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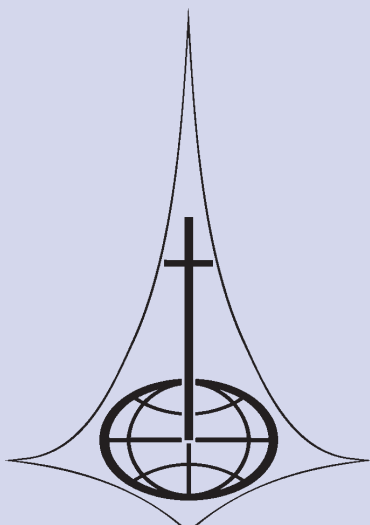
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FEATURE: Where the LWF Becomes Part of Civil Society

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has participated in the World Social Forum (WSF) since the second such forum in 2002 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. With each passing year, the LWF delegation has grown in numbers and involvement in the various activities offered under the WSF theme “Another World is Possible.” Brazilian journalist Susanne Buchweitz, reporting for *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, spoke with a cross section of the 60-person delegation attending the January 26–31 forum in Porto Alegre.



World Social Forum 2005: A workshop on the Global Week of Action on trade and justice. © LWF/P. Prove

“It was a very good opportunity for me to learn many things about the forum and current global issues,” said Mr Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, director for social empowerment projects at the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) in Bangladesh. RDRS is one of the 24 field programs of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS).

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Highlights

LWF President Hanson Urges Member Churches Worldwide to Share Resources Mutually 4

The president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Mark S. Hanson has appealed to LWF member churches worldwide to mutually share the different resources with which they are endowed for the continued “growing together” of the Lutheran communion. Hanson led an LWF delegation to West Africa, February 10–17.

India: LWF Field Program Continues Support to Churches in Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation 9

Following his recent assessment of tsunami-affected villages in southern India, the director of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS), Mr Robert Granke, has stressed the need for DWS’ continued strategic support to the Chennai-based United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI). The body of Lutheran churches has been providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to affected communities.

Brazil: “These Are the True Heroes” 14

Representatives of ecumenical organizations who attended the World Social Forum (WSF) this year had the opportunity to visit projects of the Lutheran Diakonia Foundation (FLD)—an organization of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil.

FEATURE: Daring to Speak Out for Colombia’s Internally Displaced 15

Approaching the village of Tobia, via a steep path, Hebert Gutiérrez, coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), starts calling out Rosa Amaya. He wants her to know who is coming. There are many guerrillas in Tobia, a 90-minute drive from the capital, and everyone is constantly alert.

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Germany: Commemoration of Dresden Bombing 60 Years Later

The city of Dresden has marked the 60th anniversary of the allied firebombing during the Second World War in which 35,000 civilians are estimated to have died. The historic city center was reduced to rubble.

At a memorial service in Dresden’s reconstructed Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), February 13, Rev. John Irvine, Dean of Coventry Cathedral England, presented Bishop Jochen Bohl, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, with a cross made from medieval nails as a sign of reconciliation.

Such crosses are made from nails retrieved from the roof of Coventry Cathedral after it was destroyed by German bombing in 1940.

The Dresden church was almost completely destroyed by the 1945 bombing. Reconstruction began in February 1993. The church will be re-dedicated and re-opened later this year.

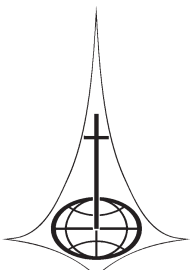
Church bells tolled at 9.45 p. m. to mark the time when the bombing of the city began on 13 February 1945.

Tens of thousands of Dresden residents took part in the commemoration. At the city’s theater square, thousands more took part in the “10,000 candles—A picture shared around the world” event. Others in a silent memorial at the city’s old market, placed candles to form in German, the phrase, “Dresden has had enough of Nazis.”

The memorial events in Dresden were disrupted by a gathering of about 5,000 supporters of far-right wing groups who waved black flags and banners, in what was seen as the biggest neo-Nazi demonstration in Germany’s post-war history.

Dresden has responded well to the threat of neo-Nazism through silence and lights of hope, Bishop Bohl said in a television interview. The Frauenkirche, he noted, had been rebuilt in a spirit of reconciliation. Dresden residents were grateful for all the support that had come from people in Europe and worldwide. (314 words)

(Adapted from an Ecumenical News International article.)



Norwegian Bishop Gunnar J. Stålsett Celebrates 70th Birthday

Former LWF General Secretary “Took Far-Reaching Initiatives”

GENEVA 10 February 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran Bishop of Oslo (Norway), and former general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Rev. Dr Gunnar Stålsett celebrated his 70th birthday, February 10. In a congratulatory message on the occasion, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko commended his predecessor’s service between 1985–1994.

“You took far-reaching initiatives, including the restructuring of the [LWF] and laying the foundations for deeper bonds of communion among the member churches. Your courage and apostolic stubbornness were admired by both your supporters and opponents,” Noko said.

He conveyed the Lutheran communion’s gratitude “to God for men and women possessing the courage and sincerity with which you have always addressed contemporary social issues from the perspective of God’s grace freely given in Jesus Christ.”

Noko noted that the 1990 LWF Eighth Assembly in Brazil, the preparation of which Stålsett was responsible, took the important step of renewing the LWF by electing a new Council drawn equally from the South and the North. He commended his predecessor for his courage to call the churches to mutual accountability in mission. The common decisions taken by the churches gathered in Curitiba continue to be a source of inspiration in the search for a common life in the Lutheran communion, Noko stressed.

Stålsett will retire on March 1 from the position of Bishop of Oslo, which he has held since 1998. The diocese has 493,000 members represented in 77 congregations served by 170 pastors. Early March, the Council of State, comprising the king and government, will appoint a new bishop for the diocese. *(See article below.)*

After his tenure in the LWF, Stålsett worked as rector of the Practical Theological Seminary at the University of Oslo. He has been engaged in various peace-building and inter-religious initiatives worldwide. He served twice on the Norwegian Nobel Committee, 1985–1990, and 1994–2003. He is currently an International Co-President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and Co-Moderator of its affiliated European



At his 70th birthday, Bishop Dr Gunnar J. Stålsett was presented with a portrait of himself painted by Håkon Gullvåg. © Church of Norway, Oslo Diocese

Council of Religious Leaders, as well as Chairperson of the Niwano Peace Prize Committee. Last year, he was appointed Co-chairperson of the Leadership Program Committee for the 16th International AIDS Conference to be held in Toronto, Canada in August 2006.

