



## **Gender Justice Policy**

### **National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ)**

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## Introduction

This Policy is, first, modeled on the "Gender Justice Policy" adopted in 2017 by ACT Alliance<sup>1</sup>. Act Alliance was launched in 2010 by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). This policy is a response to the ecumenical call for solidarity to formulate, adopt, and implement a similar policy by 2026 with the ACT Forums (to which the National Christian Council in Japan [NCCJ] joins as ACT Japan Forum) around the world.

Second, the original draft was prepared by the "Project for the Development of the 'NCCJ Gender Justice Policy' in collaboration with the Youth Committee," launched in April 2022 to reflect the voices of the future actors of the ecumenical movement in Japan. This project is supported by the "NCCJ Ecumenical Cooperation Fund" (Phase I), which is funded by a donation from the United Church of Canada (UC Canada). UC Canada has identified "gender justice" as an area of activity to promote.

Third, the Policy is aimed to promote action based upon the values expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Declaration of Yogyakarta (1979), the Resolution on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (UN Human Rights Council, 2011), and others, namely that all people are equal in dignity and rights.

Fourth, it should prove to be a tool for the NCCJ to improve its quality as a council and to be more honest and accountable. It applies to the general secretary, secretariat, executive committee members, committee chairpersons, and other NCCJ officials, and is designed to display the minimum standards to be followed by all members involved in the NCCJ. Following the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), which released "An Ecumenical Document on Human Sexuality" in 2010, and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), which released a statement entitled "Creating Safe Spaces for Understanding Human Sexuality" in 2015,<sup>2</sup> the NCCJ is able to express its commitment to the challenges of gender justice in Asia through the adoption and implementation of this policy.

## I. Historical Basis

This policy has its historical basis in the three previous NCCJ mission conferences and their mission statements which "confesses its guilt for the crimes it has committed against the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region and continues its efforts to build peaceful relationships based on justice and trust"<sup>3</sup> and to "seek to live in solidarity with the "pain of life" of those who are vulnerable and suffering."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia*, WCC Publications, 2022, pp. 33-35.

<sup>2</sup> See the bibliography. World Council of Churches, *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters on Human Sexuality (A Resources for Reflection and Action, Received by WCC Central Committee at a meeting held 9-15 February 2022 by video conference)*, WCC Publications, 2022, pp. 65-68.

<sup>3</sup> <https://ncc-j.org/aboutus/>, accessed on April 9, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. From this stance, the NCC, through the activities of its committees, has been working on the issues of military "comfort women"/sexual slavery, military and economic aggression in the Asia-Pacific region, discrimination of foreigners in Japan (*Zainichi*), and the rights of postwar immigrant women as a war responsibility.

At the 50th Anniversary Mission Conference in 1998, the NCCJ stated in its "NCCJ Mission Statement" that "although 70% of the members of the Christian community in Japan are women, the decision-making body is dominated by adult male pastors/priests. In addition, children, youths, and women have always been the object of mission and have not been treated as legitimate partners in mission" (3-3), and expresses its resolution "to actively improve this situation," as "we believe that by doing so, our missionary work will be further enriched" (3-4).

The importance of this Mission Statement was affirmed in the "NCCJ Mission Conference - 2005 Mission Statement" (2005) and then again reaffirmed in the "NCCJ Mission Statement" (1998). Finally, the "NCCJ Mission Statement 2019," adopted at the 2019 NCCJ-hosted Mission Conference declares the following:

We have confirmed at previous missionary conferences that women are not the object but the "subject," of the mission. The "subject" of our "koinonia" from now on should not be limited to the category of women, but to those who belong to all generations, genders, and sexualities. Even though Christians in Japan are less than 1% of the total population, we hope that we will always be an open community, a more inclusive community, inspired by the Holy Spirit and free from self-preserving intentions."

Given these circumstances, when ACT Alliance launched the Gender Justice CoP (Community of Practice) in the Asia-Pacific region in 2020, NCCJ sent a representative from ACT Japan Forum to participate in human rights advocacy training co-hosted by WCC, LWF, and ACT Alliance, and to receive advice from experts.

At the 41st General Assembly (March 2021 - March 2024), held under the theme "As the One Who Love All the Lives Given by God," the NCCJ clarified its stance "to reexamine justice in gender and sexuality, as well as true partnership and diversity, not retreating in these times of crisis" (Policy of Activities for the 41st General Conference). In line with this policy, the establishment of the "Working Group on Gender Justice Policy Development" (hereafter referred to as the Working Group), was proposed by the Executive Board of Directors and unanimously approved at the Second Executive Committee Meeting (July, 2021).

