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Lutherans in Brazil, Indonesia and Tanzania Say No to Violence against Women



Everyday kitchen objects as weapons: the "Not So Sweet Home" exhibit organized by the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia in Brazil shows the reality of domestic violence. © FLD/Susanne Buchweitz

Women and Men Seek Life without Violence

GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran churches are among those joining the United Nations' UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign that aims to eliminate violence against all women and girls.

The campaign brings together a host of UN agencies and offices to end violence against women; its social mobilization platform engages churches and other players from civil society, with targeted actions around the International Day of Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) action plan "Churches Say 'No' to Violence against Women" is a resource used by church leadership and congregations in addressing the issue of violence against women. It offers a theological foundation for churches in the LWF to address the situation of violence against women, naming it as sin.

Three examples of LWF member churches doing so come from Brazil, where the issue of violence is illustrated head-on; Indonesia, where confronting it is more culturally complex; and Tanzania, where women still face female genital mutilation (FGM).

Not So Sweet Home

Carolaine, a 20-year-old with a two year-old daughter, lives with her husband on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, in Brazil's southern Rio Grande do Sul province. She was severely beaten as a child by her father, with no explanations given.

She gave testimony about this as part of the Not So Sweet Home exhibit, organized by the Lutheran Foundation of Diako-

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In 2010, *Lutheran World Information* will continue to provide information about the various activities of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its member churches, and their

ecumenical and interfaith engagement worldwide.

The staff of the LWF Office for Communication Services wish all LWI readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



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Reformation Day Calls Churches to "Freedom for Service"

LWF General Secretary: Take Up Responsibility to Work for Justice

GENEVA (LWI) – Take up the cause of freedom with renewed purpose to mark Reformation Day 2011, Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), called on the worldwide communion of 145 member churches.

"Reformation churches do not need to regard the concept of freedom with mistrust. On the contrary: by standing by those who suffer injustice, conflict and situations without reconciliation they will, at the same time, give a strong testimony to the way freedom can be understood," Junge said in a 24 October letter to the LWF member churches.

"Seen in relation to our neighbors and the whole of Creation, freedom will not lead to ruin—it will bring opportunities and promise for the future," the general secretary added.

Reformation Day is celebrated annually on 31 October by Lutheran and Reformed churches around the world to mark the beginning of the Reformation, launched when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg in 1517.

Freedom was one of the central themes of Lutheran theology and action and Christians continued to draw strength from this message in the midst of political, economic, ethnic or gender-based oppression, Junge noted.

"This message also opens up new spaces for countless women today. Demonstrating a changed awareness of their own freedom and dignity, they oppose gender-based oppression and violence in the church and society," Junge continued.

"The promise of freedom by grace alone bursts forth and seeks ways of expressing itself in everyday life. The transforming power of God's action cannot be confined to a person's inner life!" he underlined in the Reformation Day letter.

Junge said that in the understanding of the Reformation, Christian freedom had clear boundaries that made it accountable. Citing the vision statement of the LWF Strategy 2012-2017, he pointed out that member churches were "liberated" to live together and in doing so to counter the current trends towards individualism and fragmentation.

At the same time, "the LWF Communion also knows it is liberated to work for justice, peace and reconciliation in the world." This freedom, which comes through the grace of God, compels Lutherans to serve.

"Christian freedom thus bears a double responsibility: towards God *and* the neighbor. Or, as is becoming increasingly evident today: towards God and the whole of Creation," he said.

Christians had made an important contribution to the social and political debates around climate change, ecological disasters and the financial crisis, Junge remarked, helping to point out that when freedom was misunderstood, it could lead to negative consequences for humanity and all of Creation.

"Wherever we lose sight of our fellow human beings and the whole of Creation in our thinking and acting the result is a lack of warmth, it is brutality and the consequences are often fatal," the LWF general secretary concluded.

Read the LWF Reformation Day 2011 letter to its member churches:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Reformation-Day-2011.pdf

24 October 2011



A woman speaks at a youth forum on various social issues and human rights.
© LWF/DWS RDRS Bangladesh

IAEA Gives LWF's Augusta Victoria Hospital Green Light

Jerusalem Hospital a "Leading Institution in Health Care"

JERUSALEM/GENEVA (LWI) — Jerusalem's Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) passed its first Quality Assurance Team for Radiation Oncology (QUATRO) audit by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the hospital head said. "The QUATRO is a comprehensive audit of radiotherapy practices and a tool for quality improvement," said Dr



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Tawfiq A. Nasser, the Chief Executive Officer of the AVH. QUATRO "is however authorized to shut down any machine, unit, or facility that is deemed unsafe or operating below standards."

Since 1950, the AVH has been the center piece of the Jerusalembased Middle East regional program of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a member of ACT Alliance.

AVH now functions as an institution within the Palestinian healthcare system. In 2010, 233 staff at AVH cared for 5,255 inpatients and provided 24,814 interventions in the radiation oncology unit.

The audit, conducted on the week of 3 October, was the first of its kind carried out by the IAEA on a Palestinian institution. The next audit will take place in about four years.

AVH's main task has been to provide services for Palestinian refugees in cooperation with UNRWA, the United Nations agency responsible for refugee programs in the Holy Land since 1948.

The LWF-run health institution provides specialized services that are not available in the majority of Palestinian hospitals. These include treatment for diabetes and cancer, kidney dialysis, a child care center and a sub-acute care unit, as well as skilled nursing.

"The hospital passed," announced Nasser. "The unit was deemed to be safe in practice and following all the approved guidelines for treatment in radiation oncology internationally." Nasser noted, "The hospital also received very constructive comments on how to develop the service for future demands in cancer care."

When he was in Geneva in September, Nasser told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, "AVH is a leading institution in health and advanced care ... It has excellence in health care and advocating health. It represents a living Christian institution, not just Crusader churches built a few hundred years ago."

The recent audit was done voluntarily and AVH applied to have it done.

Nasser said the Israeli Ministry of Health had also requested the audit. Representatives of the Israeli ministry attended and listened to the recommendations as they were passed on verbally by the inspection team.

"A senior oncologist was also present from the Palestinian Ministry of Health to hear the results. I await the full detailed technical report from the Agency but now we know that we have passed it," said Nasser.

The audit also authorizes conducting further investigations and repeat QUATRO audits, if the facility is in need of continuous monitoring which is not the case for the AVH.

The QUATRO team also gave the hospital constructive and important tips on how to proceed with future challenges in the field of radiation oncology.

"Partnerships with hospitals like Radium in Oslo and KHCC [King Hussein Cancer Center] in Jordan will be essential to further train and develop our staff," added Nasser.

1 November 2011



A young oncology patient benefits from new treatment options offered by AVH.

© LWF/DWS Jerusalem/ K. Brown

Faith Helps Us Stand for Peace, LWF Leaders Say

LWF President Younan and General Secretary Junge Reflect on Assisi Pilgrimage

ASSISI, Italy/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) leaders participating in the "Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace" day of reflection, dialogue and prayer in Assisi, Italy, underlined the powerful role of faith in bringing peace and reconciliation.

"As a communion of churches we envision to be working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world," LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge told *Lutheran World Information* (*LWI*). He noted the 27 October pilgrimage took place weeks after three women of faith received the Nobel Peace Prize. One of the laureates, peace activist Leymah Gbowee, is a member of the Lutheran Church in Liberia.

