

Towards a sustainable projection of the LWF and its Communion Office



THE
LUTHERAN
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FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

1. Executive Summary

This document proposes a direction to enhance a sustainable projection of the Lutheran World Federation and its Communion Office. It addresses both current and long-term issues related to financial sustainability.

In doing so, it proposes a theologically grounded understanding of sustainability that stems from the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion. The proposed direction towards sustainability focus on how to continue both expressing the LWF's ongoing vocation into relationships of mutuality (communion) and being a witness in a broken world that longs for justice, peace and reconciliation.

Some measures have long been under consideration and have been experimented with, while others are new and need testing. The proposed direction is grouped under the following headings:

- The Communion Office's program and organizational structure
- Conditions and assessment of options for the location of the LWF's Communion Office
- Consolidating the funding basis and expanding fundraising
- A fresh look at 'resources' in the communion and their mobilization
- A mid-term review of the LWF Strategy with a strong emphasis on questions of sustainability

The document, developed by the LWF Communion Office, intends to promote discussion and decisions by the LWF Council, so that the proposed direction can be followed up with appropriate processes and actions.

2. Stewards of the gift of communion

"...So that means that, you, the leaders of today, have to lead us (.....) otherwise we would never have this blessing [i.e. the LWF and its mission of service and love by journeying in the paths of the Gospel] that you want us to share.

So if you are not wise, we will become extravagant, if you sleep, we will be lifeless, and if you are lifeless, we will die with this world you want us to serve. So, you have to be very careful on transferring to us this very important and delicate gift of blessing we have to share, otherwise, it will fall down and disappear and this world will be lost forever.

But look at the result if you succeed: we will have more insight than you, we will have more understanding, so then you can be sure that communion will still [witness] and even will serve better."

(Reflection on Psalm 119 of Council member Mami Brunah Aro Sandaniaina during the LWF Assembly Planning Committee, Windhoek, 18 March 2015)

There is a new generation in LWF, aware of its mission and ready to take it a step further. While this generation sits at the table of decisions *today*, it reminds us of our shared responsibility for *tomorrow*. This is cause for great joy, and a call to responsibility for the leaders of today in the Communion Office (CO) and in governance. Leaders are called to show responsibility, wisdom, alertness, commitment to life. This is what the apostle Paul may have had in mind when he spoke about 'trustworthy stewardship' (1 Cor 4:2).

The new generation understands what the Gospel compels us to sustain and expand in LWF; and what those in leadership today are called to. It is with this sense of joy and of inter-generational responsibility that we address the sustainability of LWF and the CO.

3. Turning a challenge into an opportunity

On 15 January the Swiss National Bank (SNB) abandoned the cap on the Swiss Franc (CHF), a practice it had implemented to avoid the excessive strength of the CHF vis-à-vis the Euro (EUR). The cap, set at the rate of EUR 1 = CHF 1.20, provided for a predictable exchange rate, which in turn led to budgetary and financial stability in LWF.

With the SNB decision, the exchange rate between EUR and CHF initially plunged by almost 30% in LWF's 2015 budget. Today, the exchange rate has stabilized at around EUR 1 = CHF 1.05, which represents a loss in income of 20%.

The impact of the SNB's decision for LWF has been particularly critical in view of its expenses in CHF, which amount to 13 Million per year. Other than the income resulting from the Endowment Fund, LWF does not have income in CHF. Hence, it needs to sell foreign currency to cover its expenses in CHF. These funds come in the form of membership fees or are funds raised through program and project cooperation. To a large extent, these funds come in EUR. Other major currencies received by the LWF (US Dollar, Swedish and Norwegian Kroner) are mostly restricted to earmarked use (except a portion of the membership fees).

As a result of this prominent dependency on the EUR to cover expenses in CHF, and on the basis of a projected parity (1:1) between the EUR and the CHF, the SNB's decision resulted in a projected shortfall of 2.4 Million Euro to cover the budgeted expenditures of the CO in 2015.

