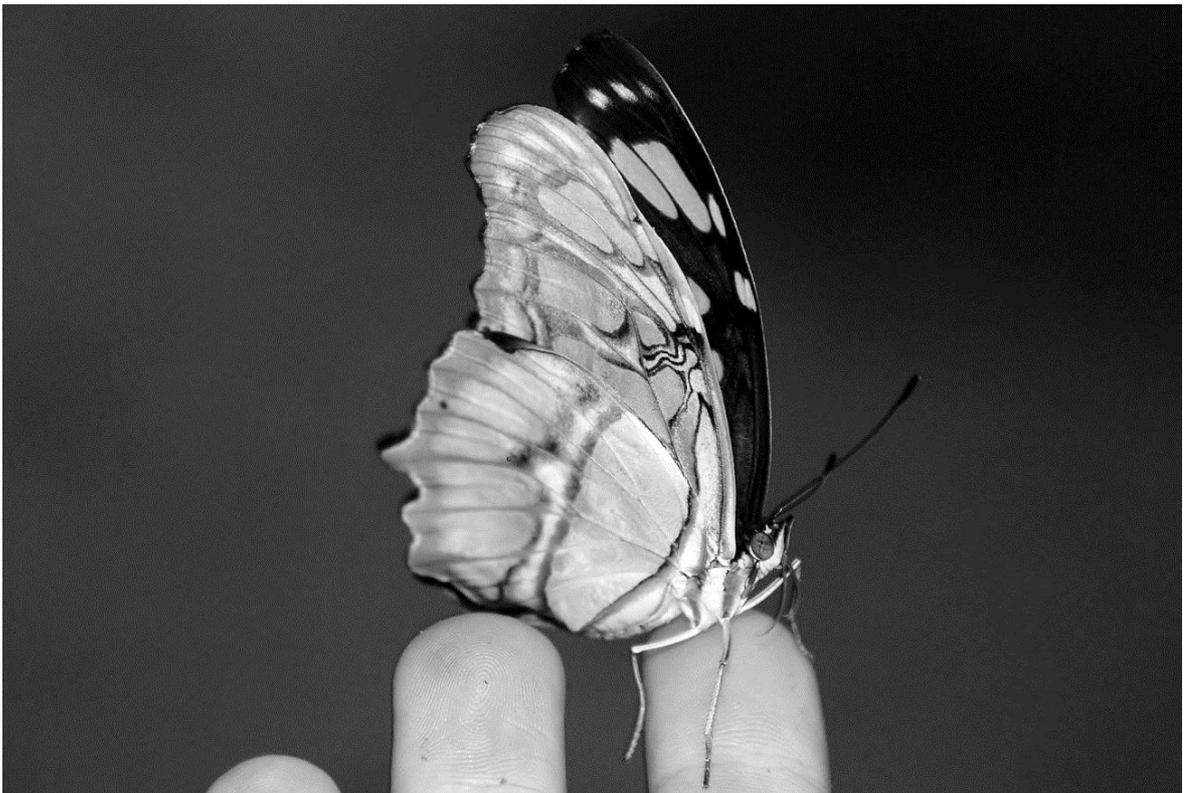


Tool 11: Working for change



"[If] all church departments were actively involved in the shaping of new ideals to manhood, society would be transformed in a radical way."

Ezra Chitando

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In this tool, you will find some ideas about working to improve the way that churches recognise and deal with issues of gender equality. It also contains guidelines on how to draw up a Gender Transformation strategy for your church or faith based organisation. You may find this useful, because it is often difficult to turn good intentions into concrete actions.

Add a short paragraph - This tool starts with some ideas for working on ourselves, because we cannot expect others to change unless we are prepared to accept that challenge too. It then goes on to some ideas for raising awareness within your church, and finally offers a step by step guide for planning your work to bring about the changes that are relevant and meaningful for your church in your specific community.



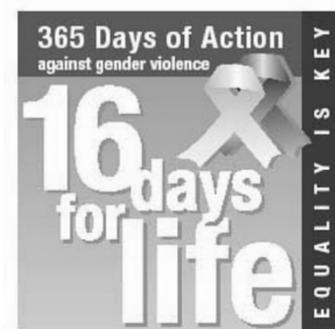
Bishop of Møre in Norway, Ingeburg Midttømme, working for change in communities during her visit to South Africa. *Source: Norwegian Church Aid*

Ideas for working on ourselves

- ✓ Read more about gender issues. See the list below for suggestions.
- ✓ Speak to women and men you know who are gender activists.
- ✓ Talk about these ideas with trusted friends and/or family.
- ✓ Know what organisations, such as ecumenical agencies and NGOs, are working in your area. They are often great resources for information and networking.

