

Lutheran World Information

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LWF emergency response staff meets with IDPs in Bouar in Central African Republic's Nana Mambéré prefecture. Photo: LWF/DWS CAR

Tribute to Staff on World Humanitarian Day 2014

LWF Calls for Aid Workers Safety and Protection

GENEVA (LWI) – On World Humanitarian Day (WHD) in 2014, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has paid special tribute to the commitment of its country program staff across world, and reiterated earlier calls for the safety and protection of all humanitarian workers and civilians in increasingly insecure contexts.

“We have to speak out more clearly and loudly that it is simply unacceptable that any fighting force and least of all official state military, targets civilians and aid workers,” said LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, in a letter to staff of all Department for World Service (DWS) country programs.

This year’s WHD theme celebrates and honors “Humanitarian Heroes.” The

day commemorates the killing of 22 aid workers on 19 August 2003 in a bomb attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

According to the United Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 155 humanitarian workers were killed on duty in 2013, representing a significant increase from the previous year. Preliminary figures indicate that this year alone, 79 aid workers had been killed by 13 August.

Referring to the recent targeted killings of aid workers and attacks on hospitals and health facilities in the conflicts in Gaza and South Sudan, Junge said he was increasingly worried about staff



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LWF Offers Condolences for ELCC Bishop Emeritus Dr. Thomas Nyiwe

In a letter to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon (ELCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed his "deep sadness" at the death of Bishop Emeritus Dr. Thomas Nyiwe on Saturday, 9 August 2014, after an illness.

"On behalf of the LWF communion and the Communion Office, I wish to convey our sincere condolences. I would also like to convey many greetings and condolences from LWF council members and friends who have contacted us after they received the information about the passing-on of a colleague and a friend whom they had known and worked together with in the communion," Junge said. "We share our prayers and thoughts with the entire Nyiwe family, the ELCC, the whole LWF communion and those whose lives were touched by Dr. Nyiwe until he was called to rest."

The LWF communion "is grateful for the gifts and accompaniment that our brother, father and colleague the late bishop Nyiwe offered to the communion," Junge added.

"He took on various responsibilities on behalf of the ELCC, the Africa region and also the global communion, serving as an LWF council member for the period of 2003-2010. It was also during his leadership that the ELCC took the bold decision to ordain

women in the ministry of Word and Sacrament (May 2012) which is one of the landmarks left to the church. We enjoyed very much serving in the Lord's vineyard together."

The late bishop Nyiwe will be laid to rest on Saturday, 30 August.



Bishop Emeritus Dr. Thomas Nyiwe at the LWF Project Committee meeting in May 2006. Photo: LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

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wellbeing and safety in several working environments with “a total absence of respect for international humanitarian law.”

Still, the new challenges anticipated, such as the plight of civilians caught in the conflict in Northern Iraq and the looming hunger crisis in South Sudan, require the LWF to “prepare for the worst as we hope and pray for the best,” the General Secretary said.

Junge underlined LWF’s gratitude and appreciation, and offered prayer-

ful encouragement as the organization’s humanitarian workers “uphold their vocation to serve the neighbor.”

In a video message, DWS director Rev. Eberhard Hitzler reiterated the General Secretary’s message and paid tribute to the daily heroic work of over 4,000 LWF employees around the world, who “put the needs of the most needy over and above their own comfort.”

But, Hitzler added, “We need to celebrate their tremendous bravery while they are alive.”

In select interviews, some of LWF’s aid workers have shared their stories about compassion and saving lives in some of the world’s most precarious conflict situations. Read more about LWF’s “Humanitarian Heroes” in peace building initiatives among young Syrian refugees and in conflict-wounded families in Colombia; reaching out to school-age girls in remote areas in Central African Republic; and providing water in refugee camps in Ethiopia against all odds including limited financial resources.

LWF Takes Part in UN Panel Marking World Humanitarian Day

Tribute to “Enormous Sacrifices” Made by Humanitarians and Their Families

GENEVA (LWI) – “Humanitarian workers make enormous sacrifices. Many are separated from their families and sacrifice their health, relationships and resources, and sometimes even their lives,” Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Program Officer for East and Horn of Africa and Climate Change Lokiru Matendo Yohana said.

Taking part in a United Nations panel in Geneva to mark World Humanitarian Day, Yohana paid tribute to the “enormous sacrifices” made by aid workers around the world who carry out life-saving activities, often in dangerous and difficult circumstances.

“Behind every humanitarian are people who also make sacrifices – whether it’s their families, those giving funds to facilitate assistance, raising a voice on behalf of the afflicted or opening their doors to allow refugees into their countries.” Yohana added.

“Make things better for people”

Yohana, who has been in his current position since July, previously worked for two years as the LWF Program Coordinator in South Sudan. He became

interested in humanitarian work as a boy growing up in northern Kenya.

“There was a lot of poverty in my country, many people suffering from the effects of drought and also at the time a big influx of South Sudanese refugees. I wanted to be part of a network and a worldwide effort of making things better for people,” he said.

Violence against aid workers has reached the highest number ever recorded, according to a UN-commissioned study, conducted by Humanitarian Outcomes. 155 aid workers

were killed in 2013 and three-quarters of all attacks took place in just five countries: Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Pakistan and Sudan. Preliminary figures show that as of mid-August 2014, 79 aid workers have been killed in conflict zones. The months of July and August saw a rise in the level of attacks and incidents involving aid workers including in Gaza and South Sudan.

The panel, which included International Organization for Migration Director General Ambassador William



Lokiru Yohana sharing impressions from the field at the UN panel on World Humanitarian Day. Photo: LWF/ C. Kästner

L. Swing and Care International Humanitarian Director Barbara Jackson, focused on hearing the stories of people who are dedicated to protecting and supporting those who have had their lives torn apart by conflict or natural disasters. This year, humanitarian agencies, including the LWF, are planning to support an estimated 76 million people in 31 countries.

UN Flag “No Longer Source of Protection”

Jackson said both the bravery and neutrality of aid workers needed to be remembered and respected.

“Humanitarians continue to be relied upon to provide crucial life-saving aid

amidst extremely difficult and stressful circumstances,” she said. “The risks these people face are substantial: death, injuries, kidnapping. It’s absolutely essential that all parties respect the impartiality of aid workers so we can continue to help those most in need.”

“We are living in an era of unprecedented human mobility, humanitarian disasters and anti-migrant and anti-foreigner sentiment,” Swing said. “The UN flag or NGOs’ identity is no longer a source of protection for humanitarian workers. Instead, it is a way to find out who you are and where you are. We need to restore the level of humanitarian protection.”

World Humanitarian Day is observed annually on 19 August, the

anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad that killed 22 people, including UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello. It is a tribute to aid workers, a commemoration to those who have lost their lives and a celebration of the spirit of humanitarian work around the world.

This year under the theme, “The world needs more Humanitarian Heroes,” first-hand accounts were heard from humanitarians working on the front-line of the world’s most dangerous conflicts.

[The LWF & World Humanitarian Day 2014 www.lutheranworld.org/world-humanitarian-day-2014](http://www.lutheranworld.org/world-humanitarian-day-2014)

LWF Provides Emergency Assistance in Iraq

“Harrowing Stories of Targeting Minorities”

MOSUL, Iraq/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) together with partners in the ACT Alliance is providing humanitarian aid to the internally displaced people in Northern Iraq. Through the ACT Alliance emergency appeal, the international humanitarian and development network is providing around US\$ 1 million for shelter, food, water, non-food items, hygiene kits, and carrying out protection initiatives particularly for women and children.

“We are horrified by the reports of human rights violations we receive from our partners in the field”, says Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, Director of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS). “LWF is committed to assist the people affected by the violent conflict with water, food and psycho-social services. We are very grateful for the funds received so far from member churches and partners to carry out our work in Iraq, and we ask you to

continue supporting our efforts to stand with those in need of assistance.”

