

## Association of Presbyterian Women

This report is an addendum to the Association of Presbyterian Women's report in the first mailing – the page numbering reflects this.

### Recommendations

---

1. That the General Assembly makes a commitment to understand and support the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to promote this understanding and support throughout the Presbyterian Church Aotearoa New Zealand.
  
2. That the General Assembly encourages parishes to access CEDAW information and contribute to the Non Governmental Report.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Report

---

Presbyterian Women New Zealand is proud of its Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is committed to fully utilise this opportunity to be a Christian voice on the world stage. Religious organisations have a unique role in creating cultures that work to redefine gender roles and responsibilities with a major focus on advocacy for those who have no, or limited voice. It is from this perspective that this recommendation is presented.

This Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 as one of the six primary international documents for the protection and promotion of human rights. It was ratified by New Zealand in January 1985. Having ratified CEDAW, New Zealand is obliged to report regularly on the progress being made to ensure that the principles in the Convention are being applied. The New Zealand government will submit its 2010 Report to the CEDAW Monitoring Committee in September 2010 and will report to the Committee next year.

Alongside the Government report will be an Alternative Non Governmental Organisation Report facilitated by the National Council of Women New Zealand (NCWNZ). This reporting process provides a way for New Zealand women to tell the government and the international community if and how they see areas of discrimination. This work not only breaks new ground in terms of law changes and new policy in New Zealand, but is also used as an example for "developing nations". The work promotes problem-solving, the sharing of ideas and solutions and it keeps pace with women's changing lives over the years.

Both the 2002 and the 2006 NGO Reports made worthwhile contributions by assisting the Monitoring committee to draw up questions to pose to the New Zealand government on gaps in its implementation performance. Such requests from the Monitoring Committee to the government were for:

- Information on what has been the impact of the Family Violence Intervention Guidelines in New Zealand.
- Updated information on the Pay & Employment Equity Plan of Action and how it addresses the gender pay gap and promotes equal pay for equal work.
- Update and trends over the last five years on HIV/AIDS infection rates for women and measures in place to address the issue.
- Update on measures taken to increase participation of women, including Maori women in local government, the judiciary and Parliament.

While women must take ownership for their decisions and how they conduct themselves, another factor which determines how easily a woman can succeed is “discrimination”. Direct discrimination is explicitly based on gender whereas indirect discrimination is when there are rules, regulations or procedures operating which have the effect of discriminating against certain groups of people disproportionately to others. Compared with many countries, women in New Zealand are fortunate in that discrimination is no longer codified in law, but the far-reaching effects of social and cultural discrimination can still be seen. In New Zealand society we see large gaps between policy and legislation and actual application and effect at the grassroots. When women’s and girls’ rights are promoted and upheld, women benefit and so do their families and societies. Empowered women are agents of the common good and investing in the empowerment of women and girls yields dividends for the whole human family.

Research and experience show that women’s empowerment is essential to reducing global poverty. Educating girls contributes to increased economic productivity and improved family nutrition. Giving women the power to make decisions can strengthen family healthcare, stem the spread of HIV/AIDS and promote long lasting peace.

In the words of a Chinese saying, “*Women hold up half the sky*” and it is this gender balance that will help provide a more secure and peaceful world that we hope for and dream of. Although we may say that in New Zealand women are fortunate in their position, we all belong to a much larger world than our own country borders and New Zealand has a responsibility not only to provide equal gender opportunity at home but also to role model to others.

**Mary McIntyre**  
National Convenor