

Paper proposal for the IAMS Study group "Religious Freedom, Persecution and Mission",

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"Hard pressed on every side, but not crushed": Christian women negotiating their role in mission and church ministry in the context of persecution

Women belonging to Christian communities that experience persecution are a particularly vulnerable group because they are subjected to double persecution: both on the basis of their gender and their faith. In many cases their ability to practice their faith and have an active role in ministry and mission of the church are limited both by "outside" forces (state, society, local communities) as well as limitations coming from "inside" their own faith communities (church leaders, pastors, husbands, other church members). This paper will look at the cross-sectionality of different type of limitations and try to identify what kind of challenges they create for Christian women in ministry and mission. In the second part of the paper I will try to shift the focus away from the negative aspects of women's experiences and explore their role as active agents in mission and ministry. In this section of the paper I will ask questions like: How do women negotiate the limited space that they have (both in their faith communities and in the society in general) and find opportunities to take active role in church and mission? What kind of approaches do they use to expand the limited space in order to facilitate change? What can their experiences, attitudes and choices teach us about mission done from a position of powerlessness and vulnerability? The paper will build on research on gender and persecution, various publication on the topic of women in mission, as well as examples and case studies from the field.

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