"I went to Assisi with a deep sense of gratitude for their witness and the witness of many other local leaders around the world, who because of their faith use every opportunity to stand for peace, justice and nonviolence," said Junge.

The LWF general secretary and the President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan were among 300 religious leaders from a wide array of faith groups, and those with no religious affiliation participating in the event. They were invited by Pope Benedict





LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan (front row, second from the left) and other faith leaders participating in the Assisi pilgrimage leave the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels.

© Servizio Fotografico de L'Osservatore Romano

XVI to the Umbrian hilltop town of Assisi, the birthplace of Saint Francis, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of a day of prayer for peace called by Pope John Paul II at the height of the Cold War.

Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, said the pilgrimage was a good opportunity to find out how religion can be the source of solutions for peace and justice in the world. "The Church needs to be prophetic and in being so it offers something important to the world, which Christ loves and gave himself for the sake of every person," he said.

The day included a reading by some of the faith representatives of "A Common Commitment to Peace," agreed at the 2002 meeting. Younan read in Arabic the paragraph stating a commitment "to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion," with emphasis on "doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism."

The LWF president said the religious leaders go back to their respective contexts "with the challenge of interpreting what they experienced here into the realities of oppression and injustice that so often are experienced on the ground."

28 October 2011

Lutherans in Brazil, Indonesia and Tanzania Say No to Violence against Women

Continued from p. 1

nia (FLD), which is linked to the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB).

"I want to have a better life. I want to raise my daughter in very different way. I don't want her to experience what I went through," remarks Carolaine. She explains what happened at her childhood home.

"When my brothers did something wrong, the daughters were blamed. My father would just administer beatings," says Carolaine. "He would not ask us what happened.

"My mother never did it, she never slapped me, but she always drank a lot. It was my father who would beat me and my siblings, and my mother."

The Not So Sweet Home exhibit is based on an international exhibit created by German anthropologist Una Hombrecher, with the support of the agency Bread for the World.

Everyday Objects Turned into Weapons

The exhibit shows a home, with a living room, bedroom and kitchen, and serves as a warning about domestic violence (affecting women, children, and men). It calls attention to an issue that needs to be discussed and overcome at all levels of society.

"People can enter the Not So Sweet Home house and walk through its different rooms, where they find everyday objects that can turn into weapons when used by attackers," says Marilu Nornberg Menezes, who is in charge of the exhibit.

Among the dangerous objects are rolled up newspapers, pan lids, pots, steam irons, rolling pins, bowls, knives, forks, pillows and cushions, belts, shoes, etc.

The 16 Campaigns for the End of Violence against Women, sponsored by the Secretariat of Policies for Women of Rio Grande do Sul, is using the exhibit and notes that similar ones can be created in different places.

Indonesia: A Family Issue

From Batak Simalungun in Indonesia, Ms Butet, the mother of a young boy and two girls, explains she works in a government office. Her husband is a farmer.

Her testimony is of her silent endurance of growing conflict in her marriage and how she was left feeling desperate, until her church was able to help. "I always obey him because I love him."

Early in her marriage she felt happy, but later her work and church responsibilities increased.

Her husband began to drink a local brew called "tuak" and sometimes after a night out with his friends he came home virtually unconscious.

"He changed. He became jealous and suspicious. He began to forbid me to go to the church, limiting my activities to meet people," says Butet. "He was angry



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when I didn't obey him. Sometimes he attacked me in front of my children. I suffered, but kept silent, afraid to speak out."

Despite Butet's prayers, things did not change. In Batak culture, the wife belongs to the husband's family, so she should discuss marital problems with them.

"Finally, I met his parent[s] and told them what their son did to me," Butet explained. But, "they did not support me. They only told me that as a wife I should be patient. They blamed me They asked me to honor him."

Darwita Purba, coordinator of the Women Crisis Center "Sopou Damei" GKPS, says, "The church's task is to break the silence."

The Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (GKPS) in 2007 built a Women's Crisis Center. "The center is a tool of the GKPS to talk about gender equality, as men and women are equal in God's image. They also help women and children who are victims of violence."

East Africa: Dialogue on FGM

In East Africa, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is getting women to discuss the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) in their country amongst themselves. The practice involves the partial or total removal of the external female



Another display of the "Not So Sweet Home" exhibit. © FLD/Susanne Buchweitz

genitalia, with health risks ranging from infections and chronic pain to obstetrical complications.

Rachel, from the Mara region, and Tina, from Arusha in the north, both say the issue still exists in their country despite the strong presence and awareness work of the Lutheran, Roman Catholic and other churches.

"Where I come from in Longido in the Arusha region, one of the Maasai homelands, FGM is practiced openly," says Tina who has not undergone it herself. "My parents made sure I did not get circumcised by sending me to school. I stayed there until I graduated as a teacher and I got married to an enlightened man.

"I live in the city and not in the village. Unfortunately, many in my peer group have undergone FGM."

She tells Rachel, "In the Maasai community, there is a specific time when FGM can be done. The ceremony involves every member of the community. Young girls aged between 8 and 15 are prepared by their parents wearing circumcision regalia and are sent to circumcisers, who are old women."

After the rite, "Parents and friends shower the girls with presents and there will be dancing and eating," says Tina.

Rachel says, "It seems that this tradition is not easy to abolish. We need to think of new methods of dealing with this problem."

Tina notes, "The church in collaboration with the government and other stakeholders is trying to abolish this tradition. Awareness-building seminars have been held for village elders, circumcisers, women, youth, local government officials and others in order to educate the communities involved with FGM, to understand its negative consequences."

Download "Churches Say 'No' to Violence against Women" at

www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/Lwfviolence-EN.pdf

23 November 2011





HIV & AIDS CONSULTATION ON "EMBRACING LIFE: OUR COMMON RESPONSIBILITY"

6-10 November, Sukamakmur, Indonesia

Indonesian Bishop Urges Youth to "Break the Roof of Prejudice" on AIDS

Lutherans Revitalize HIV and AIDS campaign

SUKAMAKMUR, Indonesia/GENEVA, (LWI)

– A week-long gathering to support Lutheran churches' response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Indonesia began with a call on young people to take a leading role in breaking the prejudice and stigma around HIV and AIDS.

"Like those who carried the crippled man on his mat and broke the roof to reach him to Jesus, you should break the roof of prejudice and stigma in the church to bring solace to the HIV-infected," Bishop Langsung Maruli Sitorus of the Indonesian Christian Church (HKI) told 30 delegates attending the three-day youth consultation at Sukamakmur, 80 kilometers north of Medan.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) HIV and AIDS desk coordinated the 6-10 November youth and church leadership consultations on the theme, "Embracing Life: Our Common Responsibility," with participants drawn from the 12 LWF member churches in the country. The LWF National Committee in Indonesia hosted the gatherings, to which participants also from support groups and networks of people living with HIV were invited.

The youth consultation focused on the role of young adults in HIV prevention and explored strategies for action. In his address to the group that also included 12 young pastors, Sitorus, chairperson of the LWF National Committee in Indonesia, reminded the young adults that the parable of the healing of the crippled man (Mark 2:1-12) offers a lesson on the AIDS crisis in Indonesia.

