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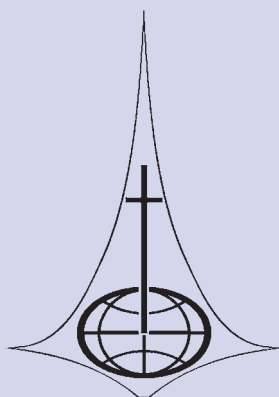
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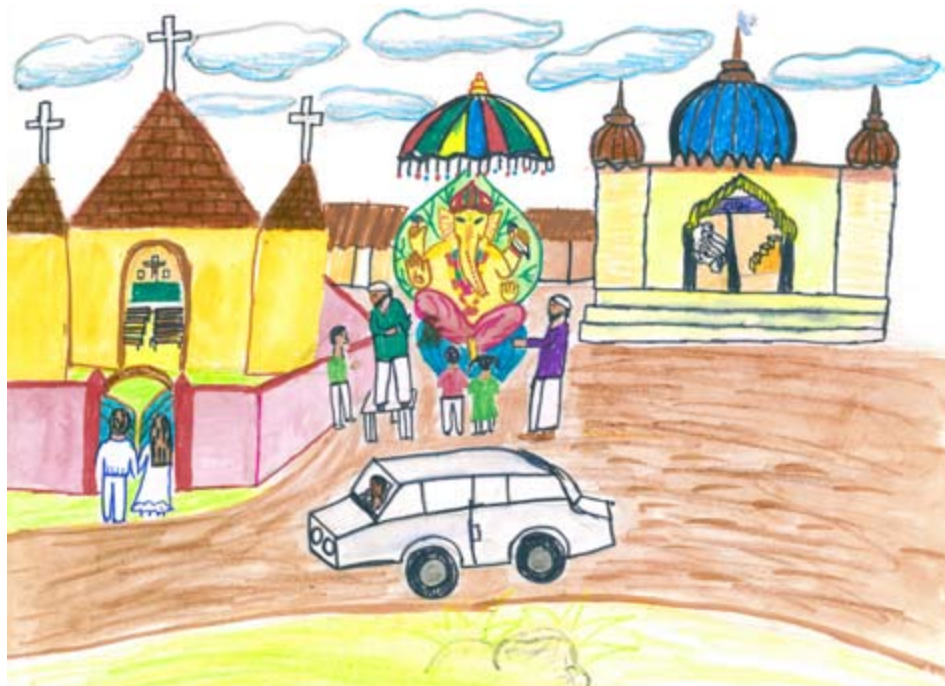
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Resist Violence, LWF General Secretary Urges



This drawing on peaceful co-existence in India (church, temple and mosque) was created by Ranjit Samal, at age 11, resident of Khatbin Sabi community in Cuttack, Orissa state. Sabi's art class was part of a Lutheran World Service India urban development project. © LWF/LWSI/ Ranjit Samal

2011 New Year Message Cautions of Religion's Role in Fueling Violence

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge urged in his 2011 New Year Message that Christians adopt language and actions that foster nonviolence and peace-building.

“I pray that this New Year will find us deeply engaged locally, regionally and globally in all possible efforts to overcome violence, hatred and persecution, and to resist manipulation of religion as a fuel to violence motivated by other interests,” Junge said in his New Year Message issued on 4 January.

Reflecting on Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans (12: 21), which says “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good,” Junge stated that the Apostle's letter makes it clear that this good can flow from

the understanding that justification comes from God's grace alone. He pointed out that recent events in the world “remind us again how urgently needed is this resistance to violence” especially when carried out under the pretext of religion.

“Justification frees human beings from the obsession of fearful self-justification, or of violent self-imposition over and against others. The freedom resulting from justification is a responsible, accountable freedom,” the general secretary noted.

Junge called for sensitivity to expressions of violence that are often not captured by the media, but continue to deeply hurt human

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LWF General Secretary Junge Emphasizes Lutherans’ Responsibility in Society

During his first visit with churches in Germany as general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Martin Junge called for a plan dedicated to life rather than a mere schedule leading up to the 2017 Reformation quinqucentenary.

Junge participated in the annual meeting of the LWF German National Committee in Hanover on 1 December, and held discussions with various church leaders. Speaking at a press conference in Hanover, the general secretary pointed out that celebrating 500 years of Reformation signifies three things: making the global dimension of the Reformation visible; meeting one’s ecumenical responsibilities; and responding to churches in their current situation.

On his first encounter with the LWF—as a steward at the 1989 Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil—he said, “I have always experienced The Lutheran World Federation as

a communion with deep compassion for fellow human beings and churches. I am happy that the LWF does not turn its back to the world and look backward, but rather, takes its responsibility in hand.”

According to Junge, the agenda in preparation for the 2017 celebration of the 500th Reformation anniversary must involve all churches, including the Roman Catholic Church.

With regard to the LWF’s position on same-sex partnerships, a source of dissension within its own ranks, Junge referred to the *Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue on Marriage, Family and Sexuality*, adopted at the 2007 Council meeting in Lund, Sweden. The document, he noted, includes proposals for respectful dialogue on this issue within and among the member churches of the LWF communion.

The Lutheran World Federation

– A Communion of Churches
150, route de Ferney
P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2,
Switzerland

Telephone +41/22-791 61 11
Fax +41/22-791 66 30
E-mail: info@lutheranworld.org
www.lutheranworld.org

Interim Editor-in-Chief and English Editor

Pauline Mumia
pmu@lutheranworld.org

Consulting Editor

John P. Asling

German Editor

N. N.

Layout

Stéphane Gallay
sga@lutheranworld.org

Photos

Helen Putsman Penet
hpu@lutheranworld.org

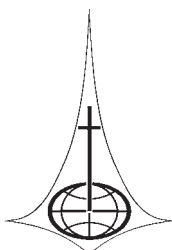
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Colette Muanda
cmu@lutheranworld.org

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Resist Violence, LWF General Secretary Urges

Continued from p. 1

beings. Referring to violence against women, he recalled the LWF's Eleventh Assembly commitment to overcome this evil by intensifying work on this issue within the Lutheran communion itself and in society.