Stålsett studied theology in Norway, the USA and Germany. He was ordained a Church of Norway pastor in 1962. From 1964 to 1970 he was a lecturer in systematic theology at the Stavanger School of Mission and Theology. He served as General Secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Foreign Relations, 1970–77.

His political responsibilities included State Secretary in the Ministry of Church, Education and Culture, 1972–1973, and Chairperson of the Center Party, 1977–79. He was a Deputy Member of Parliament and member of the Oslo City Council. He also served his government on various international commissions, including the Advisory Council for Arms Control and Disarmament, and the Norwegian UNESCO Commission. Prior to joining the LWF he was General Secretary of the Norwegian Bible Society.

The Church of Norway has 3.9 million members, representing around 86 percent of the Norwegian population. It has been an LWF member church since 1947. (537 words)

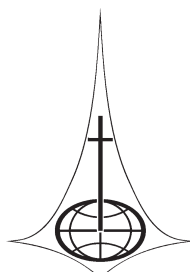
King of Norway to Name Oslo Bishop Early March

Bishop Gunnar Stålsett to Retire March 1

GENEVA, 14 February 2005 (LWI) – During the first week of March, Norway’s King Harald V will name a new bishop for the diocese of Oslo. The incumbent Bishop Dr Gunnar J. Stålsett, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

from 1985 to 1994, will retire on March 1 *(see story above)*.

The search process for a new bishop of Oslo has been going on since August 2004 when the diocesan council nominated seven candidates. Since then one



more candidate was added after a vote by the parish councils and pastors of the Oslo Diocese.

The election process is now in its final round. There are four eligible candidates—three men and one woman: Dean Trond Bakkevig; General Secretary Helen Bjørnøy; Bishop of Borg, Ole Christian Kvarme; and Erling J. Pettersen, Director of the Church of Norway National Council. After a vote by the bishops of the Church of Norway, followed by the National Council and the Oslo Diocese Council, the King, within the Council of State, will then appoint one of the four candidates as the new bishop at the beginning of March.

Article 2 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway states “The Evangelical-Lutheran religion

shall remain the official religion of the State.” The King is the head of the church and state. Within government, only ministers who are Church of Norway members may vote on major decisions concerning the church.

The bishop of Norway’s capital city, Oslo, traditionally has a prominent position in society, because of the close proximity to the government, parliament and royal family.

The Church of Norway has eleven bishops. The Bishops’ Conference elects its president every four years. The position is currently held by Bishop Finn Wagle, Nidaros Diocese.

(303 words)

LWF President Hanson Urges Member Churches Worldwide to Share Resources Mutually

General Secretary Noko Underlines African Churches’ Role in Formation of Good Citizens

ABUJA, Nigeria/GENEVA, 16 February 2005 (LWI)

– The president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Mark S. Hanson has appealed to LWF member churches worldwide to mutually share the different resources with which they are endowed for the continued “growing together” of the Lutheran communion. Hanson led an LWF delegation to West Africa, February 10–17.

“The maturing of the Lutheran World Federation and its true nature as a communion in which member churches share their gifts with one another, as reflected in the rapidly growing Lutheran churches in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, which are becoming teachers for the Northern Hemisphere churches,” Hanson said February 12, at the end of the delegation’s first stop, Nigeria.

Delivering his address titled “Growing Together, Growing Apart,” at a two-day seminar organized by the Lutheran Communion in Western Africa (LUCWA), Hanson, also presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, delved extensively into religious and socio-economic factors which cause Christians and the world to either grow together or apart.

Growing together, he said, happens when Christians increasingly see each other as companions, working for the sake of the gospel. Other factors include the increasing possibilities of global communication, which are indices of enhanced inter-relatedness.

He cited the impact of economic globalization as one example of growing apart, saying it had resulted in experiences that could fragment the entire creation, human family and unity of the LWF.

The LWF President said indicators of whether Christians were growing apart or together could be seen through the lens of relationships within the LWF, relation-



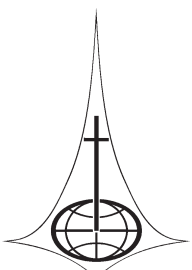
LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, officiates at Holy Communion during the closing eucharistic service at LCCN’s Nyanya congregation in Abuja, Nigeria. © LWF/LUCWA

ships within the church catholic, interfaith and inter-religious relationships, as well as global relationships.

At its September 2004 meeting, the LWF Council appointed a task force to guide discussion on family, marriage and sexuality. On the issue of human sexuality, Hanson urged caution, saying that “we run the risk of making declarations and decisions without being in conversation with each other.” He pointed out that it would be tragic if human sexuality were to become a cause for division rather than a source of respectful and admittedly difficult dialogue.

“Unless we learn the art of moral deliberation in ecumenical, global and cross-cultural contexts, issues of morality seem to have a greater potential to divide rather than unite us,” Hanson said.

The LWF President expressed concern over the imbalances that continue to exist between the rich



and poor, and weak and strong of the world. The church, he stressed, cannot afford to be complacent in the face of injustices but should instead rise to such occasion and give prophetic judgment.

African Churches Have Come a Long Way

Addressing the seminar, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko recalled the 1955 All Africa Lutheran Consultation (AALC) in Marangu, Tanzania, when Lutheran churches in Africa held their first joint conference. The continent's churches will celebrate the AALC's 50th anniversary in the latter part of this year.

Noko pointed out the difficulties that had to be overcome before the African Lutheran churches could come to where they are today. Such problems included colonialism, poor communication, geographical boundaries, underdevelopment and lack of human resources in the churches.

The LWF General Secretary noted that the formation of the three sub-regional bodies of Lutheran churches in Africa was intended to address the challenges of growth, expansion, communication and the need for closer interaction between members of the Lutheran communion in Africa and the sub-regions which include LUCWA, the Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA), and Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA).

On Christian-Muslim, and Christian-Jewish relationships, Noko explained that a lot still needed to be done toward improvement in Africa. He hoped the new frontiers in missionary work would discover ways of enhancing understanding among people of other faiths.

For the first time in Africa, Noko said, the LWF had initiated a meeting with members of seven leading faith groups in Africa to address the quest for peace there. The October 2002 first Inter-Faith Peace Summit in Africa brought together religious representatives from African Traditional Religion, the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. They had agreed that recurring conflict in Africa hinged partly on the fact that religious leaders there had not lived up to their responsibilities.