Specific ideas for getting going in your church

- ✓ A good place to start is by doing a gender audit in your church. Follow the questions in this Toolkit to guide your own research.
- ✓ Sometimes programmes of information and formation can help women and men make better and more informed decisions. Where would be a good place to start in your church? What resources would you need to help you? What could be your first step?
- ✓ Make contact with women and men from other churches who might be involved in gender justice.
- ✓ Do not go it alone. Find other people in your church or community who are interested in working for gender justice. Form a committee and meet regularly to plan events and share information.
- ✓ Make plans to talk with church leaders, such as pastors and council members, about gender justice with a group of activists to share information and concerns. Remember, the process of “defrosting” around these issues can often take time. Many church leaders may not be interested at first. Be patient!
- ✓ Be informed and make announcements about community events to your church, such as the 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence campaign⁶² and World AIDS Day.
- ✓ Join the campaign – from 16 Days of Activism to 365 Days of Action against gender based violence⁶³ so that every day becomes an opportunity to act against gender based violence.
- ✓ One way to keep awareness of GBV alive year-round is to join the campaign: Thursdays in Black, and adapt it for use in your church.⁶⁴
- ✓ Organise a Bible study in your church. You can use the ideas in this Toolkit, as well as the resources listed below.



Logo designed by Gender Links and is open for use by all who campaign to make every day an opportunity to work against gender violence.

Source: Gender Links

⁶² For more information about the global campaign go to: <http://16dayscwg.rutgers.edu/>

⁶³ For more information on examples of what has taken place in Southern Africa during the 16 Days campaign go to: <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/gender-justice-16-days-of-peace> or www.cabsa.org.za for examples on work done in the religious sector.

⁶⁴ For tools for use in this campaign, as well as useful written, audio and video materials on gender based violence, go to www.ThursdaysinBlack.com or www.cabsa.org.za



- ✓ Create your own wall of remembrance. Collect stories of women in your church or whom you know who have resisted gender injustice and tried to make a difference in your church or the community. Display their photographs or write their names on large sheets of paper in a prominent place. Spend time praying for them and remembering them.

These are just some ideas to get you started, which have been gathered from men and women in different churches in the 5 countries. Each of us will know best what might work in our own context. Every small step counts!

Steps in developing a gender transformation strategy for your congregation or organisation⁶⁵

Gender transformation is never easy. As we have seen throughout this Toolkit, gender inequality has become the norm in our societies, and most churches justify the way they do things based on deeply seated attitudes and theological arguments. Cultural and religious beliefs often support each other, and make it very hard for people to do things differently without it being understood as ill-discipline or a challenge to authority.

You have to work strategically. That means you have to keep your goal always in front of you, and plan each step carefully.

To start with, you have to 'break the ice' – how do you 'defrost' the church, so that people are even willing to talk about it and take it seriously? This means thinking carefully about who has the most influence in your church, and supporting them as they introduce the gender conversation amongst others with influence in the church.

It also means thinking carefully about what can realistically be done at any time, and in what order things need to be done so that you can build a movement for change in your church.

In the end, you want to see every part of the church, and every activity, being sensitive to the need for gender equality and to build respect for all church members, regardless of their sex, or even age or economic position. But who would be most open to make a start? And would others notice it and talk about it?

And, once they are talking, how can you help them to begin to do things differently?

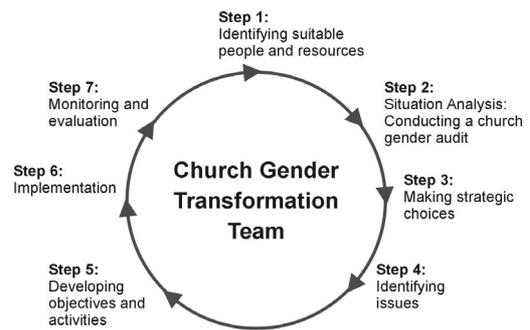
This tool offers some guidance for thinking through your strategy: Who you need to involve (and why), what needs to be done first, when and how to go on to the next step/s, and how to monitor if and how things are changing in your church. If you keep monitoring how it's going, you can also change your strategy along the way to stay on track.