"The goal of the consultations is to create a platform for the churches here to take HIV and AIDS more



Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika, coordinator of the LWF HIV & AIDS desk, and Bishop Langsung Maruli Sitorus (right), chairperson of the LWF National Committee in Indonesia, during Sunday worship in the context of the AIDS consultation in Sukamakmur, Indonesia. © LWF/Anto Akkara

seriously," said Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika, coordinator of the LWF AIDS desk at the Department for Mission and Development.

The United Nations AIDS agency, UNAIDS, reported in 2010 that the HIV epidemic in Indonesia was among the fastest growing in Asia, with all but one of the country's 33 provinces reporting HIV or AIDS cases. At the end of 2009, it was estimated that there were 333,200 people living with HIV and that the figure could reach halfa-million by 2014 without increased prevention. There was a sharp rise in those with AIDS between 2004 and 2009, when it reached 20,000. The largest increase was among 15-49 yearolds. Sex workers are at greatest risk. National HIV prevalence is estimated at 0.2 percent in the population of more than 241 million people.

The LWF consultations "will empower the churches to redouble their efforts to combat HIV and AIDS in Indonesia," noted Munyika.

The youth and church leadership consultations were a follow-up to the 2003 LWF Asian region meeting on HIV and AIDS, which produced the Batam Declaration, committing the churches to prioritize response to the pandemic.

"We want the churches to formulate a clear policy and take concrete steps to intensify efforts to combat HIV," noted Erlina D. Pardede, AIDS coordinator of the LWF Indonesian committee.

Almost all the Lutheran churches in Indonesia, representing over 5.6 million people, are based in North Sumatra, where Christians account for nearly 50 percent of the province's 15 million people.



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Youth Seek Greater Role in Combating AIDS

The three-day conference of youth from the dozen Lutheran churches in Indonesia called upon church leadership to assign them a greater role in taking up the challenge of fighting the AIDS epidemic.

"We as the youth of the Lutheran churches are ready to be involved and take part in actions to prevent [the spread of] HIV and AIDS," said the declaration from the 6-8 November conference of the youth from the 12-member National Committee of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Indonesia.

The conference preceded the church leadership consultation on "Embracing Life: Our Common Responsibility" and "breaking the silence" on AIDS.

The statement summing up "aspirations and hopes" of the youth spelt out a seven-point action plan declaring that they were prepared to act as "volunteers and facilitators" to lead the church's campaign against HIV and AIDS.

For this effort, the conference, attended also by theology students

suggested concrete action plans including launching a youth communication network and a youth forum to spread AIDS awareness, collect funds and even take up preventive treatment and care for the stigmatized HIV-infected.

Potential

While acknowledging that "young people are easily affected by HIV and AIDS," the youth also asserted that they also have the potential "to give solutions in handling HIV and AIDS."

Declaring their faith commitment to the cause, the youth conference stated that "when the congregations are suffering, it is also the suffering of the pastor, church elder and the parishes themselves."

Thus, after listening to several experts in the field of AIDS and theological reflections on the stigma and discrimination the epidemic carries, the youth called for a module of

teaching about AIDS in all 12 LWF member churches in Indonesia.

"Moreover, the church needs to make a curriculum about sex and [the] HIV and AIDS epidemic," urged the youth conference while also recommending spreading awareness about the disease through worship services, confirmation classes and campaigns during specific church meetings.

"The stigma makes HIV and AIDS-infected people feel unwanted in the church. We must remove this fear of AIDS," said Alter Pernando Siahaan, a student at Pematang Siantar theological college. Siahaan had played the role of a person living with HIV in a skit during the conference, depicting discrimination against HIV-infected persons in the church.

Curriculum in Seminaries

"I had heard about HIV and AIDS. But I did not know much about it until this conference," said Rev. Ramayanti Simorangkir, a recently ordained pastor of the Indonesian Christian Church (HKI).

If HIV is included in the curriculum in seminaries, "pastors will be able to shake hands with HIV-infected and will not drive them away," said the HKI youth pastor.

The five-member drafting team of the youth delegates presented their declaration to the conference of the church leaders on 9 November holding posters of their demands and reading them out one by one.

Enthused by the commitment shown by the youth delegates, the conference of church leaders, attended by two dozen church officials including 10 bishops, adopted the youth resolution for follow-up action.



Youth delegates present their declaration to the Indonesian church leadership consultation "Embracing Life: Our Common Responsibility." © LWF/Anto Akkara

AIDS Action Plan Will Raise Awareness and Reduce Stigma

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Indonesia committed themselves to respond to HIV and AIDS with an action plan aiming to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

"HIV and AIDS is a very serious national problem and therefore the church must take concrete steps to address [it]," said church leaders in a statement outlining concrete steps for

8

youth, seminaries, synods, congregations and national leadership.

The statement lays out a way forward following consultations of the LWF National Committee in





Rev. Emmy Sahertian, who runs the Rumah Philia HIV advocacy, care and support center in Jakarata, makes a presentation to Indonesian Lutheran church leaders during the LWF consultation. © LWF/Anto Akkara

Indonesia in Sukamakmur, North Sumatra.

In the action plan, the church leaders underlined the need for the 12 LWF member churches in Indonesia to create deliberate structures for HIV and AIDS involvement.

Every church should have a committee on HIV and AIDS covering the synodal to congregational levels to coordinate with the National Committee on campaigns to sensitize church members, according to the statement.

The church leaders also emphasized the importance of including HIV and AIDS in theological seminary curriculum as well as confirmation and Sunday school materials, with special training for teachers.

"Integrating HIV and AIDS concerns into the totality of theological education is essential to transform our faith communities into inclusive communities of compassionate care," noted consultation speaker Rev. Dr George Zachariah, associate profes-

sor of theology and ethics at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India.

Further, synods were encouraged to facilitate discussion on HIV and AIDS at different levels from Sunday sermons to church assemblies, and to raise funds for related work.

Rev. Basa Hutabarat, executive secretary of the National Committee, promised support as church leaders look to engage their members with the action plan commitments.

"It is not easy homework [for] every church. We as the National Committee will...help the churches to play their role [to combat] HIV and AIDS," she stated.

"Mainstreaming [HIV and AIDS] is key and the church is strategically positioned," commented LWF AIDS desk coordinator Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika, adding that the statement furthers the global Lutheran campaign against AIDS.

The statement "links the Indonesian churches to the other churches in the communion in their response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic," he affirmed.

(India-based LWI correspondent Anto Akkara wrote the stories in this section.)

LWF Calendar Highlights Children's Right to Life with Dignity

Children around the world are the focus of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) 2012 Calendar.

Thirteen colorful photographs highlight different aspects of LWF work with churches and local communities. From advocacy and education to diakonia, holistic mission and theological formation—the global communion seeks life with dignity for the youngest members of society.

"These joyful, confident faces give hope," says LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge. "Especially when one realizes the difficult conditions in which some of these children live. Their laughter and confidence defy adversity, their indefatigable vitality overcomes despair."

Junge notes that the churches play a key role in shaping the world children grow up in by offering space to experience faith, love and hope, and by engaging in discussion on global issues vital to young lives.