Over 1.5 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in Iraq, as the Sunni Muslim militant group, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) continues its encroachment in the region. Since the group’s violent takeover of large swaths of land in northern and western Iraq, the country according to OCHA is now contending with one of the largest internal displacements in the world. In the past few days, ISIS has cut off water supplies from central pumping plants on the Tigris in Mosul to the Kurdish controlled areas of the Nineveh plain.

“Runaway Crisis”

According to an assessment by the ACT Alliance the situation is set to worsen. “This is starting to become a runaway crisis, and the world must rise up quickly to save the lives of the people who have fallen victims to dangerously armed militant groups,” said Jonh Nduna, ACT General Secretary.

Together with its partners in the ACT Alliance, the LWF works to ensure clean,



IDPs in Dohuk, Iraq. Photo: ankawa.com

emergency water supplies for 12,500 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host communities, and to guarantee an additional two-months' food security for 2,500 IDP families. The LWF is also seeking to offer psycho-social services to 5,000 vulnerable individuals, who have experienced psychological and physical trauma.

ACT Alliance members, including the LWF, which are on the ground

providing humanitarian aid to affected populations, are calling for continued life-saving aid as the conflict intensifies.

Humanitarian Access is Critical

The alliance is also calling for human rights and international humanitarian law to be respected, and is urging governments and intergovernmental

bodies to find a lasting solution to the crisis and to identify proactive actions to respond to early signs of conflicts.

"There are harrowing stories of the targeting of minorities," said Nduna. "Humanitarian access is critical at this time. We cannot underestimate the need for protection of civilians especially women, children, the elderly, those living with disabilities, and minority populations".

Faith-Based Organizations Call for End to Iraq Violence

"Concerned and Saddened by Kidnapping and Hostage-taking"

GENEVA (LWI) – The LWF together with ten faith-based humanitarian and development organizations has issued an "urgent call to stop the horrific suffering" in Iraq.

"The untold suffering of minority groups as a result of escalating violence and attacks is unacceptable and the violation of international human rights and humanitarian laws is despicable," the letter signed by Christian and Muslim organizations says.

"We are utterly shocked at the horrific wave of attacks that has so far led to the killing of many and left hundreds of thousands more homeless, desperate and in flight. We are further concerned and saddened by the many cases of kidnapping and hostage-taking of people, including women and children," the statement further reads.

Together with ACT Alliance members, the statement has been signed by among others Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, Muslim Charities Forum CAFOD and the Human Relief Foundation.

According to data from the United Nations, about one million people have been displaced by violence and insecurity since the beginning of the year. The militant group Islamic State (IS) is especially targeting minorities such as Yazidis and Christians. The LWF together with partners from the ACT Alliance has started emergency



People displaced by the conflict take shelter in community buildings in northern Iraq. Photo: ankawa.com

assistance to internally displaced persons (IDP) in the Ninive valley close to the contested city of Mosul.

"The magnitude at which Islamic State militants are operating is absolutely terrifying and we deplore their actions in the deliberate targeting of civilians," Michael Hyden, Humanitarian Coordinator for the LWF Department of World Service (DWS) said.

"Together with our partners Christian Aid Program in Iraq (CAPNI) we are assessing how best we can assist the affected population in Duhok governate," Hyden added. According to official government data, the total number of IDP in this governorate

alone is 462,270 as of 18 August 2014.

The signatories also stress the need to protect civilians and apply international law. "We are appealing for the protection of all people, including persecuted religious minorities such as the Yazidis and Christians – hundreds of thousands who have fled in fear for their lives," Hyden said.

The organizations call for a lasting solution for peace, reconciliation and justice for all in the region.

Report from the LWF Response Team:
www.lutheranworld.org/blog/people-are-scattered-everywhere

LWF and Islamic Relief Sign Memorandum of Understanding

UNHCR: “A Model for Others to Replicate”

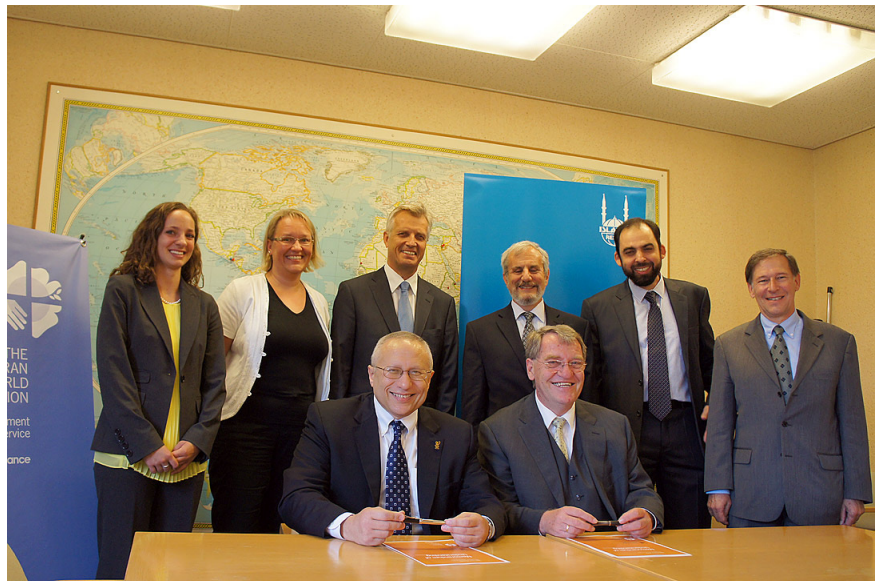
GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in humanitarian work. The signing is the first official cooperation between a global Christian and a global Islamic humanitarian organization.

“We are proud to formalize our partnership with Islamic Relief Worldwide today”, Eberhard Hitzler, Director of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) said. “At the heart of our collaboration are the many core values we share such as dignity, justice, compassion and commitment, and our common vision to empower and support vulnerable communities and people affected by disaster, which unite us across our religious differences”.

Religious Tradition to Care and Help

“We live in a time when our fragile world appears more disrupted by human suffering; religion is often construed as the dividing line between peoples in conflict”, Dr Mohamed Ashmawey, CEO of Islamic Relief Worldwide, added. “We believe that in these fragile times, faith-based humanitarian organizations are best prepared to provide a uniquely powerful model for mutual respect, service and cooperation for the betterment of all of humankind”.

Ashmawey also emphasized the religious roots of humanitarian work. “We



Signing of the MOU by Dr Mohamed Ashmawey, CEO of IRW and DWS Director Eberhard Hitzler (front, from left), witnessed by LWF Assistant General Secretary for Human Rights Affairs Ralston Deffenbaugh, Mehdi ben M'rad, IRW Director of National Programs, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Alexander Aleinikoff, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, LWF Global program Coordinator Maria Immonen and LWF Program Assistant for Interfaith Cooperation Elizabeth Gano (from right). Photo: LWF/S. Gally

have been here first” he said. “Where would people go when they were sick and hungry? They would come to the churches and mosques!”

Faith-based Needs of Refugees

The UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner, Mr Alexander Aleinikoff, praised the cooperation as exemplary. “Somewhat the secular humanitarian world has not taken enough notice of the faith-based needs of refugees” he said. “This working together is a dream coming true. You can do marvelous things together. I hope this will become a model for others to replicate”. He also asked the

two organizations to give feedback on their cooperation to UNHCR.

Already, the LWF and IRW have carried out an assessment in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya, on how best to jointly assist disabled persons who are often overlooked in refugee situations.

“This is a time when we as faith-based organizations have to say very clearly that religion is not about violence”, the LWF General Secretary Rev Martin Junge added. “This memorandum is not only about technicalities, it also touches questions of self-understanding. I am looking forward to grow in that relationship and to bring the theological challenges of that relationship back to our member churches”.