⁶⁵ This Tool is based on CABSA's Churches Channels of Hope training programme: *Step in Developing a Congregational HIV and AIDS Strategy*. See www.cabsa.org.za for a large database of HIV and Gender related resources for use by churches and faith based organisations.



It is very easy for the gender transformation agenda to become invisible or even forgotten, because of the force of habit and people's resistance to change.

The 7 steps outlined in this tool can help you to stay on track, to deal with challenges along the way and to celebrate your achievements in order to give you courage to keep going.



How long does this take?

While it is important to be well prepared, you can take the first two steps at the same time. You can undertake.... your gender audit research (Step 2), while you are still consolidating your gender transformation team (Step 1). Just do not cut corners with developing your team. This could be done by working through this Toolkit together, because you do not want to send out unclear or conflicting messages to your congregation.

So give yourselves at least a month to get your team together and draw in the relevant people you want to involve. Then you could decide to work through a short section of the Toolkit at the beginning of every meeting you hold to plan or organise activities.

The time taken for your Gender audit research will vary, depending on how many people you decide you need to speak to, and how many documents you want to study. It is up to your team to decide how deep you want to go based on how much time you have. Do not try to plan too much at once, and your planning process should not take more than one or two 2-3 hour meetings.

Many people are very busy, so it is important to get a good balance between how thorough you want to be within the amount of time people can give to this work. It is better to set realistic goals and embed your work thoroughly, than to be too ambitious and then end up dropping the whole thing because it is overwhelming.

Step 1: Identifying suitable people and resources, and involving the best people

Picking your Gender Transformation Team

Gender injustice is not something you can tackle alone. You need to find others in your congregation who also seem to be concerned to improve relationships between men and women in your church, and who are open to doing things differently, and form a team. Also make sure they are people who can give time to this, and who are reliable and hard working.



The ideal situation would be to draw in one of the people from senior leadership, either ordained or lay. You need to make sure that you have high-level support for gender transformation. A good way is to ask one of the senior leaders to be a member of your team, even if they cannot make every meeting. As long as you make sure you send them notes of all your meetings and keep them informed, they can become a useful advocate for you.

If you know of any people in community organisations that are working on gender transformation in your community, you might even ask a person from there to join. They can help you better understand what is happening in your community, and open the way for your church (when it is ready) to be involved in the community.

Becoming a strong team

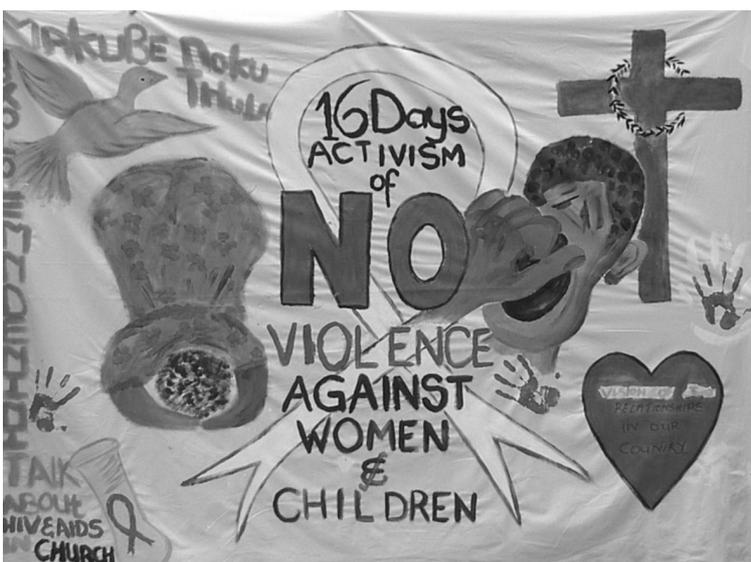
✓ **Agree on a shared understanding of your work:**

Work through Tools 1, 2 and the Glossary of Terms in Practical Tool 5 to make sure you all understand that you mean when you use the basic concepts. Also, decide together which terms you will use and how you will use them so that they make sense to those you want to work with. Share this Toolkit with them to work through on their own as well.

Then work through Tools 6, 7 and even 8 with them, and also go through the Gender Audit Template, which is Practical Tool 1 at the end of the toolkit.

✓ **Agree on your foundational values and ways of working:**

Teams often come apart because they have not agreed on the basics. Think of the ideas below, and add any others, or things you need to agree on to build a strong team.