He pointed out that at the July 2010 Assembly Lutherans "were able to grasp this liberating power of justification by grace" when they asked God and their Mennonite sisters and broth-

ers for forgiveness for the violence they suffered at the hands of Lutherans.

"This action strengthened our conviction that religion and violence, faith and oppression do not belong together, but are a contradiction in itself," Junge said.

The general secretary added that it was encouraging to see the LWF member churches worldwide working against corruption, injustice and violence, adding that their witness

was strengthened when carried out ecumenically and with other faiths.

"As we move into this New Year that God is laying before us, I invite you all to continue focusing on the good as a way of expressing who we are: a communion that lives faith from the perspective of justification and that enjoys the wonderful freedom to accept and serve the neighbor," Junge concluded.

The full text of the 2011 LWF New Year Message follows:

2011 New Year Message from the LWF General Secretary

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

I greet you in this New Year with these wise and profound words that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian community in Rome. The verse suggests that the Apostle needed to affirm the community in its baptismal vocation within a context of evil. He urges Christians to resist the temptation to adopt language, attitudes and actions stemming from evil, and instead to overcome evil with the good.

The Apostle's letter also identifies the source from which such good can flow, even in the contexts where evil may be prevailing: it is the understanding and the experience that justification comes from God's grace alone. Such insight opens wide spaces of freedom. Justification and freedom—these are actually sisters and they belong closely together! Justification frees human beings from the obsession of fearful self-justification, or of violent self-imposition over and against others. The freedom resulting from justification is a responsible, accountable freedom.

I believe that as a communion of churches we were able to grasp this liberating power of justification by grace during the Eleventh Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), when we asked God and our Mennonite brothers and sisters for forgiveness for the evil that that they suffered at the hands of us Lutherans.

This action strengthened our conviction that religion and violence, faith and oppression do not belong together, but are a contradiction in itself.

The vocation for non-violence and peace building has found a strong expression in the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence, which will be coming to an end with the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in May 2011. Recent events in our world remind us again how urgently needed is this resistance to violence, even in the name of religion. I pray that this New Year will find us deeply engaged locally, regionally and globally in all possible efforts to overcome violence, hatred and persecution, and to resist manipulation of religion as a fuel to violence motivated by other interests.

At the same time, I pray that we remain sensitive to expressions of violence that are not seen in the news, but are deeply hurting human beings. This is particularly true with regard to violence against women. The LWF Eleventh Assembly both reaffirmed our commitment to overcome this evil, and underlined how much work is still due also within our own communion in this respect.

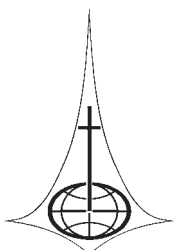
Despite all pending work, it is important to appraise the beautiful signs that member churches around the globe are planting within their own contexts as an expression of their rootedness in the message of justification.

It is encouraging to see how churches are standing up in advocacy in order to overcome corruption, injustice and violence. They often do so in ecumenical and interfaith cooperation, which makes their witness even stronger. This is also true for the heartening examples of a diakonia, both at the level of our member churches and at the level of the LWF communion. Evil realities are transformed into places where life in abundance is accessible. The proclamation of churches all over the world pointing at Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, and thus unveiling the full dimensions of our so complex humanity is another example to be highlighted. In all these cases the good becomes the focal point of the church's witness that overcomes patterns of evil. With a perspective on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 we can affirm: through this witness the Reformation has indeed become a global citizen in our world!

As we move into this New Year that God is laying before us, I invite you all to continue focusing on the good as a way of expressing who we are: a communion that lives faith from the perspective of justification and that enjoys the wonderful freedom to accept and serve the neighbor.

Rev. Martin Junge
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation

4 January 2011



Installation of Chilean Theologian Martin Junge as LWF General Secretary

Sermon: Call to Lutheran Communion to Build Bridges in a World Ravaged by Conflict

GENEVA (LWI) – In his installation sermon as the eighth General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Chilean theologian Rev. Martin Junge reminded LWF member churches of their mutual responsibility to nurture dialogue, inclusion, healing and transformation.

“Together on the Road to Emmaus” was the title of his sermon

the world, related agencies and mission partners, ecumenical guests, members of the diplomatic community and staff from church-related organizations in Geneva. The worship service was held in the context of the LWF Executive Committee, meeting 24-26 November.

The LWF Council elected Junge as general secretary at its October

2009 meeting. He succeeded Zimbabwean theologian Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko on 1 November this year.

“Throughout LWF’s journey over the years, it has seen as its mission to build and continue building bridges in a world ravaged by conflicts, iron curtains, glass ceilings, and all the visible and invisible walls that separate, exclude, confine and curtail the human race called to be one,” said Junge.



Newly-installed LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge receives from the Executive Committee members prayers for discernment and God’s presence in his ministry. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Strong Diaconal Involvement

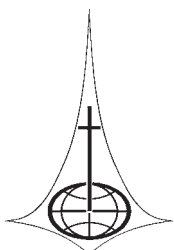
The new general secretary pointed out that the history of the LWF shows how the paradigm of the church in mission has been a strong theological intuition and vocation. “This dialogical attitude is at the origin of the LWF’s strong diaconal involvement and its prophetic voice, joining people and their communities [in] their struggles for justice and inclusion, and their efforts to build just and inclusive communities,” he said. It has also been at the heart of the LWF’s ecumenical commitment, and

based on Luke 24. Junge emphasized the significance of Jesus’ question to his disciples—“What are you talking about as you walk?”—for churches seeking to participate in God’s mission today. He noted this attitude can be nurtured by “listening before speaking, giving space to ongoing conversations that individuals and entire societies are having,” and by seeking to better understand life experiences and contexts.

LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan presided at the eucharistic service on 25 November in the chapel of the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, where the LWF Secretariat is based. Participants included representatives from LWF member churches around



Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto (Salvadoran Lutheran Church) brought greetings on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean region. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet



conversations with other faiths and society at large, he noted.

Referring to his choice of the text in the Gospel of Luke, Junge, a former president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, pointed out that he grew up in a context where the perspectives of liberation theology were discussed intensively.

