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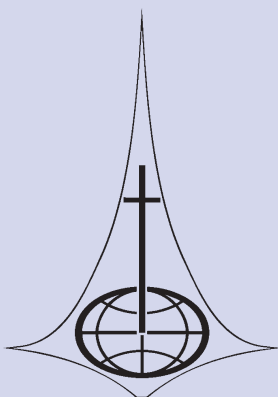
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Michael Abu Ghazaleh is one proud principal. "The School of Hope provides top-quality education to all students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or ability to pay tuition fees," he says of the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah, one of the top five in the West Bank...



Preparing Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Desert for Harsh Winter Months



Refugees at the Za'atri camp in northern Jordan where LWF assistance prioritizes children with special needs and adults with disabilities. © LWF/R. Schlott

LWF Urges Scaling Up of Aid Efforts for Basic Dignity

ZA'ATRI, Jordan/GENEVA (LWI) – Winter is coming. And even though the late September sky offers no shade from the scorching sun and the drifting dust is a merciless reminder of the Jordanian desert, the months to come mean drastic changes. The 32 degrees Celcius will rapidly drop to single digits below zero at night, and the dust will turn into mud on rainy days.

Za'atri camp in northern Jordan is 70 kilometers from the Syrian border. The number of Syrians fleeing the intensifying conflict at home into neighboring countries has been increasing dramatically over the past three months. By late September the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had registered 94,716 people in Jordan, then hosting the highest numbers, followed by Turkey and Lebanon.

The Jordanian government gave the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), the largest non-governmental organization (NGO) in the country, the mandate to manage the camp. This is a difficult and challenging

task, which, according to the JHCO, depends on international support.

Providing for Children

"We have nothing but the clothes we wore when we fled for our lives," says Mashur, glancing with worried eyes at his two boys. "And I have nothing to offer my children when the cold is here." The carpenter from southern Syria says he fled to Za'atri camp one and a half months ago, escaping the military that was threatening to kill him. "We had to leave everything for absolutely nothing."

In between the row of heavy trucks entering the camp to supply 1 million liters of water per day, hundreds of tents, prefab containers and machinery, a dozen children are trying to play football. Many of them are dressed in light clothes, few have shoes.

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Partnership with EU Has Upheld the Rights of the Poor

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) expressed gratitude to the European Union (EU) for a long standing partnership that upholds values, which support human dignity and the rights of the poor and oppressed people in society.

In a statement congratulating the EU for being awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said “the LWF and its member churches have greatly benefited from the EU and its work.”

On 12 October the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced the EU as the winner of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize, noting that for over six decades it had contributed to peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.

Junge underlined that peace in the European region “was a tremendous achievement for which the LWF is profoundly grateful.” He recalled the beginnings of the LWF’s work at the end of World War II, which included service to displaced persons mainly in Europe and assisting in the reconstruction of

the continent. During the Cold War that followed, the LWF struggled to build bridges across Europe and to maintain the communion between churches living in greatly different contexts.

His statement cited the urgent challenges confronting Europe including the economic crisis, unacceptably high levels of unemployment—especially among youth—and the growing wealth gaps between individuals, countries in the region and elsewhere in the world. “We give thanks that in dealing with these issues, Europe is no longer under the shadow of war, no longer living in fear,” Junge added.

The general secretary underlined the need to continue working for peace as an everyday task within communities, nations and with the creation.

The full text of the LWF statement is available at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/LWF-Statement-Nobel-Peace-Prize-2012.pdf

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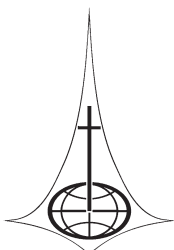
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Lutherans Launch Peace-Building Efforts in Assam

Interfaith Seminars to Equip Leaders with Conflict Transformation Skills

GENEVA (LWI) – Member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) are spearheading efforts to restore peace between ethnic communities in Assam, India, following violence that left nearly 80 dead and forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes.

The peace process, which will continue until December 2013, includes a study of the underlying causes of the conflict, bringing leading figures from both communities together in a mediation process.

“Our village was very peaceful. We have been living with the Muslim brothers and sisters as neighbors,” said Hira Mosahary, 39, a member of the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC) congregation in Goladangi. She and her family lost their home when their village was attacked on 21 July.

NELC Bishop Emeritus Nityananda Borgoary added: “The Muslims and the Bodos have lived together for years and no one even imagined this [communal clash] would happen.”

In response, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI), the national body of Lutheran churches, is coordinating a comprehensive peace process through NELC and the Inter-Church Peace Mission (ICPM).

Through an appeal of ACT Alliance, the global network of churches responding to emergencies worldwide, Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT) was coordinating the of supply food, clothing and shelter to thousands of the most vulnerable displaced families.

In early August church leaders led a peace mission to relief camps in Chirang and Kokrajhar, where displaced Bodos and Muslims have been staying since the flare-up of violence, expressing solidarity with the residents and assuring them of their prayers.



Villagers seek refuge in relief camps following ethnic violence in Chirang district in India's northeastern state of Assam. © Reuters, courtesy Trust.org - AlertNet

Violence erupted between the ethnic Bodo community and migrant Muslims in Assam after four youths were killed in July. While there have been some longstanding issues between the groups, they have mostly lived side-by-side peacefully and the recent deadly clashes took many villagers by surprise.

Pluralistic Society

There will be efforts to convince members of the Bodos community to return to their homes, and interfaith seminars on peace and conflict to facilitate awareness around the realities of living in a pluralistic society.

“Peacemaking initiatives, conflict transformation and crisis management [are] new to the church leaders of lower Assam,” said Dhojen Borgoary, general secretary of the Bodo Christian Council.

