

Lutheran World Information

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Statue of Katharina von Bora, Martin Luther's wife, in Wittenberg. Photo: LWF/E. Neuenfeldt

Lutheran “Women on the Move” – A Contribution to the Whole Church

LWF International Working Group Launches Three-Year Process

WITTENBERG, Germany/GENEVA (LWI) – An international working group of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has launched the communion’s “Women on the Move” process as part of the preparations for the 500th Reformation anniversary.

The “Women on the Move – From Wittenberg to Windhoek” (WMWW) conceptualizes a movement that will include all the LWF member churches in articulating the fundamental contribution of women to Lutheran witness in the entire church and in society.

At the group’s first meeting, 22-25 February, in Wittenberg, the city of Reformer Martin Luther, the 23 women theologians and church leaders from

all the seven LWF regions developed a framework to implement “Women on the Move” from 2015 until the anniversary year 2017, which coincides with the LWF Twelfth Assembly.

The group coordinated by the LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) program also developed a work plan around four thematic approaches namely, women in leadership and decision making; women doing theology; documenting a series of “her-stories” accounts of women’s experiences and contribution to the on-going Reformation; and how the LWF Gender Justice Policy



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Bishop Younan Assures Egyptian Copts of LWF Communion Prayers

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) has assured the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt of prayers and solidarity from the Lutheran communion following the recent killings of Coptic Christians by extremists affiliated to the militant group Isis.

In a letter to Pope Tawadros II, Younan, also LWF President, said the killing of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya was not only an attack on humanity and on followers of Jesus Christ, but also “against people of every religion who stand for peace justice and freedom.”

“Your struggle is our struggle; your grief is our grief,” the LWF president wrote to the Coptic church leader, assuring him of prayers from the LWF communion.

A video released on 15 February depicts the killings of the Christians in Libya, believed to be kidnapped Egyptians.



Photo: Francisco Martins, Creative Commons CC-BY-NC

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can help to empower churches in their respective realities and contexts.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge emphasized the importance of this process in helping the LWF communion to understand women's concerns as not only pertaining to a certain group but to the whole church. "It is more fundamentally about the church wanting to become an expression of being a reconciled body, being carried by the word of God, and inspired by the eschatological vision

of the human family living together," he said.

The topics being elaborated are "not on behalf of women [...] but on behalf of the church and the Lutheran communion," Junge added.

He reminded the participants that the outset of the Reformation was anchored in a movement of mainly young people who mobilized in tremendous ways in order to convey anew what God's word meant to them in their contexts.

"I hope therefore that 'Women on the Move' is going to help us remember that Reformation is and remains

a movement—of God's spirit in this world, of a wind that you cannot control, that reaches into people's hearts and minds and gets people into movement."

In addition to other resources, the WMWW platform will feature "Her-stories" from the different LWF regions, starting with some of the first ordained women in Lutheran churches. Women leaders from the LWF member churches will also reflect on opportunities and challenges relating to the global movement of celebrating 500 years of the Reformation.

Lutherans, Catholics and Mennonites at Halfway Point in Trilateral Dialogue

Commission Studies Baptismal Practices and Traditions

ELSPEET, Netherlands/GENEVA (LWI) – The five-year trilateral dialogue between Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Mennonites focusing on baptism has reached its halfway point, with the continued study on "Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church."

The trilateral dialogue commission of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), held its third meeting, 9-13 February at Elspeet, Netherlands, on the topic, "Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith."

Besides hearing presentations on the topic of the meeting from all three dialogue parties, the commission this time paid special attention to baptismal rites in the Mennonite tradition. It further reviewed the work of the two previous meetings, and agreed on an outline for a final report due in 2017. The members also had opportunity to meet with leaders of the local Mennonite community to learn about the life of the Dutch Mennonite church today, including their practice of baptism in a highly secularized society.



Participants of the trilateral dialogue in Elspeet. Photo: Alfred Neufelt/MWC

LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations Rev. Dr Kaisamari Hintikka, commission co-secretary, reflected on the dialogue process thus far. "From the perspective of the painful experiences that the three Christian communions had 500 years ago, it is remarkable that we are able to meet today to discuss in a respectful manner the issue of baptism, which at the time of the Reformation led into persecution of

the Anabaptists—whose tradition the Mennonites are carrying today—both by Lutherans and Catholics," she said.

At their meetings, commission members study the Bible together, helping to create an atmosphere of sharing and trust. "I believe this will help the commission to address the otherwise rather challenging issues relating to our different understandings of baptism and gives fresh impulses for the topic of the dialogue," she added.

The MWC hosted this year's meeting at the Mennorode Conference Center, an important house for international Mennonite meetings since the 1920s. The meeting was co-chaired

by Archbishop Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga of Colombia (Catholic), Prof. Friederike Nüssel of Germany (Lutheran) and Prof. Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay (Mennonite).

The fourth session of the trilateral commission is scheduled for 28 February to 4 March 2016 in Colombia, where it will discuss "Discipleship: Living Out Baptism."

Planning Worship Life for LWF Assembly in 2017

Articulating Assembly Theme in Bible Studies, Prayers and Hymns

GENEVA (LWI) – The International Worship Planning Committee (IWPC) for the Twelfth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has begun exploring how worship and prayer life will be organized at the next LWF assembly, to be held, 10-16 May 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia.

The eight-person team of liturgists, church musicians and pastors representing each of the seven LWF regions, two consultants and LWF staff, held their first meeting in Geneva, 2-6 March.