LWF Expresses Deep Appreciation of Efforts by Churches, Medical Staff to Fight Ebola in West Africa

More than 800 Deaths in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone

MONROVIA, Liberia/GENEVA (LWI) – In a letter addressed to member churches

in West Africa, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary

Martin Junge has expressed his deep appreciation for the “sacrificial com-

mitment” of medical staff, church communities and volunteers working to contain the spread of Ebola in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

“It is with deep pain that we follow the daily news on the catastrophic Ebola epidemic that has touched several countries in West Africa, especially, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Our compassion is with the many families and individuals that have been affected, also in our member churches. We are touched by the sacrificial commitment of medical staff to care for the sick and save their lives,” Junge said.

“And we are mourning with the families and church communities over the loss of beloved family members, friends and neighbors. Especially, our sympathy is with the families of the 3 nurses at Phebe Hospital in Liberia

and other medical staff who lost their lives in this battle.”

The disease, which erupted in the forested villages of southeastern Guinea and was diagnosed in March as Ebola, is West Africa’s first outbreak, and the worst known to date globally with 1,663 reported cases and 887 deaths, according to figures released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday. Infections continue to spread in Guinea and neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The three countries announced over the weekend extra measures to combat the outbreak, including calling in the army to enforce quarantines in several villages. The new measures will focus on the “cross-border regions that have more than 70 % (of the cases) of the epidemic,” they said. Liberia and Sierra Leone have declared states of emergency.

Together with its partners in the ACT Alliance, the LWF has promoted public awareness campaigns in Liberia and provided supportive care for those infected by Ebola. The Lutheran Curran and Phebe Hospitals in Bong and Lofa counties are among those treating patients with the disease. Up to 468 cases have been reported in Liberia, with 117 confirmed deaths. The West Africa outbreak is highly unusual as the virus is typically found only in central or eastern Africa.

“In these days, we would also want to express our deep thankfulness to the numerous helpers, medical staff and researchers who, day and night, struggle for people’s healing,” Junge said. “We think in thankfulness of the many volunteers, neighbors and members of church communities, and pastors, who remain at the sides of those who need comfort and support, or a meal and a warm place. God be with them all, encourage and empower them for their service to their afflicted neighbor.”

Through the Lutheran Development Service (LDS), the Lutheran Church in Liberia and ACT Alliance, the LWF is seeking additional funds to expand life-saving public awareness and prevention programs in Montserrado County, and in Bong, Lofa, Gbarmpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties along the Guinean and Sierra Leonean borders. The LWF also plans to acquire an isolation center for the Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing Compound.



Increased efforts are needed to prevent the spread of this biggest Ebola outbreak ever recorded.
Photo: EC/ECHO/Jean-Louis Mosser CC-SA

Interreligious Symposium Affirms the Values of Dignity, Compassion and Solidarity

Reconcile Accountability to God, Religious Authorities and Society

SEATTLE, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – “We cannot consider the future of our own faith community in isolation from others; our communities are closely related and the future of life in dignity is a shared concern.” This was affirmed by an international, interreli-

gious symposium on religious identity and renewal today.

The conference, sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation and the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, 10—14 August 2014, engaged thirty Jewish, Christian

and Muslim scholars from various traditions in lively and thought-provoking discussions. The papers presented topics such as identity, memory, sacred texts and revelation, and religious life in the twenty-first century. In light of sectarian hostilities between reli-



Participants of the Seattle Interfaith Conference discussing reform and renewal in different religious contexts.
Photo: LWF/ I. Benesch

religious communities, participants urged the religious leadership to oppose the use of violence in the name of religion and instead to strengthen values of dignity, compassion and solidarity.

Religious Practice More “Than Reconstructing Positions”

In his keynote address, Dr John Borelli, Georgetown University, USA, outlined the beginnings of Christian engagement in interreligious dialogue in the 1960s and looked at the future of religions in the twenty-first century. Borelli concluded that “as a result of those changes [Vatican II] dialogue became a defining factor of Christian identity.”

Describing the developments within the Reform movement in Judaism, Rabbi Dr David Fox Sandmel, director for interfaith affairs, Anti-Defamation League, New York, USA, noted that “both the Conservative and Reform definitions of Torah reflect the desire to preserve the centrality of Torah while remaining open to contemporary critical scholarship. In practical terms, this position presents challenges to religious authority and therefore to maintaining standards of belief and practice within the Reform and Conservative communities.”

Prof. Mouhanad Khorchide, Center for Islamic Theology, University of

Muenster, Germany, emphasized the centrality of God’s mercy in Islamic theology which is “the foundation for a dialogical relationship between God and humanity.” This leads to new ways of understanding and living out the Qur’anic message. Muslims are called not to “remain stuck at the level of pure reconstruction of existing positions since this would essentially kill Islam.” Khorchide suggests that religious practice in Islam “is not just limited to ritual duties but also encompasses active commitment to human dignity, to respecting the other and to establishing justice.”

Religions Accountable to Society

The political scientist, Prof. Turan Kayoglu, University of Washington, Tacoma, USA, noted that in the Muslim community traditional religious authorities have become weaker and that in the modern state and through globalization and the new media the religious voice has become diversified and fragmented. He described challenges and opportunities of this new “heteroarchy.” He pointed to four different religious authorities: the local imams, the chaplains in institutions, the new Muslim intellectuals and the internet. He stressed that in order to live together peacefully people of faith need to recognize that in their religious

practice they are not only accountable to God and their religious authorities but to society at large.

Dr Herbert Moyo, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, emphasized that in Africa “the future of Christianity lies in its ability to respond to socioeconomic and healing needs of Africans.” He described how multiple forms of Christianity are taking shape in Africa. This raises the question as to who authenticates which voice is the right voice at a given time and Moyo concluded that it is crucial for the religious voice to be life affirming.

Critical Self-Examination

Summarizing the reflections on renewal within the three religions, Prof. Kajsa Ahlstrand, University of Uppsala, Sweden, pointed to four shifts in religiosity namely “from the individual going to heaven to living together on earth; from external to internal authority; from obedience to empathy; and from hierarchical to mutual relationships.” She argued that whereas in the Middle Ages Aristotelian philosophy had provided a conceptual framework for the intellectual interaction between three traditions, a new conceptual framework is emerging today within which the acceptance of diversity and compassion for the vulnerable has become the shared concern of people of different faiths.

Participants were concerned that while there are those who embrace religious diversity, others are becoming more hostile toward people of other faith. As Rabbi Dr Shira Lander, director of Jewish Studies at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, USA, underlined “religious communities have inherited problems from the past that are strong obstacles to the future; universalistic triumphalism is one of them.” Moreover, Lander noted that in order to envision the future, religious communities need critical self-examination and “to learn how to express their core ethical values in non-particularistic language.”

In her concluding remarks, Rev. Dr Simone Sinn, LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness, stressed that “as the symposium had provided space for joint analysis and joint theological reflection between Jews, Christians and Muslims it has modeled how we can be mutually accountable in our theological

reflections.” She pointed out that “as Lutherans reflect on their identity in light of the Reformation Anniversary such interreligious conversation can deepen their understanding of renewal.”

The symposium was co-organized by Rev. Dr Sinn, LWF, and Dr Michael R Trice and Rabbi Anson Laytner of

the School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, USA.

Symposium Statement:

www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-statement-religious-identity-and-renewal

Malaysia: A “Widening in the Understanding of Gender Roles”

Interview with LCM Rev. Au Sze Ngui on LWF Gender Justice Policy, WICAS ASIA Network Meeting

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia/GENEVA (LWI)

– Participants from 12 Asian countries attended the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Women in Church and Society (WICAS) Asia network meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 8-12 August. The aim of the gathering was to highlight the contributions made by Asian women to the Lutheran Reformation journey and to study the implementation of the LWF Gender Justice Policy. In an interview, Lutheran Church in Malaysia (LCM) Rev. Au Sze Ngui speaks about the importance and relevance of the Gender Justice Policy in Asia.

What in your opinion are the most relevant outcomes of this WICAS gathering?