He said the narrative about sharing bread at the table had significance for the LWF “as a communion of churches that shares pulpit and altar” and finds its identity in a spiritual journey of shared mission. “The meal at the table is not shared only when full understanding has been reached; it is not the final stage of theological and spiritual discernment.”

For the disciples, said Junge, the table also becomes a space of empowerment for witness. “They rush back

to the epicenter of suffering and pain, which only a few hours earlier, seemed unbearable. They face the place of ignominious torture in order to be witnesses that God could not be eradicated.” Deeply transformed, they recognize their vocation as witnesses of hope.

The same is true at today’s communion tables, Junge noted. “Tables become the very place of inclusion, healing and transformation. The gathering of different people around an inclusive communion table is very much in line with the fundamental Lutheran theological understanding of justification by grace,” he added.

“Sharing [deep] hunger for healing, for justice, for peace, we do share as well the clear notion that we are not able to satisfy this hunger, but need to be fed. Our open, empty and extended hands at the table of

the Lord, needing to receive what we can’t provide for ourselves, become the clearest expression of what faith teaches about our human condition: we depend on God’s grace,” said the LWF general secretary.

“May we encounter the risen Christ who listens, who strengthens, who interprets even our shattering experiences in the light of God’s purposes—and then feeds us so that we are strengthened for the work in his name, proclaiming God’s reigning, serving our neighbors and denouncing injustice,” he concluded.

The full text of Rev. Martin Junge’s sermon is available in English, French, German and Spanish on the LWF web site under Related Documents at: www.lutheranworld.org

25 November 2010

Bishop Younan Calls on Worldwide Communion to be Prophetic

Emphasis on Theology of Accompaniment

GENEVA (LWI) – The worldwide family of Lutherans must work together to serve and heal the broken world, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, president of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said in a 25 November address in Geneva.

“We are called to work to eradicate poverty, to be prophetic against injustice, to be bridge builders between South and North and East and West, to strengthen our sisters and brothers who suffer or find discrimination because of their faith, and to be responsible for the integrity of creation,” Younan said.

The head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) was speaking at the installation of LWF’s new general secretary Rev. Martin Junge during a eucharistic service at the Ecumenical Center chapel.

Younan said the election of Junge, the first Latin American LWF general secretary, marked a significant moment in the life of the worldwide communion.

“When the LWF elects a general secretary and a president from two of the smallest churches in the LWF, that means that in the communion there is no East or West; there is no affluent or less affluent. It means that our communion is healthy because it is ready to elect people to serve the Lord and the people of the church on the basis of their gifts that Christ bestowed on them,” remarked the LWF president, referring to his acceptance speech at the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.

Reflecting on the gospel text from Luke chosen for the occasion, Younan also spoke of accompaniment, highlighting the essentiality “that this theology of accompaniment pertains not only to those who have the same mind and share the same confession, but also to those who may be different in theology or culture, so that we may come to the realization that we are called to serve together a broken and wounded world.”

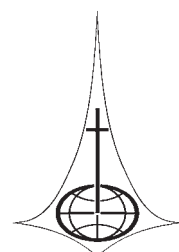
“This theology of accompaniment asks us to walk alongside one another

with humility, carrying the cross and denying ourselves, bearing one another’s burdens and celebrating together the Eucharist, while finding Christ in the other, whose diversity we joyfully accept for the sake of the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world,” Younan concluded.

At the installation, Younan presented the new LWF general secretary with a cross made out of spent bullet casings from Liberia’s civil war. He said the cross was “a sign that we are called to make peace and that healing is possible in our broken, globalized world.”

Official greetings were offered by Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto (Salvadoran Lutheran Church) on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean region; Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, World Council of Churches general secretary; and Ms Simangalisso Hove, DMD secretary for project implementation on behalf of LWF staff.

26 November 2010



LWF President Invites Pope Benedict XVI to Help Plan 500th Reformation Anniversary

Importance of Continuing Ecumenical Relations Stressed by Both Leaders

VATICAN City, Vatican/GENEVA (LWI)

– The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan has invited Pope Benedict XVI to work together with the Lutheran communion in realizing an ecumenically accountable commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

“For us there is joy in the liberating power of the gospel proclaimed afresh by the reformers, and we will celebrate that,” said Younan in a message on 16 December, when he led a seven-member delegation in a private audience with the Pope. He underlined the need to recognize both the damaging aspects of the Reformation and ecumenical progress.

“But we cannot achieve this ecumenical accountability on our own, without your help. Thus we invite you to work together with us in preparing this anniversary, so that in 2017 we are closer to sharing in the Bread of Life than we are today.”

Greeting the LWF delegation, Pope Benedict expressed gratitude for “the many significant fruits produced” by decades of bilateral discussions between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, saying it had been possible “slowly and patiently to remove barriers and to foster visible bonds of unity by means of theological dialogue and practical cooperation, especially at the level of local communities.” In the years leading up to the next Reformation anniversary, “Catholics and Lutherans are called to reflect anew on where our journey towards unity has led us and to implore the Lord’s guidance and help for the future,” he said.

Pope Benedict pointed out that the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), whose tenth anniversary was marked in 2009, “has proved a significant step along the difficult path

towards re-establishing full unity among Christians and a stimulus to further ecumenical discussion.”

The pope said he was pleased to note that for the Reformation anniversary, the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity was preparing a joint text which would document “what Lutherans and Catholics are able to say together at this point regarding our closer relations after almost five centuries of separation.”

He reiterated his expectation that the close contacts and intensive dialogue which have characterized ecumenical relations between Catholics and Lutherans would continue to bear rich fruit.

LWF’s Commitment

Representing every LWF region, the delegation included also the General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge and regional vice presidents from Africa, Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa (Tanzania); from Central Eastern Europe, Bishop Tamás Fabiny (Hungary); and from the Nordic region, Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfluglien (Norway); and staff. Also

present was Kurt Cardinal Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), and other Vatican staff.