"In this sense these photographs are eloquent illustrations of the confident, joyful faith to which the church of Jesus Christ bears witness in the world," he adds.

The 42 x 28 cm calendar can be ordered online for CHF 20/EUR 16/USD 22, plus shipping and handling. Proceeds



One of the pictures in the LWF calendar; eager and ready to learn Haitian school girl. © Paul Jeffrey

from the calendar will support an LWF project working with children.

Order your LWF Calendar 2012 at www.lutheranworld. org/lwf/index.php/calendar-2012.html



LWF Committee Underlines Leadership Formation, Communications and Worship for 2017 Anniversary

Sharing of Ideas from Different Contexts Encouraged

BUDAPEST, Hungary/GENEVA (LWI) – The special committee mandated to guide The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in preparing observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 identified leadership formation, the central role of worship and emerging communications as some of the issues needing urgent attention.

At its inaugural meeting in the Hungarian capital, 14-15 November, the "Luther 2017: 500 Years of Reformation" committee underlined the use of new information technology—"from Gutenberg to Google"—as crucial especially in engaging young people in the different activities planned by LWF member churches throughout the world.



Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny presents the wide range of activities being planned to commemorate the Reformation anniversary. © ELCH/Zsuzsanna Horváth-Bolla

The committee comprises nine members from all seven LWF regions, and includes two youth members.

Reviewing the summary of plans already underway in member churches and theological institutions, the committee affirmed the wide range of activities and noted that these ideas would help to inspire others to their own creative planning in their contexts. A noted Hungarian animator Zsolt Richly introduced

his project on the life and witness of Martin Luther; the hope is to make this available also in other languages.

The committee noted that each centenary anniversary had been distinctively shaped by its own time. It reflected on the marks already identified in planning 2017: to attend to the Reformation movement as a global citizen; to be ecumenically engaged and accountable; and to look forward to ways in which churches of the Reformation are still "in reformation."

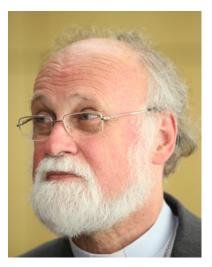
Twelfth Assembly Focus

The committee affirmed that the LWF Twelfth Assembly in 2017 would be the primary focus for international recognition of the anniversary year. On 31 October itself, multiple observances would occur in congregations and local settings around the world. It emphasized the important role of the Communion Office (CO) in providing support for worship resources.

The committee asked the CO to continue expanding and updating the summary of local and regional activities, and also to make such information accessible on the LWF Web site. It also asked the General Secretary to confer with a range of ecumenical partners about the meaning of 2017 in their own self-understandings and to make recommendations for ways they could collaborate in planning for 2017.

The committee will continue its work electronically, and will meet again in 2013 to prepare its report to the LWF Council meeting in June that year.

Speaking to *Lutheran World Information* (*LWI*) about the committee's first meeting, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said the LWF had gone "into this first meeting with great excitement and anticipation about the task ahead for the 2017 anniversary commemora-



Committee chairperson Rev. Dr Walter Altmann (Brazil). © WCC/Monica Rodrigues

tions. We have so far identified three marks for the LWF's approach to the anniversary: Lutheran reformation is today a global citizen; we want to remain ecumenically engaged and accountable; and we want to explore what it means to be churches standing under the transforming power of the gospel."

"This committee in its global composition will support us significantly in designing the concrete processes and plans to express these three commitments," he added.

Committee chairperson Rev. Dr Walter Altmann (Brazil), told *LWI* the events surrounding the Reformation anniversary "will only be faithful to the spirit of the Reformation if they do not limit themselves to celebrations, but also offer a chance for a renewed reflection, both purposeful and self-critical, about the meaning of the Reformation yesterday, today and tomorrow."

The planned celebrations and events should reflect the developments of the Reformation in various contexts of the globe, as well as in the ecumenical relations of the churches of the Reformation, said Altmann, who is Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.



Other members of the committee include Ms Colleen E. Cunningham (South Africa), Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny (Hungary), Rev. Dr Cristina Grenholm (Sweden), Mr Warime Guti (Papua New Guinea), National Bishop Susan C. Johnson (Canada),

Ms Mikka McCracken (USA), Rev. Dr Bernd Oberdorfer (Germany), and former Bishop Nicholas Tai (Hong Kong, China).

In addition, Bishop emeritus Eero Huovinen from Finland, Lutheran co-chair of the Lutheran Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, attended the Budapest meeting in order to present the commission's draft text calling for "common commemoration" of 2017.

18 November 2011

Lutherans Are Living Witness, Says LWF President Younan

Hungarian Church Hosts Meeting of Officers

BUDAPEST, Hungary/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutherans offer the world "a communion of hope" in the midst of multiple challenges, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), said during the opening worship of the 16-18 November LWF Meeting of Officers in Budapest, Hungary.

Presiding Bishop Péter Gáncs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary led at the service, which was also attended by some 300 students and teaching staff of the Lutheran Secondary School of Deák, one of the 40 educational institutions run by the church.

In his sermon titled "Christ – the Hope of the World," Younan reflected on Ephesians 1:15-23. He spoke about the legacy of the 1984 LWF Seventh Assembly, the first to meet in Eastern Europe, which also gathered under that theme.

Younan noted particularly the witness of Hungary's Lutheran community,

which he said had been "tested under fire" by two world wars, communism and communist repression. "These were difficult times and yet your faith persisted. You never gave up. Together your churches continued to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ," he stated.

When the LWF's highest governing body met 27 years ago, Hungary was under communist rule, South Africa under apartheid and the marginalization of women in church and society was being recognized.

Younan noted that the Assembly took action on these issues, offering hope to the world. It met for the first time behind the "Iron Curtain," two South African churches were suspended for failing to end racial division in their churches and the LWF resolved that the ratio of male and female delegates to future Assemblies would be equal.

This was also the Assembly in which the LWF took the decisive step

of becoming a communion of churches. "The Assembly here voted that all the member churches should be in 'altar and pulpit fellowship.' This commitment has been central to LWF's ongoing journey as a communion. From then on, no church could become a member of the LWF without entering into communion with all the other member churches," the president noted.

Younan said the Hungarian Lutheran church embodies characteristics which provide an example for LWF member churches throughout the world. "You are a living witness to the world today. In a world of individualism, you are community-minded; in a world of extremism, religious wars and fanaticism, you seek moderation; you avoid extremes; you are resolute but ready for compromise, yet never at the expense of the Gospel," Younan said.

"In our situation today, we look back to 1984, to Budapest and the LWF Assembly, and we are encouraged. 'Christ—Hope of the World.' This is the Budapest legacy: a message of hope in the midst of challenges," he concluded.

The LWF Meeting of Officers (previously the Executive Committee) convenes twice annually. It comprises the President, the Chairperson of the Finance Committee, seven regional Vice-Presidents and the chairpersons of the Council Committees.

Its agenda included discussion of a proposal for the structure of the LWF Communion Office presented by LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge. In attendance also were LWF Cabinet members and other secretariat staff.