“Church leaders need to be trained in this regard so that they can give better input to manage this type of crisis and to interpret God’s love into action.”

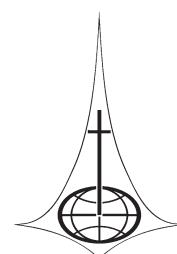
Those such as Mosahary who were forced to seek refuge in the relief camps underline the need for such efforts.

“I [see] the village people in pain, especially the children and old people, who [are] struggling to adjust to the relief camps. We need security and peace, which will help us to go back to our village, to restore our lives,” she said.

In the two-pronged effort, the UELCI collaborates with NELC and LWSIT—an associate program of the LWF Department for World Service—and ICPM to distribute food, clothing, hygiene kits, sleeping mats and other basic household items to 2,500 families in camps in Bongaigaon, Gossaigaon and Kokrajhar.

“Both Bodo and Muslim communities are affected [by the] Assam ethnic violence situation and in both the camps people are waiting to receive the food and non-food items [to meet] their daily needs,” noted Jacob Tanty, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States who is coordinating the relief response on behalf of UELCI.

UELCI executive secretary Rev. Dr Augustine Jeyakumar appealed to LWF member churches to pray for the restoration of peace and to contribute towards the relief effort to help save lives.



Latin American and Caribbean Lutherans Launch HIV Network

Quest for Dignity and Justice, an Expression of God's Unconditional Love

BOGOTÁ, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI)

– The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean launched an HIV and AIDS network in the region utilizing biblical analysis to affirm this prophetic ministry.

“When a part of the body of Christ suffers, the whole body suffers. In a well-connected and held body, the parts help each other,” was the motto of the LWF meeting held in Bogota, Colombia, 11-12 August as a follow-up on recommendations from the region’s 2012 church leadership conference.

Rev. Rocio Morales of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) invited participants to analyze the Scriptures through the lenses of healing and liberation.

“The Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot continue allowing people living with HIV and AIDS to be treated as objects. We must become conscious that they are subjects of history and part of the body of Christ. They should seek their identities in a free, welcoming, and healthy society,” said Morales.

Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, area secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD), said the network was launched after the churches had reflected on the different dimensions of what it means to be part of the body of Christ.

After analyzing their HIV and AIDS ministries, some of the churches in the region redefined and structured their work while others are seeking empowerment in order to preach, serve, and advocate for the rights of all persons.

During the consultation “Transformed to Transform,” held in June 2010 in Lima, Peru, the LWF member churches became aware of the need for mutual enrichment in order to strengthen their work.

The network “is an opportunity to enrich capacity in the region in order to accompany persons and families living with HIV and AIDS, to build awareness, and advocate for justice,” affirmed IELCO Bishop Eduardo Martínez.

The network is the result of long and diverse experiences and ministries of the member churches.

Equal Participation

“We are committed to developing God’s mission promoting equal participation through dynamic relationships. For this purpose, the network will be facilitated in a collegial manner,” added Ros Mary Rincón from IELCO, one of the network facilitators.

to support and strengthen the communion in the region as its members approach the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017.

The network hopes that by 2017 the LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean—each in its own context—would be committed to seek dignity and justice for persons living with or affected by HIV and AIDS as an expression of the unconditional love of God.

“Considering the fact that stigma and discrimination regarding HIV and AIDS persist, the member churches are potential spaces to continue witnessing to God’s grace in a comprehensive manner,” said Cuyatti.

“The LWF will continue to facilitate member churches’ participation

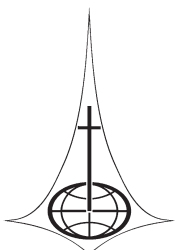


Dr Emilio Mendoza Apaza shares about the development of the HIV and AIDS ministry of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church. © IELCO/L. E. Ramirez

The coordination team also comprises Rev. Kenneth Kross, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname; Rogério Oliveira de Aguiar, Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil; and Rev. Concepción Angel Venegas, Salvadoran Lutheran Church. The group is committed to promoting interaction among churches through various means of communication in order

and engagement in responding to HIV and AIDS, particularly as they concern stigma and marginalization,” noted Rev. Dr Musa Panti Filibus, DMD director.

(Luis Eduardo Ramirez, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, and David Heffel Cela, Evangelical Church of the River Plate (Argentina), contributed to this article.)



LWF President Younan Calls for Syrian-Led Dialogue Process

Appeal for Continued Assistance to People Displaced by Conflict

GENEVA (LWI) – Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, president of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), urged diligence by global political leaders in pursuing a Syrian-led process of dialogue to resolve the current civil conflict, as the influx of refugees into neighboring countries increases.

“It is regrettable that the Syrian conflict is being viewed almost exclusively through the lens of geopolitical concern when the human suffering is so great and so avoidable,” Younan said in an 11 September statement addressed to global political and religious leaders.

The LWF president, who is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), expressed his deep concern for displaced persons “streaming into refugee camps or suffering at the border as countries prepare to welcome them in.”

His statement reiterated the LWF’s commitment in assisting Syrian refugees. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Jordan Hashemite Char-

ity Organization (JHCO) signed in August includes support to the JHCO in providing shelter, psycho-social support, education services and camp management at the Za’atari refugee camp, inside the Jordanian border with Syria.

Younan urged the United Nations and its member states to spare no effort in delivering the appropriate aid to refugees and to those displaced within Syria. Efforts “must not waver” in finding a peaceful and just solution to the conflict.

He called on governments outside “to pursue a Syrian-led process of dialogue and peace-building as diligently as they have pursued military [intervention] and the preservation of their supposed geopolitical interests.” They should “avoid the temptation to manipulate sectarian divisions in pursuit of their interests,” he added.