The LWF General Secretary also challenged the African churches to be actively involved in the formation of good citizens in their countries through use of educational institutions where moral instructions could be imparted. They could also adopt ongoing dialogue with the governments and advance suggestions for the formation of good citizens, he proposed.

The LWF delegation also visited some local congregations of the host churches, the Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN), and Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN).

In the closing eucharistic service, the LWF President reminded Christians of the need to see themselves in the light of the temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). They should strive to overcome temptations and be ready to meet one another's material and spiritual needs, he said.

The LUCWA seminar was also attended by LCCN Archbishop Nemuel A. Babba; LCN Bishop Effiong E. Ekanem; LUCWA President, Rev. Robert Goyek Daga, also head of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon; and several other clergy from Nigeria and within the LUCWA sub-region.

During the West African pastoral visit that also covers Liberia and Sierra Leone, Hanson and Noko are accompanied by the LWF Area Secretary for Africa, Rev. Dr Musa Filibus, and their spouses, Ione Hanson and Gladys Noko respectively. (932 words)

(Written for LWI by Abuja (Nigeria)-based journalist Abu F. Ojie.)



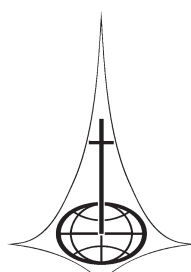
The LWF leadership addressing a press conference in Abuja: left to right, LCCN Archbishop Nemuel A. Babba; LCN women's delegate Ms Brenda Arpan; LWF President Mark S. Hanson; and General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko. © LWF/LUCWA

Norwegian Lutheran Theologian Converted to Catholicism Quits Teaching Position

Professor Ola Tjørhom Asserts Commitment to Visible Unity of the Church

GENEVA, 18 February 2005 (LWI) – A former Lutheran professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, who converted to the Roman Catholic tradition has resigned from his current position as chairperson of dogmatics at the Lutheran School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, Norway.

After his conversion two years ago, Ola Tjørhom, 51, was allowed to continue as professor of systematic theology and ecumenical theology at Stavanger. However, the faculty leadership later on decided that he should be moved to a more neutral field, namely theory of science.



Tjørhom's decision to become Roman Catholic in January 2003 drew considerable attention not only in Norwegian media, but also in ecumenical circles. As a prominent Church of Norway representative, he was instrumental in ecumenical developments at both regional and international levels, and participated in the process that led to the Porvoo Common Statement. Tjørhom was also a Lutheran member of the Anglican-Lutheran International Working Group. *(See LWI No. 01/2003, pg 4)*

Tjørhom resigned from his teaching post in January 2005 as part of a mutual agreement between him and the Lutheran School of Mission and Theology. He says he welcomes the settlement that has been

reached, but regrets the difficulty reflected in defining an appropriate teaching area for a Roman Catholic theologian. Theory of science, he says, is an area in which he has no special background.

Tjørhom, who has had leave of absence for the last year, has continued writing and publishing on various topics and will now begin looking for a new teaching post.

"I am fully aware that a conversion is a problematic step, not least in an ecumenical perspective," he remarks. "Yet, my commitment to the goal of the visible unity of the church remains unchanged," he adds.

(306 words)

Call for Government Action after Violent Raid on Salvadoran Lutheran University

LWF Affirms Support to Reestablish Academic Activities

GENEVA, 22 February 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has asked the Salvadoran government to ensure the physical protection and integrity of the Salvadoran Lutheran University (ULS), following a raid in which a security guard was killed and almost all of the university's equipment was stolen.

"I want herewith to solicit you to do what is in your authority so that the perfidious acts are brought to the light completely and that their authors are brought to justice," LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko wrote to Salvadoran President Elías Antonio Saca.

"We deplore this vicious act against the university" and ask "for an immediate and thorough investigation to uncover the identities of those responsible," LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson said in a separate letter to Saca. Hanson is presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The LWF said it would continue to be in close contact with the ULS in order to evaluate the progress of the criminal investigation and the reestablishment of the academic activities. The university is an institution of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod (SLS).

The ULS was raided on January 29, "and the guard on duty, Mr Manuel de Jesús Martínez was killed, and left hanging from a tree in plain view of the street, gagged, blindfolded and with hands and feet tied. Almost all of the university's equipment was stolen, including the bus, which was abandoned on the opposite side of the city, two blocks from the home of the university's acting rector," Rev. Hector Fernandez stated in a news release issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). The SLS is an ELCIC partner church.

A communiqué from the university said the ULS is characterized as an alternative project in education, promoting a critical conscience for the society. It accompanies the people in their struggles for justice, and in giving education opportunities for the poor of El Salvador.

"It is worrisome to think that the motive for these actions was not only theft but was also meant to frighten in order to curb the commitment which we have assumed. [This] is not only about a robbery but also about a savage assassination which reminds us of the horrors of the years of the armed conflict," the ULS stated.

(397 words)

South African Lutheran Becomes Director of ACT Coordinating Office

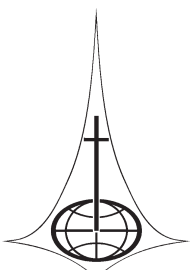
Effective February 15, Rev. White M. Rakuba, an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) is the new director of the Geneva-based Coordinating Office of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International. The Lutheran World Federation is a founding member of ACT, a global alliance of churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergencies worldwide.

Prior to joining ACT, Rakuba served as director of the emergency relief and refugee program of the Johannesburg-based South African Council of Churches (SACC). He has been a member of ACT's Emergency Committee, its highest governing body.

He joined SACC in 1990, starting as a field officer in the refugee ministry. He completed a program in disaster management through Charles Sturt University, Australia. Rakuba attended Marang Lutheran Theological Seminary in Rustenburg, South Africa. Ordained in 1981, he was a parish pastor in various locations of ELCSA's Northern Diocese in the 1980s.

Rakuba succeeds Thor-Arne Prois, who served as director until September last year. Jenny Borden, a former senior staff member of United Kingdom-based ACT member Christian Aid, and who served as co-moderator of the ACT executive committee, has been interim-director.

Rakuba is married and has four children. *(210 words)*



Auschwitz Liberation: Commitments to Prevent Genocide Remain Unfulfilled

Noko Underlines LWF's Contribution to Promoting Dialogue, Cooperation

GENEVA, 27 January 2005 (LWI) – Solemn commitments never to allow genocide to recur after the atrocities of the Nazi regime remain unfulfilled, and are an unacceptable reality in today's world, said Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

In a statement released January 27, Noko noted that the various actions taken in condemnation of the Holocaust including the establishment of modern international human rights law have neither brought anti-Semitism to an end nor prevented further genocide from occurring.