17 November 2011



LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan speaks the benediction during the opening worship of the November 2011 Meeting of Officers. © ELCH/Zsuzsanna Bolla

Lutheran World Information

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Lutheran Women and Men Team Up to Strategize on Gender Justice

Theological and Ecclesiological Implications Discussed at Poland Meeting

KRAKOW, Poland/GENEVA (LWI) – Gender justice and women's empowerment in Europe came under scrutiny when 30 Lutheran women and men leaders from 14 European countries gathered in Krakow, Poland, 7-10 November.

The Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk, together with the European Women Regional Coordinators' Network, organized the meeting—held in the context of the LWF Strategy 2012-2017 which names gender justice as a crosscutting priority—to develop the use of gender as a theological tool in the churches.

Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt, WICAS secretary, said that while in some areas there is an advance in achieving gender parity, in other contexts there is still a need for gender analysis to be recognized as a legitimate tool.

"On the one hand, there is fear and insecurity about women's leadership and feminist approaches to theology and practice. On the other hand, though, gender is too often understood as only being connected to and concerned with women's issues," she noted.

"A comprehensive approach concerning the empowerment of women and gender justice will provide opportunities for sharing practices, challenges and opportunities to come to a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both women and men in church and society," Neuenfeldt added.

The WICAS desk has throughout the global Lutheran communion in recent years conducted a program on gender and power. These regional reflections were published in the document, "It will not be so among you! A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power."



Agnieszka Godfrejow-Tranogorska, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, explains proposals for a WICAS network in the Central Eastern Europe region. © Thomas Schollas

In 2009, the LWF Council voted to receive the document and encouraged member churches to participate in formulating a comprehensive LWF gender policy. The Krakow meeting was one of the regional gatherings that will feed that process.

Participants discussed gender justice and women's empowerment issues as they relate to their Central Eastern European, Central Western European and Nordic contexts, and designed strategies for a regional coordination network for the continent that is to function from 2012-2017.

Areas defined as priorities in the work of the women's network include developing resources and methodologies to build women's self confidence in healed and reconciled relationships, and deepening biblical hermeneutics and theological foundations based on women's experiences in leadership in lay and ordained ministries.

Other areas identified are to collect stories and art projects on women during the Reformation era and today; to continue discussion on platforms and policies for and structural implications of working with gender justice and women empowerment; and to involve different actors in the network, including young women, men and theologians.

Participants highlighted the rich learning process and friendship experienced during the seminar, which was hosted by LWF member church, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland.

"It will not be so among you! A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power" is available in PDF format in English, French, German and Spanish at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/it-will-not-be-so-among-you.html

16 November 2011

More LWI News at www.lutheranworld.org/lwf



Lutheran Bishop Calls for Calm after Post-Election Standoff

Reaching Out to Keep Country Unified

MONROVIA, Liberia/GENEVA (LWI) – Liberian Lutheran Bishop Sumoward E. Harris appealed for calm in his country, following a presidential runoff on 8 November in which Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the incumbent, was the only candidate.

Most parts of the country have been calm, according to Harris, except for a few opposition areas in the capital, Monrovia. Two people reportedly died after shots were fired during an opposition protest in the city, a day ahead of the second round of voting.

With the sporadic violence, Harris said the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) was passing messages of urgency that calm must prevail, while announcing their availability to support an all inclusive peace dialogue. In their latest action, the leaders were reaching out to the opposition urging them to accept the election outcome.

"We are seeking urgently to meet with the aggrieved parties. We want to urge them to join in the reconciliation process. This is a process in which we are asking them to participate with open minds," Harris told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*.

In the first round of the 11 October general election, Sirleaf, running under the Unity Party, led 16 other

presidential candidates and won with 44.7 percent of the ballots cast, still less than the required majority for an outright win. The opposition party Congress for Democratic Change boycotted the runoff, in which the incumbent received over 90 percent of the votes.

Responsible Citizenship

Prior to the elections, the LCL bishop preached a series of homilies on "Responsible Citizens Making Responsible Decisions" in St Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia. The church was the site of the worst recorded massacre of that country's civil war where on 29 July 1990 more than 600 unarmed civilians were killed by then government troops.

At a 28 September news conference, Harris recalled that his church was one of the worst affected institutions during the 1989-2003 civil war in the West African nation. An estimated 250,000 people died, hundreds of thousands were displaced, and property and infrastructure was destroyed.

Most of the LCL's institutions and churches, including the Curran Lutheran Hospital in Zorzor and

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the Lutheran Training Institute in Salayea, were burned twice. Zorzor Lutheran School was also destroyed. Most of the churches were burned along with parsonages, Harris recalled.

"That is the reason why as your bishop, I am passionate about good governance, about making the right choice, about making the right decisions, about all the registered voters going out to vote, about a free, fair and transparent national electoral process and about violence-free elections," said the LCL leader who is an executive member of the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia.

Encouraging, Working and Praying

Local and international observer groups, including representatives of church and other religious organizations, accepted the recent election as transparent, free, fair and credible.

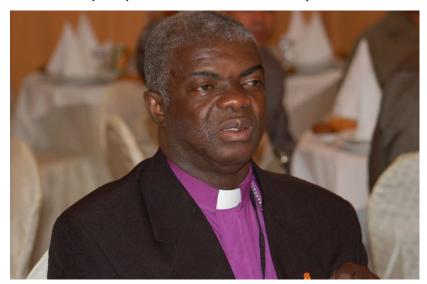
"We continue to intervene. We are putting positive pressure on the CDC to accept the results of the election. We are doing everything possible and encouraging, working and praying that the country will remain unified."

Sirleaf became Liberia's president following the 2005 elections, which was preceded by a United Nationsbrokered peace process. The peace has held since but the Lutheran bishop is concerned that the current standoff could trigger renewed violence.

Africa's only elected female president, Sirleaf was one of the three women, including LCL peace activist Leymah Gbowee, who in October shared the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

(With contributions from the Lutheran Church in Liberia and LWI correspondent Fredrick Nzwili.)

24 November 2011



Liberian Bishop Sumoward E. Harris © LWF/Fredrick Nzwili



Dadaab Humanitarian Work Curtailed, But Continues, Says LWF

UN Agency Underlines Need for Continued Partnership

DADAAB, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI) — The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will continue with its humanitarian work at the world's biggest refugee camp despite recent security threats in the Horn of Africa region, said the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) director Rev. Eberhard Hitzler.

The Dadaab camp in Kenya's northeastern province is now 20 years old and the LWF is responsible for housing and security for some 460,000 refugees mainly from Somalia seeking refuge from conflict and famine. Recent security threats on Kenya are hampering humanitarian response.

Hitzler said on 8 November: "In DWS we have not yet the impression that the current situation in Dadaab constitutes a serious crisis—despite the security risks increasing for the organization; so we should set up a team to respond to it." He also said that in many areas where the LWF conducts its humanitarian work security risks exist.

Raouf Mazou, deputy director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) desk for East and Horn of Africa, Chad and Sudan, told the LWF that if the aid organizations leave Dadaab "there will be a catastrophe." He said, "Thinking ahead we think that the sittion. The situation might remain the same until early in 2012, Mazou added.

Lennart Hernander, LWF Kenya-Djibouti country representative, confirmed three new incidents, while explaining that work had been curtailed for the present.