They discussed how the assembly theme, "Liberated by God's Grace" and its sub-themes would be articulated in worship services, Bible studies and devotions, prayers and hymns throughout the eight-day meeting hosted by the three Lutheran churches in Namibia. The committee identified Bible texts and possible songs from different regions.

As the assembly year coincides with the commemoration of the 500 years of the Reformation, the team also began to envision worship around the anniversary.

The IWPC was appointed by the LWF Council in June 2014. It is chaired by Canadian pastor Rev. Dr Stephen Larson, who also served at

the English-speaking congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva (ELCG), and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Other members are Rev. Sonia Skupch, General Secretary of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP) in Argentina; Prof. Jochen Arnold, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany); Rev. Lilla Molnár, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary; Ms Karin Runow, Church of Sweden; Michelle Mu Le Wong, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia; Rev.

Seth Mesiaki Ole Sululu, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania; and Rev. Dr Martin Nelumbu, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN).

It includes two consultants, ELCG music and choir director Rev. Dr Terry MacArthur, and Dr Sakari Löytty, a consultant for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, who previously worked with the ELCIN in developing new "African" liturgy.

The IWPC will present its draft report to the LWF Council in June this year.



Participants in the first IWPC meeting in Geneva. Photo: LWF/IP. Mumia

Leadership Should Foster Unity, Says Russian Lutheran Archbishop Brauer

Solidarity for Reconciliation and Peace in Ukraine

MOSCOW, Russia/GENEVA (LWI) – Archbishop Dietrich Brauer, recently consecrated as head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia (ELCR) says the archbishop's role is critical in connecting two parts of

a vast church with different traditions, history and spirituality.

Speaking to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* following his consecration on 8 February in Moscow,

Brauer affirmed his commitment to continue fostering unity within ELCR, which is made up of two regional churches—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in European Russia (ELCER)



Archbishop Dietrich Brauer. Photo: ELCROS

and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East (ELKUSFO).

“Despite differences, we are united by our common history and the church structure,” he said. “In this respect, the archbishop is an important figure, who connects both parts and makes an important contribution in the unity of the church,” Brauer added.

Brauer was elected as ELCR archbishop at the church’s synod last September, and was until then, ELCER bishop and interim archbishop of the Russian Lutheran church, which has congregations spread out between Moscow and Vladivostok. He succeeds retired Archbishop August Kruse.

Relations with Neighboring Church in Ukraine

The new archbishop also reflected on relations with the neighboring sister church, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (GELCU), especially in the midst of the current violent political struggle in Ukraine involving pro-Russian militia.

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia has always tried to support sisterly contacts with the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine,” said Brauer. He noted that

this year’s 6 March World Day of Prayer services in Lutheran churches in Russia will include prayers for peace and reconciliation with Ukraine. Plans are under way to resume in 2016 full-time theological education at the ELCR Theological Seminary in St Petersburg, and Ukrainian students will be invited to take part, he noted.

Following the 2014 referendum that rendered Crimea to the Russian Federation, seven Lutheran congregations in Crimea were advised by the Bishops’ Council of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS) that they could remain under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian church. In spite of the political changes, internal decisions of belonging to one of the Lutheran churches “will be made by the congregations of Crimea independently and on their own,” the archbishop added.

The ELCROS Federation groups together the ELCR, ELKUSFO and other regional Lutheran churches in Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Lutheran Witness in Russian Society

On Lutheran church witness in Russian society today, Brauer said ELCR’s ecumenical engagement with the Rus-

sian Orthodox Church on one hand, and with other Protestant movements on the other, are important contributions. It is also a “church of modern theology,” as it increasingly works to make Lutheran theology accessible to people in the local language. “Our local theologians are publishing books in Russian and translating works by German Lutheran theologians,” he added. The church also organizes theological seminars and runs a radio program on Lutheran theology.

The ELCR is a visible church in the country’s cultural life, Brauer explained. “It is a place to develop church music and culture: in all cities where we have historical buildings and organs, we offer church music concerts. This is a huge contribution to the cultural life of Russia,” he added.

Lutheran Communion Accompaniment

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was represented at Brauer’s consecration by the Vice-President for Central Eastern Europe Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny (Hungary), who delivered a congratulatory letter from LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge.

The general secretary assured Brauer of the Lutheran communion’s accompaniment and support as he assumes his new role of leading the largest LWF member church in geographical expansion. “Your duties as bishop of European Russia are diverse and challenging,” Junge wrote to Brauer. “The expectations of an archbishop and his presence in the midst of these immense distances are great,” he added.

Church leaders from ELCROS and other churches throughout Europe, as well as Russian government officials attended Brauer’s consecration at St Peter’s and St Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Cathedral in the Russian capital.

ELCROS joined the LWF in 1989. Its regional churches comprise around 450 congregations with over 70,000 Lutherans.

Diakonia that Promotes Justice, Vocation and Dignity

LWF Workshop in Manchester to Focus on ‘Convivial Economy’

TALLINN, Estonia/Geneva (LWI) – When Rev. Avo Üprus became pastor of the Harkujärve Community Church on the outskirts of Tallinn in northwestern Estonia 25 years ago, he and his congregation began working with prisoners, homeless children and drug users.

They invited these marginalized people to live in the church then helped them to live together in an apartment. Today the congregation offers meals for children, employs one of the girls in its kitchen and organizes summer camps with Nordic church partners.