The ELCJHL bishop expressed support for a September statement on Syria by the World Council of Churches’ Central Committee calling for an end to the violence, encouraging

urgent humanitarian response and a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Younan urged prayers for the wisdom of all political leaders and for the people of Syria, a country that provided refuge for the early Church, and more recently a context for significant Christian-Muslim dialogue, all of which is threatened by the current conflict.

Read Bishop Younan’s statement in its entirety:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Speaking-Out-for-Syria-Statement-LWF-President.pdf

Consult the WCC Statement on Crisis in Syria:

www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/kolympari-2012/report-on-public-issues/iii-statement-on-crisis-in-syria.html

Preparing Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Desert for Harsh Winter Months

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There is very little for them to do and the restlessness often ends up in quarrels and fighting.

Basic Dignity

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a founding member of the ACT Alliance, has recently started offering emergency assistance in Za’atri with the primary aim to provide shelter and clothing for children, as winter now hastily approaches. Here, 52 percent of the refugees are below the age of 18.

Under a memorandum of understanding with the JHCO, the LWF

will provide the refugees with winterized tents, prefab containers and warm garments for 10,000 children. The focus will be broadened in the coming months to include assistance to refugees in organizing community-based groups at the camp.

An LWF delegation comprising LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge visited Za’atri camp on 27 September and witnessed firsthand the conditions there and the humanitarian response supported by the global Lutheran communion.

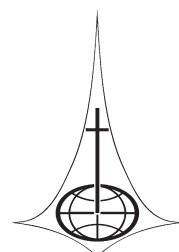
Junge said he was impressed by how the different NGOs are working together. But he noted, the needs

are there and it takes great efforts to overcome the challenges.

“We are facing difficulties and hardship. I see traumatized people that have escaped violence, and how violence is shaping the way people relate to the situation. Fifty two percent of the population here are children, facing a winter soon to come with low temperatures and rain,” he said.

“We will have to scale up our efforts jointly so that people can live in basic dignity,” Junge added.

Others on the delegation included Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, director of the Department for World Service (DWS), the LWF’s humanitarian relief arm; and Rev. Mark Brown, who heads the Jerusalem-based



DWS operations for the Middle East region.

The group's itinerary until 30 September included a visit to the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, and meetings with ecumenical leaders and with the Palestinian Prime Minister Dr Salam Fayyad.

Long Experience in Jordan

The LWF has a long experience in refugee situations and engagement in the region. By the end of 1951, its Jerusalem program, with over 400 employees, was one of the largest employers in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, behind only the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees and the government itself.

When the region experienced drought from 1958 to 1962, the Jordanian government appealed to the LWF to distribute food, especially



LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan (left) and LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge (right) meet Nabeel, one of the children who make up 52 percent of Za'atri's population, during a visit to the camp in late September. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund

flour, to Bedouin communities at risk of starvation. Over a period of three years, nearly 5 million pounds of flour was distributed to more than 179,000 people.

Looking to the end of 2012, the UN plans to assist up to 700,000 Syrian refugees at a total cost of USD 488 million, with the LWF's involve-

ment in Jordan at USD 950,000. It is estimated that Jordan will be hosting 250,000 Syrians by the end of the year. The government puts the current numbers at 180,000, but says not all are in need of protection.

(Written for LWI by Thomas Ekelund in Za'atri, Jordan)

LWF Welcomes Peace Talks in Colombia

General Secretary: Incorporate Principles for Just, Sustainable Peace

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) welcomed the announcement of peace talks in Colombia and urged that the dialogue incorporate principles for a just and sustainable peace.

In a public statement issued on 4 September, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed thanksgiving and hope that the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were entering into peace talks.

The June 2012 LWF Council meeting in Bogotá had been “deeply moved by the challenges and difficulties of people living in poverty in the context of Colombia’s long-standing conflict,” which has forcibly displaced one out of every ten of the nation’s inhabitants, Junge said.

The LWF’s highest governing body in between Assemblies had observed with concern the disproportionate ef-

fect of the violence and social injustice on women, children, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians, he added.

Junge called for the negotiations between the Colombian government and the armed opposition groups “to incorporate the principles for a just and sustainable peace” outlined by the LWF Council at its last meeting.

“Every Colombian citizen needs to have the opportunity to take part in the peace-building process,” Council members had affirmed.

Also, the peace-building process needed to happen “from the highest level to the grassroots, as well as from the grassroots level upwards.”

A change of mindset was crucial as well, stated the Council, proposing that “the imagery of dialogue” replace “the imagery of violence.”

Further, victims should not be excluded for they “play a key part in the dialogue of peace.”

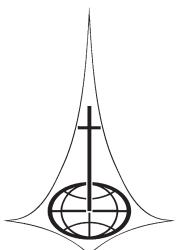
The general secretary underlined the LWF’s commitment to “working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world,” as laid out in the communion of churches’ vision statement. He echoed the Council’s appeal to Lutherans around the world “to pray and engage with and for the churches and people of Colombia.”

Read the full text of the Statement on Peace Talks in Colombia:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/LWF-Statement-on-Peace-Talks-in-Colombia-Sept2012.pdf

Find out more about the Council 2012 Public Statement on Colombia:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/colombia-statement-council2012.html



Asian Churches Seek Ways to Enrich Lutheran Communion

Theologians Explore Lutheran Identity in Context

KOTA KINABALU, Malaysia/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran leaders and scholars from seven Asian countries concluded that the urgent task of establishing a Lutheran identity in Asia should be rooted in the various cultural contexts in which the churches serve.