The SNB decision has also brought to the surface questions about the long-term sustainability of the LWF in general, and the CO in particular. These questions had been with the LWF for some time and relate to a wide range of issues, including changes in the financial strength of churches and related agencies traditionally funding LWF, a changing face and landscape of Christianity, increasing cost of the current location of the CO, changed paradigms of cooperation. In various ways the CO has been looking into means of addressing these issues. The current situation encourages us to continue.

Understanding the risk of the immediate and medium-term financial implications of the SNB's decision on the LWF and the CO's sustainability, the response has been two-fold: **mitigation** – immediate measures to control both damage and risks resulting from the SNB's decision; and **adaptation to change** – measures with an impact in the medium and long term. *Thus, the immediate challenge resulting from the SNB's decision is turned into the opportunity to think ahead, projecting the LWF's life and work in sustainable ways into the future.*

4. Sustainability

Sustainability for LWF is first of all a theological and spiritual matter. As it is God's word that calls the church into being, it is God's call into communion, which constitutes the cornerstone of the LWF's sustainability. As long as God's vocation is vigorous, is recognized and continues inviting LWF member churches into a shared journey, and as long as the gift of being drawn into togetherness is recognized, and the task resulting from this togetherness is taken up by LWF member churches, the LWF is sustainable.

Accordingly, for the LWF as a communion of churches 'sustainability' is not a question of preservation or surviving, but of offering a thriving witness to God's grace as a communion included in God's mission for the healing of the world. It is this service across ethnic, social and political borders that becomes a witness of the communion in Christ and to Christ's grace. A service that will also seek its genuine expression through relationships of mutuality among sisters and brothers (2 Cor 8 and 9, 1 Cor 12:25).

Proposals in this document are based on this understanding of sustainability and are grounded on this theological identity. As such, they reflect the principles outlined in the LWF Strategy, particularly in its vision statement and priorities for the joint witness and work of member churches. The financial environment may have changed but the mission of LWF remains unchanged and points us towards actions that need to be taken to sustain LWF's mission in the world. The key question guiding the quest of sustainability is therefore: what needs to be done so that LWF's 'passion for the church and for the world' (LWF Strategy) is expressed meaningfully and relevantly to member churches and to the multitudes longing for justice, peace and reconciliation in this world?

This involves a multi-dimensional understanding of sustainability that includes people / communities and their vocation, relationships, methodologies of interaction, to name some. For LWF, important dimensions of sustainability include a shared faith and spiritual life, a broad and culturally rich grassroots base, a legitimacy that comes from collective ownership of LWF's identity and shared purpose, and organizational processes and capacities (leadership, financial and human resources, communication and systems).

While emphasizing questions of *financial* sustainability, we seek to avoid decisions on finances that undermine this broader understanding of sustainability, and the theological foundations on which it is built.

5. Sustaining LWF's mission – the role of the CO

The quest for sustainability will be pursued with a strong focus on LWF's ability to continue expressing its vocation to 'live and work together for a just-peaceful and reconciled world' (LWF Strategy).

LWF is a living system, manifested in different ways. The Council is an expression of the LWF, as are the regional leadership conferences. Youth and women's networks are significantly contributing towards building and expressing communion. Member churches on their own and in their bilateral relations seek to express the core theological features of being churches in communion. World Service as the international, diaconal arm of the communion expresses in unique ways what the LWF member churches recognize as their joint calling in this world.

A quest for a sustainable LWF, therefore, will adopt a *systemic approach*, which will see the variety of expressions of the communion as explained above as assets that embody and express the LWF member churches' journey of communion.

While addressing questions of overall sustainability with this systemic approach, this document focuses more specifically on questions related to the CO. However, clear intentionality is kept to understand the CO not as an end in itself, but as a specific structure within the "system" of the communion. As such, it is mandated to carry out the LWF Strategy with its priorities and programs, supporting thereby the various expressions of the communion as they 'live and work together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world' (LWF Strategy).

It is worthwhile to note that the CO is not homogeneous when it comes to the share of responsibilities of the LWF's programmatic work. Hence the challenges and perspectives of sustainability are varied. Even the concept of 'programs' carries different meanings within the CO, and therefore different departments face specific challenges on the question of sustainability.