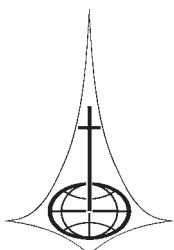
In his statement, Younan reiterated the LWF’s commitment to “moving closer toward one another around this Table of the Lord, which Luther saw as the *summa evangelii*.” The LWF president pointed out that while it was important to “rejoice in each small step which brings us closer together, we do not want to be content with these steps. We remain strong in hope—both for the full visible unity of Christ’s Church and for the Eucharistic communion which is so crucial a manifestation of that unity.”

Younan presented to the pope a gift from Bethlehem, a carving depicting the Last Supper. Referring to this image, he said, “Each of us can bear witness to the importance of this sacramental meal in nurturing our own Christian lives. Each of us also knows the yearning for the time when we will be able to celebrate this feast together,” said the LWF president.

Younan noted that the LWF had taken a significant step toward



Bishop Younan presented to Pope Benedict XVI a gift from Bethlehem, a carving depicting the Last Supper.
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The LWF delegation and Vatican officials during the private audience with the pope. © Servizio Fotografico/L'Osservatore Romano

Christian reconciliation at its July 2010 Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, by asking forgiveness from Mennonites for the persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century. In preparing for this act, he said, the LWF was mindful that this legacy was shared by other traditions, including Roman Catholics, who with other ecumenical guests stood in solemn solidarity when the action was pronounced at the Assembly.

“We believe that we took this action on behalf of the whole body of Christ. We pray that this spirit of repentance, reconciliation and renewal will continue to grow among us.”

Younan, who is head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, noted that Catholics and Lutherans share a vision for just peace in the Middle East and support a two-state solution with a shared Jerusalem. He thanked

the pope for his moral leadership in exposing the injustices and idolatries of the global financial crisis—also a concern shared by the LWF, notably in its advocacy against illegitimate debt. On both issues, he urged closer collaboration.

Stronger Witness

“Our witness will be stronger if we will work together on these problems. Thus we look forward to forging multiple cooperations with our Catholic sisters and brothers at all levels, locally as well as globally,” Younan said.

The LWF president noted that he and the general secretary represent the new leadership of the global Lutheran communion. Younan was elected President at Stuttgart in July, while Junge began his term of office in November.

The audience with the pope honors the extraordinary journey by the two churches in recent years, and is a sign of hope for their future relations, Younan said.

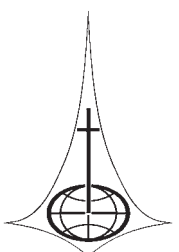
Lutherans continue to rejoice, he added, because of the ways the two churches have reached new degrees of theological understanding and agreement, noting in particular the landmark *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

“Within our own lifetimes, the climate of relations between Lutherans and Catholics has warmed dramatically—and this climate change has been for the good! Around the world our churches live in a new ecology of relationship.” Younan concluded.

The message from Bishop Younan to Pope Benedict XVI is available at: www.lutheranworld.org

16 December 2010

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LWF Congratulates Newly-Elevated Cardinal Kurt Koch

Looks Forward to Deepening Lutheran-Catholic Relations

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) warmly greeted the president of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) Kurt Cardinal Koch on the occasion of his becoming a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church.

The former bishop of Basel, Switzerland, was among 24 Roman Catholic church leaders from around the world who were created cardinals by Pope Benedict XVI at a consistory in Vatican City on 20 November.

“The setting of this consistory at the Feast of Christ the King has perhaps a special resonance for ecumenical work,” wrote LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge in a 22 November letter to Cardinal Koch.

“We know that it is ultimately Christ who wills our unity and works towards it. But of course this awareness does not take away the urgency of our desires and efforts for Christian unity; it only deepens them,” Junge stated.

Prior to the consistory, the PCPCU celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding on 17 November. Its former president, Walter Cardinal



PCPCU president, Kurt Cardinal Koch
© Servizio Fotografico/L'Osservatore Romano

Kasper from Germany, and the incumbent, then Archbishop Kurt Koch, led a ceremony in the Vatican to commemorate the occasion.

The PCPCU and the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs are jointly responsible for the bilateral dialogue begun between Lutherans and Roman Catholic in the mid 1960s, which eventually led to the October 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) in Augsburg, Germany. The JDDJ affirms that past condemna-

tions on justification issued by both churches no longer apply to their respective teachings.

In his letter, Junge underlined Koch’s commitment to Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations, including his having served until recently as vice chairperson of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. The general secretary noted that while the cardinal’s wider responsibilities would mean a loss for the commission, which will miss his wisdom, his interest in its work and in the relation between Catholics and Lutherans “will only take a new and broadened form in your new position.”

In July Pope Benedict XVI named Koch as successor to Kasper, who had served in the top ecumenical post for 11 years and was retiring.

In his letter to Koch, the LWF general secretary offered Lutherans’ prayers for the new cardinal as he assumes his new role. Junge said he looks forward to discussing “the hopes we have for the coming years and the work we can undertake together.”

22 November 2010

Call for Prayers and Assistance on Sudan Referendum

Movement of Thousands to the South Compounds Serious Humanitarian Challenges

GENEVA (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Rev. Martin Junge called for prayers and assistance over Christmas for the people and churches of Sudan in anticipation of the 9 January referendum on autonomy in South Sudan.

“Our hope is that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 between the respective Sudanese parties will hold, that the people of South Sudan will be free to vote in the referendum and free to choose the

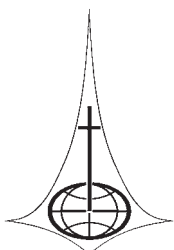
future direction for their region, and that whatever the result of the vote the consequences will play out in a way that is peaceful and respectful of human dignity,” Junge said in a 21 December letter to LWF member churches worldwide.

“The situation in South Sudan and with Southern Sudanese in the North is tense. Many people are fearful. The already serious humanitarian challenges in South Sudan have been confounded by the movement of tens and tens of thousands of Southern

Sudanese from the North to the South,” Junge added.

While some of this movement is voluntary, Junge noted that much of it comes because of fear and intimidation. Many people have no place to stay as there are no organized reception centers. In addition, many people who want to move to the South have been unable to do so and remain in the North.