The Working Group started its activities with a kick-off meeting in August 2021 and published the Japanese version of the "ACT Alliance Gender Justice Policy" in October of that year. Then, in the following year leading up to September 2022, the working group studied prior initiatives for gender justice attempted in churches and Christian organizations around the world since the 2010s.

The prior initiatives that the Working Group analyzed are the "Gender Policy of the Catholic Church in India" (2010), "The Position on Gender Justice and Gender Equality in the Church of Sweden's International Work" (Church of Sweden, 2014), "Position on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)" (Church of Sweden, 2014), "Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Gender Justice Policy" (2013), and "A Shared Struggle for Gender Justice" (2013) presented by male participants in the pre-assembly, "A Just Community of Women and Men," preceding the 10th General Assembly of the WCC in Busan, Korea, "CCI Pastoral Statement on LGBT" by Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI/CCI, formerly the Indonesian Council of Churches) (2016), "Policy: Achieving Gender Equality" (2018) by Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World, hereafter BfW), "God's Justice - Just Relationships between Women and Men, and Girls and Boys" (2019) by the Anglican Communion, "World

Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) Gender Justice Policy" (2021), and "WCC Gender Justice Principles" (2022).<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the working group examined the views of evangelical churches and Roman Catholic churches and discussed gender injustice in the Christian communities in Japan. The working group spent the time drafting the policy from September 2022 to February 2023, made revisions based on comments from the NCCJ Youth Committee and advisors, and completed the draft by March of 2023. From April through September of that same year, there was an effort to reflect the opinions of NCCJ stakeholders in the policy. The three dimensions of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP), which form the basis of the "WCC Gender Justice Principles," were utilized in the process of developing this policy.<sup>6</sup>

## II. Biblical and Theological Basis

### II-1 Biblical Basis

The Bible shows us not only the value of humanity and the possibility for people to build better relations and communities, but also the cruelty, ruthlessness, violence, oppression, and injustice of humans. Certain biblical passages and their interpretations have been used to justify sexism and violence against those with diverse SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual characteristics).<sup>7</sup> In order to achieve gender justice, therefore, it is necessary to (1) ground the vision of gender justice in the Bible, (2) learn from the injustices displayed in the Bible and prophetic accusations against them, and (3) reflect on the arbitrary use and discriminatory interpretations of the biblical text.

#### (1) Biblical Vision for Gender Justice

The Bible speaks positively about human creation and origins. "God created humanity in God's own image" (Genesis 1:27).<sup>8</sup> According to Genesis, every human being, regardless of their SOGIESC, is made in the image of God and is valuable and irreplaceable in their very being. Since every human being has dignity, gender justice is not only an issue for women, but for all.

The Church is an assembly of dignified individuals who cannot be unrelated to one another. "[T]hough there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other." (Romans 12:5). "Certainly the body isn't one part but many. [...] If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it." (1Cor 12:14, 26). As long as the Church sees that the suffering of one person is the suffering of the whole, gender injustice, oppression, and discrimination based on SOGIESC cannot be overlooked.

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<sup>5</sup> See the bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> The first dimension is "celebrating the gift" (expressed in Latin as *via positiva*), which reflects the idea that creation in the image of God is an "original blessing" (not "original sin") and that together as a communion we are a unique part of the "web of life". The second dimension is "visiting the wounds" (*via negativa*), which holds that pilgrimage leads us not only to beautiful places but also to places where ugly violence and injustice are practiced, and the third dimension is "to transform injustice" (*via transformativa*) through prayer and action.

<sup>7</sup> In 1990, "homosexuality" was excluded from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) revised by the World Health Organization (WHO), declaring that "homosexuality is not a target of treatment in any sense." In addition, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), revised in 2019, excluded "gender identity disorder" from "mental disorders" and placed "gender incongruence" under "conditions related to sexual health."

<sup>8</sup> This policy uses the Common English Bible for biblical quotes.

As Paul uses the bodily metaphor to emphasize the importance of everybody who forms the Church, it is desirable to have a Church in which people of all SOGIESCs do not have to hide their own identity or feel ashamed of it, but can help one another in a spirit of respect.