6. Addressing the sustainability of the LWF and the CO

6.1 Mitigation – the immediate measures to control damage and risk (2015)

The impact on LWF's CO budget required immediate actions to avoid lasting damage and financial risks for the LWF. These measures were taken as management decisions, and are of a temporary nature, with the exception of the increase in the employee's contribution to the pension fund, which is of a permanent nature.

- **2015 budget revision** to reduce costs: streamlining, revising the location and size of meetings, the spacing of new hiring and other measures, program adjustments;
- **Allocation of 2014 treasury gains** to reduce the deficit resulting from exchange loss: instead of allocating gains proportionally to the reserves, a significant part of them were allocated to reduce the deficit.
- **Temporary toleration of a portion of the deficit:** implications of the SNB decisions cannot be fully assessed but need to be monitored closely. A temporary deficit was tolerated in view of possible future developments.
- **Reduction of costs related to staff:** the percentage of employee contributions to the pension fund was increased, and that of the employer decreased accordingly. Seven days of unpaid leave were proposed to staff in the Communion Office and international staff in DWS country programs, and were accepted by all.

The assessment of the impact of these immediate measures made after the first quarter of 2015 is positive. If there are no major developments until the end of the year these measures, and with the additional support pledged by some member churches and related organizations, the budgetary situation will have stabilized, and the adjusted program delivery of the CO will have been safeguarded. This is important because the sustainability of the CO will directly depend on its capacity to implement programs that express the vocation of LWF member churches.

6.2 Adaptation to change – directions on long-term sustainability

The measures to *mitigate* are temporary. They provide for immediate remedies to contain the situation. They focus on retaining the capacity to implement LWF programs.

It is essential, however, to pursue actions with medium and long-term impact in order to adapt to a changed reality and to sustain the mission of LWF.

The following are the directions proposed:

6.2.1 The Communion Office's program and organizational structures

It is an opportune time to look deeper into the program and CO structures to safeguard the on-going commitment to the mission and the LWF strategy. The CO shall be proactive and continue to be relevant in its ways of working despite the rapid changes in our context.

Building from the rich experiences in implementing the current strategy, the next step is to further deepen the collaboration and cross cutting synergies amongst the programs. Some existing projects and programs may need to be brought together, or new programs conceived differently that involve changed ways of working on issues across departments. Program inter-linkage and complementarity would be better focused. With careful analysis, this would result in interrelated and comprehensive programs that would better express what LWF member churches want to achieve together, and bring

greater impact to the churches, communities and people we work with. Such approaches shall be geared towards sustainability of programs and finances.

This effort to better express the complementarity of programmatic work and to bring it into fruitful synergies will entail a structure that can feasibly support its implementation. The complexity of this action will require external support, so that staff currently functioning within a given program and Communion Office structure is helped to think afresh.

6.2.2 Conditions and assessment of options for the location of the Communion Office

The issues related to how to organize the CO's structure in view of a re-conceptualized program work needs to be seen in conjunction with a larger, more fundamental question that the current situation has revealed: the challenge to financially sustain the Communion Office in Geneva. **Annex 1** gives a more detailed background both to the historic and present reasons for the LWF CO's location in Geneva, as well as for the challenge it represents today.

The approach chosen here is not to rush into hasty decisions, but to carefully analyze what the necessary conditions for a Communion Office to operate are, and what the criteria to assess possible alternative options would be (see: Identifying required conditions and assessing alternative options for the location of the LWF Communion Office, page 7).

While this assessment is undertaken, there are also concrete actions to be pursued in order to still enhance the conditions under which the LWF CO operates in Geneva.