Junge urged Lutherans around the world “during this special time of Christmas” to pray for the people



and churches of Sudan and to assist those in countries where the South Sudanese in *diaspora* are entitled to vote—Australia, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States.

“I urge you to reach out to those Southern Sudanese among you to help support them so that they may freely exercise their democratic rights,” Junge wrote.

The LWF general secretary expressed gratitude to the LWF member churches for their continued support to the organization’s work in Sudan mainly through the Department for World Service (DWS), its humanitarian relief and development arm.

Over several decades, DWS work in Sudan has included massive emergency airlifts of food and other supplies; assistance to refugees—particularly those in neighboring countries such as Kenya and Uganda—and support for so-called “Lost Boys” and girls in LWF-managed camps, and then with their resettlement. Through its re-established office in the South, DWS Sudan addresses the acute and long-term needs of returning refugees and internally displaced persons, and provides services to host communities. The program



An elderly southern Sudanese woman displays her card after registering as a voter for the January referendum in one of the centers in Nairobi, Kenya. © LWF/Fredrick Nzwili

adopts an integrated approach emphasizing peace building, capacity building, disaster mitigation and preparedness, food security, water, sanitation and education.

The general secretary underlined the importance of collaborative work through the Sudan Ecumenical Forum and the Ecumenical Center-based ACT Alliance and World Council of Churches (WCC). The LWF does not have a member church in Sudan.

Junge expressed his backing for a similar call for prayers and support

issued by the WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit in a letter to the organization’s member churches.

“I wish you a blessed Christmas. May there be peace in the New Year throughout our world, and especially in Sudan,” Junge concluded in his letter to the Lutheran communion.

More about LWF work in Sudan at: www.lutheranworld.org

22 December 2010

Ethiopian Church Marks Decade of Ordaining Women

Significant Strides but More Needs to Be Done

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia/GENEVA (LWI)

– The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) marked 10 years of women’s ordination with a celebration and seminar reflecting on the long journey since Rev. Bekure Daba became the first woman pastor in Africa’s second largest Lutheran church.

The Women’s Ministry Coordinating Office (WMCO) organized the events held 10-12 December 2010 at the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary in the capital Addis Ababa. Participants included several EECMY officials led by General Secretary Rev. Birhanu Ofgaa, synod presidents,

women’s ministry staff and women pastors from around the country, as well as representatives of local sister churches and mission partners from abroad.

In a paper outlining the opportunities and challenges for women’s ordination, Daba, whose May 2000 ordination in the Western Synod marked a major stride in EECMY’s history, noted that the call to women to participate in the church’s sacramental ministry was both biblically rooted and for the wellbeing of the church.

“Ordination is not a question of equity or complementarity. Obviously, it is God, the Holy Spirit who calls believers through his church to the ministry of

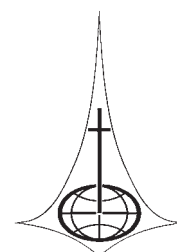
word and sacraments, without gender discrimination,” she told the seminar.

Challenges

Daba said the challenges to women’s ordination include opposition from some women and differences in the understanding of Scripture.

The 2009 statistics show that the 17 women pastors in the EECMY accounted for just one percent of the total number of 2,061 pastors. The seminar noted that the few women ordained in 2010 did not alter the statistics dramatically.

However, it was suggested that ordaining 23 women pastors in a



culturally and religiously diversified and conservative society was a notable success and a step forward for the pioneer church. Still, more could have been done.

Most of the women ordained by the church are from its western synods, while synods from the north and south seem to be lagging behind on this issue. Rev. Hirut Megersa, who was ordained after Daba in 2000 is director for evangelism at the EECMY Central synod; Rev. Aregash Toucho is an assistant pastor at one of the congregations of the Western Wollega Bethel synod; while Rev. Addise Iteffa works at the WMCO evangelism section.

Missionary Background

During the seminar it was noted that although cultural norms and traditions were among the main factors against women's participation in the sacramental ministry, the missionary backgrounds of some synods had also played a significant role in either delaying or rejecting it.

It was agreed that there still remained a lot of work to be done in terms of awareness raising and educating leaders and members at various levels of the church on the issue of women's call to ordained ministry.



Participants in the tenth anniversary seminar included WMCO staff and board members (left to right) Rev. Addise Iteffa, Ms Adanech Mekonen, Ms Sindu Bisrat, Sister Tadelech Loba, Ms Dillame Gebre and Ms Bone Boneya. © EECMY

During a Bible study on the Old Testament story of Esther's courage in working to save the Jewish people, and Mordecai's leadership, former WMCO leader Aberash Dinsa said, "Churches need such selfless leaders as Esther and more Mordecais, who are willing to work with women in harmonious and empowering ways for a common goal without gender or age discrimination.

"Nevertheless, the bold step taken by the EECMY stands out as an eye-opening experience for other

denominations around it. Women have begun exercising their gifts through whatever rare chance and narrow doors available," added Dinsa, a former member of the Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

At the end of 2010, the EECMY had nearly 5.6 million members. It joined the LWF in 1963.

(Former WMCO coordinator, Aberash Dinsa, provided material for this article.)

6 January 2011

Call to Denounce Violation of Human Right to Food

Brazilian Church-Related Institutions Affirm Food Security Sovereignty

SÃO LEOPOLDO, Brazil/GENEVA (LWI)
– Groups of men, women, young boys and girls rummaging through mounds of food stuff discarded by various food suppliers in fetid dump sites is increasingly becoming a common feature of urban life in many countries throughout the world.

In Brazil thousands of people get their daily bread from garbage dumping sites.

Food sovereignty and food security was the focus of a conference last November in São Leopoldo, Brazil, organized by the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia, the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran

Confession in Brazil (IECLB), the Superior School of Theology, the Support Center for Small Farmers and the Mission Council among the Indigenes, with support from German Protestant aid agency Church Development Service [Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst – EED]

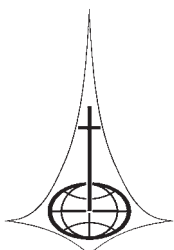
At the conclusion of the conference, participants wrote a "Letter to the Communities" in which they recommended the symbolic revival of community meals as spaces for communion, sharing, solidarity and reconciliation.