The good representation of all the Asia sub-regions at the meeting is clearly an asset. Having 37 participants from different Asian backgrounds gathered around gender justice issues is a significant step forward for the church. The fact that the participants have expressed their willingness to translate the LWF Gender Justice Policy into many Asian languages shows there is an eagerness to own the document, and to find in it the strength to transform their churches and communities. Personally, WICAS’ encouragement to contribute in this process as a theologian has been particularly important to me.

Taking the Asian context into consideration, how do you envision the actual implementation of the LWF Gender Justice Policy?

Asian society is evolving. Migration towards the cities and the increasing freedom and participation of women in the workforce has led to a widening in the understanding of gender roles. In such a scenario, the transformational dimension of the Gospel, which offers a provision for gender justice, will enhance the possibilities for implementation.

The Gospel paves the way for entering into a reflection on gender justice and that is what we have been doing throughout this meeting. The successful implementation of the policy

will happen when the transformation brought by the understanding of the Gospel has taken place.

What are the possible challenges to this transformation process in terms of gender justice in the Asian context?

The understanding of justice is contextual. It could mean different things to each society. However, for us Lutherans, it is because we believe in a just God who has created women and men equally that we can share the core values reflected in the Gender Justice Policy.

It is important to emphasize this theological grounding in order to avoid any misconception of gender justice



Rev Au Sze Ngui at the 2014 WICAS Asia meeting.
Photo: LWF/C. Rendón

as a western perspective. Traditions play a central role in Asian societies and finding a way to highlight gender justice in a context where ancient practices are still highly valued may be a challenge. This is particularly visible in rural settings where we still have very strict gender roles that can prevent women and girls from benefitting from equal opportunities, and where often they suffer discrimination and abuse that is tolerated and reproduced in families and the institutional system. The LWF has contributed significantly in confronting these situations and has

empowered women. However, it is still a challenging context.

What contributions can women theologians in the region bring to the discussion on gender justice?

Faith is the haven from uncertainty. We read the Word of God searching for comfort.

But if we decide to head towards greater gender justice, as women theologians we need to introduce critical thinking so as to question the interpretations of the Bible that lead to injustice towards women. This exercise

of questioning is not specific to Asia, but it is necessary.

I would add that we have to reach out to male theologians as well. Based on my experience as part of the Asian Lutheran network, I realize that we analyze things in a particular and complementary manner. The richness of women's experience doing theology is often rooted in a more practical approach and the discussion with male theologians is crucial in order to cover the full range of issues regarding gender justice that the church, as a whole, needs also to reflect and act on.

Young Reformers Network Explores Cooperation with Taizé Community

Youth Empowerment and On-Going Reformation

TAIZÉ, France/GENEVA (LWI) – The Global Young Reformers Network of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is exploring ways of cooperation with the Ecumenical Community of Taizé.

On a visit to Taizé, the Steering Group of the Young Reformer's Network invited brothers and young volunteers in Taizé to be part of the Young Reformers Conference from 22 August to 4 September 2015 in Wittenberg, Germany. The conference will unite Young Reformer delegates from all 144 LWF member churches.

Bring Alive the Gifts of Churches

“The brothers and volunteers of Taizé can bring an ecumenical and spiritual perspective to the conference” LWF Youth Secretary Caroline Richter said in a meeting with Brother Alois Löser, the prior of the community.

“2017 should not be about finding our confessional identity against one another, but with each other”, Brother Alois said. “The many gifts of our churches only come alive in ecumeni-

cal ways. You, the young people, can show that”.

“The Wittenberg Conference is a wonderful way to bring an international perspective to the reformation” Steering Group member Julia Braband from the Evangelical Church in Central Germany says. “Taizé shares our view of ‘ecclesia semper reformanda’, of a church in on-going reformation”.

The ecumenical community of brothers in Taizé, France has been conducting Youth meetings since the 1970's, each week inviting thousands of young Christians from all over the world. It is especially known for its spirituality, which includes three daily prayers with chants in many languages. In 2015, it will celebrate its 75th anniversary. The anniversary also commemorates the 100th birthday of Brother Roger Schütz, the founder of the Taizé community who was killed in 2005.

What are you freed from? – ecumenical discussions

For these celebrations, the community has also invited young people to discuss ways of engaging in the



Young Reformers Steering Committee at Taizé.
Photo: LWF/C. Kästner



THE
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LWF Sunday 2014 Salvation—not for sale

The LWF invites churches and congregations to make use of the draft order of worship prepared for LWF Sunday 2014 in services held on or around Reformation Sunday, either as a whole or by using individual elements of it.

The service makes reference to one of the sub-themes adopted by the LWF Council for the Reformation Anniversary: Salvation – not for sale.



Photo: LWF/1. Benesch

Opening and call to worship

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Invocation

In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Welcome

Psalm 91

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,

will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;

he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;

his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,

or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling-place,

no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the adder,
**the young lion and the serpent you will trample
under foot.**

“Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.

When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be
with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honour them.

With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.”

**Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy
Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be for evermore. Amen.**

Confession of sin

Gracious God
You have shown us the way of life in your Son.
We confess how difficult we find it to learn from him,
and how hesitantly we follow him.
You call us and we do not listen to you.
Your glory has appeared and we have been blind.

You stretch out your hand to us
and we continually draw back from it.
We receive much from you and yet are often ungrateful.

[Kyrie: Sfinte Dumnezeule \(Taizé\)](#)

Assurance of grace

2 Cor 5:19: “in Christ God was reconciling the world
to himself, not counting their trespasses against them,
and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”

Be reconciled to God, to your fellow human
beings and with yourself. For in Christ God has
made reconciliation incarnate for us all and has
forgiven us our sins.

[Gloria: Gloria a Dios \(Agape 26\)](#)

Prayer for the day

Merciful God, come into our world
Open our hearts and minds to your message.
May we become the living witnesses to the recon-
ciliation and salvation that was brought
about by the cross. Through your love
towards us you have come close to us and
have brought reconciliation into the world.
Salvation is not for sale, you give it to us as
a free gift from the riches of your grace.
Enable us constantly to find ways of coming together and
to bear witness to the message of salvation

Proclamation and creed

Readings:

Epistle: Eph 2, 8-10
Gospel: John 8, 31-36

Creed

Sermon

Hymn: Meine engen Grenzen

Communion

Intercessions

Leader: Eternal God, with the coming of your Son
have you have promised to lead us all out
of darkness into your glorious light.

Congregation: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Fill our hearts with compassion and love

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Fill our lives with meaning and purpose.

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Fill our world with your Spirit and renew the face of
the earth.

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Merciful God, we hear your voice from your throne
saying: whom shall I send? Who will go for us?
Teach us to answer: "Here am I, send me".

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Send us out to restore righteousness to the world

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Send us out to seek justice and to bring an end to
oppression

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God

L: Send us out to give, to care, to love and to live.

C.: Fulfill your promise in us, O God AMEN.

*(For services not including communion, go to the
Lord's Prayer followed by the dismissal and blessing)*

Hymn: Let us break bread together (Agape 52)

Preparation

Gracious God, through your son Jesus Christ
salvation is bestowed upon us all.

So now we bring before you bread and wine,
in the knowledge of your redeeming presence.

Make them a sign of salvation,
that we receive our Lord in this meal.

Strengthen our faith and renew our lives
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer of Praise

L: The Lord be with you

C: And with your spirit

L: Lift up your hearts

C: We lift them to the Lord

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C. For that is fitting and right.

It is truly fitting and right that we should at all times
and in all places give praise to you, eternal
God and give you thanks through Jesus
Christ our Lord;

You sent him for the salvation of the world,
through his death we have the forgiveness of sins
and through his resurrection we have life.
Therefore the angels praise your glory,
the mighty worship you and earthly rulers fear you.
The powers of heaven praise you, united in jubilation;
we join our voices with them
evermore declaring:

[Sanctus: Du är helig \(Agape 16\)](#)

[Words of institution](#)

[Lords' Prayer](#)

[The Peace](#)

[Agnus Dei](#)

[Distribution](#)

[Post-communion prayer of thanksgiving](#)

L: We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have
strengthened us through this healing gift.
We pray that you will make it effective in giving us
unshakeable faith in you and love towards
one another.