6.2.2.1 Negotiating improved framework conditions in Geneva

a. Conditions under which LWF would be hosted at the World Council of Churches

The LWF is an integral part of the ecumenical movement. This is demonstrated, among other ways, by the fact that the LWF's offices are located in the Ecumenical Center in Geneva. The property development process in which the World Council of Churches (WCC) is engaged requires active participation by LWF as a stakeholder. In addition, as the property is developed careful negotiations are needed around the conditions under which LWF is hosted as a fraternal tenant, while also assessing the LWF's options for the location of the CO (See: Identifying required conditions and assessing alternative options for the location of the LWF Communion Office, page 7).

b. Framework conditions provided by cantonal and federal authorities in Switzerland

City, canton and federal authorities have a high interest in retaining both the reputation and the gravitas of Geneva as a leading international city with a long track record of active engagement in humanitarian affairs. This is represented through various UN structures that are located in Geneva.

At the same time, the UN system has developed a strong approach towards engaging civil society in order to pursue its objectives. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are key players in this regard. LWF is one of them with very active relationships with the Geneva-based UN system:

- UNHCR – the LWF is the largest faith-based implementing partner and the fourth largest implementing partner on a global level;
- Human Rights Council – the LWF plays a key role supporting the Universal Periodic Review system (UPR), as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW – New York), and;
- INGO committees that relate to human rights and freedom of religion – LWF helps lead these.

Advocacy work is being developed by the LWF towards the cantonal and federal authorities to better position the LWF as an international, faith-based organization that is instrumental for the UN system and its mandate. This advocacy is undertaken collaboratively and includes ecumenical organizations as well as other INGO's relevant to the UN and with headquarters in Geneva.

6.2.2.2 Identifying required conditions and assessing alternative options for the location of the CO and its organizational setup

There are strong historic reasons for the CO to be located in Geneva. The ecumenical motivations for the LWF to be located in the Ecumenical Center, alongside WCC and the ACT Alliance, have been explained earlier. Furthermore, the LWF's commitment to serve refugees and displaced persons, and act on its commitment to human rights, makes it essential for the LWF to have a presence in the city where the major UN bodies related to this work are headquartered.

While conditions may change in future (immigration vote 2014), Geneva still offers comparatively good overall framework conditions for international organizations.

Yet with the SNB's decision the already expensive city of Geneva has become even more costly, posing a serious challenge to the financial sustainability of the CO in its present location.

It is appropriate, therefore, to assess the availability of options for the LWF in view of the location of its CO.

Basing this assessment on financial criteria only carries immense risks. As stated above, sustainability of an organization such as LWF is multifaceted (see: 4. Sustainability, page 3).

A set of clearly outlined criteria that reflect this multifaceted understanding of sustainability needs to be developed to support the assessment of available options for the location of the CO.

Evidently, the efforts to redefining programmatic and organizational structures of the LWF CO (see above, 6.2.1 The Communion Office's program and organizational structures, page 5) have implications for the assessment of the available options regarding the location of the CO, for instance in view of possible approaches towards de-centralization.

Annex 1 proposes criteria to assess the possible options regarding the location of the CO as well as the process to be followed for such an assessment.

6.2.3 Consolidating the funding basis and expanding fundraising

6.2.3.1 Membership Fees and Endowment Fund

Membership fees

The LWF's annual budgets are mostly *fundraising budgets*. This means that the resources that are required for the LWF CO to implement the programs are not available beforehand, but need to be raised. To a certain extent, these resources are pledged by member churches and related organizations through annual funding commitments, which helps to make responsible decisions regarding the annual budgets.

The income through membership fee and through the LWF Endowment Fund is different by its nature. Although fundraising needs to be done, it represents a more stable, known income basis for the LWF.

During the last few years considerable effort has been devoted to raise awareness and to explain about the importance of the payment of the membership fee. This has resulted in an important increase in the percentage of churches paying membership fees (115 in 2013, compared to 69 in 2012).

It is proposed to sustain these efforts. The payment of membership fees is important both in view of providing a stronger basis of funding to the LWF (not bound to program implementation), and in view of becoming a way for LWF member churches to express their commitment with, and ownership of the LWF. These two dimensions have direct implications on the LWF's sustainability.