Travel by Road

Hernander said, "On Friday [4 November], a tourist vehicle was attacked in Shaba National Park during a game drive. At least one tourist was injured and the driver was killed. The authorities have said that they do not believe this incident is related to the Al-Shabaab threat on Kenyan tourism, and no further information has been given about the likely motive."

The following day, a convoy between Hagadera refugee camp and Dadaab town was targeted by a remotely controlled improvised explosive device. The explosion was targeting the escort vehicle, which was damaged, but police officers in the vehicle were not hurt.

"An LWF vehicle was in the convoy but not damaged and all staff members are safe," said Hernander.

Following the recent attack on the church compound, the use of the road between Garissa and Dadaab was suspended and most agencies decided to ban travel by road to and from Dadaab until further notice.

"That means all transport and travel is now done by air from Nairobi directly to Dadaab," said Hernader.

Another immediate consequence is that no external visitors, unless critically needed for the implementation of relief activities, would be allowed to the camps.

Hitzler explained that the LWF currently has security concerns similar to Dadaab in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where election-eering was taking place, and in Sudan "with various incidents around us."



New arrivals enter the registration area at Ifo refugee camp in Dadaab. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst

In mid-October, Kenyan forces launched a military operation against the Al-Shabaab militants inside Somalia in an effort to secure its borders. There is a high security alert in the country, as the Muslim extremist group threatens counter attacks on Kenya for implicating the group in recent abductions of citizens, tourists and foreign aid workers. On 5 November, a grenade attack on a church compound in Garissa, some 100 kilometers south of the Dadaab camp, left two people dead.

uation is going to be unstable for some time, especially due to the deployment of Kenyan troops in Somalia."

One of the measures being put into place, said Mazou, is the deployment of 100 Kenyan police to the Kambioos camp at Dadaab, one of the newest, where the LWF is in charge of accommodation and security.

He said UNHCR is not planning to significantly reduce staff at Dadaab and that the refugee agency wants to continue working with partners such as the LWF, sharing important informa-



"Fortunately, nothing serious has happened, so far," said Hitzler. "Security concerns of a different character, but still worrying, occur in Colombia and Central America."

Michael Hyden, LWF program officer for Kenya/Sudan and emergency officer for the African region, explained that the LWF has about 140 staff in Dadaab–55 who are currently on duty and about 85 who are on leave or not able to work there at the moment.

"DWS will remain, but the number of staff will be lower," said Hyden.

The LWF has designated six staff positions as crucial for all the camps it manages at Dadaab—camp manager; field, security and information officers; a senior social worker and planner.

"We have been assessing whether it is safer to keep staff in the camps overnight or to move them between Dadaab and the camps," said Hyden.

Constant preparedness will be maintained for both options, "and also for keeping food etc. in the camps if staff based there cannot return to Dadaab. We are also working on fencing, increasing the number of guards around our compounds. We will also get metal detectors to screen all persons moving in and out of the compounds."

Fencing

Due to fears that a grenade could be thrown over the fence into the compound, fencing is to be improved and the finalization of staff housing is a priority.

These measures are likely to remain in place till January, "unless the situation changes and we can scale up again," Hyden said.

Concerning education, he explained that teachers had been scheduled to go on leave soon. "But now students are sitting for the national primary and secondary school exams so we plan to finalize that and then send the teachers home." Public schools begin their first term in January.

He noted that surveying might not be done anymore or anytime soon in Dadaab and that social work activity had been curtailed. When the situation improves, staff operations can be increased again, he said.

Trust, Cooperation

A UNHCR representative in Dadaab, Bettina Schulte, speaking after a meeting of Camp Peace and Security Teams and Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), reiterated what Mazou said. One PTA member had told the group, "We are sorry about the developments, but 90 percent of us are good, you should not be afraid of coming to us. We want you to trust us; don't leave; we want to cooperate with you and the government."

Another PTA member remarked, "You say you do life-saving work. But if the health posts are not open, where shall we go when we are sick? We need the agencies to return," while a refugee leader said, "We no longer can sleep. If we see staff leaving, we wonder how safe it is for us to stay. The difference is that we have no home to go to."

This was reiterated by Abdi, a youth leader from the Dadaab refugee camps: "As youth, we feel insecure in Dadaab in the current situation. There is nowhere to go, nowhere safe to stay. But we stand still to fight and change the situation in our community for a better living environment for all."

9 November 2011

LWF World Service and NCA Sign Agreement on Emergency Cooperation

Two Biggest Global Implementers of ACT Inspired by Tunisian Work

GENEVA (LWI) – The two biggest global implementers in the ACT Alliance, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in emergencies.

The director of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS), Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, said, "A pilot program finished recently in Tunisia in response to the Libya crisis, in which the LWF provided the umbrella for a joint ACT Alliance program and NCA, played a crucial part in our agreement."

After the agreement's signing on10 November, Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, DWS global program coordinator and leader of the humanitarian emergency response, said, "Today the DWS and NCA management teams met here in Geneva to discuss our future joint cooperation."

Both organizations, he noted, "are committed to start a new phase of partnership, based on mutual trust and accountability, and [to] overcome possible gaps from the past cooperation."

De Faria said NCA and the LWF agreed "to hold regular coordination meetings to promote decisive, intentional and effective cooperation at all levels."

The MoU addresses global cooperation in humanitarian action. "The foundation for collaboration will be

based on geographic areas of common interest, sectoral priorities and complementarities, and humanitarian need," says the agreement.

A key part of the MoU is that the LWF and NCA will promote accountability and strict adherence to the ACT Code of Conduct regarding abuse of power and sexual exploitation.

De Faria said, "This is one of the elements of the DWS Strategy for Emergency Response regarding partnership with the major ACT global members."

Eivind Aalborg, acting director of international cooperation at NCA, said, "For NCA this MoU is the basis for the development of stronger cooperation within the ACT Alliance





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DWS Director Rev. Eberhard Hitzler (left) and NCA Acting Director of International Programs Eivind Aalborg commit their organizations to collaboration in humanitarian response worldwide. © LWF/R. Schlott

where NCA's main contribution in humanitarian responses will be water, sanitation and hygiene promotion." He said the joint program implemented along with the LWF and the Church of Sweden in Tunisia was

a positive development in the ACT Alliance's response to emergencies. It highlighted how the members' specialized services can more efficiently serve an affected population than if each organization operated on its own.

"NCA believes that this is a model for future collaboration and the LWF will be an important partner for NCA in this type of operation," said Aalborg.

The LWF is a founding member of ACT, a global alliance of churches and their related organizations. They work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development. DWS, the LWF's humanitarian relief arm, works in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

15 November 2011

LWF Urges Humanitarian Assistance without Conditions

Salvadoran Bishop Seeks Conversion of World Bank Loan into a Grant

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has expressed "deep concern" regarding the practice of responding to humanitarian emergencies with conditional loans that exacerbate poverty and increase national debt burdens.

In a 23 November statement, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge called upon the World Bank and the United Nations and its related agencies to respect humanitarian space and provide unconditional grants that are "based on justice, respect for human rights and care for the creation."

Referring to the Tropical Depression 12E which struck Central America in October, Junge points out that the recent announcement by the World Bank of a USD 50 million loan to El Salvador to deal with the storm's aftermath only goes to increase "the country's indebtedness at this time [and] is no solution for the poor."