The 50 children they feed regularly at the Peeteli congregation of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC) focus on the question, ‘Who are you?’ As they get to know the church community better, word spreads among the children that the church is a trustworthy place to get help.

“First, we should restore a person, a human being and not put them into prejudiced boxes like criminals,” Üprus commented recently while introducing visitors to his congregation’s diaconal ministry. “We need to start with giving and restoring respect.”

This holistic approach of diakonia is one of the initiatives that was shared at The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) workshop on “Convivial Economy” held 2-6 March, in Manchester, United Kingdom. Üprus alongside 25 diaconal actors from across Europe and guests from Africa and Asia also reported on new ways of working and making policy changes.

The Lutheran Church in Great Britain hosted the workshop organized by the LWF Europe desk at the Department for Mission and Development in collaboration with the International Academy for Diaconia and Social Action (interdiac) in the Czech Republic.

The convivial economy concept emphasizes the principle of justice, vocation and dignity to reverse concentration of wealth, income and power in a few hands and create a more equal distribution of society’s goods in order to reduce poverty and exclusion.

Collaborative Actions

Participants visited several projects in Manchester that relate to the workshop

sub-themes: debt, corruption and transparency, welfare and work, migration, and creation and the environment. They reflected on the themes from theological and ethical standpoints then work on collaborative actions.

They shared stories from their regions on the impact that economic pressures are having on marginalized communities, vulnerable groups and forgotten places. They also reflected on what Lutheran theology and biblical sources offer regarding economy and work.

In Estonia, Üprus is working to develop his congregation’s notion of convivial economy, creating a community church that works with economically vulnerable families while forging collaboration among churches and other partners. The church will hold a conference this year to further these goals.

The LWF European Diaconal Process published its first results in 2013 in the document *Seeking Conviviality: Reforming Community Diakonia in Europe*. Conviviality – the art and practice of living together, in solidary and sustainable communities, has become a focal lens for transforming diaconal action in European churches.

“I hope the Manchester workshop, with its focus on ‘convivial economy’, will lead us to address background challenges of sustainable community throughout Europe. It is also an opportunity to identify how we can build up concepts and action towards an economy that safeguards dignity and justice as cornerstones of living in community,” said Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, LWF area secretary for Europe.

Vogel-Mfato noted that this year’s meeting included guests from other LWF regions. “Living in a globalized economic world, we seek collaboration and reciprocal learning with col-



Children from Peeteli in a 2014 summer camp organized by the EELC on Saaremaa island, Estonia.
Photo: Avo Üprus

leagues from the Lutheran communion member churches in the global South,” she added.

The LWF European Diaconal Process began in 2011, and this was the second gathering in its 2014-2016 phase. In

2014 the diaconal actors focused on enhancing electronic platforms and the theme for 2016 will be convivial theology.

Holy Land Lutherans Adopt Gender Justice in Ecclesiastical Court Constitution

Bishop Younan: Women’s Contribution to a Historic Decision

JERUSALEM (LWI) – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) has adopted a constitution for its Ecclesiastical Court, which henceforth provides for gender equality when dealing with family issues including inheritance.

In this interview, ELCJHL Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, explains the impact of this historic decision by the Lutheran church Synod on 27 February.

In practical terms, how will the gender justice principle be applied in the ELCJHL Ecclesiastical Court?

Similar to other Ecclesiastical Court constitutions in the Holy Land, that of the Lutheran church dates back to the 1850s Ottoman empire jurisdiction, which gave every religious community the right to deal with the organization of its members’ family life. In the event of marriage and inheritance, separation or divorce, these courts did not accord equal recognition to the spouses and children. Women received only 1/8 (one eighth) of the inheritance that men got, and male children were entitled to twice as much as their female siblings. With the new constitution for the ELCJHL court, each spouse has equal responsibility in family life and children are treated equally. In cases of separation or divorce, responsibility for the family and its affairs will be shared equally by the spouses. When it comes to inheritance, each spouse will be entitled to an equal share of the family’s inheritance, and the male and female children would receive an equal proportion.

The Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas endorsed the estab-



The ELCJHL Synod looks over the revised Constitution of the Ecclesiastical Court before it was put to a vote. Photo: D. Hudson/ELCJHL

lishment of the Lutheran Ecclesiastical Court in September 2014, after which the church synod worked on having a constitution for the court. Ecclesiastical court decisions are executed by the Ministry of Interior.

This is a historic decision in a long process of deliberation that the ELCJHL started in 2009. I give thanks to God that we have given justice to both genders, and we have rectified the wrong history towards women. In the Middle East, it is the only ecclesiastical court constitution that incorporates gender justice.

How was the constitution deliberation process?

The general approach was constructive. Credit must be given to over eight years of work that the ELCJHL women’s committee has devoted to the issue of gender justice: organizing conferences among the women, bringing the various interpretations to

congregational and national church committees and so on. The pressure of the women’s commitment has created awareness in the church, their work has been remarkable and challenged us all to have a holistic and inclusive constitution for our constitutional court and we have taken their work very seriously.

Of course the process was not without challenges. In the beginning, some members had difficulties understanding why only the Lutheran church needed to change a tradition to which so many people in the Middle East region are accustomed. I have been personally involved not only at synod but in congregational meetings together with fellow pastors. We have been explaining why the theological understanding of all individuals as created equal by God and redeemed on the cross equally by Jesus Christ must be applied in our legal decisions on family matters.

In the end, we have had constructive, positive, discussions. We have learned together that the church has a pastoral influence on legal matters that touch on family life. Our role is to support our members in building family lives that are based on justice and equality for both men and women, and for boys and girls.