Such a Church is made possible by being created anew in relationship with Christ. "So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Being made one in Christ and created anew, Christians are called to establish new relationships in order to live together. Circumcision, for example, used to separate a group of people from others, but Paul proposes a new kind of community and relationship that does not depend on circumcision as a boundary marker: "Being circumcised or not being circumcised doesn't mean anything. What matters is a new creation." (Galatians 6:15). The church of this day, too, must overcome what divides people, "br[eaking] down the barrier" (Ephesians 2:14) when necessary, and continue to be created anew to achieve gender justice.

## (2) The Prophets who Pointed to Injustice and Pursued Justice

The pursuit of justice begins with naming and pointing to injustice. The biblical prophets sharply denounced the behavior of the powerful, such as kings, priests, and rich people, who caused suffering to others. "Doom to those who pronounce wicked decrees, and keep writing harmful laws to deprive the needy of their rights and to rob the poor among my people of justice; to make widows their loot; to steal from orphans!" (Isaiah 10:1-2). "The Lord proclaims: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor. Don't exploit or mistreat the refugee, the orphan, and the widow. Don't spill the blood of the innocent in this place." (Jeremiah 22:3). "In you they treat father and mother with contempt. In you they oppress immigrants and deny the rights of orphans and widows." (Ezekiel 22:7). Widows, orphans, and refugees were in a vulnerable position in a society that was based on the household where protection came under the patriarch's control. The prophets spoke out against oppressors, denouncing indifference to injustice and calling for justice and equity when such people were oppressed. The Church today must also denounce gender-based violence and exploitation, discrimination and oppression based on SOGIESC, and speak out the prophetic voices for justice.

## (3) Reflections on the Injustice Done by the Church

The Church has not always been the prophetic voice. Rather, it has overlooked injustices and actively participated in discrimination and violence. In the Bible, too, there are words that reinforce and reproduce patriarchal domination and oppression, heterosexism, and gender binary, and the Church's discrimination, violence and oppression have been justified on the basis of these biblical texts. For example, so-called "family teachings" (e.g., Ephesians 5:22-6:9) demand that women and children be obedient to their fathers and husbands. Jesus' teaching, "[forgive n]ot just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22), does not require repentance from the abuser, but has encouraged those who have been abused (especially women) to continue to forgive their abusers (see the Anglican Communion's precedent). In addition, there have been repeated false claims that "the Bible and God condemn homosexuality" by interpreting biblical texts on sexual behavior with the lens of modern heterosexism. Such discriminatory claims have caused serious damage to those with diverse SOGIESC, including homosexual people, by hurting them, expelling them from the Church, and harming their physical and mental health. The Church must acknowledge and reflect on the arbitrary and/or careless use of the biblical words to perpetrate violence against women and those with diverse SOGIESCs.

## II-2 Theological Basis

### (1) Gender Justice as "God's Justice" (*via positiva*)

During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century "gender justice" has been generally defined as "the ending of—and if necessary the provision of redress for—inequalities between women and men that result in women's subordination to men,"<sup>9</sup> the inequalities that are reproduced through nation, market, community, and family. While it is seen as "a broader term that has equality as one of its fundamental principles, but that extends beyond formal equality to also include a process that ensures strengthening accountability,"<sup>10</sup> it is sometimes used ambiguously as interchangeable with concepts such as "women's rights," "gender equality" (formal equality), and "gender equity" (consequential equality). In the 2010s, however, "gender justice" evolved into a concept that encompasses "equality and autonomy for people constructed by gender institutions, including people of all sexes, genders, sexual identities, and gender identities."<sup>11</sup> "Gender justice" in Christian community is understood in the context of the "God's justice" (which has also been translated as "God's righteousness") displayed throughout the Bible. In the ecumenical movement at the global level, Namsoon Kang, a feminist theologian from Korea, proposed the viewpoint in 2005 that gender justice is rooted in the prophetic tradition that "God acts [...] on the side of the oppressed"<sup>12</sup> and therefore should be at the heart of the mission of the Church. According to Kang, what even progressive Christians tend to fail to see is that **"gender justice" is not "only a women's issue" that only women should strive to solve, but a "human issue" to which all people should be party.**

In 2007, while working for the Christian Council of Asia (CCA), Lisa B. Ramis, a feminist theologian from the Philippines, took Kang's argument further, rejecting the heterosexist framework based on gender binary, which holds that there are only two genders of people: man and woman, and arguing that to speak of gender justice is also to keep in mind those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and so forth.<sup>13</sup> This view that "gender justice" is about "all genders" is also evident in the 2021 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) policy.

