The Conceptualisation of Gender, perspectives on gender discourse: Gender and constitution making in Kenya

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Date: 2002

Abstract

The Conceptualisation of Gender, perspectives on gender discourse: Gender and constitution making in Kenya. The term gender became popular in the late 1980s as a replacement for women and development. Gender is a social construct that asserts that the expectations and responsibilities of men and women are not always biologically determined. Advocates of the gender approach point out that the term easily accommodates race, class, ethnicity, and male and female power relationships. (Snyder and Tadesse 1995: 14). Gender role differentiation is structurally and culturally defined in ways which create and reinforce relationships of male dominance and female subordination. For instance, ideas of what patterns of behaviour and activities are appropriate or inappropriate for women and men are largely social and cultural in origin and they are acquired through the socialization process. From the time children are born, they are socialized into different roles on the basis of sex. They are rewarded when their behaviour is seen as sex appropriate and ridiculed or reprimanded when they deviate from the established culture norms (Were, 1991:1). This paper examines the concept of gender from an African perspective, indeed, it aims at highlighting those issues that influence the lives of women and men particularly those that serve as constraints in enabling women and men to realise their full potential. It argues that the concept of gender needs to be redefined. As it is now, gender seems to be associated only with women’s issues. Heinrich Boll Foundation, East and Horn of Africa Region. Nairobi Wilfred Subbo (2002) - Institute of African Studies Why a Christian Gender Manual The Church plays a pivotal role in contributing to a world where justice, peace, truth, freedom and solidarity
prevail, a world where God reigns. Thus the Church is committed to protecting the dignity of women like any other human being. These include elimination of gender-based discrimination, exclusion and violence among others. Addressing gender is translating the Christian message of love of neighbor into action. This manual will guide users to address gender imbalances in the light of Christian virtues-the Social Teaching of the Church and to plan for active peace-building that will bridge the Gender Gaps and harmonise relations between women and men of God. It will assist development workers of the Kenya Episcopal Conference – Catholic Secretariat in particular and Church Organisations in general, to plan for interventions that will correct gender imbalances and lead to more equitable and sustainable human development. This manual is primarily meant for Catholic Development Workers and Trainers. It is envisaged that this manual: • Provide a comprehensive training for gender trainers that also takes into account vital African and theological perspectives. • Help promote gender awareness thus increasing the empowerment of the Family of God – both women and men.