Noko underlined the LWF's commitment to dialogue and cooperation between religions and ethnic groups as prerequisite to promoting human understanding that can preclude genocide and attitudes related to it.

Statement by the LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp

Today's commemoration of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp is an occasion to remember the victims of the Nazi regime. It is also a moment to reflect on the fact that the main cause of this tragedy—anti-Semitism—and the human capacity for hatred and violence against 'the other' remain an unacceptable reality in today's world.

The horror of the Holocaust led to many solemn commitments never to allow genocide to occur again, and helped to gather political will for the establishment of modern international human rights law. But these solemn actions have neither brought an end to anti-Semitism nor prevented further large scale slaughter of human beings from occurring. What has happened in Rwanda, Cambodia, the Balkans and Darfur, to name but a few countries, shows that the commitment never again to allow genocide to occur remains unfulfilled.

Around six million Jews died in Nazi camps alongside millions of others including prisoners of war, Roma and Sinti people, homosexuals and political opponents to Adolf Hitler's 1933–45 regime. Today's remembrance marks the Soviet troops' liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp where an estimated 1.5 million people, most of them Jews from across Europe, were executed in gas chambers or succumbed to disease, starvation and abuse.

As Auschwitz's liberation is commemorated in a world that is still encountering anti-Semitism, religious intolerance and genocide, "we must realize that our work has barely begun," the LWF general secretary concluded.

(243 words)

The full text of the statement by the LWF General Secretary follows:

Dialogue and cooperation are the only means of promoting the sort of human understanding and solidarity that can preclude genocide and the attitudes that lead to it. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is committed to enhancing collaboration between people of different faiths in order to build community across religious and ethnic boundaries. For at least two decades, the LWF has actively encouraged conversations and cooperation between its member churches and Jewish communities.

On this day, looking at the reality of anti-Semitism, genocide and religious intolerance around the world, we must realize that our work has barely begun.

Geneva
27 January 2005

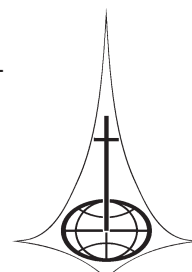
Tsunami: Assessment Team to Indonesia Identifies Crucial LWF Accompaniment Role

Group Presents Its Recommendations to LWF General Secretary

GENEVA, 18 February 2005 (LWI) – A Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assessment team to Indonesia in the aftermath of the devastating tidal waves (*tsunamis*), says the LWF has a significant accompaniment role in the short and long term.

The report of the seven-member LWF Pastoral Team to Indonesia, January 16–25, has been presented to LWF

General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko. The team led by Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) Secretary and Mission Director, Rev. Wayne Zweck included LWF Council members Rev. Dr Jubil R. Hutauruk (Indonesia) and Ms Diadem Depayso (Philippines); Mr Peter Schirmer, executive secretary of the LCA overseas aid and resettlement agency, Australian Lutheran World Service; and LWF staff





Massive tsunami destruction in Banda Aceh. © LWF/HKBP

persons Rev. Ginda Harahap, DMD Area Secretary for Asia; Mr David Mueller, LWF/DWS representative in Cambodia; and Mr Neville Pradhan, DWS program officer for emergencies, refugees and internally displaced persons.

The group visited Banda Aceh and Nias Island, regions of Indonesia severely affected by the *tsunamis* that swept across the southeast Asian coastline, following an under-sea earthquake off Sumatra's coast, 26 December 2004. Indonesia was the worst affected, accounting for around 70 percent of the 220,000 people reported to have died as a result of the catastrophe that affected 11 other countries.

The team explored the potential role of the LWF Departments for World Service (DWS) and for Mission and Development (DMD) both in the short and long term. The group also evaluated the churches' capacity to effectively respond to the crisis, and how best their programs and people's needs could be met through Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, the Geneva-based global network of churches and their partners responding to emergencies worldwide.

The team reports that the largest LWF member church in the country, the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) with a membership of 3 million, has considerable actual and potential internal capacity to respond to the needs created by the disaster especially through its diakonia department. But it still needs support as ACT's existing capacity is currently stretched in the middle of response. Two LWF member churches—the HKBP, and the Protestant Christian Church (BNKP), with a membership of 338,061—have experienced direct impact of the *tsunamis*. Also affected is the Protestant Christian Communion, a non-LWF member church.

LWF Intervention Should Complement Local Partners' Response

The team recommends that any intervention by the LWF through direct support to its member churches, which also belong to the national council of churches, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), must complement the role

of the PGI's foundation for relief and disaster YTB, and should seek to strengthen these key relationships.

The team members concluded that the response by the government, United Nations and non-governmental organizations, and more specifically through the current ACT partners, should—if properly coordinated—considerably address the challenges faced in the *tsunami*-devastated areas. There appears to be no need for DWS to consider establishing an operational presence in the country and, in any event, it is probably too late to participate in the emergency and post-crisis phases, they report.

Facilitating Greater Cooperation among Churches

Providing pastoral support was a key task for the team. Whether they met with church leaders in Medan or Nias, spoke to community leaders, addressed displaced people at a camp, listened to harrowing accounts of unlikely survival, or heard the cries of impotence and frustration, they were intent on sharing the solidarity of the global Lutheran family, they report.

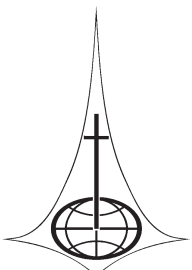
With regard to pastoral needs, they see a role for LWF/DMD to support the member churches in Nias. It was also felt that DMD could encourage the member churches to look beyond their own congregations and engage with the wider community. The LWF department could also facilitate greater cooperation among the churches, and help them build capacity as they struggle with isolation and lack of education.

Needs of Women, Children Require Special Attention

The group also assessed the needs of children, large numbers of whom have been orphaned, and women. They report there have been requests for assistance in getting children back to school, and concern has been expressed for orphans. The team was informed that the extended family was not always in a position to care for



Visiting a community cared for by the Protestant Christian Communion in Nias: LWF pastoral team members Ms Diadem Depayso (Philippines), far left, and Rev. Ginda Harahap, DMD Area Secretary for Asia, right, listen to two girls who lost their parents in the *tsunamis*. © LWF/HKBP



the latter, and this had led to a proposal for the establishment of alternatives such as child-care centers.

The LWF team identified livelihood support for female-headed households as a major issue. Other related concerns include the need for security and protection; water sources; mother and child health care; and special feeding for lactating mothers and school-age children.