C: Fulfill your promise in us, O God.

Dismissal and Blessing

[Blessing](#)

Go in the peace of the Lord.
God be with you in all that you do or fail to do.
May he make you living ambassadors of his reconciliation

May God bless you as children of his grace
and give you courage and freedom for life.

[Hymn: A mighty fortress is our God.](#)

This liturgy was prepared by the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness © LWF



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

world, grounded in faith. “We started to explore ways of contributing to that celebration with young witnesses from the LWF”, Richter said.

The LWF Youth Desk has already sent a young delegate to conduct a workshop about climate justice and the **#fastfortheclimate** initiative in the Taizé youth meetings, earlier this summer

In a workshop, the Steering Group also presented the LWF Global Young Reformers Network to young people

visiting Taizé. “Our theme ‘Freed by God’s Love’ was very well received”, Rev. Monica Villareal, the Steering member representing North America, said. “It provoked many discussions about freedom in a theological sense, and in everyday experience”.

The visit to Taizé was part of the Young Reformer’s Steering Group meeting in Geneva from 19-26 August 2014. In seminars and meetings, they together prepared the upcoming activities such as the Virtual Confer-

ence “Freed by God’s love- to change the world” on reformation day 2014 and the Young Reformers Wittenberg Conference in 2015.

[More information about the Global Young Reformers Network, youth activities planned for the reformation anniversary 2017 and the Wittenberg conference on \[www.youngreformers.net\]\(http://www.youngreformers.net\)](#)

LWF Council Adopts Statement on Conduct on Holy Sites

Calling for Respect of Spiritually Significant Places

MEDAN, Indonesia/GENEVA (LWI) – The Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) on its 2014 meeting endorsed the Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites. This document developed in consultation with religious leaders and experts from many of the world’s major faiths makes ten provisions on the establishment, preservation, access to and conflict prevention on religious sites worldwide.

The recommendations include the handling of sites sacred to different faiths as well as cases of expropriation and nationalization. The Council also encouraged member churches to support initiatives in their context and called upon the United Nations to adopt a UN resolution in the spirit of the Code.

The adoption of the statement was initiated by LWF President Bishop Munib A. Younan. “We continually notice that many holy places throughout the world are being attacked for both political and religious reasons”, Younan, who is also Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, said. “We are dismayed and wonder why these holy places have become a legitimate target during conflict. All holy places should be places for worship, for meditation, for prayer, and for coming nearer to the God who



Jerusalem. Photo: LWF/D. Harris

sends us into the world to be pilgrims of justice, peace, and reconciliation”.

Overcoming Past Differences in Canada

An example of a holy site used by different faith groups was shared by Council adviser Bishop Cindy Halmarsson of the Saskatchewan synod in Canada. For centuries, the prairie province had been inhabited by the aboriginal First Nations such as the Young Chippewayan. In 1876, at the signing of treaty 6 the land was set

aside as a reservation, but due to many circumstances the band was scattered and they settled in various places. The reservation later was taken back by the Canadian government and opened up to settlement.

Stony Knoll, a hill overlooking plains and wheat fields between the North and South Saskatchewan river, had been holy land to the Young Chippewayan. It has a long history as a place where First Nation people gathered for ceremony and prayer. When the land was settled by Lutheran settlers in the late 19th century this mound was

chosen as the perfect spot to build their place of worship, a church and a graveyard.

It took more than a hundred years for three parties to come together and agree on a common use of this place sacred to all of them. In 2006

Lutherans, Mennonites and Young Chippewayan in a traditional ceremony signed a memorandum of understanding. While the First Nation tribe vowed to respect the current ownership of the land by the Christian congregations, Mennonites and Lutherans promised

to support the Young Chippewayan's ongoing claim for compensation for the land they lost 130 years ago. Stony Knoll, a place of interreligious dispute, now bears testimony to interfaith relations between Protestants and First Nations in Canada.

LAC Meeting Focuses on Management and Leadership for Sustainable Churches

Sustainability Institute Trains Leaders, Helps Builds Networks

SÃO LEOPOLDO, Brazil/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) meeting in São Leopoldo, Brazil, agreed to continue their efforts to promote the sustainability of churches in the region as part of their service to society.

The event from 19-21 August explored the theme of “Leadership and Management for Sustainable Churches” and was organised by the LAC Sustainability Institute.

The Sustainability Institute, which is based at the Faculdades EST [Higher School of Theology] in São Leopoldo and was launched last year, is the result of a partnership between the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) LAC desk and the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB).

The Institute works primarily with the LWF member churches promoting the value of management and leadership grounded in theological reflection. It has established a network of tutors to strengthen the training of new leaders and uses online education as an important tool. The Institute plans to enhance its educational activity with civil society, the business sector and state organizations to develop sustainability programs.

Since the creation of “The Sustainability Program” in 2007, the LWF churches in the region have focused on working together by “building networks as a result of listening and sharing with one another about the ecclesiastic challenges in bringing about change,” said Rev. Ilo Utech from The Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope.

“The project enables churches to generate their own institutional, administrative, financial and institutional changes. The program belongs to every church and helps strengthen their service in the contexts in which they are based,” said Regional Coordinator Gustavo Driau.

The Sustainability Program is, therefore, the result of various expressions and connections between different languages, cultural, liturgical and ecclesiological approaches. Together with Women and Gender Justice, HIV & AIDS, and the Youth networks, the Sustainability Institute is an important part of theological education.

“It seeks to promote the link between existing networks because each of these has the ability to contribute and be a tool for constructing knowledge. The Sustainability Institute is a new space in the network of churches that allows for the expansion and enrichment of relationships,” said DMD area secretary for LAC Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti.

As these relationships grow, the gift is “proximity and collaboration with academia that promotes careful listening among the churches themselves,” she added.

The meeting emphasized the prophetic mission of churches in promoting and providing opportunities to ensure sustainability as well as allowing for change and healing. Fifty percent of churches in the region have started participatory strategic planning (PEP) to help define their vision, mission, objectives and strategies in coming years.



Participants at the LAC sustainability meeting. Photo: LWF LAC

The Sustainability Institute builds on the spirit of the document, "Linking Theological Research and Sustainability," which was presented at Managua by Gustavo Driau of the United

Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU) in Argentina.

It is connected to the Good Governance and Transformative Leadership Program in DMD.

[Sustainability Program Website \(ES\)](http://sustentabilidad.wordpress.com/author/sustentabilidad/)
<http://sustentabilidad.wordpress.com/author/sustentabilidad/>
[Sustainability Institute Website \(ES\)](http://www.est.edu.br/sustentabilidad/)
www.est.edu.br/sustentabilidad/

LWF Expresses Shock at Kidnapping of Cameroon Pastor

Spreading Violence is Deeply Distressing, Junge Says

YAOUNDE, Cameroon/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has expressed its shock over the brutal abduction of Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon pastor Rev. Jean Marcel Kesvere on 24 July 2014.

Rev. Kesvere, 45, who is married with eight children, was born in Cameroon, trained in neighboring Chad and serves the church in the northern community of Bargaram.

In a letter to the President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon, Rev. Robert Goyek Daga, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge offered prayers for Rev. Kesvere and his family, the church and community he serves after hearing news of the kidnapping this week.

"We pray that in this time of worry and uncertainty you are feeling God's loving and comforting presence ever more closely beside you. Know that you are surrounded in love and prayer from around the world," Junge said.

Reports indicate that at least 25 people were killed in Cameroon at the end of July as suspected militant Boko Haram Islamists carried out two attacks in the far north of Cameroon. In one attack Rev. Kesvere was kidnapped at Lake Chad on the Cameroon-Nigerian border. Reports indicate it was the first kidnapping of a Cameroon church leader by the militants.