"Food and sharing have always been a very important question for

the Christian faith. Therefore, one of the most important sacraments of community life is the Holy Meal. In his ministry, Jesus put much effort to feed and have table fellowship with people, transforming a meal together into a way towards forgiveness and salvation," said the letter.

"Hunger and food of low nutritional quality are a sad and common reality. That situation causes sorrow and resentment which in turn may lead to apathy or action," the letter from the 80 participants warned.

The letter pointed out that churches and social movements were in a position to help change that unjust



scenario if they worked together on a common agenda, strengthening their collaboration by reflecting on the issues and by better sharing information.

Two essential concepts guided the “Letter to the Communities:” food security and food sovereignty. The letter noted that food security exists when people are guaranteed access to adequate food, in sufficient quantity and nutritionally safe so that they can enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle.

Food sovereignty, on the other hand, involves the rights of people, communities and countries to define their own agrarian, agricultural, working, fishing and eating policies so that they are “socially, economically and culturally appropriate for their specific context.”

Participants pointed out that food security “is strictly connected to food sovereignty,” thus it was necessary to link the respective action plans and policies. In addition to securing the right to a nutritive and healthy feeding system, food sovereignty also guarantees the right of the people and traditional communities to guard and strengthen their culture and wisdom.

Participants called for the purchase and consumption of products grown by family agriculture and agro-ecology. They also urged the consumption of ethically produced

food; the avoidance of harmful products; educational programs to encourage good nutrition; and action by churches, social organizations and governments to denounce violations of the human right to food.

“Also, Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread, given to us by God as a blessing. This prayer has fed us throughout our history.”

For that reason, the conference participants proposed the revival of biodiversity and native seeds as a basis for the conservation of life and the autonomy of communities.

“We restate that the diverse forms of life do not require genetically

modified organisms and pesticides to ensure food security, sovereignty and sufficiency,” said the conference letter.

The guarantee of sovereignty and of food security involves access to the land, and shared knowledge, as well as agrarian policies and credit. The letter proposed making room for fair trade directly between farmers and consumers through family agriculture fairs and consumption cooperatives.

Conference participants said they had learned from indigenous communities that food and feeding are part of the sacred realm of life. Food



*These people scavenging for food live near this dumping site in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
© Paulino Menezes*



*Participants line up for a group photo at the end of the conference in São Leopoldo, Brazil.
© Valdir Gromann*

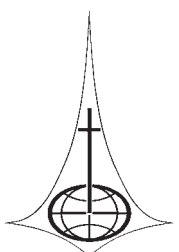
nourishes both body and spirit. They also stated that all forms of life have the right to food.

The letter highlighted the connection between food security and food sovereignty, and gender justice issues, stating: “Statistics reveal that it is the women, the children and the elderly who suffer the most with the absence of these assurances.”

Participants called for study and commitment to the IECLB’s 2011 study theme, “Peace in God’s Creation” to help reflect on issues of food security, sovereignty and sufficiency.

(By Susanne Buchweitz)

22 December 2010



Bishop Reinhart Guib to Lead Romanian Church

During a special worship celebration on 12 December **Bishop Reinhart Guib** was installed as head of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania in Sibiu/Hermannstadt in the presence of many national and foreign guests.

Guib succeeds Bishop Dr Christoph Klein, who retired in October after 20 years as bishop. As vice president of the Central Eastern Europe region of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from 2003 to 2010, Klein was a member of the Executive Committee.

The 48-year-old Guib comes from Mediaş, where he has been pastor since 1994. In 1997 he was elected to the National Consistory and became vicar in 2007, the highest office in the church after the bishop. He is married to Henriette Guib, a school teacher, and has three children.

Bishop Michael Bünker from the neighboring Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria assured the new



Bishop Reinhart Guib
© ECAC in Romania

bishop of continued, close collaboration. Bünker highlighted the fact that at present many Transylvanian pastors work in the Austrian church.

The German regional bishop from Kurhessen-Waldeck Martin Hein emphasized that the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) would follow the course of the partner church in Romania with great attention.

In a congratulatory letter to Guib, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge pointed out that the Romanian church had distinguished itself in the past through its work of reconciliation between those who remained behind and those who had emigrated.

The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania has over 13,400 members, and it joined the LWF in 1964. Its 240 congregations are served by 42 pastors, three of whom are women.

Peter Gancs Is Presiding Bishop of Hungarian Lutheran Church

Bishop Peter Gancs is the new presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary. The church synod elected him last November to succeed retiring Bishop János Itzész (Western District) who had been in office since March 2006.

Gancs, 59, the sole candidate for the position of presiding bishop, will be in office for two years, as the regular elections will be held in 2012. He has been bishop of the Southern Church District since 2003, and is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

Upon his election and installation, Gancs said that the trust shown in his election gave him strength and he wished to share this trust with all members of the church. He



Bishop Peter Gancs © ELCH

said improved communication was a prerequisite to strengthening trust between the different groups and ministries of the church.

The position of presiding bishop in the Hungarian Lutheran church is held by a bishop from one of its three districts—Western, Southern and Northern. The church has more than 213,000 members in 300 congregations throughout the country.

The church has over 30 educational institutions including one university. Its social services work includes homes for the elderly and handicapped children and shelters for the homeless, among others.

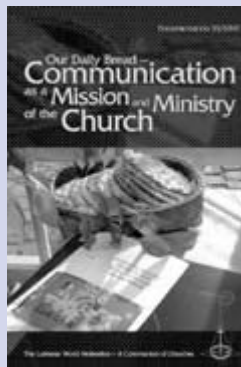
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary joined the LWF in 1947.

Our Daily Bread – New LWF Publication on Communication

Our Daily Bread – Communication as a Mission and Ministry of the Church is the title of a new LWF publication on the role of communication in the churches' mission and ministry.

It is published as *Documentation 55/2010* in the LWF Documentation series. The 130-page book is a compilation of papers presented at a 2009 international consultation where communicators and policy makers from churches, mission societies and other church-related agencies exchanged information, deliberated new trends and expectations for the 21st century communication in the churches.