A number of stories put a human face to the statistics and the varying long-term needs including

psycho-social support for those suffering trauma, as well as the value of the proposed early warning information centers. In Mandrehe District, Nias Island, the team visited Sisarahili II village, a community that was severely affected in terms of human loss. They came across a number of people with packed suitcases as they had heard that a volcano was about to erupt and were fleeing to the sea-shore. (854 words)

(Linda Macqueen, editor of *The Lutheran magazine*, Lutheran Church of Australia, contributed to this article.)

India: LWF Field Program Continues Support to Churches in Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation

LWF/DWS Director Stresses Need to Restore Fishing Communities' Livelihood

GENEVA, 21 February 2005 (LWI) – Following his recent assessment of tsunami-affected villages in southern India, the director of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS), Mr Robert Granke, has stressed the need for DWS' continued strategic support to the Chennai-based United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI). The body of Lutheran churches has been providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to affected communities.

Granke said the Kolkata-based LWF/DWS India program, with extensive experience in handling recurring emergencies like flooding in India, has so far worked with the UELCI to distribute relief items, and in the construction of temporary shelters. With the completion of the relief phase at the end of January, further focus will be on rehabilitation of homes and livelihoods. The DWS director commended the good collaboration between the churches and LWF field program. A number of UELCI churches are present in the areas worst affected by the December 26 disaster that struck several countries in South East Asia.

Out of the estimated 10,000 tsunami-related deaths in India, nearly 75 percent occurred on the southeast coast, particularly the state of Tamil Nadu. Thousands of people were reported missing, and over 140,000



A destroyed house and a temporary shelter in Nalavadu.
© DWS India/UELCI/ACT International

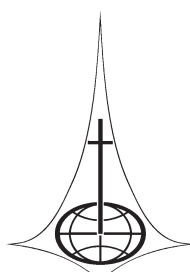
mostly from fishing communities, were temporarily housed in relief centers.

Accompanied by Mr Howard Jost, LWF/DWS India director, Granke visited Cuddalore and Pondicherry in the southeast, where the state government has assigned several villages to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including the LWF field program and UELCI. The DWS director met with Bishop Gideon Devanesan Rajagembeeram of the Arcot Lutheran Church, and the district administrative head, and toured devastated villages where he participated in the distribution of relief items.

In the villages assigned to DWS India, the government and other NGOs have already provided temporary shelters to those whose homes were completely destroyed, thus the LWF field program will assist in carrying out repairs to damaged houses. The government is expected to advise on the design and location of new houses. There are indications that rebuilding may be allowed on the original sites, but there is preference for land that is more than 500 meters from the coast. There is concern that people residing in houses that were not destroyed by the tsunamis would



Broken boats: Many people along the coast made their living by fishing. When the tsunami destroyed their boats, it dealt a serious blow to their livelihoods.
© DWS India/UELCI/ACT International



have to move if the limit is implemented, which would involve massive relocation.

Most of those directly affected in India belong to fishing communities, and have no way of earning a living without boats and nets. DWS India is prioritizing procurement of fiberglass boats, engines and nets. The LWF field program staff and community members are discussing the issue of ownership, with the aim of making boats available to fishermen who will work cooperatively. Traditionally, fishing boats have crews of five to ten men, and are, in some cases, hired by absentee boat owners. Granke

noted that a new fiberglass boat would cost around USD 1,750. "It is important that the fishing community members agree on this joint responsibility," he added.

Granke stressed the urgency to get the fishing communities back to work. "While they have already lost so much—family and community members, and property—and are deeply traumatized, they need their boats and nets back," he said, describing groups of fishermen whiling away their days by the seashore. "Fishing is the only occupation they've ever known, and they need it back," he added. (570 words)

LWF Delegation in Mauritania to Mark 30 Years of Department for World Service Involvement

Lush Belt of Forest around Nouakchott Most Visible Sign of LWF/DWS Work

GENEVA, 24 February 2005 (LWI) – A Lutheran World Federation (LWF) delegation led by General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko visited the Islamic Republic of Mauritania February 22–26 to mark 30 years of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) work in this northwest African country. Among those accompanying the general secretary was DWS Director Mr Robert Granke.

During the visit, Noko was expected to meet with Mauritanian government representatives, and officials of national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In the early 1970s Mauritania faced serious consequences of a long drought. When the LWF program established itself in the country in 1974, its first focus was emergency relief. Today, it provides assistance toward several rural community development activities, supports local NGOs, and engages in HIV/AIDS awareness raising. Other work areas include environmental protection, advocacy and human rights, and gender issues, targeting mainly poor and vulnerable socio-economic groups.

From the beginning, DWS Mauritania has sustained its commitment to the struggle against desertification, in a country whose surface area is 90 percent desert. The southern part, near the Senegal River, receives about 400 mm of rainfall annually, other regions get half that amount. Agriculture is possible only in the

south, representing less than five per cent of the country, and arable land is continually shrinking.

A visible sign of DWS work is a lush green belt of forest encircling the capital, Nouakchott and several villages. Each year, the LWF program carries out environmental and reforestation projects in some 25 villages, in order to protect roads, wells and other infrastructure from desertification.

All DWS Mauritania activities are implemented in close collaboration with the local communities, national NGOs and government. For example, DWS Mauritania works closely with the United Nations Development Program and the government to help implement the national human rights action plan, adopted as part of the government's good governance program.

But there are challenges, says Dr Colette Bouka Coula, LWF/DWS Mauritania representative since September 2004. These include the HIV/AIDS pandemic and human rights work, and cooperation within the national good governance program. The DWS program, though not among the largest compared to others, operates in difficult areas, where communities have to face hardships like desertification, lack of potable water, food security and illiteracy.

Around 99 percent of the country's 2.8 million people are Muslim. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania gained independence from France in 1960. (419 words)

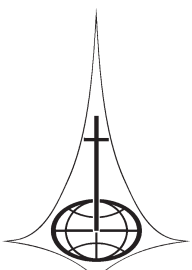
Udo Hahn Named EKD Communications Director

The Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in Germany has appointed Oberkirchenrat Udo Hahn as communications director. Hahn, 42, a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, will take up his new position in the second half of the year, succeeding Oberkirchenrat Robert Mehlhose, who retired early 2004. Since 1999, Hahn has been press and public relations officer of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) and the Hanover-based German National Committee (GNC) of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Since 2001 he has been in charge of press relations for the Community

of Protestant Churches in Europe. Hahn studied Protestant theology in Erlangen, Neuendettelsau and Munich in Germany. In his new position with EKD, Hahn will be responsible for the organization's communication and public relations activities.