The Bible is your most valuable and wise resource, but it needs to be approached with respect and care. Work through the Practical Tool 2 which gives guidelines for preparing and conducting Contextual Bible Studies, to help you agree on a common approach to the Bible. There are also many women and a few men in the Bible who can be role models and examples for us. Work through Tool 3 on Theology together, and explore



your own theological understandings together. This is important, because the Bible can be used by church leadership to undermine the work of gender transformation in the church, and you need to be able to answer those who challenge you.

You need to be able to **trust** each other, as members of the team, both women and men. Safe spaces need to be created every time you undertake any activity. So you need to make some fundamental agreements on how you will work together. Here are some ideas:

Your approach needs to be **inclusive** – recognising that different people can make different kinds of contributions, and their efforts need to be valued;

- Promote **respect for difference**, based on recognising that we are in different places, and we do not all have to agree on everything;
- You will also need to make sure that your **approach** does not blame or threaten anyone, even if their views are very different from your own, so that the spaces you create in your work are safe, and people can be themselves;
- You will need to reassure participants in your team, and in every activity you undertake, that **confidentiality** will be respected, and encourage participants that it is a no-no to discuss anyone's personal contribution with anyone (even those present) afterwards.

✓ **Recognise and record the gifts each member brings**

Many people think that they need to look outside of themselves and their church to help them do the change work they plan to do. But in fact, most of the skills, knowledge and resources you need you may already have in your team!

The most important gift your team members need is a vision for life-giving gender relations. They also need an ability to reflect on their life experiences, their cultures and traditions in a wise and compassionate manner to be able to offer leadership for positive change.

They may be a teacher, community care giver or social worker, or have simple but important things to offer- a room to meet, a personality that can reach out to others easily, etc.

- Spend some time thinking about what skills and knowledge you will need.

Write down together what skills and resources each person in your team is bringing into your Gender Transformation Committee (GTC) .Write down also what other skills and knowledge you do not have between you, and decide who to approach to help (see below).



Deciding who else you need to bring on board

If your gender transformation committee is to succeed, you need to have some good allies! Two important questions to ask yourselves as a team:

✓ Who in your congregation has the most influence?

You need people who can support your work, reinforce new life-giving gender discourses and be an example to others. Most important, you need the church leadership (clergy and lay leaders) to be on your side. They are the ones with the power to convince others to take gender issues seriously, to work with you, and to let you have the floor during services or meetings.

✓ Who in your congregation has skills or access to resources they might be willing to share?

For example:

- Are there any professionals in your congregation, like lawyers, social workers or psychologists?
- You may know of gender activists in your community, who could act as resource people to support your work in the church and your church's work in the community.
- There may be some who are good at fund-raising, or who work in companies they could help you approach to sponsor some of your work.

Make a list of these people, and decide who is going to approach them in order to draw them in. Be very clear with them about what you want from them and why. And make sure to acknowledge them and their contributions so that they know they are appreciated!

Step 2: Situation analysis – conducting a church gender audit

This may be the most important step, because there is no point doing all sorts of activities if they do not relate to the situation in your church. You are more likely to bring about change if you know what it is that needs changing, and what deserves to be celebrated! It is important to look for strengths and achievements, as well as gaps and challenges.

Refer to Practical Toolkit 1 for the Guidelines and Template questionnaire for a gender audit.

Also, **read Tool 6** to give you an idea of how this tool has been used in churches in different countries.



Understanding what we are dealing with

During this step, it is important that you focus on two things:

- how gender issues are dealt with **inside** your church congregation
- how gender issues are dealt with in the work or ministries your church has in the community **outside** your church congregation, including any public statements, projects, etc.

Sometimes these two overlap, but make sure you cover everything. The template in Practical Tool 1 covers both.

TIP Make sure your gender audit process will also show how people **feel** about different gender issues, so you can decide at Step 3 which issues to start with, and who to target first.

This is important, because you don't want to overwhelm people or cause resistance by being too direct.

Perform this step thoroughly, and the other steps will follow so much easier.

- ✓ What you learn from your gender audit will guide you in deciding what to focus on, and so will help to make your work more effective.
- ✓ If each person in your task team chooses a few people to talk to, it will not be too big a job.
- ✓ If you choose to use the Template in Practical Tool 1, each person carefully records the answers you receive under each question.
- ✓ But more than that, after each interview, each person writes down what they heard, what they saw, and what they sensed about how people felt.