Meeting in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, under the theme “An Asian Perspective of Lutheranism and Lutheran Identity in a Post-Modern Era,” 20 Lutheran churches and seminary representatives noted that Lutheranism in Asia offers important insights to the worldwide communion as it approaches the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development (DMD) organized the 20-24 August conference at the Sabah Theological Seminary as part of LWF’s aim to support member churches, theological institutions and networks to respond to their respective contexts.

“The Asian contextual understanding of Lutheranism can enrich the LWF Communion by enhancing a better understanding of each other and the different cultures,” said Rev. Dr William Chang, LWF area secretary for Asia.

Theologians delivered papers reflecting the diverse Asian perspectives on applying Lutheran principles that help interpret scripture. Their presentations focused on how the different options for understanding Lutheranism can help churches live faithfully to the gospel in ways that are relevant within their cultural, traditional and societal realities.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice at the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW), urged a reading of cultural contexts before asking: “What is God calling us to do?”

Rev. Dr David Udayakumar of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute at Chennai, India, highlighted the dif-

ficulty of finding a common Lutheran identity in his country because of the diverse local cultures and lack of understanding of the law and the gospel.

Reflecting on Indonesian responses to Lutheranism, Rev. Dr Mangisi Simorangkir of the Protestant Christian Church said that the Batak culture helped provide Lutherans with a communal identity amidst the country’s cultural diversity.

Christian community,” said Bishop Philip Lok of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore.

Participants outlined how the churches and theological schools are creating a Lutheran identity in the region through the training of pastors, study programs and research on Luther, though some highlighted the difficulties presented by cultural differences.



Left to right: Ms Lin Yew Chin (Singapore), Rev. Dr Eto Naozumi (Japan) and Rev. Martin Lalhangiana (Myanmar) during a group discussion at the LWF conference on Lutheran identity in Asia. © LWF/W. Chang

Cultures and Ethnicities

Bishop Dr Lip Tet Thomas Tsen of the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia explored why the church needs the law from Luther’s writing, while Dr Thu En Yu of Sabah Theological Seminary suggested that the use of Confucian ideas of loving kindness and righteousness help Chinese grasp the law and the gospel in Lutheranism.

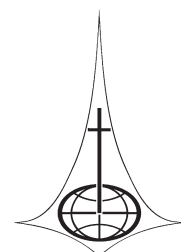
The papers prompted lively debate on the nature of Lutheran identity in Asia and its relevance to the region’s diverse social and economic issues, cultures and ethnicities, and concerning how biblical truths apply in the various contexts.

“There is an urgent need to establish our Lutheran identity in Asia so as to identify who we are, our position and also contribute to the wider

Shirley Cheng of the Southeast Asian Lutheran Communion (SEALUC) Women in Church and Society (WICAS) network said the conference had helped outline a new way for Lutheran women to serve the church.

“Women have a very important role to play and when we fully understand our Lutheran legacy, we can be further empowered to serve at various levels,” she added.

“This conference has ... provided a clear process and destination for the journey,” said Steven Ju of China Lutheran Seminary, Taiwan. For Dr L. B. Siama of Lorrain Theological College in Myanmar: the gathering had “established a very clear process for the way forward.”



LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL MEETING

18-22 September in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Churches Seek Structures That Strengthen Their Prophetic Voice

Sharing of Gifts and Resources Explored in Latin America and Caribbean Context

SANTA CRUZ, Bolivia/GENEVA (LWI) – A regional meeting of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Bolivia’s eastern city of Santa Cruz assessed how churches emerging from contexts of strong social, economic and political crises can be a prophetic voice of hope amidst massive impoverishment, violence and inequality.

“That is why today we have hope, that is why today we struggle with stubbornness,” stated the theme of the 18-22 September gathering of representatives from the 16 LWF member churches in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, and partner organizations.

reviewed challenges and offered recommendations from a five-year program (2007-2011) aimed at developing local capacity and empowering leadership to strengthen churches’ institutional and human resources for witness in their contexts.

Empowering the Leadership

The major objective of the meeting organized by the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) through the LAC and Human Resources Development (HRD) desks was “to concretely define how best churches

various local initiatives and explored the kind of church they want to be in their respective contexts, and how they could best express and witness their faith. Empowering the leadership was an integral component as well as the mutual sharing of gifts and resources between the different churches.

“The IELB is very pleased for the opportunity to welcome the regional meeting and offer its perspectives as a church mainly of indigenous people in this country,” said Rev. Emilio Aslla, head of the IELB.

“Our church can share the talents of teaching, preaching, agronomy, psychology and medicine. And also gifts of music and playing soccer. In the local church, 40 percent are youth and they are coming to the church through the music and soccer games,” he explained.

Aslla said participatory and inclusive processes were crucial in addressing the sustainability of churches in minority contexts in particular. “We need perspectives on the different methodologies that can consolidate and strengthen our commitment and solidarity with the people we serve, and strengthen us as a communion of churches.”

He underlined the need for the region’s churches to work together in affirming their “social commitment to serve our people and improve their living conditions.”

The 22,000-member IELB is organized in 105 congregations served by 26 ordained pastors. It supports community members including women’s groups through projects dealing with education, water supply and food security.

The churches in the LWF LAC region bring together more than 846,000 members.

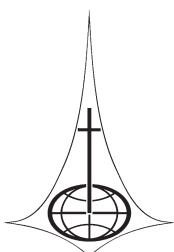


Rev. Emilio Aslla, leader of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church, speaks at the LAC regional gathering on sustainability. © LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

Hosted by the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB), the 54 participants comprised church leaders, members of networks of women and youth, persons living with disabilities, theological educators and diaconal (social service) workers. They discussed lessons learned,

in the region can develop human and institutional capacities that support their contribution to God’s mission, and in the process build the Lutheran communion,” said LWF area secretary for LAC, Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti.