The book's foreword states that while the 1970s and 1980s emphasized communication as an integral part of the mission and ministry of the church, the 1990s saw a shift toward a service-oriented role within church administration, and therefore separate from the more specific proclamation of the gospel, education and advocacy. These changes were influenced by technological advances in communications and in society in general.

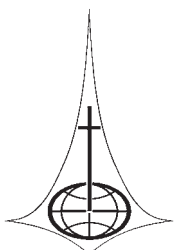


The publication's title evokes the LWF Eleventh Assembly theme, "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread" to affirm the centrality of communication for the church. The book is edited by Rev. Karin Achtelstetter, former director of the LWF Office for Communication Services, who since last October is general secretary of the Toronto (Canada)-based World Association for Christian Communication.

The book is available also in German under the title, *Unser tägliches Brot – Kommunikation als Auftrag und Dienst der Kirche*.

Orders at USD 15 per copy can be placed with Lutheran University Press at, www.lutheranpress.org/catalog/p-95.html.

For further information please contact Ms Colette Muanda at, cmu@lutheranworld.org Tel: +41/22-791 6370, Fax: +41/22-791 66 30.



DWS Mauritania Program Staff Killed in Road Accident

General Secretary Junge Conveys Prayers to Families

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania/GENEVA (LWI) – Three long-serving staff members of the Mauritania country program of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) were among seven persons who died on 25 November in a road accident in southern Mauritania.

DWS Mauritania program coordinator Ms Houleye Tall; Mr Macky Coulibaly, area coordinator for Brakna, Trarza and Gorgol; and driver Mr Louloud Ould Khaina were travelling back to the Nouakchott head office after completing a training session with local communities and leaders when their vehicle hit a lorry. A local leader, his wife and two children from the region also perished in the accident.

“Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of all seven victims of this terrible accident, we send them our heartfelt condolences,” said LWF/DWS Mauritania representative Mr Jaap Aantjes.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge conveyed deep condolences for the tragic loss on behalf of staff colleagues and partners around the world. “We pray that [you] will be comforted in your grief. Know

that you all are surrounded in love and prayer,” he wrote in a letter addressed to Aantjes.

Tall, 52, started her first stint with the LWF as an emergency volunteer during the Sahel drought in the late seventies. She joined DWS Mauritania in 1988 as administrative staff, gradually rising to the position of program coordinator. “She had excellent relations with many of our partners in Europe, America, Asia and Africa. She had a warm personality, she was good humored, and very capable in the areas of women empowerment, peace and reconciliation, and human rights,” said Aantjes.

“She Taught Us”

Junge recalled Tall’s participation in the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, where she managed the DWS program stand, exhibiting various activities including the women solar engineers’ project. “She taught us and welcomed us into the world of Mauritania, especially the world of women there. She was a wonderful representative for promoting understanding and building bridges across religions, across cultures, and across economic divides.



*DWS Program coordinator Houleye Tall had worked with DWS Mauritania since 1988.
© LWF/DWS Mauritania/Paula Laajalabti*

She gave witness to our common humanity,” wrote the LWF general secretary.

Tall represented the LWF in various other regional and international meetings including as a delegate to the December 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, and as coordinator of a team to the United Nations Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Tall was an active member of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) women’s network. She “worked hard to advance human rights, including women and children’s rights in her country, and her work was well appreciated by all,” said Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, IFAPA president.

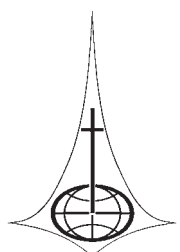
Coulibaly, 59, joined the LWF program as a finance officer 1991. Khaina, 51 has been working for the Mauritania program since 2000.

“All three will be dearly missed by their families as loved ones and breadwinners,” said Aantjes. They were “committed to the cause, hard working and wanting to help others in need first,” he added.

26 November 2010



*LWF’s work in Mauritania includes tree planting to decrease desertification.
© LWF/DWS Mauritania/ Paula Laajalabti*



LWF Lauds UN Agency for Partnership and Dedicated Service to Refugees

LWF Statement on the Occasion UNHCR's 60th Anniversary

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) expressed gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its dedicated service to refugees and internally displaced persons throughout the world, and for its pragmatic spirit of humanitarian partnership.

“We are grateful that through UNHCR, human dignity has been lifted up and millions of people who had lost everything have been able to start new lives,” said LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge in a statement coinciding with the agency’s 60th anniversary observed on 14 December.

The LWF’s humanitarian work is carried out through its Department for World Service (DWS) with country and regional programs in more than 30 countries throughout the world. Junge expressed gratitude for the long-standing practical partnership the LWF had shared with UNHCR and its predecessor body, the UN International Refugee Organization.

The LWF statement underlined “UNHCR’s pragmatic spirit of humanitarian partnership,” citing collaboration in view of Somali and Sudanese refugees in Kenya, Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chad, among other settings.

The UNHCR’s 60th anniversary theme, “Put Yourself in the Shoes of Refugees,” is one that resonates well for Lutherans, Junge added, noting that at the close of the Second World War, one out of six Lutherans was a refugee or displaced person. Lutherans in other parts of the world worked

together to provide relief and new lives for the displaced. Out of this service the LWF was born in 1947.

“Service with refugees and displaced persons continues to be part of the core witness and work of the Lutheran communion of churches,” Junge noted.

The statement underlined the sad reality that assistance to refugees and IDPs on which the LWF and UNHCR collaborate will remain



LWF - UNHCR partnership facilitated this income generation activity for Bhutanese refugees in Morang, eastern Nepal. © LWF/DWS Nepal



A food security project with displaced women in the urban area of Soacha, greater Bogotá, Colombia, where the LWF is working with internally displaced persons. © LWF/DWS Colombia/H. Halvardsson

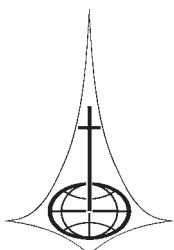
necessary “as our world tragically continues to create situations in which innocent men, women, and children are forced to flee.” Many of these forced migrants, though not fitting within the definition of a refugee, “are no less vulnerable, and no less in need of protection,” Junge remarked.