The Salvadoran government estimates that four percent of its GDP has been lost following the storm that resulted in damages of up to USD 840 million.

The LWF general secretary called for reform and democratization of financial systems, "so that that the funding of humanitarian aid and of climate change adaptation and mitigation averts additional vulnerability and long-term effects" from already severely affected populations.

The Salvadoran Lutheran Church (SLC) reiterated the LWF's call for unconditional assistance, urging that the World Bank loan to the Central American country be converted to a non-repayable contribution for humanitarian assistance in order not to worsen the country's economic vulnerability.

In a 23 November letter seeking greater advocacy on this issue, SLC Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto underlined, "It is our duty to say that any contribution that means new indebtedness under apparent soft conditions will lead to the same negative results as in the past and far from improving conditions will result in exacerbating this vulnerability.

"It is also vitally important to put special emphasis on the eradication of the causes of poverty and inequality through a model of economic justice and transparent practices, including auditing and cancelling of illegitimate debt," wrote Gómez in the letter addressed to the UN, LWF, World Council of Churches and Latin America Council of Churches.

The LWF general secretary emphasized that recurring disasters are partly due to climate change, whose consequences increasingly affect "the vulnerable communities who have contributed the least to global greenhouse gas emissions."

The prospect of further indebtedness in the Central American region would demand that governments transform their economic and social policies to serve the rights of people and preserve the natural environment, without tying budgets to debt servicing, Junge concluded.

The full text of the LWF statement can be found at www.luther-anworld.org/lwf/index.php/humanitarian-aid-without-conditions.html

24 November 2011



Somali Women Say Violence Often Follows Them to Dadaab

LWF Trains Women as Community Police to Offer Protection

DADAAB, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI) – It's a working day like any other at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) office in Kenya's Ifo refugee camp.

Still it's not yet lunchtime and at least one woman has arrived telling a harrowing story, pleading with the staff for help. Today, Fatima sits in the sun, gesturing angrily while she tells her story to a fellow Somali and LWF social worker, Hadija.

Wendy, an information officer with the LWF, a member of the Act Alliance, says that the main security threat in the old camps is gender-based violence, robbery and violence between rival tribal groups.

Gender-based violence is any form of violence that targets women. Due to the stigma attached to victims of rape and other forms of gender-based violence, it is difficult to know how prevalent it is in this camp for those fleeing from violence and famine in Somalia.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says that, "Within the host community at the border village of Liboi, the health center reports seeing cases of sexual violence amongst newly arrived Somali refugees."

Although LWF social workers do their best to document and follow up on cases, there are a number of obstacles to ensuring that women are protected.

"Within this type of community... women are mainly property and since they are property, it means that they have to submit to the community," says Wendy in noting that community structures do not properly protect women and children. "If they don't do what the community asks of them, they become outcasts."

Fatima [name has been changed] told of how she had received death threats from both her former husband and her brother. When she became pregnant, her then-husband refused to take responsibility for the child and divorced her, saying the child was not his.



Refugee woman construct a makeshift dwelling at Ifo camp in Dadaab. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst

Even though the local community leader has told Fatima's husband he must take care of the child, he claims it is not his.

She says her brother, who still lives in Somalia, has threatened to kill her to save the family honor. Because of the pervasive tribal system within the Somali community in Kenya, Fatima fears for her safety, even in Dadaab.

There is a chance that Fatima and her four-year-old daughter can be resettled in another country but the application process usually takes years. For her, it is a race against time. She hopes desperately her application will be successful before her ex-husband or brother follows through with their threats.

Wendy says, "We are living in a camp where a lot of structures are not in place. The social structure is broken. The governance structure is broken. Women are beaten up and their children are also beaten up sometimes."

This means that for many women fleeing Somalia, their problems do not end once they reach Kenya. "In the middle of all this, the woman suffers a lot," says Wendy.

Offering Protection

There are a number of processes that deal with the problem—some are community-based and others are implemented by non-government organizations (NGOs) such as the LWF which work in the camps.

Community-based interventions include a council of elders to whom women can take their cases.

These councils, comprising mostly men, try to protect the women but are unable to enforce their decisions. There are also families within the community who voluntarily accept to discreetly host a woman or girl in need of physical protection.

Responses from a number of NGOs include psychosocial care and the use of a protocol developed for treating rape cases. This includes a physical examination, treatment and care for injury.

The LWF has trained women in their security, community peace and safety teams. They patrol the camps and work closely with the police trying to ensure that the refugees are safe and secure. In the extension of Ifo camp where 17,000 families will be settled by November, 30 members



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are currently being trained in a code of conduct for human rights and child protection.

A transit center within one of the camps can accommodate women and children who are victims of violence who require emergency accommodation but many women say that they do not feel safe there.

For LWF workers like Wendy, it's hard not to be touched by what she sees.

"I get affected by a lot of things that affect the women in this camp and children because they are just like me. They are just human beings like me," she remarks. "I imagine if I was being beaten up and I was suffering and I went to the closest system

available to help and I was unable to get help. I'd lose my sense of life."

Fatima was wearing a ring with the word "love" on it. During her interview at the LWF office, Fatima she was told that her ring said "love."

(Written for LWI by Melany Markham in Dadaab, Kenya)

1 November 2011

FEATURE: The Pastor Was Scared, He Turned Her Away

Fighting the Spread of HIV with Love and Tolerance

SUKAMAKMUR, Indonesia/GENEVA (LWI) – With her younger son dead and her husband's health deteriorating from AIDS, Manjur turned to her local pastor for support.

But instead of lending a helping hand to the HIV positive woman, the pastor asked her to stay away from the church because he was scared of HIV and AIDS.

This drove the woman from her church, one of the hundreds there, accounting for the 15 million Christians in the North Sumatra province of Indonesia.

"I found solace and support in the new church," said Manjur, who lost her husband to AIDS in 2010.

This stark testimony illustrates the stigma that AIDS carries in Indonesian church and society.

The widow shared her testimony during consultations for youth and

church leaders organized by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its National Committee in Indonesia on "Embracing Life: Our Common Responsibility."

Prevention and "breaking the silence" on HIV and AIDS were major topics at the November meetings at Sukamakmur in North Sumatra province, to which participants from other churches and organizations were also invited.

According to the United Nations AIDS body, UNAIDS, the HIV epidemic in Indonesia is among the fastest growing in Asia with predictions that infections could climb from 330,000 in 2009 to 500,000 by 2014 without more prevention programs.

Speakers at the meetings in Indonesia included Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika, coordinator of the HIV and AIDS desk at the LWF, who

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emphasized the need to focus on the stigma and discrimination in the fight against the global epidemic.

"With love you can fight the spread of HIV and AIDS," said Munyika in a sermon delivered at the Indonesian Christian Church at Sunggal, an industrial suburb of Medan.

"The gospel calls for love for the sick and the needy. We need to have the same attitude towards the HIV infected. We should welcome them into our midst," Munyika urged.

He pointed out that there have even been instances of theologians condemning those infected by HIV as sinners. "With such an attitude, you will only worsen the AIDS situation," he cautioned.

"This is a very powerful message. It is time we speak this language of love to those affected by AIDS," remarked R. Simanjuntak, one of the half a dozen elders who assisted in the service at the Lutheran church.