The EKD includes 24 Lutheran, Reformed and United regional churches in Germany. The VELKD is an association of eight regional Lutheran churches in Bavaria, Brunswick, Hanover, Mecklenburg, North Elbia, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe and Thuringia.

(169 words)



WORLD SOCIAL FORUM: JANUARY 26–31, PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

FEATURE: Contextualizing Lessons Learnt at World Social Forum

LWF Delegation Focused on Economic Justice, HIV/AIDS

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil/GENEVA, 28 January 2005 (LWI) – Lutheran pastor Augustine Jeyakumar participated in a World Social Forum (WSF) for the first time in January 2004 in Mumbai, India. It was also the first time that the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) was taking part in the global gathering of civil society groups and movements. “The experience was so positive that in August 2004, the UELCI held a Lutheran World Social Forum, bringing together 80 participants from different levels of church leadership,” remarked Jeyakumar, executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) National Committee in India.

This year Jeyakumar was a member of the 60-person LWF delegation at the January 26–31 WSF in Porto Alegre. “We learnt a lot the first time. The objective of participating in this event is to interpret and contextualize the information one gains here,” he said. The LWF team included member churches’ representatives drawn from 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and North America, as well as staff from the Geneva secretariat and from the Department for World Service (DWS) field programs.

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, LWF/DWS program officer for sustainable development and environment saw the WSF as a great opportunity to gather different people and ideas and foster global strategy to encounter common concerns. “With its unique diversity, the WSF is an excellent space for understanding the problems and issues faced by civil society today,” he noted.

The LWF was part of a global ecumenical coalition that included the World Council of Churches (WCC), Association of WCC-related Development Organiza-



Rev. Silvio Schneider (left), director of the Lutheran Diakonia Foundation and other members of the ecumenical coalition participate in a march in the streets of Porto Alegre on the WSF opening day. © Paulino Menezes/LWF & WCC

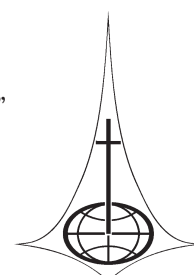
tions in Europe (APRODEV), Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, Caritas Internationalis, International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity, Young Men’s Christian Association, Young Women’s Christian Association, World Student Christian Federation, National Children’s Alliance, Ecumenical Forum in Brazil, and a host of other worldwide ecumenical organizations.

Under the overarching ecumenical theme, “Affirming Life in Dignity: Enhancing Justice and Rights in a Globalized World,” the LWF organized and cooperated with other ecumenical organizations in seminars, workshops and other discussion forums on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace and reconciliation; illegitimate debt; human rights and economic globalization; global governance; indigenous people and the right to food; violence against women; children in armed conflict; and HIV/AIDS.

Célia Medrano, from the LWF/DWS Central American regional office was participating in the WSF for the first time, but had very clear expectations of the event: “The WSF must have effective results and continuous actions,” she said. She was concerned that the enthusiasm among



Members of the ecumenical coalition attending the January 26–31 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, at their opening meeting in the city’s Lutheran church. © Paulino Menezes/LWF & WCC



WSF advocates does not “end up like a big party without concrete results.” But Medrano is also aware that the “enemies” of organized civil society movements are wary of actions that can arise from a meeting such as this one. “They fear that words can become actions,” she added.

This year’s was the first WSF for Akberet Fre, LWF/DWS Eritrea program. She took part in workshops and seminars that focus on human rights, equality and justice. “Independent since 1993, Eritrea is a young country that has only recently [begun to talk openly about] the rights of women and children,” she said. Her goal “is to meet many people here in Porto Alegre, discuss different ideas and return home with new knowledge and experiences that can be applied locally.”

She applauded the LWF’s initiative to organize such a diverse delegation to Porto Alegre.

The WSF is an open meeting where civil society groups and social movements engaged in building a people-centered civil society come together to share experiences, debate ideas, build networks and create possibilities. It was first held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 and is an ongoing process under the theme “Another World is Possible.” An estimated 120,000 people were expected to take part in 2,500 events scheduled by some 4,000 non-governmental organizations from 112 countries. (639 words)

(Reported for LWI by Porto Alegre-based journalist Susanne Buchweitz.)

FEATURE: Where the LWF Becomes Part of Civil Society

Increased LWF Participation, Commitment to World Social Forum

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil/GENEVA, 16 February 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has participated in the World Social Forum (WSF) since the second such forum in 2002 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. With each passing year, the LWF delegation has grown in numbers and involvement in the various activities offered under the WSF theme “Another World is Possible.” Brazilian journalist Susanne Buchweitz, reporting for *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, spoke with a cross section of the 60-person delegation attending the January 26–31 forum in Porto Alegre.

development. They presented RDRS’ evolution since its inception as an LWF/ DWS country program soon after Bangladesh’s war of independence in 1971, to an associate program in 1997, nationally recognized as a leading non-governmental organization (NGO) in development. RDRS was initially involved in relief work, supporting refugee repatriation. But from 1980 onward, it started rural development activities focusing on health, education and agriculture. “But we were working in isolation, not in an all-inclusive manner, and we realized this kind of assistance did not help the needy people improve their livelihood. They needed more comprehensive support,” Muniruzzaman said.

RDRS has since moved into more comprehensive development activities, adopting a holistic approach. Today, RDRS works with 300,000 poor families in seven districts in the country’s northern region. The focus is on social empowerment; improving livelihoods through agricultural and environmental activities; as well as micro-finance projects.

Bangladesh—with a population of over 141 million people—is an extremely poor country, Hossain stressed. “People are deprived of many things, including their rights, and there is little awareness and education especially about people’s right to land and women’s rights,” reported Hossain, RDRS senior program manager for innovative projects including HIV/AIDS prevention, and collaboration with NGO networks.



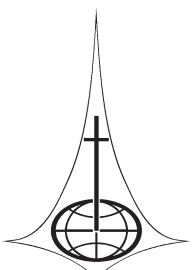
From left to right, Rev. Angel Furlan, (United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Argentina), and Mr Tony Tujan (IBON, Philippines) at a workshop on illegitimate debt. © LWF/IP. Prove

“It was a very good opportunity for me to learn many things about the forum and current global issues,” said Mr Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, director for social empowerment projects at the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) in Bangladesh. RDRS is one of the 24 field programs of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS).