The Endowment Fund

The Endowment Fund was created in 1999 to provide some long-term sustainable income for the LWF. Member churches have given CHF 11.5 million since it was formed. The target is to reach CHF 20 million by 2017. This is ambitious, but achievable if enough churches and people can be persuaded of its long-term potential. The Endowment Fund income has a particular value to the LWF. Not only does it provide unrestricted income, it is the only income received in CHF and therefore has no exposure to the risks of currency fluctuations (except the part of the Endowment Fund hold in trust by ELCA). It does, however, rely on a healthy investment performance and steps have been taken in the last two years to "smooth out" the annual distributions irrespective of the investment performance in any given year. Recently, annual distributions to the LWF have been around CHF 350,000 and were allocated to the budget according to the Endowment Fund policy, thus supporting the CO to fulfil its mandate.

6.2.3.2 Expanding fundraising

While efforts are needed to secure income through membership fees and the endowment fund, fundraising efforts need to be continued and further developed. The CO has accelerated the process to develop its fundraising strategy, which will guide these efforts. The strategic commitments are:

- Ensuring program relevance, quality and accountability
- Strengthening existing partnership and funding models
- Develop new sources of funding
- Strategic use of unrestricted funds
- Improve resource contribution from members
- Strengthen internal capacities and expertise

These will also entail actions that include to:

- Develop more collaborative inter-departmental fundraising: gathering up different areas of activity and expertise of the LWF, and presenting it as a coherent whole
- Seek new High-value donors including private Trusts and Foundations.
- Recruit and nurture a core group of individual donors who give regularly to the work of the LWF.

(See also Finance Committee Exhibit 5.3)

6.2.4 A fresh look at 'resources' in the communion and their mobilization

The current situation invites a fresh look into resource mobilization in the communion through the lenses of a strengthened emphasis on the polycentric and trans-contextual nature of LWF. This fresh look is inspired by John 6:1-15, a biblical story helping to focus on existing, available resources that are offered for the common good and provide for the nourishment of all.

The LWF needs to understand resource mobilization in a wider sense, which includes mobilizing resources for local use, while keeping them aligned with LWF's program focus.

Resource mobilization is not going to exclusively focus on how to move resources to the CO in order to be used for program implementation, but on identifying and bringing locally available resources into synergy with LWF's programmatic commitments. Opportunities need to be provided to individuals who may have the calling to support the LWF's mission with their gifts and time on a voluntary basis.

These approaches enhance the possibilities of member churches, regardless of their size and financial capacity, to support LWF's mission according to their own means and to increase their sense of ownership in LWF. They help root LWF and its mission deeper into the life of its member churches by offering churches and individuals fresh opportunities to participate in its mission.

Good practices already exist, some with the financial support of LWF, others with costs fully borne by local churches. The following ideas are being developed:

- Creating (better) synergies around programmatic activities that LWF and member churches have in common;
- Home-based secondments that support the implementation of LWF's program work;
- Volunteers, who expand the possibilities of the LWF's witness.

Annex 2 focuses on the proposal to generate a network of volunteers in LWF.

6.2.5 LWF Strategy's mid-term review

The LWF Strategy extends up to 2018. During that year a new strategy needs to be developed. This will happen after the Twelfth Assembly, which will contribute with its deliberations and resolutions to develop a new strategy.

A mid-term review has been planned for 2016, which would identify major lessons learned during the period of implementation of the strategy currently in place. Similar to the approach used during the development of the current strategy, the review process should be participatory and safeguard the involvement of key stakeholders in the process. The Terms of Reference for this mid-term review are being designed to pay particular attention to questions regarding the sustainability of the LWF so that a new strategic approach tentatively set for 2019-2025 addresses the larger questions related to sustainability.

7. Envisaging the next steps

The proposed measures are to a large extent interconnected and require a comprehensive approach, so that the visions expressed are broken down into concrete processes, actions and decisions. This speaks to the complexity of the process that is ahead, and calls for external support and facilitation.

The change process that is envisaged is sensitive, as matters of identity and how identity is expressed will always be sensitive. It is crucial that the process ahead is implemented with a strong commitment towards participation and communication, both internally (CO) and externally (governance, member churches, stakeholder engagement).