NCCJ responds to this prophetic call of the Asian Christian women, as NCCJ maintains the basic position to "confess its guilt for the crimes it has committed against the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region and continue its efforts to build peaceful relationships based on justice and trust" and "seek to live in sympathy with the 'pain of life' with those who are vulnerable and suffering." It means not to be satisfied with the status quo, not to fall into self-satisfaction, and to pray and act with a vision of what God is asking of us in this time and age. For this reason, the Church must oppose its role in ideologically justifying gender injustice.

What we must not forget is that the action for gender justice to which we are called never starts from scratch (BfW). The fact that those seeking full participation in the ecumenical movement gathered in Baarn in 1948 prior to the first general assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam, and that the CCA Women's Desk has promoted the

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<sup>9</sup> Anne Marie Goetz, "Gender Justice, Citizenship and Entitlements Core Concepts, Central Debates and New Directions for Research," in Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay, Navsharan Singh eds, *Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development*. Zubaan Publications, 2007, pp. 30-31.

<sup>10</sup> Mahrinaz El Awady, "Does Gender Justice Matter?," *Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)*, United Nations, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Mala Htun, S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights around the World*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 2, n.1.

<sup>12</sup> Namsoon Kang, "The Centrality of Gender Justice in Prophetic Christianity and the Mission of the Church Reconsidered," *International Review of Mission*, 94:373, April 2015, pp. 278-289, p. 279.

<sup>13</sup> Liza B. Lamis, "Empowering the Church for Gender Justice," *CTC Bulletin*, 23(3), 2007, p. 28.

theological movement led by women in Asia in the late 1970s, suggest that our journey has already begun. Olaf Fyke Tveit, then General Secretary of WCC, who accompanied the development process of WCC Gender Justice Policy, 2022, has called gender justice "sacred work" and has empowered those who work for it. The NCCJ also affirms that people are created in the image of God and thereby have dignity, and that sexuality is a gift from the Creator to be affirmed and celebrated (NCCP).<sup>14</sup>

## (2) Gender Justice as "Repentance" (*via negativa*)

In order for the NCCJ to work together toward gender justice, we need to begin by recognizing and confessing our own guilt for past and ongoing gender injustices together with our members. While gender justice has not been achieved yet in any part of the world, especially Japanese society, which ranks 125th (as of June 2023) out of 146 countries in the gender gap index, and the Church in Japan must recognize the existence of injustice among men, women, other various genders, heterosexual people, and those with other various sexualities.

The Church must first recognize as sin the fact that the Church, based on gender binary and in favor of male clergy, rejected, treated as children, and sometimes overly idealized women. Women, too, need to be careful as they are also at risk of becoming perpetrators of oppression and complicit with the patriarchal system by internalizing the stigma that they are inferior and dangerous. It must also be acknowledged that the Church has pushed upon the women the discussion and resolutions involving issues of gender and sexuality injustice. The real "problem" is not the fault of minorities<sup>15</sup> such as women, transgender, non-binary, lesbian, bisexual, and gay, but the majority that stigmatizes them. The Church is invited to confess this, admit its shortcomings, and repent (CCI).

The church has deprived people of various opportunities because of gender and sexuality, and it is clearly reflected in the fact that the leadership representing the church is dominated by men and that there are still few congregations that welcome women pastors. Even in the Church of Sweden, where the number of women pastors exceeded that of men in 2020, decision-making in the church is dominated by men pastors, and women pastors suffer from disparities in wages and benefits.<sup>16</sup> This situation is the result of denying and distorting the gifts God has given to each and every one of us. The Church has also dismissed as non-existent those who have a gender identity or sexual orientation that deviates from gender binary and heterosexist norms. The Church has been the arbiter of their treatment, deciding whether to accept or reject them, and the Church must look back on this and sincerely reflect on itself. We must also fight against all discrimination and oppression as an act of prophetic justice, in order that the rights and dignity of those who have been harmed physically, mentally, socially and spiritually by society and the Church may be respected.

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<sup>14</sup> WCC, *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>15</sup> The term "minority" is used in this policy to refer not only to numerical minority but also to existential minority. We understand this term to refer to persons or groups who, because of their differences from others in a particular time, place, relationship, race, gender, language, etc., are deprived of political, economic, health, educational or other rights, or have their rights undermined by being reduced to belonging to a subordinate group.