Decide on a **date** by when all the information will be brought to the team, and meet to bring everything together. Once everyone has got the information you need, talk about your findings, and write up a summary as a group. You may use the following table to help you write it up:

What is the congregation doing well in relation to Gender equality and gender justice in the church itself?	Difficulties / gaps / opportunities the congregation needs to work on to improve gender equality and justice in the church?



Positive perceptions of the church's gender work in the community	Needs identified in the community in relation to gender

Step 3: Identifying focus areas

The notes you made in Step 2 should give you a good idea about what the strengths are in your congregation that you can build on, and what gaps or challenges there are to achieving gender justice.

As a team, present your results to different groups of people in your congregation, and hear their opinions. For example, lay leaders, clergy, women's organisation, men's organisation, Sunday School teachers, Administration team.

Do they agree with your findings? How do they understand gender in your church? Are they an ally or someone who you will still need time to think this through?

Write down what you learn from these meetings. Different types of people might respond differently.

This will help you think about what might be issues and groups of people your team needs to focus on to best bring about gender transformation in your church, and to best help the church become more active in contributing to gender justice in your community.

Discuss all this information thoroughly in your Gender Transformation Task Team.

✓ **Think about the following, in relation to the gender issues you have covered. Use what you have learnt from your Gender Audit process to help you answer these questions.**

- What type of person is this? (man, woman, girl, boy, ordained or lay leader, ordinary congregation member, etc.)
- What is being done?
- What is being said?

✓ **Then analyse what you observe or hear, by asking the following questions.**

What might be the motivating factors that are causing people to act or speak the way they do?



- Knowledge:** Is it that they have not been exposed to information about gender to make them think more deeply about what they are doing and why?
- Attitude:** Do they lack respect, or believe they are superior or inferior, etc?
- Social assumptions:** Could it be based on what they have learnt from their upbringing or their training? Is it related to the way they interpret the Bible? Have they been influenced by other people close to them (like their friends, fellow clergy, spouse, etc.)? Is it because of some bad experiences they might have had?
- Perception:** Could it be that they don't realise the impact of what they do on other people and themselves; or the risks they may put themselves or others under by their behaviour?
- Personal Capacity:** Or do they lack the skills, personal power or confidence to change things?

✓ **Make a list of the areas which the congregational strategy could focus on.**

Draw up a rough list together as a Gender Transformation Team.

Step 4: Making strategic decisions

You cannot do everything at once! Although there may be many areas which you want to work on, you will need to prioritise. At first the task team may decide to focus on three or four different areas, but as you develop your goals and action plans, you may not find this very realistic. Decide – what are the most urgent or perhaps the easiest things to change in your congregation?

✓ **Go through the list you made at Step 3, and decide on their order of importance, using categories like:**

- A- Highest priority,
- B- Quite important, if there is time,
- C- Good focus, but not immediately essential.

When you have sorted out these priorities, then determine which would be the first, second and third actions which you would want to plan further.

These do not necessarily need to be both within the congregation AND within the community. Allow yourselves to be guided by the situational analysis.

You might want to start in the church itself, since it will be hard for the church to change things in the community if its own practices and teachings are not open to gender equality.



Celebrating the Zimbabwe Council of Churches Golden Jubilee 50th Anniversary, Harare.
Source: Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah



Or you might decide that exposing your congregation or leaders to things happening in the community might challenge them to think anew about what is happening inside the church.

Write up your priority choices for the development of objectives and activities:

Gender focus areas within the congregation	A,B,C	Gender focus areas in the community	A,B,C

Step 5: Developing objectives and activities

This is probably the most difficult step in the process, and the one people very often cut corners on.

Take each of the strategic choices you have made in Step 4 and develop an objective on what you would want to achieve. Remember an objective should be SMART: Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound!

TIP To set an objective, ask yourself:
 What is the situation now, and what do I want the situation to be like after this intervention? An objective is NOT about what you plan to do – but what OUTCOME or CHANGE you want to see.



Role plays can help to surface difficult issues in a fun way. *Source: PACSA*



The question is: What do you eventually want to achieve?

Then develop a list of all the **activities** you will implement to reach your objective.