After an internal communication process about the proposals contained in this document with LWF Staff in the CO, the document is presented to the Council at its meeting in June 2015. The Council is requested to discuss the proposals, to contribute to the strategic reflection and to endorse the implementation of the proposed measures.

The LWF Meeting of Officers (November 2015) and the LWF Council (June 2016) will receive progress reports, and will be presented with recommendations for those decisions that governance is mandated to take.

8. Conclusion

“But look at the result if you succeed: we will have more insight than you, we will have more understanding, so then you can be sure that communion will still [witness] and even will serve better.”

With this very short and simple sentence, our Council member from Madagascar managed to express key aspects of what is at the core of the LWF’s identity: the LWF journey is a witness to Christ, the togetherness of LWF member churches is expressed by mutual care and by service in this world. The quest for a sustainable LWF must be nurtured by this vocation to continue witnessing in this world, participating with devoted service in God’s mission of transformation and healing, as expressed and offered in Jesus Christ.

The LWF is in a strong position to engage in this process. It hears God’s call into communion. It has a strategy, which clearly outlines the identity, the values, the vision and the priorities of the LWF. It is financially and organizationally in a relatively strong position, with significantly improved planning and reporting instruments. It enjoys a positive, supporting attitude, if not good reputation, among its key stakeholders. It has an active, committed Council supporting the CO with larger strategic reflections. It has amazingly committed staff that is eager to contribute to an LWF that is thriving and making a difference.

These are ideal pre- conditions to take up the challenge resulting from the SNB’s decision and turn it into an opportunity to strengthen the LWF’s journey and witness in this world. Because that is what needs to be sustained: LWF’s ongoing participation in God’s mission of transformation and healing in this world. Or, to put it in the language of the LWF strategy: it is about continue being “a communion in Christ, living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world” (LWF Strategy – Vision Statement)

Annex 1: Criteria to assess available options for the location for the LWF Communion Office

Parameters to assess local conditions required for the CO to carry out its mission

Introduction

For almost seven decades LWF has had its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Several reasons led to that choice. The humanitarian commitment of Lutheran churches had prompted them to establish offices in Geneva in order to better collaborate with the ICRC. In addition, the strong post-war Lutheran commitment to the ecumenical movement attracted LWF to be in the same city as WCC, which was already establishing itself in Geneva because of Switzerland's neutrality and Geneva's central location in Europe. The UN's European offices were set up in Geneva on the premises of the former League of Nations. Geneva has proven to be an ideal location for LWF in many respects. It offers immediate access to relevant UN bodies and staff, close interaction with other ecumenical organizations, excellent conditions and infrastructure for international staff, easy accessibility for people from many countries.

At the same time, a degradation of certain conditions has been observed. Two ecumenical organizations formerly located at the Ecumenical Center have relocated their offices, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The 2014 Swiss referendum on immigration raised questions concerning the ability of international organizations to freely hire their international staff. The pressure on housing is immense, partially due to the fact that over the last decade several large international corporations have been attracted to establish themselves in Geneva. This has reduced both the affordability and availability of housing. Finally, while the inflation rate has been very low in Geneva over the past few years, the local currency (Swiss Franc – CHF) has increased its value over the foreign currencies on which LWF depends to sustain its work. For example, the Euro dropped from 1EUR: 1.48CHF in January 2010 to 1EUR: 1.20CHF in December 2014 (-19 %).

With the decision of the SNB to stop protecting the Swiss Franc from further strengthening against the Euro in January 2015, the exchange rate has dropped even further and has resulted in a near parity between the Euro and the Swiss Franc. As a result, whenever Euros need to be sold to cover LWF's expenses in Swiss Franc, there is a loss of almost 33% of its value, if compared to the value of the Euro in 2010, and of 20% if compared to its value just a day prior to the SNB's decision.

This concern around the value of the Swiss Franc raises questions concerning the ways to sustain financially the CO in Geneva. The fact that it is happening in the context of a decreasing financial strength in most of the churches that have traditionally supported LWF represents an additional concern.