The ELCJHL lawyers worked very hard with the synod in establishing a constitution that is in accordance with our Lutheran understanding.

Did the LWF Gender Justice Policy [adopted in 2013] have an impact on the ELCJHL ecclesiastical court process?

The LWF gender justice policy has helped us to understand the theological arguments in a focused way. We are now contextualizing it and translating it into Arabic to help us reflect on our own context with a focus on equality between both men and women, and on domestic violence. It will also help us to participate in contributing to the country's constitution so that it reflects the holistic approach to gender.

The ELCJHL ecclesiastical court includes four members—two pastors and two lawyers one of who is a woman, all appointed by the church synod. Its court of appeal includes the

ELCJHL Bishop, one pastor, and two lawyers one of who is a young woman.

What are the next steps for the ELCJHL church constitutional process?

The ecclesiastical court and church constitutions are intertwined, it's not either or, they are interdependent. We are restructuring the whole church, and we are now looking at how we can have quotas for men, women and youth.

We come as Arab Christians with distinct Lutheran theology that adds value to the whole ecumenical movement, both regionally and globally.

Youth Leadership: An Opportunity to Work across Generations in India

Interview with UELCI Youth Secretary Chrisida Nithyakalyani

CHENNAI, India/GENEVA (LWI) – Youth leadership development programs run by Lutheran churches in India are equipping young people with skills that help communities take up issues of climate change, and help students in career development. Ms Chrisida Nithyakalyani, youth secretary for the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI) looks at some of the initiatives supported by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) through its Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

Why is youth empowerment important in the Indian Lutheran churches and wider society?

The most precious resource of any nation is a prospective, potential and productive youth, an asset that is abundant in India's diversity of young faces, comprising 65 per cent of the country's 1.2 billion people. They are not only the future but they are the present leaders and pillars of the church and the society. However, even though their presence is required in the decision-making and leadership processes, they are often silenced



Ms Chrisida Nithyakalyani, UELCI youth secretary. Photo: LWF/P. Mumia

from presenting their views, insights and observations and assume a passive role of being only 'listeners.' Hence, it is important that young people have space in the churches where they can raise their voice.

Which are some of the issues that you have actively taken up as UELCI youth to strengthen progress in society?

Through the UELCI Youth Desk, youth secretaries of the eleven LWF

member churches [in India] help the young people engage in creative skills that encourage them to overcome challenges such as poverty, climate change impact on vulnerable communities, and speaking out on violence against women.

Our youth leadership development programs for the member churches in four regions (Tamil, Telugu, Hindi I and Hindi II) target 25 youth, both male and female, resulting in the training of

100 young people annually. They learn skills to define strategies; set goals and achieve results; how to ensure accountability and transparency; and the practical implications of taking leadership and participation in churches. The trained youth serve as trainers of more youth in their home congregations. In one session, Ms Amita George from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh said: "Leadership is not an authority or holding position; instead it is an opportunity to listen to and respect the voiceless." Benison Kachhap, a male participant from the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chotanagpur and Assam said: "Youth leadership involves working with all the age groups of a congregation at the grassroots level and filling the generation gap through intergenerational working."

We are also a vibrant communion towards a greener future, as we take up the issue of climate change and eco-justice seriously. We organize climate change awareness programs at national and regional levels and take up practical measures such as tree planting and 'youth gardens'. We also engage in observing important

days such as World Water Day [22 March] by providing worship resource materials and raising awareness on the need to preserve water for sustainable development.

Since 2014, as part of the second phase of the youth empowerment project, we offer career guidance and counseling programs. The training includes 'employability' skills and information sharing on government welfare schemes such as scholarships, and job search strategies including preparation of curriculum vitae and facing interview processes.

In a recent career development session, Ms Premlata Baskey, an undergraduate student at S. P. Mahila College, in Dumka, Jharkhand, said: "The mock interview helped me to get rid of my fears and gave me an idea of how an interview would be as I am a fresher. I am sure that I can attend an interview with confidence, which will be helpful for my future."

What are some of the challenges you face in carrying out such tasks?

One of the challenges we face is that the leadership training and skills given to the participants are not always

put to use by the member churches. Young people should be encouraged to take up leadership roles. The churches need to provide opportunities.

What have you learned from your leadership role in UELCI, and how has it helped you grow as an individual?

As a young person, I have enjoyed great experiences and exposure in this journey with youth in the UELCI member churches. It has helped me to know about the reality of Indian youth and their skills at grassroots level.

As an individual, I have grown as a young leader in a national organization [since 2013]. My engagement with the ecumenical movement has grown by networking with national partners like the National Council of Churches in India, globally with the LWF and World Council of Churches (WCC) where I represent the Indian Lutheran churches on the Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation (EEF/WCC).

(The UELCI comprises 11 LWF member churches representing around 4 million Lutherans.)

Refugees in Cameroon Assisted through LWF/UNHCR Partnership

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will partner with the UN refugee agency UNHCR to assist refugees in Cameroon. After conducting an assessment in 2014, LWF developed a concept note for refugee assistance and was accepted as a partner by UNHCR in Cameroon for 2015.

The refugees in Cameroon originate from the Central African Republic (CAR), where conflicts between Seleka and Anti-Balaka militia caused unrest and displacement. The United Nations witnessed a great influx of refugees in early 2014, when the situation in CAR deteriorated. Previously Cameroon already was home to a great number of refugees who arrived from CAR in 2006. The last year saw a great number of new arrivals due to civil unrest in CAR and Nigeria.