She noted that throughout the five-year program, churches affirmed



Developing Capacity – A Way to Be Church

At the end of their five-day meeting, representatives of the LWF member churches in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region affirmed how strategic training for ordained and lay people is promoting church growth and encouraging more participation of members in the church's prophetic mission.

"We feel that all our team members—from the pastors to the administrative workers—understand this process of 'just learn and do it,'" Linda M. Perez Gomez of the Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras said of the LWF-supported five-year (2007-2011) sustainability program to develop churches' local capacity and empower leadership.

"We are beginning to grow in numbers and at the same time have the spirit to work together, to join our efforts as a first base and take our decisions collectively," she added.

The process of accompaniment, consciousness raising, capacity development, inclusion and sharing of responsibility was important for the churches involved in the five-year program, she added.

"The church's programs would have had more possibility of success in our churches and communities if we had taken care of the development of the human capacity of the people, the ministries and the lay leaders," said Milton José de Oliveira of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil.

Oliveira added he was convinced that the region's churches were now headed in the right direction with more strategic plans to offer the kind of formation and training that will help lay and ordained persons serve the church and community.

More Participatory

United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Argentina) participant Enrique



Elizabeth Arciniegas (right), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, speaks during the Women and Gender Justice Network session at the LAC regional gathering on sustainability and human resource development.
© LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

Nery Kallsten explained how his church had worked through home Bible study to become more engaged and responsible to one another.

"Our church needed a strategic plan. We needed to organize our ministries and make them more participatory for the members so that they might offer their gifts for the well-being of the church," he said.

Rev. Everardo Stephan of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (Argentina) maintained that ministries that focus on gender, youth and children required special training and urged the LWF to support these areas of work.

Learning

A key learning from the Santa Cruz meeting was the importance of developing the capacities and gifts of people and institutions so that church ministries can function well. "I am very excited about the sustainability program. It's more than a program. It is a way to be church," Stephan added.

It was also suggested by Rev. Guadalupe Cortéz of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church that the LWF

LAC region should work collectively to create a frame of reference for its ministry.

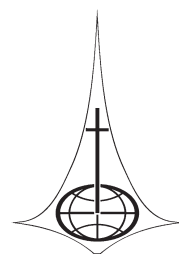
Abebe Yohannes Saketa, LWF secretary for Human Resources Development at DMD, noted that the meeting had provided a "very rich content" because of the new perspectives developed under the five-year program.

"This meeting was unique and distinct from the previous gatherings, as I noted from the reports and comments. It was broader since about half of the participants were here for the first time. It was richer, due to new perspectives developed and presented. It was also deeper as it revealed several issues of mutual concern," said Saketa.

The LAC meeting was part of the LWF's strategic efforts to realign human capacity development initiatives among the member churches. A framework for long-term planning has been formulated for adaptation and use at church level.

(Written for LWI by Bogota [Colombia]-based journalist Edwin Mendivelso)

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The Difference a Year Makes

LWF Provides Education and Child Protection at Dadaab Refugee Camp

DADAAB, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI) – In September 2011, Hilal Primary School at the Dadaab refugee camp was a few tents, without walls, scattered across open fields. Children crowded under roofs that sheltered them from the scorching sun as they took their lessons. Refugees themselves, they had fled Somalia amidst a wave of more than 150,000 people who arrived at the complex of camps in northeastern Kenya over a period of 12 months.

One year later, the school site is hardly recognizable.

Today, there are four times as many buildings on the site and the classrooms that were once only tented roofs now have walls. Inside the classrooms, children sit at desks with textbooks in front of them, writing in exercise books. This is another marked difference to a year ago, when up to 40 children shared a single text book and, due to a shortage of desks, many sat on the floor.

And the changes don't end in the classroom. After school, children rush into the playground to play on the swings and slides and take turns drinking water from the taps supplied by boreholes. Both the taps



Ali Abdi Abdullah (21) is a refugee who arrived at the LWF-managed Dadaab camps in northeastern Kenya when he was a baby. Now he is a teacher at Hilal Primary School in the camp. © LWF/Melany Markham

and the play equipment make a huge difference to their health and happiness. The clean water supply not only ensures the children have enough to drink. It also means they can wash their hands, a precaution against ailments such as diarrhea, which can be lethal in a vast place like Dadaab.

Fenced and Guarded

The playground is open to the students all day and, as the compound

is fenced and guarded, the children have a safe haven after classes end for the day. Children can be especially vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse in Dadaab and safe spaces like the school playground keep them out of harm's way.

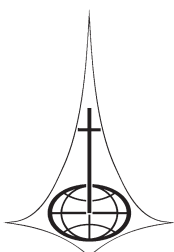
Over 2,000 children attend Hilal Primary School, which is operated by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a founding member of ACT Alliance, the global network of churches responding to emergencies. The LWF collaborates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as an implementing partner, and is the lead agency in camp management at Dadaab.

Mahado and Her Little Sister

Thirteen-year-old Mahado and her little sister Aminao, aged three, are both students at Hilal. They arrived in Dadaab seven months ago and have been attending school ever since. Back home in Somalia, Mahado had never been to school, so today they share not only the same classroom but the same desk. She sits with her



Mahado (13) and her sister Aminao (3) have been attending school in the LWF-managed Dadaab refugee camp in northeastern Kenya for the last seven months, since they fled war and famine in Somalia. It is the first time both sisters have been to school. © LWF/Melany Markham



arm protectively wrapped around her younger sister's shoulders as they take their lessons together. Mahado says her favorite subject is English and she hopes to become a teacher herself one day.