Muniruzzaman and his colleague Ms Dilrose Hossain participated in a workshop on a rights-based approach to

Linking Up with Networks, Addressing Human Injustices

Ms Shashi Rijal, advocacy co-ordinator with the DWS field program in Nepal, attended several workshops related to human rights violations and territorial obli-



gations. "I certainly have learnt a lot of things that will allow me to move forward with my responsibilities." Started in 1984, LWF/DWS Nepal focuses on empowering the most vulnerable groups in society to achieve a just and sustainable livelihood. There is increasing focus on advocacy and networking to support civil society efforts that seek to address injustices particularly with regard to marginalized and disadvantaged groups and communities such as the 'untouchables' (*Dalits*) and freed bonded laborers (*kamaiyas*). The program also supports over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees living in seven camps in southeast Nepal.

Ms Marta André Uetela, responsible for human rights issues with the LWF/DWS field program in Mozambique was participating in the forum for the first time. "Before coming here, I wasn't sure there would be room to discuss Mozambique's concerns, but I discovered the problems are common to all." The LWF Mozambique program covers five of the country's ten provinces. Its priorities include support to community members to reduce risk and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and alleviation of the impact on those affected by the epidemic. It also works with the most vulnerable people in society to ensure food security, promotion of human rights, healthy life-styles and an enhanced ability to manage the environment.

Rights-Based Approach Provides Tools to "Attack Causes"

Many members of the LWF delegation took part in discussions on a rights-based approach to development. "The LWF has been involved in human rights and development work since its very inception. What is new, however, is the deliberate effort in the past two or three years to bring together human rights practitioners and those working strictly in development," said Ms Maria Immonen, LWF/DWS program officer for advocacy and communication. Though significantly influenced by human rights work, development practice has not been able to change power structures, she noted. "The rights-based approach allows us to have tools to attack causes that are behind each country's problems: for instance, lack of water, what causes it and what can the local population do?" she urged.

A rights-based approach uses United Nations human rights legislation in a development context, so there is increased focus on holding governments accountable. "It also has an effect on how we view the people with whom we work. We no longer refer to them as beneficiaries, instead they are people who are rights holders," Immonen added. LWF/DWS works in 37 countries worldwide through four regional, 15 country and five associate programs and emergency operations.

Ms Vidhya Rani, women's desk secretary, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) and



Mr Vincent Manoharan, representing India's National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, joins in a demonstration for the rights of marginalized groups in society. © LWF/P. Prove

regional coordinator for the LWF Women in Church and Society desk, mainly focussed on the issue of water privatization, a growing concern in India. "The UELCI marked 2004 as the 'Year of Water,'" with the aim to involve the member churches in addressing the concern, she said. At the forum, Rani joined in a seminar organized by the International Coalition Against Privatization of Water, during which several perspectives on water privatization and its impact on the poor were presented.

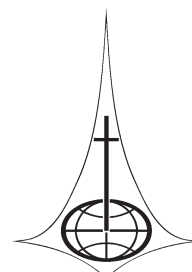
Important LWF Contribution to Diakonia, Humanitarian Assistance

"The LWF had an unprecedented level of participation in this year's WSF, both in terms of numbers and diversity," said delegation leader Mr Peter Prove, LWF Assistant to the General Secretary in the Office for International Affairs and Human Rights.

The team included at least one representative from each continent. "That is an enormous evolution in terms of LWF presence from two or three years ago, when there were three or four people. It is also a sign of a much greater commitment," Prove said. He recalled that the LWF Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada, in July 2003 acknowledged the WSF as an important place for the Lutheran communion's engagement in the struggles for social justice.

However, the LWF should not assume it comes to the WSF only to learn, but also to teach. "I think we also have something very important to contribute in terms of our experience of diakonia and humanitarian assistance. Certainly from my perspective, contributions made by the LWF to discussions at the WSF have been good and valuable for others, and this is important," he said.

Prove recalled a statement made by Rev. Ángel F. Furlan, former president of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Argentina) three years ago: "The



World Social Forum is a place where churches can be part of civil society, rather than walking in front of civil society, or dragging along behind civil society.”

The WSF 2005 LWF delegation leader asserted there was no other forum like the WSF in terms of bringing together global civil society. “Of course, it is imperfectly realized, it is not really comprehensive

geographically. One might say that it does not include the real grassroots, but it has already established itself as the peak international forum for civil society struggles for social and economic justice.”

(1,207 words)

(Adapted from the original Portuguese written for LWI by Brazilian journalist Susanne Buchweitz.)

Brazil: “These Are the True Heroes”

Lutheran Foundation Offers Hope to Marginalized Communities

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil/GENEVA, 16 February 2005 (LWI) – Representatives of ecumenical organizations attending the 2005 World Social Forum (WSF) had the opportunity to visit projects of the Lutheran Diakonia Foundation (FLD)—an organization of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB).

“Through the exposure visits, many issues debated at the WSF could be seen in practice,” said FLD executive secretary, Rev. Silvio Schneider. The foundation’s involvement includes work with recyclable material collectors; a small-scale farmers’ support center; co-operatives; a *quilombo* (slave descendants’ community); income and employment-generating projects; and, HIV/AIDS and human rights projects in urban centers.

“Seeing the association of waste collectors at work was a unique experience for me,” said Yacubu Muhammed Bingle from Ghana, who came to Porto Alegre through sponsorship of the German Protestant aid agency, Bread for the World. “Back at home, this type of work has no dignity. Here I see unemployed garbage collectors who have resisted the temptation to become criminals. They have overcome their pride and are turning this task into a profession. These are the true heroes and I’ll go back to my country and talk about this experience!”

Vincent Nanga from Cameroon, supported by Germany’s Church Development Service (EED), a body of Protestant aid agencies, commented on the visit to



Janine Schneider (IECLB), left, and Dilrose Hossain (RDRS Bangladesh) second left, during the visit with quilombo community members. © LWF/S. Buchweitz

the *quilombo*. “We’ve read about them, we’ve heard about them in Africa, but to see how people here live is another experience in itself. Although far away from them, physically, there is a spiritual union between us.” Nanga was particularly shocked by their appalling living conditions. “What can we do to see them integrated in the world?” he asked. At the same time, he was encouraged by their struggle to stand on their own. He commended the FLD and farmers’ support center for their remarkable work with the community.

“If we are discussing the possibility of ‘another possible world’ at the World Social Forum, it is important that people from other countries, who come to Brazil for the first time, make visits like these and get to know the several dimensions of what is being done,” commented EED’s Luciano Wolff.