The LWF needs to respond to such external developments while remaining committed to the mission of the LWF and understanding the vital importance of the role the CO plays. The LWF needs to assess availability of options and take into account the advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and threats of these options.

Parameters to guide the assessment on the conditions required for the CO

The following alphabetical list includes aspects to be considered in assessing the location of the CO.

Accessibility (travel): The CO needs to be located in a place that is easily accessible through a well-connected airport, with high frequency of connecting flights from/to larger international hubs.

Indicators:

Accessibility (visa requirements, restrictions): Visa requirements need to be clear, transparent and non-restrictive. Access to pertinent offices of the government to pursue specific visa requests would be established. This relates both to temporary visas for short-term visits (meetings), and to international staff hired by LWF.

Indicators:

Capability to attract international staff: For international staff to be able to decide whether to serve in the CO, local conditions are often decisive. The existence of an international school(s) and/or good quality local schools, as well as accessible and good health services are highly important.

Indicators:

Church / ecumenical context: The CO is composed of a large number of staff who are keen to actively engage in church life. This engagement is important for the ongoing expression of their baptism, and their spiritual growth. The existence of a local Lutheran church is of great importance.

Indicators:

Communication infrastructure: The availability of a reliable, strong infrastructure and adequate IT are of great importance for the CO in view of the active, constant communication the office carries out worldwide through email, Skype and video conferences.

Indicators:

Conference and meeting facilities: The location of the CO should allow for large meetings (100–150 persons). Adequate hotel and conference facilities are required, as well as the ability to convene meetings with international participants.

Indicators:

Cost of living: The CO should be located where the cost of living is commensurate to the LWF's financial strength to sustain personnel costs.

Indicators:

Fiscal and legal conditions: The CO should have clear, transparent, reliable and attractive legal and fiscal conditions to operate as an international organization, including registration, taxation, and possible subsidies and /or fiscal packages.

Indicators:

Office infrastructure: Adequate and affordable office space should be available, supporting LWF's commitments to high ecological standards.

Indicators:

Security: The CO and its staff require reasonable security in terms of crime and personal safety, particularly in view of violence based on race, gender and /or targeting foreigners.

Annex 2: Concept Paper – On establishing a Lutheran communion global volunteer network

About this paper

This paper presents an idea for the foundation and development of a global volunteer network affiliated with and serving the vision and strategic aims of LWF. The paper will be used to generate further discussion and thinking on:

- the rationale for such a network;
- the value of the network in ongoing renewal, formation and sustainability of LWF;
- who the volunteers could be and how they might contribute and benefit;
- possible fields of engagement;
- the associated opportunities and risks;
- possible models for management and support of the network.

Background

The LWF Strategy 2012-2017 sets out LWF's vision, purpose, strategic aims and commitments leading up to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It invites the communion to move toward this significant commemoration in ways that express ongoing reform and renewal in the formation and identity of the communion and in the way it shares in God's mission for the world.

The strategy emphasizes the importance and interdependence of relationships to LWF's character, spiritual journey and life as a communion, including relationships between churches and among congregations, and those connected through local, regional and global networks that reflect the theological and cultural diversity of the communion.

The strategy also highlights the need to invest in and nurture sustainability – as a communion of churches and for organizational effectiveness. For LWF, important dimensions of sustainability include a shared faith and spiritual life, a broad and culturally rich grassroots base, a legitimacy that comes from collective ownership of LWF's identity and shared purpose, and organizational processes and capacities (leadership, financial and human resources, communication and systems).

A global volunteer network established under the auspice of LWF could support these commitments and enhance the communion's shared purposes:

- Proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed and promoting Christian unity worldwide. Strengthening self-understanding and faith in action through the sharing of gifts and resources, cooperative study, reflection, and theological dialogue.
- Contributing to dialogue and reconciliation among churches, between different faiths and in societies affected by violence and conflict.
- Promoting human rights, peace and reconciliation, alleviating human suffering, and addressing the root causes of social, economic, and gender injustice.
- Caring for God's creation and living in an environmentally sustainable way.