Sitting happily at the desk together, it is hard to understand the magnitude of the difference the school has made to their lives. The emergency in 2011 that forced Mahado and Aminao to flee Somalia caused widespread malnutrition among children and women. Lack of access to water and poor sanitation and hygiene exposed them to disease, and many were subjected to physical and sexual abuse as they made the journey from Somalia, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

LWF staff Moses Mukhwana says the education projects operated by the LWF in Dadaab are by far the most important in the camp. "By providing a safe place where children can learn we solve many other problems," he said. "Building schools is important, but it's the dedication of our teaching staff who, despite increasing insecurity, turn up to teach almost every day, that makes the most difference to the students." The LWF runs six schools at Dadaab and employs over 500 teachers—some Kenyan and some refugees themselves.

The completion of schools such as Hilal means that there are even more places in classrooms for the 250,000-odd school-aged children living in

the camp. The classrooms, textbooks, playground equipment and boreholes are funded by UNICEF.

Schooling for Thousands More

Despite the success of the LWF's education projects, there are still thousands of children in the camps who don't go to school, many of who live in larger, more crowded camps. Over the next six months, the LWF is hoping to relocate many of these families to the more recently set-up Kambioos camp, where services like education are available.

Education is one of the most significant ways that aid funding can positively impact a child, now and in the future, and in that sense

at least, Dadaab is no different from anywhere else in the world.

Located some 80 kilometers from the common border with Somalia, the Dadaab camp complex covers a radius of approximately 20 kilometers, and is home to nearly 453,000 Somali refugees.

The LWF's work in Dadaab is carried out through its Department for World Service (DWS) Kenya-Djibouti country program, operational there since 1991.

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



A boy plays on a swing at one of the schools in the LWF-managed Dadaab refugee camp in northeastern Kenya. Such safe spaces help prevent child abuse in the camps. © LWF/Melany Markham

Helping the Smallest the Most

LWF: Urgent Action Needed for Children Caught in Sudan Crisis

BUNJ, Maban County, South Sudan/ GENEVA (LWI) – As humanitarian aid agencies in South Sudan's Upper Nile state struggle to cope with the massive numbers of refugees arriving from neighboring Sudan and difficult weather conditions, children remained particularly vulnerable.

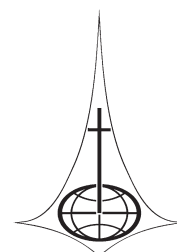
The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a founding member of the

ACT Alliance, will focus its response to the desperate situation on children, who comprise more than 50 percent of the estimated 170,000 refugees in camps and settlements across South Sudan's Unity and Upper Nile states.

Since October 2011 conflict between Sudan and South Sudan and food shortages have forced the people of Blue Nile to flee from their homes

in the tens of thousands. The influx includes large numbers of unaccompanied minors or children who have been separated from their families.

Between June and September, around 1,000 people were still arriving daily in refugee camps, with thousands flowing into Yusuf Batil camp which was opened to cope with this influx in particular. But





A newly-arrived family to Upper Nile's Yusuf Batil camp settles into temporary shelter while waiting to receive a tent. © LWF/M. Retief

this camp is now overflowing so the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has opened another camp close by to cope with the need.

At Yusuf Batil and Gendrassa camps in Maban county, the LWF will be looking at setting up child friendly spaces, ensuring child protection and providing educational facilities.

For many of these refugees, the journey of flight has spanned months. Seasonal rains, which began in June, are having a devastating effect. Large families huddle under wet blankets at night and others struggle to keep dry in ankle deep water.

"To be able to assist the many people in need in the new camp ... we need considerable financial assistance. Any donation will help us work with setting up schools and assisting the numerous children, who need protection and support in the camps," said Michael Hyden, program officer for Eastern Africa at the LWF.

Providing Schools and Protection

Protecting these children is complex and difficult. Foster families need to be found and supported to take care of those who are alone. Child protection workers and teachers need to be recruited and trained, and child-friendly spaces need to be created to help chil-



Boys sit in an outdoor classroom in the Gendrassa refugee camp in Maban county in South Sudan's Upper Nile state. © LWF/Paul Jeffrey

dren recover from their experience and continue their education.

But LWF has a sound track record of protecting children in refugee camps and providing education programs in neighboring Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.

"Even though the operation in Upper Nile is new, we are building on the expertise we have gained from our operations in Kakuma, Dadaab [the world's largest refugee camp] and Djibouti, where the LWF has been working ... for a number of years," Hyden explained.

He said the LWF's response for the next eight months requires at least USD 2.5 million for which an

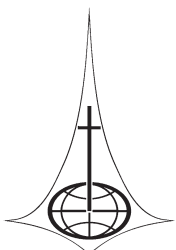
appeal has been sent out to the ACT Alliance and UNHCR. With only 30 percent of the target funds available until the end of the year, immediate assistance will include delivery of materials to lay the foundation for the work to be carried out in partnership with the UNHCR and other organizations.

Maban county is among the most remote and least developed areas in South Sudan, and the only way to get there during rains is by air or boats. The extremely high cost of fuel and scarcity of materials because of South Sudan's conflict-fuelled economic crisis exacerbate the situation,

making any humanitarian response extremely expensive, Hyden added.

The unresolved political issues between Sudan and South Sudan also have an impact on the local environment. The growing population in the camps is compounding tensions between impoverished local communities and refugees, as competition grows over scarce water sources and thousands of trees are cut down for construction at refugee settlement sites.