<sup>16</sup> In Asia, it is noted that nearly 70% of the pastors of the Gereja Masehi Injil di Minahasa (GMIM) are women, but few of them hold important positions in decision-making bodies. Yumi Kitamura, "Rainbow over the Church: Indonesian Christian Church and Sexual Minorities," *Southeast Asia and 'LGBT' Politics*, edited by Wataru Kusaka, Kaoru Aoyama, Tsukasa Iga, and Keiko Tamura, Akashi Shoten, 2021, p. 336 (in Japanese).

### (3) Gender Justice as "Transformation" (*via transformativa*)

Repentance for gender injustice leads our fellowship (*koinonia*) in a radical change of direction (*metanoia*). For those who do not conform to gender roles or do not fit into the heteronormative framework based on gender binary, the church has often been experienced as a dangerous place, where they can be treated poorly or receive blatant (and false) accusations. Even the church groups called "women's groups" have not always been welcoming places for diverse women including single women, women with small children, transgenders, lesbians, and so on. The church must be transformed toward a "Safer Space," a place that is safe and secure for all of God's creatures. And, it is not the majority who will decide if the church or the NCCJ is safe or not, but those who currently belong to the minority.

## III. Principles

In order to achieve gender justice, the NCCJ will do the following.

### Principle 1: Justice, Peace, and Life (Ideological Basis)

The NCCJ has developed the NCCJ Gender Justice Policy and aims to achieve gender equality in order to realize a just and peaceful society as expressed in these principles. Gender equality is an all encompassing and important human rights issue, and it requires increased efforts in a variety of areas to move away from inequalities underlying social structures and institutions. The NCCJ shares the idea of gender justice with NCCJ members and puts effort into considering gender balance, equal participation in decision-making and equal access to resources, protecting human dignity, the empowerment of the vulnerable, and overcoming the various forms of inequality that result in discrimination and conflict.

### Principle 2: Gender Balance, Transforming Power Dynamics

Our work of service requires all types of leadership based on the principle of priesthood of all believers. Leadership is exercised with unique gifts given from God to each person through the Holy Spirit, and those gifts should be valued equally. In the meantime, organizational and structural practices have prevented the participation of women in leadership and decision-making bodies. As a result, we must recognize, oppression and alienation are caused by unfair power dynamics. Therefore, equal gender parity and participation on equal terms must be guaranteed in the establishment of important policies and organizational structures (representatives, governing bodies, and decision-making processes) in each of the NCCJ member churches and organizations. Those who have been marginalized, such as women, can respond to God's call and make contributions by receiving fair recognition and assuming leadership roles within the Church.

### Principle 3: All Programs Conducted by NCCJ Must Include a Gender Justice Perspective.

The unique wisdom and insights that come from the experiences of the marginalized, including women, are gifts that contribute to the transformation of the Church and that should influence its course of action. In order that their voices are heard within the community of faith and that the Church become a safe and secure place (Safer Space) for them, the NCCJ continues to reflect on itself, fight against discrimination, and appeal for protection of all rights and dignity. To this end, we ensure fair decision-making by embracing diversity and balancing gender and generation within the NCCJ, its member churches and organizations, and in committees. In addition, in order to achieve fairness and justice, and to build an inclusive structure that respects diversity, we ensure a gender justice perspective throughout our



worship services (including liturgies) and religious life, by engaging in the various stages of policy development (planning, implementation, evaluation, etc.) based on a gender analysis and for the elimination of injustice.

#### Principle 4: Internal Training and Capacity Building

The NCCJ ensures that NCCJ officials, including the general secretary, secretariat, standing members, and committee chairpersons, receive training to deepen their understanding of the NCCJ Gender Justice Policy, as well as capacity building consisting of a planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement process considerate of gender balance in an effort to eliminate gender-based disparities. Training will include training for new staff as well as periodic refresher training for existing staff.

#### Principle 5: Training and Capacity Building in NCCJ Member Churches and Organizations

The NCCJ is committed to sharing information about the NCCJ Gender Justice Policy among its member churches and organizations in order to be accountable for its implementation. The NCCJ supports the member churches and organizations to do training, disseminate the Gender Justice Policy as part of their theological and Christian education, and learn gender justice as well as other issues of discrimination as part of their human rights education. It also encourages member churches and organizations to conduct capacity building that is considerate of gender equality and provides the necessary resources for implementation.