Why a global volunteer network?

As a further step in the ongoing formation and evolution of the LWF communion of churches, consideration is being given to establishing a global volunteer network. Such a network could become a new and exciting expression of LWF as it grows into communion and provide new pathways for people to be a part of this global communion. A global volunteer network could:

- provide new ways for member churches and people connected with them to express being part of a global communion;
- offer a vehicle for participation in the communion beyond that currently available through local and regional networks and church institutions;
- support LWF to be truly rooted in its many different contexts;
- build more grassroots support and legitimacy for the communion and its engagement in civil society;
- offer ways for individuals to learn about, connect with and contribute their gifts to the communion;
- provide new ways for individuals and groups to express their faith in action for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.

Those who might choose to volunteer for LWF will have a mix of motivations – to express or deepen their faith, learn, have new experience, make a difference in the world, and connect with and contribute to the shared mission of the communion.

LWF volunteers can grow in their understanding, acquire experience and skills and the satisfaction of living out their faith and serving God in new ways. They will gain fresh insights that they can take back to their worshipping communities, networks and organizations.

A global volunteer network would provide ways for people to express the gift of the communion and participate in its life and work. We need to identify LWF activities or initiatives that provide appropriate opportunities for volunteers to work with member churches and their related agencies, regional expressions and LWF offices.

Establishment of such a network could be an initiative associated with preparations for and commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Who are the potential volunteers?

Potential groups who might be included in a future LWF communion volunteer network are:

- young people connected with member churches and colleges;
- professional people, lay and ordained, participating in member churches who want to 'give back' through LWF volunteer engagement;
- church leaders who want to share their skills and/or learn with other member churches and networks;
- people who have worked for member churches, LWF-related agencies and the CO who are seeking a different form of engagement.
- Retired persons who want to continue contributing with their gifts.

The goal will be to have an international network that becomes vibrant, active and inclusive of people associated with LWF from all corners of the world. Volunteers might be engaged in LWF work in their local or regional context, through a member church or group of churches in another part of the world, or in the CO.

What are possible areas of engagement?

There are many areas where volunteers could potentially make a contribution. For the network to be effectively managed and supported, it may be necessary to start with a small number of areas where volunteering opportunities are created.

Potential areas for volunteer participation and engagement are:

- church-to-church support (e.g. church governance, leadership development, conflict mediation);
- information sharing and communication;
- placements enabling cross-cultural learning and exchange (theology, worship, holistic mission);
- a pool of expertise that can be mobilized for action in given situations (e.g. accompanying member churches with Disaster Risk Reduction - DRR - and local emergencies);
- areas of expertise and skills for initiatives that are important to the communion as a whole;
- regional expressions of the capacity to develop and meet the expectations of member churches;
- paths for young people to gain experience and understanding of their faith in a global context.

What issues and challenges can arise?

A successful LWF volunteer network would have to be well managed and have a professional approach to the challenges that arise, such as:

- Ethical and industrial issues associated with using volunteers in place of or alongside paid staff.
- Areas where it is not appropriate to use volunteers because it would jeopardize quality or effectiveness of programs.
- Cost issues – how the costs of volunteering are shared by the individual volunteer and LWF.
- Volunteer management – volunteer programs require effective management in terms of recruitment, induction, on the job support, information and guidelines, standards and accountability, sharing the learning and benefits.
- Relationship management – establishing and managing the network will require good communication, promotion of the concept and managing relations with those parts of the communion that offer volunteer opportunities.

The intention is not to create a 'cheap' labor pool. It will be just as important to define where it is *not* appropriate to engage volunteers as it is to define the spaces where participation could be encouraged.

Promoting, establishing and managing a volunteer network will have costs attached to it. Support, coordination and management of a 'global' network will be challenging and a decentralized model is probably more compatible with the identity and nature of the communion. Local or regional chapters can develop their own flavor and operating model within some agreed parameters and management guidelines. These chapters would also rely on financial and human resources being available to them.