(Written for LWI by Melany Markham)



Founded to Give Hope in the West Bank

Lutheran Schools Provide Holistic Education in an Interfaith Context

RAMALLAH, West Bank/GENEVA (LWI)—Michael Abu Ghazaleh is one proud principal. “The School of Hope provides top-quality education to all students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or ability to pay tuition fees,” he says of the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah, one of the top five in the West Bank. The majority of the students at the school are Muslims, an indication that Christian schools are an important part of the educational system in the occupied Palestinian territories.

their love for the dance. Seventeen-year-old Ahmad says the group’s name Al-Raja, which means hope in Arabic, is more than a name. “We are a strong people, and giving up hope is giving up living,” says Ahmad, who wants to go to Germany to study. “But I will always come back to live here,” he adds.

Expanding Facilities and Quality Education

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope, one of the six congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), was founded in the mid 1950s as Palestinian refugees fled to the Ramallah area after the war. The School of Hope began in 1965 as a kindergarten with ten students and two teachers, and graduated its first class of three students in 1979. The school has since been serving the greater Ramallah area and continues to grow. It currently has more than 450 students—comprising 20 percent Christians and 80 percent Muslims.

And the constant expansion has led the European Union (EU) to fund construction of a 4,000 square meter building that will accommodate around 500 students, who are now located in the old campus. The new school campus is expected to be ready in 2013 when it will be handed over to the church. The construction of the new campus comes as a result of the EU’s continuous support to the Palestinian education sector not only by increasing the physical capacity of school buildings but also by developing the quality of education in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Model of Cooperation

Christians are a minority in Ramallah, but the Christian community is



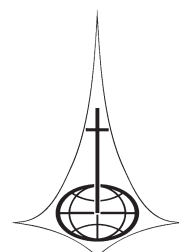
The School of Hope’s Al-Raja Folkloric Dance Troupe gives an enthusiastic performance for the LWF delegation visiting the West Bank school in late September 2012. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund

But the school is not all about studies and results. Georgette is 17 years old and a year away from graduation. “I love this school, it’s my second home,” she says smiling. Georgette is a member of the school’s Al-Raja Folkloric Dance Troupe, of which about 15 students performed two dances when a delegation from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) visited the school on the 29 September.

The dance style in Arabic is Dabke, meaning “stomp,” and is probably the most accurate way to describe the flying dance. Almost 50 high school students come together after class to practice the traditional dance and their passionate performance reveals



Female trainees at the LWF’s Vocational Training Center in Ramallah receive practical training in mobile maintenance. The center opened a second class in telecommunications in 2011 due to the high number of female applicants from the West Bank. © LWF/Y. Shalian



responsible for almost 30 percent of the educational system in the West Bank. The school “is a model in the community of cooperation and tolerance among its diverse students,” principal Ghazaleh says. The school offers extra curriculum activities including an English club, sports teams, scout troops, an information and computer technology unit, and the renowned dance group that performs both locally and abroad.

“As Palestinian Christians we have always considered ourselves to be an integral part of the fabric of our society, and that means we have a role to play in education and in societal

issues in our country,” said ELCJHL Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, also LWF President.

Younan said the mission of the ELCJHL schools was to prepare young Palestinian women and men to build their state.

“We teach our students to respect human rights—especially women’s rights—to respect freedom of religion and to dialogue with other religions. We emphasize peace education in our schools, and the right for each and every person to live in dignity,” added the ELCJHL bishop who had previously served as pastor of the Ramallah congregation.



Palestinian Prime Minister Dr Salam Fayyad (middle) with the LWF delegation members, left to right: Department for World Service (DWS) director, Rev. Eberhard Hitzler; LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge; LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan; and the DWS Jerusalem program director Rev. Mark Brown. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund

Meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister

The importance of Christian education was also a subject when the LWF delegation met with the Palestinian National Authority Prime Minister Dr Salam Fayyad. The premier noted that the role of Palestinian Christians in Palestinian society was indispensable, and urged encouragement for their efforts.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Fayyad said the aim of the Palestinian Authority is to end the Occupation by peaceful means, with a viable two-state solution that recognizes East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State. He expressed concern about pressure on the presence of Christians and their diminishing population in the region.

During the meeting with the premier, LWF General Secretary Martin Junge reiterated the crucial role the Christian communities play in the region through their institutions.

“The importance of the Lutheran schools in the Palestinian context became evident again in the conversation with the Palestinian Prime Minister,” Junge said after the meeting. “I was pleased that the Prime Minister brought up the issue and the importance of the Christian presence among the Palestinians, as a matter of identity for the Palestinian people,” he added.

(Written for LWI by Thomas Ekelund in the West Bank)

Jerusalem Health Institution Protects Patients’ Right to Human Dignity

LWF-Run Hospital and Vocational Training Centers Reach Out to Palestinians

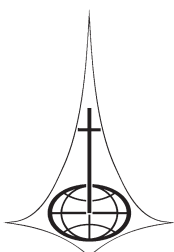
EAST JERUSALEM/GENEVA (LWI) – The Mount of Olives, a mountain ridge east of Jerusalem’s Old City in East Jerusalem, serves as the footing for the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) and the ultra modern medical services provided here.

Nadia is only five years old, but she is familiar with the corridors and staff

at the AVH, a health institution run by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Her father does not want her picture taken or her real name used, but he willingly says that without the treatment Nadia gets at AVH, she would not be alive. Her kidney is not working properly, so she needs to come to the hospital three times a week for dialysis.

“The hospital bussing [bus transport] program helps us to assert the right to the treatment that Nadia so desperately needs,” he says.