“Ours is still a world in which the cruel situations of war, persecution, and disaster force people to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. Yet, despite all this, our world is a better place because of UNHCR,” he concluded.

The full text of the LWF statement is available at:

www.lutheranworld.org

14 December 2010



FEATURE: “Our River, Our Public Market”

Empowering Asian Communities’ Rights to Clean Water and Sanitation

MANILA, Philippines (LWI) – In Tanay, an indigenous Philippines community endowed with a river, tributaries and springs, villagers must travel 45 minutes by jeep to buy drinking water.

“It is unfortunate for a community abounding in water to have no access to clean and safe water,” commented Dr Salima Rahman, who coordinates the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh. “The community has springs but it does not have pipes to bring spring water to households.”

Rahman and other church and civil society representatives visited the Rizal province community located in a river valley southeast of Manila in November as part of a regional consultation on communities’ rights to water and sanitation in Asia.

The consultation was organized by the World Council of Churches-supported Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), a faith-based water rights advocacy group, and hosted by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

Biblical Interpretation

The 40 participants from 12 Asian countries challenged what they described as a distorted reading of the Old Testament’s Genesis story in which God told Adam and Eve to “subdue the earth” and “have dominion” over the other species and resources on the planet.

The appropriate translation of the original Hebrew is “to oversee and take care” rather than ‘subdue and have dominion,’ noted Dr Hrangthan Chhungi of the National Council of Churches in India. “So we are overseers and caretakers of God’s creation.”

Misinterpretation of the biblical creation story has helped legitimize often destructive development projects and the monopoly of vital resources, participants said. Tanay is an apt case study.



Children in Benguet province, northern Philippines, mix fun with their assigned task of fetching water from a mountain spring. © LWF/ Maurice Malanes

Rahman was among three representatives of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) country and associate programs participating in the regional consultation. They learned first-hand why villagers in Tanay oppose a proposed big dam project.

Resistance

The villagers have been resisting the project since 1979, when it was proposed under the regime of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos. They thought their problem was over when Marcos was ousted in February 1986.

But the need for cheap sources of electricity coupled with the growing demand for water by Manila’s almost 20 million inhabitants has prompted succeeding governments to revive Marcos’ project.

The Laiban Dam project, known as the Manila Water Supply Project III, was bid out in 2007 and awarded and approved in 2008. Construction was set to begin in 2009 with completion in 2013.

The 113-metre high dam would submerge over 28,000 hectares cov-

ering seven villages, the ancestral territory of more than 10,000 indigenous Dumagat folk and other settlers. The project would divert 2,400 million liters of water daily to Manila. It would dry up the irrigation supply of adjoining lowland farms in the neighboring towns of Infanta and Real in Quezon province.

But the villagers’ persistent opposition continues to delay the project.

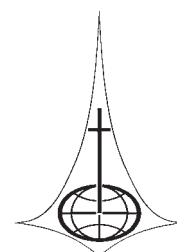
“We have to defend our community, whose fertile land has sustained us for generations,” elder Danilo Torvator underlined. “With our limited education, we cannot find elsewhere any other better work than farming.”

Torvator and other villagers grow rice and corn, cassava, yam, sweet potato, and various fruits, including coconuts, mangoes, papaya and banana.

Fish Species

“Our river is also our public market,” said Federico Ubana, another elder, referring to the lobsters, eels and various fish species they catch from the river and its tributaries.

The government and a private firm are determined to tap water



from Laiban for Manila. But the government has yet to provide safe, clean water for the villagers through simple water-drawing facilities such as pipes.

The story repeats itself throughout Asia. In Nepal, drinking water is accessible to 82 percent of the country's population but 34 percent spend 15 minutes daily fetching water, says Yadu Lal Shrestha, the human rights coordinator of the DWS country program in Nepal.

"Rich citizens are eight times more likely to have sanitation facilities than the poor," remarked Shrestha.

Empowering Communities

The rich are also 13 times more likely to have private water connections. "This is why the Lutheran World Federation Nepal's initiatives on access to water and sanitation are especially geared toward the poor and the disadvantaged," said Shrestha.

In India, the rural and urban poor are the focus of church-based organi-



Mr Yadu Lal Shrestha said speaks about LWF water projects in Nepal. © LWF/ Maurice Malanes

zations' initiatives on access to water and sanitation. The DWS associate program there helps build high-rise tube wells in flood-prone rural and urban poor communities.

"With the high-rise tube wells, poor communities can still access clean, safe water even during floods," reported Judith Hembrom of the Lutheran World Service India Trust.

The trust helps poor communities manage their water and avoid waste. "We also train, educate and finally empower communities to be



Dr Salima Rahman, RDRS Bangladesh © LWF/ Maurice Malanes

confident and bold enough to urge [the] government to provide them basic and important social services such as clean water and sanitation," added Hembrom.

In Bangladesh, Rahman said, RDRS offers interest-free loans for communities to build latrines and helps train them to urge government to install latrines and water facilities.

"For a Muslim woman like myself, who has to wash each time before I pray five times each day, water is really a sacred element that must be readily accessible," remarked Rahman. "So that desire to help others to have equal access to this vital basic resource is part of my humanity."

(Written for LWI by Manila-based correspondent Maurices Malanes.)

More information about DWS work in Bangladesh, India and Nepal is available at:

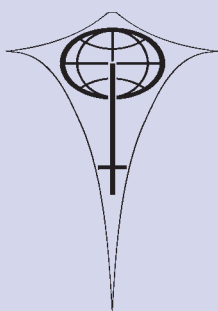
www.lutheranworld.org

15 December 2010

***The article is in the continuing LWI features' series focusing on the topic "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," the theme of the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.**



Bangladesh's riverine chars are inhabited by the poor and most marginalized people. In Ostomir, Kurigram district, RDRS provides clean tap water to such communities. © RDRS



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The Lutheran World Federation
150, route de Ferney
P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Tel. +41/22-791 61 11
Fax +41/22-791 66 30
E-mail info@lutheranworld.org
www.lutheranworld.org