"It is deeply distressing that the violence which has gripped northeastern Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic is now spreading into northern Cameroon as well," Junge added in his letter.

The LWF General Secretary acknowledged that the violence is an additional burden for the Sahel region, which is facing a major humanitarian situation in the face of a lack of rainfall, the influx of refugees fleeing violence in Nigeria and a cholera epidemic.

Reports indicate that Christian and Muslim leaders in the region are urging

their people not to give in to fear and to stand firm in their faith and Junge said that they have the support of the worldwide Lutheran family.

"Our prayers are with you and the other pastors and people of your church, for courage, compassion and wisdom, and for being able to follow our Lord's call to love the neighbor," Junge said.

The LWF General Secretary said he was praying that God's Spirit may grant the Cameroon church and its leaders, wisdom so that their words and attitudes communicate God's incommensurable love for all of creation and for each human being.

"May both the witness of your church, and also those waiting in anticipation for word on the fate of Pastor Kesvere and other beloved ones, be sustained by this faith and this conviction during these challenging days," Junge concluded.

Rwanda Lutheran Church Project Builds Schools, Resource Centers with Local Resources

DMD Supported Project Provides Training in Income-Generating Saving and Credit Schemes

KIGALI, Rwanda/GENEVA (LWI) – A project run by The Lutheran World Federation member (LWF) church in Rwanda with support from the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) has enabled church leaders and parishioners to establish saving schemes to finance schools, health centres and church buildings entirely through local resources.

The Lutheran Church in Rwanda (LCR) was officially founded on December 25 in 1994 by Rwandan returnees from Tanzania after the genocide, which led to the loss of about one million lives and the creation of 800,000 refugees and displaced people. The church started with just six pastors and some 2,000 members.

Today membership has risen to more than 5,000 people and the LCR is active in most parts of the country.

The "Capacity Building for Sustainable Parishes" project, which started in 2009, provides training in saving and credit schemes, project planning and fundraising skills for LCR leaders and pastors in all of the church's 17 parishes

throughout Rwanda. This has resulted in the creation of saving groups run by women, young people and other parishioners for small income-generating schemes and larger construction projects, where the government usually provides the land and covers operating costs.

“Educating our parishes on local resources mobilization and leadership has been of great significance. It has led our church to positive transformation, said LCR Bishop Mugabo Evalister. “As I look back where we started and compare it with what I observe today, I see parishioners’ energy and commitment to build infrastructures such as schools and chapels by their own initiatives, and to me this means a lot for church growth.”

In addition, six parishes in Umutara district in Rwanda have mobilized local resources and labour for the construction of a resource center in Nyagatare. The center will be used for meetings and conferences, with the goal of generating income for the LCR.

The project targets marginalized and destitute women and youth by providing them with opportunities to improve their economic and social situations through saving and credit management skills. Between five to 10 saving and credit associations have been created in 17 parishes by women and youth leaders. After three years of saving and keeping small livestock such as pigs, chickens, rabbits and goats, group members have saved 30 % of their annual income.

“I want to thank my parish leaders for making me aware about joining a group for saving and lending as it restored



Tree plantation in the Matimba parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rwanda. Photo: LWF/J. Brummer

my dignity as a woman,” said Sarafina Niyonsaba, a member of the Kibungo Parish Women’s Group. “I no longer spend my money on beer but save it. I applied for a loan, which enabled me to own four goats, and today my neighbors no longer disrespect me.”

“The Lutheran Church in Rwanda stands out as an example of a church that makes genuine efforts to achieve self-sufficiency. It illustrates that more than the infrastructure or financial means it is the attitude of people and their true commitment that makes a church grow and gain importance in its local context,” said Julia Brümmer, DMD program assistant to the secretary for Project Implementation and Monitoring, after visiting the LCR in June.

“In Rwanda, the commitment and will of the church leadership has carried along the members in the congregations and thereby empowered

them to become agents of their own development,” she added.

The DMD-supported project has also increased community awareness of environmental issues aimed at helping the LCR become a partner in reducing soil erosion and pollution. Six tree nurseries have been planted in six parishes in order to develop greenbelts alongside church properties and parishioners’ homes, as well as provide a source of income.

“Two years ago when we started creating consciousness for generating resources locally, I did not understand how it was going to work,” said LCR District Pastor Rev. Theoneste Ruhinda. “But I’m happy today when I see how parishioners through their own resources and initiatives are able to build schools, churches, and many destitute women in parishes are saving the little they earn and lend among themselves for their wellbeing. God is great.”

Zimbabwe Lutheran Church Project Helps Save Lives, Promote Public Awareness

DMD Supported Project Provides Health and Prevention Care

MUSUME, Zimbabwe/GENEVA (LWI) – A project run by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member church in Zimbabwe with support from the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) is playing an important role in helping to reduce

the number of new HIV infections in the Southern African nation and educating communities about the disease.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) initially started the project in 1999 to offer pastoral

care to people affected by HIV and AIDS. It broadened its work to include increased advocacy and awareness raising in response to the 2002 ‘Breaking the Silence’ initiative, when LWF member churches in Africa agreed to

work together to fight the pandemic. Today, the “HIV and AIDS Awareness and Prevention Care for People Living with HIV & AIDS and Orphans” includes a home-based care center in Musume in the southern district of Mberengwa. It provides voluntary testing, treatment and counseling, life skills training and income-generating initiatives such as vegetable gardens.

The project also aims at reducing stigma and discrimination by integrating an AIDS theme in parish activities and by involving those living with the virus in all church activities and decision-making processes.

Isheunesu Dubiwas was one of the first people to publicly declare his positive HIV status in 2003, and now works as a caregiver at the Betseranai Care Center in Musume. He says his involvement with the project changed his life. He gives credit to the food distribution approach that included free supply of nutritious porridge to HIV-positive people.

“We were given porridge to attract all those who did not yet want to disclose their HIV status,” Dubiwas says. “So when the porridge was distributed people were able to disclose their status just because they were attracted by the porridge, which was also good for our bodies.”

With an estimated 1.4 million people living with HIV, Zimbabwe is among the five countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the highest cases of people living with the virus that causes AIDS. Despite a reported drop in the prevalence rate from a peak of 33 percent in 1999 to 15.6 percent in 2009, the disease remains a serious threat—with 600 new infections daily—according to the United Nations agency UNAIDS.

Home Visits by Volunteers

Today, the Betseranai Home-Based Care Center has 223 trained volunteers who make regular home visits

to people living with HIV to monitor their health status and family situations, identify orphans and vulnerable children, and conduct the prevention of mother to child transmission.

“The impact of the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe on the lives of people living with HIV is more than visible. Not only has the project saved lives, but at the same time it has changed minds,” said Julia Brümmer, DMD program assistant to the secretary for Project Implementation and Monitoring, after visiting the Betseranai Center in June. “It is heart-warming to see how those who received services from the project ten or 15 years ago have now become service-providers to their peers.”

Partnerships

The ELCZ is also involved in advocacy and networking with other organizations, including government departments, other non-governmental organizations, AIDS groups, and national and international partners.

“The HIV and AIDS work of the ELCZ is a great example of how bilateral funding support, the work of LWF regional expressions and LWF support can complement each other in bringing the local efforts of a member church to life,” Brümmer said.

In addition to the LWF, the Church of Sweden and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America fund the project. The sub-regional Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) AIDS program also provides capacity building support and is involved in a related awareness project for young people.



An income-generating garden for people living with HIV and AIDS in Musume, Zimbabwe. Photo: LWF/J. Brümmer

Papua New Guinea: Mainstreaming Youth Leadership

Interview with Reuben Mete, the first National Youth Director

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea/GE-NEVA (LWI) – Reuben Mete treads new ground. He is the first National Youth

Director in Papua New Guinea who was elected under the new criteria – him being younger than 30 years.