No other hospital in the occupied Palestinian territories offers pediatric kidney dialysis. In addition, the AVH Cancer Care Center is the only radiation oncology facility operating



in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Ear, nose and throat surgery, adult and pediatric kidney treatment, and pediatric oncology are a few examples of the specialized services available at the hospital, services that are not easily accessible or are unavailable in other hospitals in the occupied Palestinian territories.

A Beacon of Hope

When an LWF delegation comprising the President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge visited the hospital on 29 September, Shadja Nasser was on the day shift as a nurse in the pediatric ward. The message that Junge conveyed to her and other staff was clear: "The Augusta Victoria Hospital is owned by the whole LWF communion. That means 143 member churches in 79 countries all over the world, representing more than 70 million Christians. The work of the hospital staff is a beacon of hope and what it represents for the entire communion cannot be overestimated," he said.

The LWF general secretary stressed that the AVH plays a key role in defending the right of patients and humanitarian staff to access vital healthcare facilities in Jerusalem. It helps to promote and protect the right to human dignity, particularly



A child from Gaza receiving treatment for cancer at the AVH's specialized center for child care in Jerusalem in 2011. © LWF/K. Brown

in the face of checkpoints and walls that weigh heavily on the most vulnerable in society, he added. Today, the hospital and its village outreach program are crucial in the Holy Land.

The general secretary said that through donations and support of churches, organizations and individuals, AVH tries to ensure that anyone needing treatment at the health institution will be cared for. Most of the patients are referred to the hospital by the Palestinian Authority or the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees.

The Augusta Victoria building was converted into a hospital for Palestin-

ian refugees in 1948 and continues to serve Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The LWF was registered as the owner in 1950 and has since been called upon to assist the UN in meeting the often overwhelming needs of the refugee population.

"The AVH is an embodiment of the LWF's vision to be a communion in Christ, freed to work together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world. The medical services at the hospital are accessible to everyone needing them, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender, or ability to pay," Junge added.

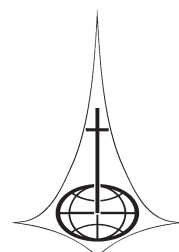
Vocational Training Program

The LWF delegation also visited the LWF Vocational Training Center in Beit Hanina, north of Jerusalem, which since 1949, has been helping to empower young men and women. This year there are over 600 students taking advantage of the training provided at the centers in Beit Hanina and Ramallah and the short courses held in various locations in the West Bank. Training programs are offered in carpentry, auto-mechanics, metalwork, plumbing and heating, and electronics. The LWF is in the process of adding courses in handicrafts and catering.

Students at the centers come from Ramallah, Hebron, Nablus, and from



During a 2011 visit by the AVH governance board, the director of the cancer screening unit explains the objectives of the hospital's mobile mammography program whose staff team travels to villages throughout the West Bank to provide mammograms, ultrasounds, and breast cancer education. © LWF/M. Brown



towns and villages all over the West Bank. The program strives, as part of its Christian witness, to promote reconciliation and understanding among all people.

The unemployment rate among young people aged 18 to 24 is almost 40 percent. Despite these disappoint-

ing figures, recent surveys by the LWF's vocational training program show that 75 to 80 percent of those graduating from the LWF-run centers are employed in areas related to their training.

Junge noted that the vocational training program serves as a witness

of the crucial role of churches as part of civil society. He encouraged governmental agencies to recognize the importance of education as means of empowering young people as full citizens who help to build society.

(Written for LWI by Thomas Ekelund in East Jerusalem)

New Publication on the Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification

The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification—a publication documenting ecumenical partners' follow up on the historic agreement by Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the doctrine of justification—is now available in English and German languages.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) in October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany. This action ended centuries' old disagreement and conflict over the crucial subject of justification, the original point of dispute between Catholic and Lutheran traditions.

Compiled by an ecumenical task force, the LWF – PCPCU publication highlights the commitment of the JDDJ signatories to continuous dialogue, and to widening the circle of conversations to include insights from Methodist and Reformed scholars. "A book full of promise" is how the expanded circle of four partners describes *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification – An Ecumenical Follow-Up to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in its preface.

Representatives of the four partners, including LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, underline that the book was not written only for biblical scholars or theologians. They invite readers to explore "a text which is accessible to many attentive readers who care about Christian confession of God's grace and about the unity of the Church."

At a 1-2 September meeting of former students of Pope Benedict XVI at the Castel Gandolfo residence near Rome, Prof. Theodor Dieter, director of the LWF Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, presented the pope with a copy of the German edition, *Biblische Grundlagen der Rechtfertigungslehre – Eine ökumenische Studie zur Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre*.



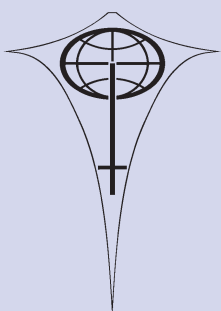
The Strasbourg Institute director Prof. Theodor Dieter (right) presents Pope Benedict XVI with a copy of „Biblische Grundlagen der Rechtfertigungslehre.“
© Osservatore Romano

Discussions at the meeting moderated by the pope focused on Catholic-Lutheran and Anglican-Catholic dialogues. Dieter analyzed the method of differentiated consensus developed in the JDDJ as the model for any fruitful ecumenical dialogue. Other participants included emeritus Lutheran Bishop Ulrich Wilckens (Holstein-Lübeck, Germany).

Copies of *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification* at USD 21.95 each can be ordered from Paulist Press (New Jersey, USA) at info@paulistpress.com.

Orders for *Biblische Grundlagen der Rechtfertigungslehre* can be placed with the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig at vertrieb@eva-leipzig.de or info@eva-leipzig.de at EUR 19.95.

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