When you plan your activities:

- ✓ Decide which activities will most effectively help you to bring about the change you want to see.
- ✓ Decide which people to begin to work with. You may want to start with those people that have power to open doors for you (e.g. clergy, church council or other leadership structures, women's and men's organisations), and then go on to ordinary members – women, men, children, youth, young adults, aged, etc.). Or you may want to get a bigger group of members together to speak with a stronger voice to those in power. It depends on the dynamics in your congregation.
- ✓ Choose gatherings where you can begin to raise issues without creating too much disruption (e.g. worship services, different meetings and leadership forums, ministries, confirmation, marriage and baptism preparation, youth work). This way, people may begin to deal with the issues as part of their normal activities.
- ✓ Do not set out to start a new project straight away! It costs money and lots of work. Start by looking for existing church projects that you can revise to include a gendered perspective, and only start something new if you are sure it is necessary.

Remember that many people are very busy, and might not have time to come for add-on workshops on gender. Rather try to find ways to integrate gender awareness raising as part of their normal meetings. Of course, you may have some special workshops, but keep these to a minimum.

This activity plan will eventually help you to put together a list of the **resources** you will need, including the **budget**.

Do not embark on an activity if there are not the people, the interest or the money to make it a success!

Use the PLANNING TOOL below

The table only has room for one objective and a few activities related to this objective. Use a separate page for each objective. Make enough copies of the next page to enable you to develop a complete set of objectives and activities.

You may choose to tackle different issues in different ways, depending on who you are working with and which kind of church meeting you are able to use. For example, if you want to do a Bible



study on how Jesus related to women, you will have to choose a different approach or even a different text, with youth, Sunday school children or the men's organisation.

Action Plan Template

Gender Focus / Issue: What behaviour or way of relating do we want to change?				
Target group: Who do we want to reach?				
Set the main objective: Which of their behaviours or ways of doing things do we want to change, and in order to see what end result?				
Sub-objectives to tackle underlying factors: Which of the list below specifically need to change to achieve the above objective?				
*What do you want people to know ? *What attitudes do you want them to have? *What perceptions of risk or impact need to change? *What social norms do you want to change (or do you want people to be able to challenge)? *What skills do they need, and what personal capacities do they need to develop?				
Activities				
What will we do?	How will we do it?	When will we do it?	Who will do what?	What resources do we need? (people, information, venue, catering, money...)



Step 6: Implementing your plans

After this, draw up a budget, get approval and start working!

In fact, there are quite a few things you can do without much money, as people are often willing to help voluntarily. Do not wait until you have lots of money in the bank before getting started!

Step 7: Monitoring and evaluation

It is essential to continuously monitor whether the activities are being implemented, if they were successful and if any change is needed to make them more successful. Use your planning table as a starting point, because you will be checking what progress you have made in achieving each objective you had set in Step 5.

Objective: (Write the objective you developed in Step 5)		
How will we know that we have achieved the change? You may identify more than one sign of change.	Who will monitor (ask the questions or observe the change)?	On which dates will we check for progress? (E.g. At the end of a workshop, or in a month, or after a year?)

TIPS

- Decide which person will help with monitoring each activity.
- Decide what method you will use to determine whether you have achieved your objective:
 - Will you ask questions before and after each workshop, to find out what participants have learnt?
 - Will you follow up on decisions made by leadership?
 - What other things will you do to assess if there have been any changes?
- Identify what evidence you are looking for to give you an indication as to whether you have reached your objective? For example:
 - How will you know if your male pastor is becoming more open about women in leadership? Just asking him or her may not help. But if he has started inviting women to participate in leading services, then that is a good result.



The purpose of monitoring is to learn from your mistakes or to reflect on what in the situation where you are working is making it difficult to work - and to develop a better plan. It is not to apportion blame.

Do not get discouraged if you meet many challenges! Change is hard at the best of times, and, because our social assumptions and attitudes are so deep-seated, changing mindsets about gender may be one of the most difficult things to do!

Conclusion

The most important thing you will need to succeed is **passion** for gender equality and justice! The second most important is a **strong team** to work together.



The third is a good **strategy**, to make sure your efforts are not in vain, because you cannot afford to become discouraged.

But before we try to change others, **we need to change ourselves**. (Remember, Jesus warned that we take the log out of our own eye before we try to remove the splinter out of the eye of another! Matthew 7:3-5)

It costs nothing to choose to be a channel for change, except:

- allowing God's love to be shown by our willingness to be humble and open to what God is doing in our lives to make us more open,
- having the courage to risk 'doing church differently' (Bishop Purity Malinga, 2004), and
- relating to each other in new ways that will heal gender relationships and restore and preserve the dignity of both women and men as created equal in the image of God.

Notes

Please send your feedback for this tool to gendersa@nca.no or consultancy@pacsa.org.za