"There is a lot of fear about AIDS in the people. They need to be educated," said the elder from the industrial neighborhood of Sunggal, 15 kilometers from downtown Medan, where most of the residents are migrant laborers.

Suriati Simanjuntak, a school teacher in the area, said that "this message of love is very timely. Due to fear, many of us are scared of them."

There are signs this message is getting through. Following the November consultations, the LWF member churches in Indonesia committed themselves to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around HIV and AIDS.



Medan Plus staff and care and support workers. © LWF/Anto Akkara



Care and Support

Meanwhile Manjur receives support from Medan Plus, a local nongovernmental organization which runs the largest advocacy, care and rehabilitation program on HIV and AIDS in North Sumatra.

Started in 2003 by a peer group of people living with HIV, its major focus areas include community support and harm reduction. The Lutheran churches are collaborating with the organization in building up their AIDS response.

"The time has come in the battle against AIDS to say as churches that

we will no longer tolerate any deaths from AIDS, and we will no longer tolerate any discrimination against those infected and affected," said Munyika, reflecting on the theme of the 2011 World AIDS Day (WAD).

"When our churches become 'welcoming and embracing spaces' for those who are stigmatized because of AIDS, this will encourage others to get tested, receive the necessary medication, care and support, and live long and productive lives," noted Munyika.

WAD is observed on 1 December. This year's theme "Getting to Zero," focused on the goals of zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS related deaths.

According to UNAIDS, new HIV infections and AIDS related deaths continue to fall due to improved access to treatment and to changes in sexual behavior. Some 2.7 million people were newly infected with HIV in 2010–a reduction of 21 percent since 1997. There are more than 33 million people worldwide living with HIV, out of whom 68 percent (22.5 million) are in sub-Saharan Africa.

(By LWI correspondent Anto Ak-kara)

25 November 2011

Soweto Lutherans "Passionate" About AIDS Work Despite Stigmatization

Theology and Mission Must Include AIDS, Says South African Bishop

SOWETO, South Africa/GENEVA (LWI)

 Health care workers at a Lutheran program say the specter of HIV and AIDS stigmatization still thrives in Soweto, a large city that started as a string of black townships near white Johannesburg in the days of apartheid.

In Soweto's Jabavu suburb, a group of young South Africans and people from Europe and North America work at the Diakonia AIDS Ministry (DAM), a program launched and supported by churches in The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

They spoke of passion for their work which includes dispatching support staff to visit people and families affected by AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases at both their homes and in the hospitals.

The observance of World AIDS Day on 1 December has a special significance in South Africa. According to the United Nations agency dealing with the pandemic, UNAIDS, the country has the highest number of people living with HIV in the world.

Bishop Ndanganane P. Phaswana, who heads the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) and is a founding member of DAM, told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, "With 5.6 million people living

with this virus [in South Africa], one can't speak of theology and mission here without discussing this pandemic."

Many people, added the LWF Council member, "do not know their status."

DAM executive director, Lutheran pastor Rev. Selby Mugivhi, said, "In the church, we look to

the healing and restoration of people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS and their communities. We seek to lead people to acceptance and support of those living with or affected by [the disease]."

Willam Tshoke from Krugersdorp works for the South African Council of Churches (SACC) as an HIV and AIDS facilitator through DAM in churches throughout the industrial Gauteng province. He said, "DAM is Lutheran run, but it is ecumenical. It works for everybody."

A number of the health care workers at DAM are HIV positive. They tell patients who they visit at homes or in hospitals openly about their status in order to persuade



pastor Rev. Selby Rev. Selby Mugivhi, executive director of the Mugivhi, said, "In Diakonia AIDS Ministry. © LWF Peter Kenny

them not to stigmatize carriers of the disease in their own families.

Part of Our Life

An estimated 310,000 South Africans died of AIDS in 2009. HIV prevalence is 17.8 percent among those aged 15-49, with some age groups

being particularly affected: almost one in three women aged 25-29 and over a quarter of men aged 30-34 are living with the virus.

"HIV is part of our life. We breathe it and live with it in every aspect of our lives. It is not only our concern, but that of all spheres of our society. The Church needs to address the issue not just on Sundays, but constantly, as it affects all in it," remarked Ms Colleen E. Cunningham of the Moravian Church in South Africa, who serves on the LWF Council and its Meeting of Officers.

In 2010, South African President Jacob Zuma's administration changed the policies of his predecessor Thabo Mbeki, and launched a major HIV counseling and testing





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Ancillary nurses Evelyn Saomatse (left) and Leratamang Mahlake get ready to head out for home visits to HIV and AIDS patients. © LWF/Peter Kenny

campaign, which DAM workers said has made their work easier.

Two caretakers of orphans, working as ancillary nurses, spoke of how they seek to support families which have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Evelyn Saomatse said the spiritual counseling they receive through pastor Mugivhi helps them to deal with the work tension they endure. "We need to be happy in our work. This helps us to give to those who may have no one to care for them. It's a very stressful environment."

"As caregivers, we're able to learn about HIV and AIDS from this job. When we impart information on medication and how to use it, we feel good. Patients need to know their treatment regimen. Some want to sell their medication and many are in denial," noted Leratamang Mahlake.

Ntombikayise Ngakane, a 20-year-old social worker auxiliary seconded by the SACC to do practical work said, "DAM is more than an organization; we are a family. People know each other's backgrounds."

She concurred with two other auxiliaries, Busisiwe Molalugi, 20, and Mapula Phatshwane, 24, both from Soweto, noting, "The DAM staff connect so well with their patients on a personal basis. They love what they do. You can see the joy when they talk about their patients."

Speaking of the challenges they face, Ngakane said, "We want to revamp people's mind-sets. In Soweto most of the youth are into partying or alcohol and stuff like that."

There are problems like teen pregnancies that add to it. "Because we are the youth, we can empower [fellow youth]," Phatshwane added.

But the social workers also have to deal with the way older people think. "The older ones concentrate too much on traditional ways. They don't take the medical things into consideration."

Getting to Zero

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, visiting the DAM program during a regional conference for churches in Africa earlier this year, said, "I'm impressed with the passion of the people working on this program, but I was concerned to note workers saying that stigmatization is still such an impediment in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

"The global AIDS campaign 'Getting to Zero' especially calls upon our churches to work toward zero discrimination and zero stigma in the fight against AIDS," said Junge, reflecting on the theme for this year's World AIDS Day (1 December).

The general secretary pointed out that the LWF Strategy 2012-2017 underlines HIV and AIDS as one of the priority themes for global advocacy. "Our churches are called to increasingly greater involvement in raising awareness, advocating for better care and treatment and in tending to the spiritual and psychological well being of people living with HIV and AIDS and those affected by it," he said.

The LWF handbook *Grace*, *Care and Justice*, now available in several languages, "has proved to be a valuable resource for churches, congregations and individuals seeking to respond to the challenge of HIV and AIDS as a reflection of their baptismal vocation," Junge added.

(Written for LWI by Peter Kenny)

Download "Grace, Care and Justice," the LWF handbook for HIV and AIDS work,

at: www.lutheranworld.org/ lwf/index.php/resources/ lwf-handbook-for-hiv-and-aidswork

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