In an interview with Lutheran World Information (LWI) he talks about the challenges in engaging youth in his



In visiting congregations with youth ministries, Reuben Mete often ventures off the beaten paths.
Photo: LWF/ M. Renaux

church context and the rural society of his country.

How do you involve youth in church leadership?

Involving youth in church leadership has been very challenging for me as being the first National Youth Director within the youth age range of 24 -30 years. It will firstly have to come from creating our youth policy and tool kit guidelines of the process and requirements in appointing church leaders.

The issues, concerns and voices of youth are not always listened to. Many young participants also move out of the

church, because being a youth leader is only possible as a volunteer and they are not getting paid.

Mainstreaming our youth participation and youth leadership is a way forward we are working on.

In your experience, what are the concerns and particular challengers for youth in PNG?

Youth in the ELC-PNG context means youth who are often unemployed and don't receive education. Thus, many of the youth leaders have already passed the youth age of 30 and some do not want to quit their

leadership to younger youths that are coming up.

The National Youth Desk which is the National Coordination body of ELCPNG youth ministry needs a better infrastructure and funds which is a challenge now due to the financial situation of the church.

Do youth engage in these questions? If so, how?

Yes; they mainly engage through Social media and informal meetings.

What does it mean for you to be part of the world wide Lutheran community?

We are still trying to be more engaged with the global programs. At the moment the internal issues and reorganisation of the church takes priority. Another point is that equal representation of youth in decision making needs to be improved.

What are your plans for commemorating the Reformation Anniversary?

We have an initiative called "PNG change makers", where we identify, train and support 500 young Lutherans who have passion to bring changes to their communities. We want local people to provide local solutions to local challenges and problems.

Mass Deportation of Migrant Children to Central America

LWF Member Churches Criticize Action by the U.S. Administration

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has criticized plans by the United States Administration to expand the detention of families with children from Central America and to expedite deportations for thousands of unaccompanied migrant children and return them to their home countries without due process protections.

The U.S. government said that border patrols have caught 57,000 unac-

companied minors—some of them as young as four years of age—crossing into the U.S. since October 2013, up from 28,000 in the previous fiscal year. Three quarters of the children are from the three Central American countries—Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, with the remainder from Mexico.

More than 16,000 children from Honduras have been apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border since October. 14, 000 children from Guatemala and

13,000 from El Salvador were also caught by border patrols. An estimated 5,000 of those Honduran children have been deported, or are in the process of being deported, by U.S. immigration authorities. In addition, several flights have already brought dozens of mothers and children back from the U.S. to Guatemala, and children have been returned in groups to El Salvador.

LWF Council member and Executive Director for the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in America (ELCA) Global Mission Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla said the children arriving in the U.S. are leaving their home countries to seek protection from drug and sex trafficking, hunger and poverty and other risk factors rendering children vulnerable.

The social, economic, environmental, and political conditions in Central America make it one of the most vulnerable regions globally. The murder rates in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala are among the highest in the world, with Honduras having the world's worst outside a war zone, as street gangs have become increasingly linked to drug traffickers moving cocaine from the Andes region to America. Estimates indicate that 70 percent of Hondurans are unable to earn an income necessary to meet their basic needs.

"For years our companion churches in Central America have been struggling with the problem of growing violence in their societies that has its roots in poverty and inequality. My appeal to United States decision-makers is to respond to this humanitarian crisis in a comprehensive way," said Malpica Padilla.

"Our response must address both the immediate needs of newly arrived migrants here in the United States, as well as critically review our economic and security policies toward the Central American region and consider different approaches than we have in the past," he added.

"We have to remember first of all that these are children, and look at them through child welfare lenses rather than enforcement lenses," commented Ralston Deffenbaugh, LWF Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights. "What's in the best interests of the child? It's a measure of how violent and unsafe the situation is in Central America that desperate parents would risk their children's lives by sending them off on a dangerous and uncertain journey of migration. No parent makes such a decision without good reason. Countries of refuge, such as the United

States, have a moral and legal obligation to protect these children. And a crucial part of that obligation is to be sure not to return the children to exactly the same situations where their lives were in danger in the first place."

Through Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA members are working with Lutheran church companions and strategic allies, such as the Baltimore-based Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, to respond to the needs of unaccompanied and migrant children.

"We are working with Lutherans and local communities to reunite thousands of children with family living in the U.S. and to care for children without family in loving homes," said Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service President and CEO Linda Hartke.

"What is at stake—we believe—in addition to the lives and dignity of individual women and children and families, is the threat of a significant shift in protections for all people who flee violence around the world. We cannot accept any response by the U.S. administration that seeks to forcibly and indiscriminately return these children, who have made perilous and courageous journeys, back to a life-threatening situation."

The LWF has an active World Service program in the region and a history of close accompaniment of

the churches and people of Central America. At the LWF Council, meeting in Bogota, Colombia in June 2012, the Council called upon "the governments of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador to hear the cries of their people, to respect and protect human rights, to enforce the laws of the land, and to put an end to impunity by bringing to justice those who commit acts of violence."

The Council also urged "the strengthening of programs for the security and safety of women, girls, boys, and youth," including access to education, employment, and the opportunities for a dignified life.

Bishop Medardo Gomez of The Lutheran Church in El Salvador said it is "the mission of the churches in the region to respond to the crisis by providing pastoral care to the unaccompanied children who return to their counties."

"The unaccompanied children that migrate are in search of life. The El Salvadoran Lutheran Church collaborates in emergency aid through long-standing pastoral support," he said. "We are blessed that most of the churches in the region are organized to offer pastoral support through networks built with ecumenical organizations and civil society. It is my hope that governments will participate in the response to the crisis as well."



Rally in Wisconsin against deportation of children, July 2014. Photo: Light Brigading (via Flickr, CC-BY-NC)

New Coping Skills despite Slow Recovery from Drought in Southern Angola

Confidence among LWF-Supported Communities but Assistance Still Needed

ONDJIVA, Angola/GENEVA (LWI) – The last four years for subsistent farmers in Onkanga village, in Angola’s southern province of Huila have been anything but predictable. Since 2010, life here has revolved around a three-season cycle of heavy rainfall and severe flooding; followed by a drier but short cultivation period with some harvests; then prolonged drought with severe food and water shortages.

In 2014 it rained early, and heavily, says 63-year-old Tucangui Tyululu. “We planted the seeds that we had received last year. And, although we could not cultivate a big piece of land, we have a good field of maize and millet, and expect good returns until the next harvest in April or May.”

Like thousands of vulnerable families in Huila and Cunene provinces that were severely affected by prolonged drought in 2012 and 2013, the widowed mother of five got through the most critical periods with emergency food assistance from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola (IELA) and other members of the ACT Alliance forum in the country.

“It was the worst drought in years. It did not rain here, not even a drop. It was horrible,” Tyululu recalls. “All the seeds we planted did not germinate and there was no grazing grass for our livestock. Our traditional wells dried up and animals started dying of hunger and thirst. Whatever food we managed was given to children, and we elders used to stay for two to three days without a proper meal, only depending on wild fruits.”

Today, she is grateful for the drought response assistance—maize meal, beans, cooking oil and salt—coordinated through the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) Angola program. “Thank God we have passed through the critical period. Without this help, I



A demonstration farm for drought-resistant sweet potatoes in Gambos municipality, Huila province, southern Angola. Photo: LWF Angola/Bely Mangika

would not be standing here,” she adds. Families also received agricultural seeds and were taught how to prevent diseases such as cholera.

Tyululu’s household can now manage two meals per day, but she is still cautious about their food security in the future. “We still don’t know if the rains will continue or stop again as it happened in the last years,” she says.

Food and Awareness Raising on Hygiene

The drought that also hit neighboring Namibia was the worst the region had experienced in over a quarter of a century, with the border province of Cunene needing urgent assistance for more than 600,000 people—half of its population.