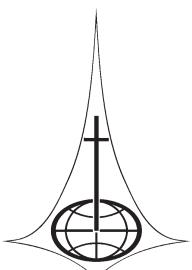
Rev. Enos Moyo, representative of the Lutheran World Federation Department for World Service in Zambia and director of the Zambia Christian Refugee Service, was equally impressed by the *quilombo* project. “The message that we are carrying home to Africa is to pray for you. We have seen real challenges here: the need for sanitation, water, education, land itself and now the drought you are facing. These are enormous challenges and we will pray and have hope for you.”

(446 words)

(Adapted from the original Portuguese article written for LWI by Porto Alegre-based journalist Susanne Buchweitz.)



Children inside a typical quilombo house. © LWF/S. Buchweitz



FEATURE: Daring to Speak Out for Colombia's Internally Displaced

Lutheran Church Gives Hope Amid Conflict, Fear

BOGOTA, Colombia/GENEVA, 21 February 2005 (LWI) – Approaching the village of Tobia, via a steep path, Hebert Gutiérrez, coordinator for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), starts calling out Rosa Amaya. He wants her to know who is coming. There are many guerrillas in Tobia, a 90-minute drive from the capital, and everyone is constantly alert.



IELCO Bishop Sijifredo D. Buitrago (right) and Rev. Jairo Suárez (left) during a visit to the LWF Geneva secretariat last year. © LWF/P. Colberg

Rosa, 39, has eight children ranging from one to 18 years of age. Her nine-year-old niece lives with them, since Rosa's brother is in prison. Her husband Orlando works as a hotel guard in Bogotá, returning to his family once or twice a month with enough money for the children's schooling. Rosa takes care of everything else. She gets up at 4.00 a. m. daily to make *churros* (bread rolls), which the children bring to school to eat and sell.

She grows a variety of vegetables and fruits in the family garden, and also keeps some chickens for the family's consumption, and for sale. During weekends, the children are at home to help out.

On the face of it, this family appears to be doing relatively well, but their lives were not always so easy. Rosa's family is one of over two million Colombians displaced internally or forced to flee to neighboring countries as a result of a civil war that has lasted over 40 years.

IELCO, a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member church since 1966, has been assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia for several years. "We work in a very difficult context," asserted IELCO Bishop Sijifredo D. Buitrago in an interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, referring to the country's political and socio-economic crisis.

The government continues to face serious challenges as it deals with widespread internal armed conflict mainly perpetrated by the two major guerrilla groups—Colombian Revolutionary Forces (FARC) and

the National Liberation Army (ELN), and narcotic trafficking. Para-military forces have developed a third group in the conflict, which is greatly feared because of its extreme violent methods against civil society.

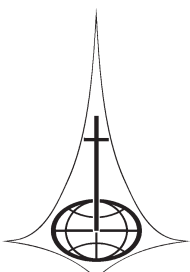
In its response to the IDPs' needs, IELCO works closely with the El Salvador-based LWF Department for World Service regional office in Central America, and with Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, the global network of churches and their agencies responding to emergencies worldwide. The LWF is a founding member of ACT.

"Migration and displacement severely affect the life of IELCO's congregations as some of them are located in the so-called 'red-zones,'" Buitrago said, referring to regions controlled by one or more armed groups.

As the violence increases, the human rights situation deteriorates, and advocacy becomes an increasingly risky job. Indeed, many of IELCO's members are displaced, remarked Rev. Jairo Suárez, secretary for the church's office for justice and life. He acknowledged there are risks involved in speaking out for people's rights in the context of a conflict in which hundreds are killed annually. But the church is unwavering in its commitment. Human rights defenders, judges, jour-



Rosa Amaya outside the new house that she and her husband Orlando have built. © Anneli Dufva, IKON/ACT International





Rosa's current kitchen: Improved kitchens will be the next project for needy families in Tobia. © Anneli Dufva, IKON/ACT International

nalists, peace activists, businesspersons, leaders of indigenous communities and religious people are the most exposed groups for kidnappings and violent actions, Suárez explained.

Sharing the Faith from Different Contexts

The violence and instability coupled with the deteriorating economic situation has greatly affected the church's capacity to sustain itself financially. IELCO

recently had to shut down some of its schools due to lack of financial resources.

Buitrago stressed the importance of sharing in the joys and struggles of the member churches of the Lutheran communion. "We live out our faith in different contexts, and coming here makes me realize just how diverse the LWF is," he said on his first visit to the LWF Geneva secretariat late last year. He has been head of the church since January 2004, succeeding Rev. Nehemías Parada.

For Rosa's family and other community members, such solidarity has meant having access to potable water and latrines, which reduces the spread of water-borne diseases. They also received assistance toward the construction of houses. The next phase of IELCO's project will provide families with material for improved kitchens, and Rosa is planning hers. They will also receive education in hygiene and health.

The IELCO has 3,000 members with 14 congregations. Ninety percent of Colombia's 42 million people are Roman Catholic.* (720 words)

***This article is part of the ongoing LWI Features on Healing focusing on the LWF Tenth Assembly theme, "For the Healing of the World."**

(A contribution by LWI editors, and ACT communication office.)

Brazilian Church Launches Portuguese Version of LWF Document on Violence against Women

The Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) has launched a Portuguese-language version of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) document "Churches Say 'No' to Violence against Women."

IECLB President, Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann described the publication as a very practical handbook that should be studied in local communities. "We will be distributing it to all IECLB's working groups and leaders," he said at the launching ceremony during the World Social Forum, January 26-31 in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

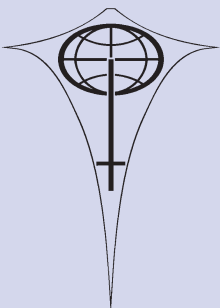
Produced by the LWF Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS), Department for Mission and Development, the document is a contribution to the World Council of Churches "Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010): Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace." It is available in the four LWF offi-

cial languages—English, German, French, and Spanish. Some of the LWF member churches have translated the document into an additional 20 languages worldwide.

Vera Roth, WICAS Latin American regional coordinator, said of the Portuguese edition: "It's an important publication, because it tells us women, how to deal with violence. It speaks of the need to seriously understand the kind of violence perpetrated against women and how we can respond to that."

Vidhya Rani, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) women's desk secretary, speaking during the event, noted that India's 12 Lutheran churches use different languages. In order to reach all the UELCI women, laity, pastors and seminaries, the document has been translated into four Indian languages," she stressed. (256 words)

(By LWI correspondent, Susanne Buchweitz.)



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