The refugees from CAR who sought asylum in Cameroun settled mainly in the villages in the East and Adamawa regions. Many of them joined relatives and friends who had come to these villages as refugees in 2006.

According to UNHCR estimates the Adamawa region is currently hosting 63,795 Central African refugees, with another 151,290 in additional refugee in the East region. The majority of the refugees are women and children.



LWF team leader in Cameroon helping women and children prepare food. Photo: LWF Cameroon

LWF has now started to implement activities in water and sanitation and creating sustainable livelihoods. It is also planned to conduct workshops for peace and reconciliation.

Back to School in Maban, South Sudan

Students in Refugee Camp Start New Term

BUNJ, South Sudan/ GENEVA (LWI) – “What is science?” the teacher asks. In front of him are about 40 teenagers dressed in light purple school uniforms. “It’s the study of living and not living things. How do you know a living thing?”

Faiza raises her hand. “A living thing can move from one place to another,” she says in a clear voice. “Very good,” – the teacher makes a note on the board while the students applaud. The answer, seemingly simple for a teenager, marks a big achievement: English is not Faiza’s mother tongue. Since she started school nine months ago, she has mastered the language well enough to express herself in class.

Faiza is one of 2,508 students enrolled in The Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) in the refugee camps in Maban County, South Sudan. Funded by EU Children of Peace (ECHO), the program is devised to help older students who missed school because of conflict and displacement finish their primary education and go to secondary level. There are 10 ECHO funded ALP centers in Yussif Batil and Kaya Refugee Camps, and another four ALP centers funded by a different donor in Gendrassa Refugee Camp.

Interrupted Education

Like all of her classmates, Faiza has come from Blue Nile, Sudan, where fighting has been ongoing since 2011. The conflict has forced families like Faiza’s to flee their homes and go to South Sudan. The fighting in Blue Nile has interrupted the education of the teenagers for years and regular school attendance is new to them. The ALP helps them finish their primary level education. Since the students are older, they cover the curriculum of two primary school years in one year.

Two years ago, Faiza, her mother and her siblings settled in Yusuf Batil



ALP level 3 students in class in Yusuf Batil refugee camp, Maban county, South Sudan. Photo: LWF/ C. Kästner

camp in Maban. They were allocated a small space and building material for a hut and a fence to shield the family’s living space from the neighbor’s. Yet the door, made of branches and a plastic sheet, stands wide open, and more children than belong to the family are playing in the small yard.

“I can hear the school bell from here” Faiza says. “When I hear it, I know I have to hurry”.

At 16 years, Faiza is one of the oldest girls in her class. Most girls are only sent to school at a younger age. “My mother thinks this is important,” the girl, one of the best learners in the third level, says. Many girls like Faiza are in danger of being married at a very early age, sometimes as young as 13 years, and consequently leave school.

Challenging Environment

The students in Maban are learning under difficult circumstances. They speak Arabic and have to learn English first. There is a shortage of qualified teachers. The ongoing conflict in South Sudan delayed the start of the project. Tension between refugees and the host community, teachers on strike

demanding pay rise, staff evacuations due to sporadic fighting and threats of militia attacks keep interrupting the school year.

The fighting in South Sudan has made road transport impossible, delaying the delivery of textbooks and building materials. Just recently, the desks for the schools in Gendrassa, Batil and Kaya refugee camp had to be flown in by air cargo. Still the classrooms in Maban do not have walls. The students sit on homemade benches and used oil tins from the food distributions in a structure which is little more than a roof to provide shade from the scorching heat.

Serve their People

Despite the circumstances, they appreciate the possibility to learn. “At home, we had to buy our own books,” 18-year-old Nikola says. “Here, they are being provided by the LWF”. Nikola wants to become a doctor so he can help his family. He has two younger brothers with physical disabilities. They move on crutches, and cannot attend school because it is too far, Nikola says. He hopes one day they’ll be able to go to school like him.

“Many children in ALP have dreams to be teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers and serve their people as leaders in future when they go back home to Blue Nile,” LWF interim team leader Julius Tiboa says. “Like Faiza, they will need a lot of self-discipline to complete their ALP, join secondary education

and eventually sign up for courses in higher institutions of learning. LWF and its partners are contributing to the realization of these children’s dreams in the remote parts of South Sudan”.

LWF has been operating in Maban since September 2012. The core activities include Education and Child

Protection. LWF works in the three refugee camps Yusuf Batil, Kaya and Gendrassa with a total population of more than 78,000 refugees. The team consists of 540 staff, 483 of them being refugee staff.

Ajuong Thok Refugee Camp Starts Computer Training

Teaching in the Global Village

AJUONG THOK, South Sudan/GENEVA (LWI) – “In most cases the mouse is green and the keyboard purple,” the teacher explains. 27 men and women stretch their necks and inspect the back frame of their PCs to find the connector ports the young woman in front of them is talking about. It’s the first class of the “Informatics, Computer and Technology” (ICT) project at Ajuong Thok refugee camp.

Sponsored by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), UNICEF and Vodafone foundation, 2000 primary and secondary students will be given tablets to learn basic computer skills. But before the students can be instructed, the teachers have to learn how to use a computer themselves.

Therefore, the group of 27 men and women put in an extra shift after

their classes are finished. It is a mixed group, some trained teachers, others volunteers, among them two women. “I want to learn how to use a computer, because they store data,” Artum Noah Kansal (27) says. “All the information you need is there”.