In Onepole one of the driest places in Cunene, “there was no drop of rain the whole year; a total dryness that we have never seen before,” recalls Kaponha Daniel Sikongo, who has served as the area community administrator for the last 22 years.

Sikongo praises LWF Angola, the Lutheran church and ACT Alliance for the

support to nearly 3,500 people “as they struggled through a period of malnutrition, disease and huge losses of livestock.”

While the government provided some assistance, it was low and often interrupted by inaccessibility to the remote areas due to bad road conditions. The LWF-coordinated support also offered meaningful spiritual and material support. “We received food and we supported the most vulnerable people—the aged, orphans, the handicapped and families headed by women,” he adds.

The communities in LWF’s drought-response areas also received millet and maize seeds for planting, hand hoes, and hygiene kits alongside awareness education to promote sanitation and hygiene and prevent diseases.

Significant but not Enough

Michael French, DWS program officer for Angola, says that despite the timely rainfall this year, the impact of the drought in Angola’s southern provinces is far from over. As many families did not have food stocks, “they started eating

the under-ripe crops from their fields. Therefore, the returns from this year's crop though significant, may not last as long as expected," he said, following a recent assessment visit to Angola.

DWS Angola interim country representative Mr Abrao Mushivi says without additional assistance, it could take communities like Onepole three to four years to recover from the drought. "All together, families lost about 60 percent of their 2 million cattle—in Cunene province alone—and they rely on these stocks for livelihoods," he notes.

Mushivi tells of one farmer who had 72 head of cattle but now has just 12. "In some cases, there is no hope yet. It is not just a loss of livelihood but according to their tradition, it is also a loss of dignity," he emphasizes.

LWF Angola and its local partners continue to work with the drought-recovering communities. Most families are now able to eat one meal a day consisting of maize meal or millet, watermelons, squash, pumpkins or green vegetables from their fields.

The local authorities commend the LWF and partners' sanitation and hygiene promotion efforts in several villages, pointing out that no new reports of waterborne diseases had been reported in the respective emergency response areas. The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) component included distribution of aqua tabs for water treatment, rehabilitation of several water pumps, construction of animal drinking troughs and potable water points, benefiting more 7,000 people and their livestock in several villages.

New Crop Varieties and Sustained Advocacy

Cultivation of drought-resistant food crops is part of the training on disaster-risk reduction. LWF Angola has distributed cassava and sweet potato cuttings to organized farming groups in Huila and Cunene. Such groups also set aside seed multiplication and demonstration plots for the newly introduced crop varieties. The local administration provides a tractor to plough the land.

IELA Bishop Tomás Ndawanapo says pastors are reporting that the situation is improving a year after the drought, but he is still concerned that "hunger is still felt" in some areas. The assistance from the LWF and its partners has been very important, he adds. "We will always be ready to collaborate to support our people."

Mushivi emphasizes the need to maintain ongoing advocacy among the populations, "with a strong focus on restoring and securing sustainable livelihoods."

The LWF is the longest-serving international non-governmental organization in Angola, where the DWS humanitarian work began in 1986 in collaboration with IELA. Long-term priorities include education and literacy skills, advocacy for basic rights and capacity building to increase household food security and diversified livelihoods.

(Mr Abrao Mushivi, LWF/DWS Angola interim country representative, contributed to this article.)

Typhoon Haiyan: Building Back Better and Resilient Communities

LWF Assistance Provides Shelter and Livelihoods for Vulnerable Families

ESTANCIA, Philippines/GENEVA (LWI) – She describes it as her 67th birthday gift, and though it is categorized as transitional shelter, this is the only home for Nevita Romero Montermoso since she lost her house in Central Philippines nine months ago.

"I do not own any land, we live here as caretakers. But now the landlord allowed me to put up this shelter with flooring and attached comfort room [toilet], which is far better than my old shelter," says Montermoso, who lives with her adult son in a new two-roomed house in Estancia municipality, Iloilo province.

Her family is among millions of people who lost loved ones, homes, property and livelihoods following the super typhoon Haiyan, which struck

the Philippines' central region in November 2013. Emergency support provided through the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) has since enabled nearly 150,000 survivors in the worst hit regions of Tacloban and Iloilo to slowly rebuild their lives including the establishment of community-based disaster response mechanisms.

Montermoso says she and her son who works as a casual laborer in the nearby Estancia town are lucky to have survived, but their bamboo-mat house with iron sheet roofing was destroyed. "For 24 hours I had no food, until we received some food the next day from local individuals." They managed to salvage some of the materials, which they later used to construct a makeshift shelter.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) supported NCCP's intervention coordinated through ACT Alliance. In the initial emergency period, the most vulnerable people received rice, cooking oil, sugar, salt, skimmed milk, vegetables, sardines and dried fish.

Better Habitation, Restoring Livelihoods

"And then in mid-July they [NCCP] gave us this new house. They told me that it is a transitional shelter, but I consider this as a permanent home for me. In my old house, some parts of the roof allowed in rainwater, and we had no proper floor," she adds.

Through an initiative dubbed 'building back better habitation', the NCCP



Following Typhoon Haiyan, Ms Nevita Romero Montermoso, 67, lived in the make-shift shelter on the left for nine months before moving to her new NCCP house in mid-July. Photo: LWF/NCC

Typhoon Haiyan rehabilitation program is helping around 3,000 vulnerable families to clear habitable areas and rebuild more sturdy houses in the typhoon-prone regions of Tacloban and Iloilo. The assistance targets the poorest among the poor, female-headed households and families with disabilities. The new houses are built with reinforced coconut timber poles and marine plywood boards for walls, with firmly secured galvanized iron roofing and cemented floor.

The NCCP assistance is also about restoring livelihoods, some of which depended on the sea.

For 37-year-old Maricel Demapanes, a mother of seven children of whom the eldest is aged 16, the typhoon obliterated the only source of family income—fishing. Her husband's diagnosis with a terminal illness last December only complicated the situation, but things are looking up since she started her new job as an

administrative assistant at the NCCP ACT Alliance office in Balasan.

Before typhoon Haiyan struck, the family of nine lived with Demapanes' widowed mother in a rental house near the oil refinery in Botong town. The fierce storm not only damaged their house but also caused extensive oil spillage, which affected the fishing activities on which many families depended. "My little regular income of up to 300 pesos (USD 7) from fish sorting and filling was seriously affected," she recalls.

She describes the NCCP emergency intervention with basic food items as "the best quality relief supplies we received from one source after the typhoon."

Afterwards, the small income from the available petty jobs, the government's cash support of 1,400 pesos (USD 32) per month for two months, and occasional assistance from her family barely sustained the family, including buying medicine for her sick husband and keeping the children in school.

Demapanes says they have come far since the typhoon's devastation. When the oil spillage totally damaged their house, they moved to an evacuation center, where they first lived in tents and then moved to makeshift shelters constructed with material salvaged from their first home, until they received a temporary shelter kit from a non-governmental organization.

Managing Disaster Risk

"With a new job since mid-July I feel that I am secured with a regular income, and I can plan my family expenditures," Demapanes says. She is also happy to be part of a team that is helping the local communities acquire the necessary awareness and skills to manage the risk of disaster in a region with regular storms.

"We are grateful for the assistance received, and continue with our prayer to God to 'Give us this day our daily bread,'" she adds.

Mr K. G. Mathaikutty, a member of the LWF emergency roster in Asia currently assessing LWF-NCCP intervention in Tacloban and Iloilo, says that while recovery for Typhoon Haiyan survivors will be slow, progress has been made in setting up a reliable community-based disaster response mechanism. "The goal is to ensure awareness raising that helps communities to prepare for emergencies such as typhoons, coordinate assistance effectively, and build back better and more resilient communities," he adds.

(Mr K. G. Mathaikutty, a member of the LWF Department for World Service emergency roster in Asia contributed to this article.)

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