#### Principle 6: Prohibition of Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC).

Everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sexual characteristics, is guaranteed the right to the protection provided for in international human rights law. This right includes the right to life, liberty and security of the body, the right not to be tortured or humiliated, the right not to be discriminated against, the right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. There are, however, severe human rights abuse, persecution, and discrimination based on SOGIESCs. The NCCJ takes a firm stand (zero tolerance) against any discrimination, persecution, violence, abuse, or aggression based on sexual orientation or gender identity, including harassment and hate speech.

#### Principle 7: Empowerment of All Women

Empowerment of all women is the foundation of measures to prevent gender-based violence and to achieve gender equality. Through empowerment, women can become aware of unequal power dynamics and obtain the language, status and dignity to overcome inequalities in the Church and in society and to become independent. To this end, specific needs must be taken into account, from the establishment of feminist theology, queer theology, and gender-aware courses in theological institutions to the availability of time, transportation, accommodation, and childcare to facilitate women's participation (Catholic Church of India).

#### Principle 8: Empowerment of the Next Generation

In order to empower the next generation, not only must the children be liberated from the stereotyped view of woman, but the violence and domination in the stereotyped view of man must also be deeply introspected, and forms of masculinity that actively participate in the

formation of a just community (positive masculinities)<sup>17</sup> must be promoted. In addition, empowerment of the next generation must also liberate children from the binary view that all persons belong to either a woman or man category, and make them aware of the diversity and richness of their gender and sexuality. We must also convey that all our sexuality is a gift from God, that it is the source of life, and that each of us is respected and loved in the diversity that God embraces.

#### Principle 9: The Pilgrimage as People of God

As people of God, we affirm that we are on the pilgrim way together toward justice and peace. We acknowledge that not all of us are at the same point in our journey, and we seek to accompany and lead one another through mutual understanding, love, and respect.

#### Principle 10: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are the rights of individuals to make free and responsible decisions regarding their body, gender identity, sexual orientation, and reproductive choices. The NCCJ aims at the protection of SRHR for all so that individuals can make informed self-decisions about their own sexual relations, the use of contraceptives, medical care and health, without discrimination, coercion, or violence. SRHR includes knowledge of age of consent, contraceptive choice and safety, maternal and newborn health, reduction of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and other reproductive infections, prevention of high-risk abortion, and promotion of sexual health. The NCCJ believes that inclusive sex education<sup>18</sup> is an essential component of human rights and dignity.

## IV. Methodology

### IV-1 Self-Assessment

The NCCJ asks their own staffs, supporting volunteers as well as member churches and organizations to conduct a self-assessment to inspect how the gender justice perspective is reflected, to measure the following indicators, and to monitor the process. The results of the self-assessment, as well as the corrective actions to be taken, shall be presented to the General Conference.

#### (1) Equal participation

Does every decision-making body set gender equality to be considered and maintained from the time of its establishment?

#### (2) Equal use of resources

Are organizational resources such as budget and facilities allocated equally?

#### (3) Ensuring the Safety of Victims

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<sup>17</sup> It is a movement that the WCRC and WCC have been promoting in the ecumenical movement since 2010. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, Philip Vinod Peacock ed., *Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership (A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities)*, World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> See UNESCO (translated by Haruo Asai, Kaori Ushitora, Mieko Tashiro, Kazuko Fukuda, and Daisuke Watanabe), *International Sexuality Education Guidance: A Science-Based Approach*, revised edition, Akashi Shoseki, 2020.

Are there safe and secure places (Safer Spaces) and safe procedures where and with which someone can report a case without further violence if they have been wronged or harmed? Are processes discussed and confirmed in advance to ensure that the victim's wishes are respected as much as possible in the handling of the case?

**(4) Sense of Crisis Regarding the Standards**

In the process of setting and passing on organizational standards, are there any attempts to review them using global standards and treaties on human rights? Are there opportunities for the departments in charge of setting standards to participate in continuous learning about gender justice?

**(5) Transparency as an Organization**

Even when the above indicators and perspectives have not been realized according to each particular situation, has the actual situation been discussed, and have plans for improvement been established and implemented? Is this information publicly available both inside and outside the organization?