The mother of four, like everyone else in the camp, comes from the Nuba mountains. After conflict broke out in the Kordofan region, Sudan, she fled with her family. Schools free of charge were the reason she relocated from Yida refugee camp, where she first arrived, to Ajuong Thok.

Overcome the Road Blocks

The LWF is the sole implementer of education at Ajuong Thok camp, with

three Primary and one Secondary school, and the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for over-age learners of primary level, which is financed by the ECHO Children of Peace grant. “The students are eager to learn,” team leader Anne Mwaura says, “but there is zero literacy on computers, even among the teachers”. When Vodafone foundation offered tablets to teach computer skills to the students in school, it became evident that the teachers themselves needed computer training. The first group to be trained consists of 150 teachers and graduates.

“We want to learn how to use the internet,” Mati Amin Kadam (26) says. He teaches at Napata Primary School, which together with Soba Secondary School was connected to the World Wide Web a few months ago.

“We are moving towards a global village,” LWF team leader in Ajuong Thok, Anne Mwaura, says. “By teaching the refugee students how to use computers, we help them catch up with the rest of the world.” On a more practical level, they would also be able to stay in contact with relatives who live in other camps or have been re-settled abroad.

Mwaura hopes that the teachers will also use the internet for good quality teaching in school. “The big challenge in South Sudan is that there are not enough academic resources,” Mwaura explains. “However, there is good teaching material available online.



Primary school teacher Afrina Zechariah Anabak inspects the connection ports on her computer. Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

The teachers can get case studies and additional material from there.”

Since road transport is often impossible either due to conflict or flooding in the rainy season, school materials are hard to come by. The internet could help the refugees in Ajuong Thok overcome the road blocks which often delay their supplies.

Distant Learning Programs

But Mati Kadam is not only thinking of his students. Like many others, he

also hopes to further his own education with the help of distant learning opportunities. “I would like to complete university and study management,” he says. His colleague Abass Jalhalla Koriss plans to attend long distance classes to further qualify as a teacher.

Offering tertiary level education is also the dream of LWF team leader Anne Mwaura. “Education is the pull factor for refugees to favor Ajuong Thok camp,” she says. Schools in Ajuong Thok are overcrowded. The first group of primary students has

been sitting their final exams, which will enable them to go on to secondary school. Soon the secondary school will have the first graduates as well.

Mwaura hopes to provide tertiary level education through distant learning programs, for example from the University of Juba. In the long term perspective she thinks of linking up with other facilities for various fields of study. “This would be the only tertiary training available in the state,” she says.

Something to Take Home

Students in a South Sudanese Refugee Camp Embrace Education

AJUONG THOK, South Sudan/GENEVA (LWI)

– “I came here to learn”. 18-year-old Mobarak Habil Ibrahim introduces himself. He fled the conflict in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan, and left his parents. His temporary home is Ajuong Thok refugee camp in South Sudan.

Mobarak does not know when he will be able to return, but like his classmates, he is determined to make the best of his current situation. “We faced many problems. We have war in my country, our enemies attacked us. So we have come here to learn, to get what will benefit us in the future,” he says.

Schools at Home Destroyed

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is the sole implementer of education in the expanding Ajuong Thok refugee camp. LWF is running three primary and one secondary school as well as child rights clubs and seven child friendly spaces, something like a day care for children of all ages. One was set up for the host community which at one point demanded equal education opportunities as were given to the refugees.

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) which Mobarak and 1,800 students are attending is a special intervention for over-age learners who have

missed part of their primary education due to conflict and displacement. The program helps them to catch up and eventually join their peers in secondary school.

Education opportunities are the main reason for refugees to come from Yida refugee camp to Ajuong Thok. “It is very important to the Nuba people,” LWF Education Coordinator Annet Kiura says. “The conflict has destroyed the schools in Kordofan. When the students come here, they are eager to learn”.

In the morning the three Primary schools resound with the noise of more than 2400 students, while younger children carry their baby siblings to child friendly spaces to learn the alphabet and their first English words through songs and play. There is a long list of open teacher positions at the headmaster’s office in Napata Primary school. Like their students, the teachers come from Kordofan. They now teach in English and according to the curriculum set by the South Sudanese Ministry of Education.

New Challenges Ahead

Visit Soba secondary school after school hours. In the afternoon heat, the tents which were set up as temporary classrooms are filled with stu-



ALP students at Napatat Primary School, Ajuong Thok refugee camp. South Sudan.
Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

dents. Music is playing quietly while the teenagers are revising and doing homework. A student shares his notes from the science lesson on the big blackboard, the others copy carefully into their books.

The students sit on homemade benches made of logs, and write on their knees. There is an atmosphere of quiet concentration; newcomers join without making a sound. The only unruly thing is felt pen writing on the canvas of the tent. "Life isn't easy" it reads, and: "Never give up!"

Mobarak, like many of his classmates, wants to become a doctor. He loves science and maths. Others strive to be teachers, engineers and pilots. "There are many things I did not know in the Nuba mountains" Mobarak says. "But when I came here, I learned. We found hospitals and secondary schools. Here everything is good".

Since the conflict in the Nuba Mountains escalated, Ajuong Thok saw an increase of refugees. The camp, once set up for 10,000 refugees, had 21,000 inhabitants by mid-February. 1,000 people arrive every week. UNHCR estimates that the camp will hold 40,000 people by the end of 2015. Half of them will be children, 43 percent of them of school age.