## **IV-2 Awareness Building and Human Resource Development**

### **IV-2-1 Commitment of the NCCJ as an Organization**

The NCCJ establishes an ecumenical consultative forum composed of Japanese Protestant churches and organizations with the aim of achieving gender justice. NCCJ shall also assume its social responsibility through the following commitments.

**(1) Awareness Building**

The NCCJ prepares educational tools such as a policy handbook and supplemental casebooks so that this policy is recognized and endorsed in various parts of the country. Furthermore, to raise awareness, the NCCJ hosts briefings, workshops, etc. (including online and hybrid) for decision-makers, such as the heads and board members of the NCCJ member churches, organizations, synods, and congregations, etc. throughout Japan, and exchanges opinions with them. We encourage interested parties to participate freely and also urge churches and organizations not to block information about this program.

**(2) Strengthening Our Expertise**

The Working Group members and those involved in the NCCJ will strengthen their specific expertise in gender justice through continuous participation in workshops and seminars hosted by the ACT Alliance Asia Regional Forum and others. At the same time, seminars will be held in Japan with resource persons from churches as well as NGOs/NPOs, etc., who are experts in the field of gender justice. This is done in order to deepen the understanding of gender justice in the NCCJ as a whole and to enable a broader perspective.

**(3) Survey and Research**

The NCCJ tries to understand what kinds of gender injustices are occurring in the Christian communities in Japan and who is being disadvantaged by it. In order to solve the problems and conduct advocacy activities, surveys of NCCJ member churches and organizations will be conducted by means of questionnaires and individual interviews.

#### (4) Individual Consultation

The NCCJ establishes a consultation desk, mainly by means of e-mail, for persons involved in NCCJ member churches and organizations. At the same time, in order to share information and strengthen cooperation, each member church and organization will be required to assign a person in charge of gender justice issues.

#### (5) Intervention and Recommendation

When a problem related to gender justice is discovered through the investigations or through individual consultations described in (3) above, or at the request of the organization in which the problem occurred, an interview and issue analysis will be conducted to ascertain the situation, and if necessary, the information gap will be resolved by cooperating with external professional bodies. Those involved in the NCCJ, member churches, and organizations are obliged to assign a contact person or person in charge of gender justice issues, and make recommendations to the parties concerned through these persons. In the case of serious cases, the concerned party would receive warnings and be requested to make corrections of their problematic statements.

### **IV-2-2 Resources needed**

The following resources are needed to implement the above commitments. The NCCJ maximizes the resources available and seeks to identify potential resources.

- Expertise

Increase the level of expertise of those involved in the NCCJ by ensuring support from experts in the field of gender, as well as various opportunities for capacity building.

- Funds

Secure the necessary budget for the above activities by utilizing grants such as the NCCJ Ecumenical Cooperation Fund.

- Network

Inclusive approaches to issues through collaboration with interdenominational and civil society organizations (groups) and proximate areas that work to promote gender justice.

- Human Resources

Expand the consultative forum on gender justice within NCCJ stakeholders through public recruitment, while working to strengthen collaboration among NCCJ committees.

### **IV-3 Organizational and Administrative Structure**

#### (1) Thorough Principles on Gender Balance

1. The NCCJ ensures to apply principles of gender balance at all levels of the organization by carrying out the following.

The NCCJ Standing Committee shall

- a. ensure gender balance in the election of the board members at the General Assembly by adjusting the number of each gender,
- b. consider gender balance in the composition of the members of committees and in the election of committee chairpersons, and
- c. comply with Article 16 (3) of the Constitution and Article 4 of the Bylaws for electing delegates and standing members to the General Assembly.

The general secretary shall

- a. consider gender and generational balance in the recruitment of staff, and

b. monitor the fairness of the treatment and benefits of all employees.

(2) Gender Justice in NCCJ Activities

1. This policy must be observed in all the meetings and programs of the NCCJ, such as worship services, prayer meetings, councils, seminars, etc.
2. The inclusive language must be used in all documents that the NCCJ announces, issues or publishes.
3. The inclusive language must be used by those who preside, present and speak in all meetings and programs of the NCCJ, such as worship services, prayer meetings, councils, seminars, etc.

(3) Invitation to Member Churches and Organizations

The NCCJ urges member churches and organizations to recognize and address gender justice as a matter of justice for the faith community, respecting that all are equally invited into the community of God.

**V. Review of the Policy**

This policy is revised every three years. In the event of significant changes in the program or context, the policy may be revised more frequently.

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