Make a Difference

It is up to LWF to meet this challenge. Already classrooms are overcrowded, with one teacher for 70-100 students. "We need at least twice as many primary schools and another secondary school" LWF team leader in Ajuong Thok, Anne Mwaura, says. Resources however are hard to come by.

Due to the volatile security situation in South Sudan, everything

has to be delivered by expensive air cargo, which has raised operation costs. The trucks which were meant to bring school desks, books and play material for the child friendly spaces last spring got stuck during the rainy season and now only slowly make their way through checkpoints of different conflicting parties.

Still lessons continue, even during holidays. "Education is one of the interventions to keep children from risk, girls from getting pregnant and boys from being drawn into forced labor or even recruitment," Mwaura says.

Malachi Farouk Aballah, the ALP head teacher, hopes to raise a new generation for his country. "It is very important for them to acquire knowledge and skills," he says. "When they finish they can get good jobs. Some of them will be teachers, they can teach this country".

Seeds, Tools and Consideration

Rebuilding Livelihoods in DR Congo

GOMA, Democratic Republic of Congo/GENEVA (LWI) – Havuga Pitie, 32, can still recall the day when he was forced to leave the village where he had spent all his life. "I was forced into exile when rebels attacked our village in 2010," Mr Pitie tells his story. "The atrocities and pillaging they committed would prevent the most courageous men from returning to our village".

Today, Havuga Pitie is the head of the Mushwa Community Based Organization (CBO) in Bukinanyana village, Masisi. After four years of moving from one camp for internally displaced people (IDP) to another, the father of two children decided to return to his home village and restart life. A livelihoods project of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) helped him take life into his own hands again.

A Matter of Dignity

"I felt as if every day I spent in a camp was depriving me of my dignity, of my



Members of the Bukinanyana village organization looking at the pig they purchased. Photo: LWF/DRC

value as a human being," Mr Pitie describes. Not being able to provide for his family was especially difficult for him. "I had always been a hard worker at home and always relied on my own strength. Now I was made to line up in the IDP [internally displaced people]

camp for food. The day a very young man shouted at me for not queuing made me especially angry. I then decided to leave the camp and go back to my village".

In the meantime an agreement had been signed between the warring

parties, so Mr Pitie was able to return safely to his village. When parliamentary and presidential elections approached in 2011, Mr Pitie wanted to exercise his right to vote at his place of origin.

Back in his village he learned “that an organization named LWF was assisting people to restart life,” Mr Pitie says. The LWF has been providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflicts and natural disasters in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 1994, when it assisted refugees of the genocide in Rwanda.

The main sectors of the LWF’s intervention in DRC are food security, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, psycho-social support and rehabilitation of social infrastructures, such as schools and health centers. Recently the LWF has begun to implement development projects in the more stable areas of Oriental Province.

Havuga Pitie was highly motivated to be part of such a project. “The LWF staff gave me exactly what I needed: seeds, tools and consideration,” he says. “They were talking nicely and respectfully to people. Their behaviour motivated the returnees to follow their advice and be organized into community-based associations”.

A Village Comes to Life

The villagers were organized into collectives who were farming large stretches of land together. “Being part of an association was a new experience for me,” says Mr Pitie, who has previously owned a small farm of his own. “It was simply greater to discuss and share information with other villagers than to stay isolated. It was as if we were living in one big family shaped by what had happened to us. We were

happy to see our village coming to life again”.

With LWF’s support, Mr Pitie cultivated two acres of vegetables and crops. Additionally, the association cultivated 11 acres of a collective plantation. The production from the collective plantation was sold to purchase a pig and rent an additional plot for another collective plantation. The farmers were also able to keep 200 kg of seeds for the next agricultural season.

“It is magical how this project has revived our village,” Mr Pitie says. “We have never felt so close together as villagers and we feel confident that we are now becoming better prepared to face difficulties in the future. Each home has food, decent food, and we do not have to queue in a distribution line to receive food. It feels good to be able to rely on oneself for food!”

“Educated Women Are the Key to Development and Peace”

Teachers Graduate in Ali Addeh Refugee Camp, Djibouti

ALI ADDEH, Djibouti/ GENEVA (LWI) – “My dream of being a role model for my three daughters has finally come to pass,” says Alemsahay with a smile. She is one of 40 refugees in Djibouti who have just graduated with a diploma in Primary Education from Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology. All of them are refugee teachers in Ali Addeh and Hol Hol camps, Djibouti, where The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assists with Education and Child Protection.

Alemsahay came to Ali Addeh refugee camp in 1992 at the age of 17 years. She had just completed grade 12 in school. “I joined LWF as pre-school teacher in 2011; I believe that this opened the door for me and gave me this great opportunity to develop my skills and knowledge in the teaching profession,” she says. “Being a teacher was the turning point in my life, an opportunity that has brought me to where I am today”.



Graduates with diploma at the graduation ceremony. Photo: LWF/Kenya-Djibouti

A Role Model

Holding a university degree makes Alemsahay feel confident and stronger. “At the beginning of the course, I wasn’t very sure I will make it. The curriculum

taught in English appeared complex and loaded but I believe my persistent efforts with support from God have made me thrive,” she says. “What fuelled my resolve further was the faith

my three daughters had in me. They expected me to succeed in life so that I could be their role model, provide for them and secure their future.”

“My first born in grade 8 at Wadajir Primary school in Ali Addeh refugee camp has already set his mind focused on becoming a graduate in the next 5 years to beat me,” she says.

“It was absolutely fantastic to be there and see how the whole refugee community supported the graduates, and how children saw their teachers be recognized as ‘real teachers,’” Lennart Hernander, LWF Country representative for Kenya-Djibouti, says. “We are certain that there were many among the refugees who thought: I also want to go to University and graduate. They can do it, I can do it!”

UNICEF and Church of Sweden/Sida have been the main funding

partners for the project. “We also want to mention our Education Technical Advisor Hellen Choge and former Senior Education Officer now Project Coordinator in Kakuma, Collins Onyango who are the two who planted the seeds for this program when they both worked in LWF Kakuma in 2009” Hernander adds.

“Everyone has the potential to learn”

After the successful completion of her course, Alemsahay began saving money to construct a classroom in her compound of the refugee camp. She wants to help the mothers in her section to learn, because she is convinced that “educated women are the key to development in the community and to peace for a world full of conflict.”

She believes that education helps women grasp opportunities which will benefit them and their families, preparing them for the labor market and help them understand their civil and reproductive rights.

“Everyone is intelligent and has the potential to learn,” she concludes. “Thank you LWF for believing in me, walking with me and helping make my dream come true”.

The LWF is assisting refugees from Somalia and South Sudan in Kenya and Djibouti with Education, Child Protection, assistance to people with special needs and community services.

(Contribution by Robai Naliaka, Sub Programme Manager LWF Kenya-Djibouti)

Empowering Women in Macaya, Haiti

Capacity Building and Human Rights Education

MACAYA, Haiti/GENEVA (LWI) – Buckets of butter, canned tomatoes and corn, gallons of oil, garden seeds and big white sacks of grain: The community store in Despagne is well stocked. “This is the first time we manage such a large amount of goods and finances,” one of the leaders of the women’s group

says. “The shop allows us to accumulate income. We could already use part of the profit to buy 16 sheep and distribute them to the most vulnerable members of this group.”

The shop is part of the Lutheran World Federation run project “Capacity building and improving the socio-

economic situation of rural women in Haiti.” Financed by FinnChurch Aid the project aims to increase the influence, decision-making ability and socioeconomic status of women in their respective communities.

More than 320 women in Macaya have so far been benefitting from the initiatives of the project. Activities are including literacy classes in especially set-up “Alpha Centers”, consciousness-raising initiatives; training on women’s leadership, human rights and citizen participation in community life.



A woman in the community store in Despagne.
Photo: LWF Haiti/H. Enge

Pay for Education and Textbooks

The community store is supported through trainings in accounting and trade, enabling the women to analyze the market, determine the best time for selling products and to eventually make their business profitable.

There is also a project with vulnerable women on goat farming. “During

the school year in September 2014, I sold a goat that allowed me to pay school fees for my children, and to buy uniforms and shoes,” Latigot, a mother of seven, said.

For some of the initiatives it is yet too early to tell the results. Participants valued the human rights and citizenship trainings and plan to make their voice heard from now on. A 40-year-

old mother of ten children emphasizes the importance of reproductive health education in the community, even if it does not apply to her anymore: At the age of 40 years she is already considered elderly in her context

The majority of the participants emphasize how much the literacy initiative has changed their lives. A young woman who had never been to school

joined the third year of basic education after her training in the Alpha Center.

“I got married in June,” another woman says. “My husband did not know how to write. He could not sign the civil act, so I signed for me and for him. After that, he decided to come to the Alpha Center.”

LWF Solidarity with Danish People and Church after Attacks in Copenhagen

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good,” was the message of solidarity that LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge sent to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) following the 14 and 15 February attacks in Copenhagen, in which two people were killed and several policemen were injured.

In a letter to the Bishop of Copenhagen Peter Skov Jakobsen and the chairperson of the ELCD Council on International Relations Dr Mogens Mogensen, Junge encouraged the Danish Lutheran church to maintain its unbroken commitment to be a prophetic voice, supporting and upholding communities at all levels of society “to live together in justice and peace.”

The LWF general secretary expressed gratitude for the many ways in which pastors and church congregations are actively contributing to offering space for discussion. He mentioned the acts of solidarity shown with the Jewish people in Copenhagen and the joint statement of Christians and Muslims speaking out against violence and underlining the continued need for dialogue. Such response “bears witness to a common vision to uphold a public space where violence does not have a place and the respect and the dignity of each human being is upheld,” Junge added.

In the Danish capital and other cities, several churches marked the events through Sunday morning worship prayers, special messages and hastily organized memorial services.

The Copenhagen Cathedral Dean Rev. Anders Gadegaard emphasized the importance of standing “shoulder to shoulder as a sign of peaceful coexistence, respect for freedom and democracy,” in spite of religious and political differences.

There was candle lighting and quiet reflection at St Jakob’s Church, located near the *Krudttønden* cultural center where the

first shooting took place during a panel discussion on the freedom of expression. In his Sunday sermon, parish pastor Rev. Lars Ottosen emphasized the equal value of all human beings, which for Christians, is affirmed by baptism. “In the eyes of God we are all equal and no man or woman can kill in the name of God. That would be an insult against both God and humans,” he said.

Sharing words of comfort in a twitter message, Copenhagen Bishop Jakobsen prayed for “courage to live in freedom with one another—not against one another.”

(With additional information from Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen, General Secretary of the ELCD Council on International Relations)



In front of the Copenhagen Synagogue. Photo: Kim Bach, Creative Commons CC-BY-SA

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