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Rights-Based Approach Local to Global

Annual Report 2023



THE
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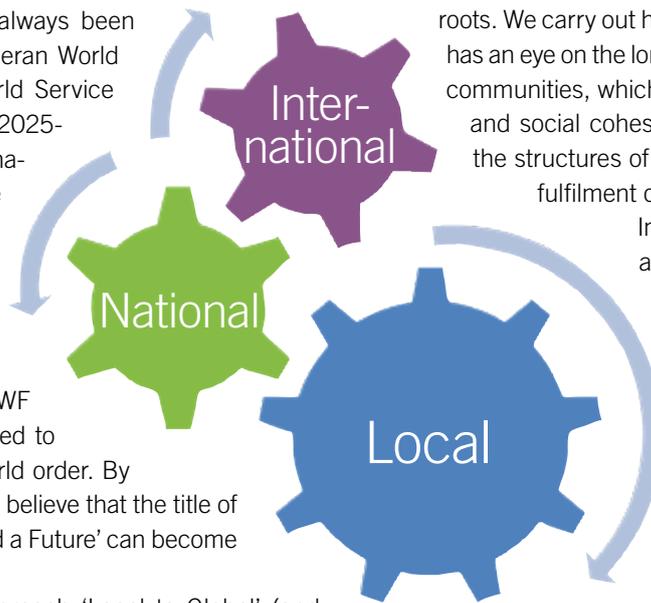
Overview

A rights-based approach has always been central to the work of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). As LWF World Service prepares its new global strategy 2025-2031, human rights will be emphasized even more strongly as the foundation of all that we do. In an increasingly turbulent and cynical world, where there appears to be an assault on the global consensus around the human rights framework, LWF will insist tenaciously on the need to defend this as a pillar of the world order. By holding on to this conviction, we believe that the title of our global strategy 'For Hope and a Future' can become a reality.

The LWF Rights-Based Approach 'Local to Global' (and back to local) – RBA L2G2L – is an expression of that conviction and commitment. It has also been a key driver of the visibility and credibility of RBA within LWF over the years, and has thus helped to ensure that RBA is mainstreamed as a central part of our identity as an organization. The 'local' element is where it starts: everything that we do is people-centered, focused on the rights and dignity of each individual – woman, man, girl, boy – whom we serve.

This report describes that RBA L2G2L approach around the world in 2023: rights of refugees in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda, of women in Burundi, Iraq and Jordan, land rights in Angola and Mozambique, and the rights of marginalized communities in Myanmar. These examples give concrete expression to our global Theory of Change (ToC) which expresses concisely our understanding of how change for the better can come about, and what our contribution can be.

Our global ToC reminds us that in a global climate of turbulence, crisis and the erosion of fundamental rights, through a people-centered approach, we recognize that those people are themselves the key agents of their own future. LWF stands in solidarity alongside those people and communities at the grass

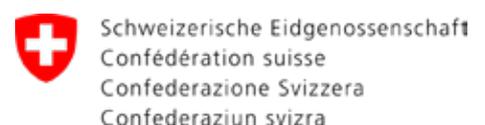


roots. We carry out humanitarian response which always has an eye on the long-term, which is based on trust with communities, which builds long-term resilience, peace and social cohesion. At the same time, we address the structures of society, working for justice and the fulfilment of fundamental rights.

In solidarity, we enable the voices and actions of those at the grass roots to be amplified at the national and international level.

'Local to global' is a programmatic methodology which expresses this in a consistent and replicable way. Every rights-based or advocacy intervention is carried out as part of a clear and consistent logical framework, with activities at local, national and international level, earthed always in a particular country and in a particular locality in that country. Aiming for change for that locality, in that place, and holding to the discipline of specific indicators of local, concrete improvements in the rights, the well-being, and the lives of children, women and men at local level, is a way to hold ourselves accountable and focused on the ultimate goal of all this activity. The goal is that people not only have the theoretical 'right' to something established, but that they have the thing itself: good health, proper education, real opportunity, a healthy environment, economic security, and hope for the future.

Collaboration and co-creation with our friends and partners continue to be a key to this, including Bread for the World, Act Church of Sweden, Finn Church Aid (FCA), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the German National Committee, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Australian Lutheran World Service, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UPR Info and many more local partners. We are grateful as ever for our partnership with all of these.



ENGAGING IN THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

LWF has chosen to engage strategically in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a unique mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) which aims at improving the human rights situation on the ground of each of the 193 UN Member States. Since 2015, LWF has engaged with civil society partners in 12 countries, in activities ranging from supporting coordination, capacity-building, data collection, submission of alternative reports to bringing local voices to the UN

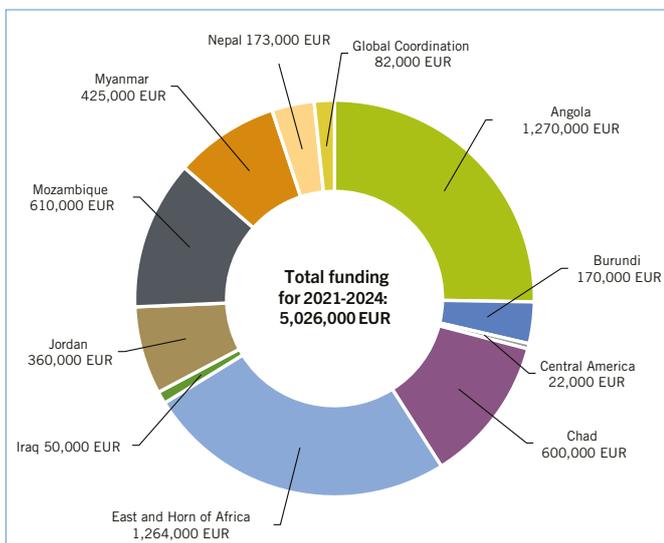


offices in Geneva to meet with diplomatic missions around the UPR pre-sessions or providing technical support to design the implementation processes.

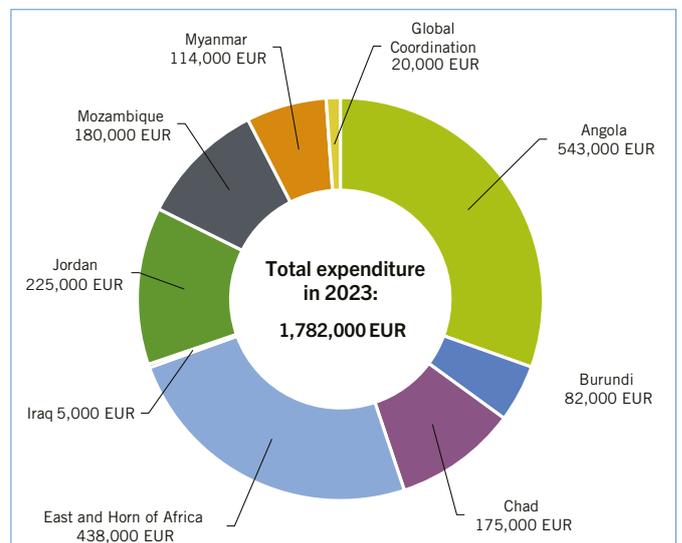
Countries engaged in Rights-Based Approach L2G projects in 2023



Overall funding for RBA local to global projects (2021–2024)



2023 expenditure for RBA local to global projects



1. Rights of Refugees

Promoting land rights and inclusion for refugees in Chad

LOCAL

LWF works in various refugee settings in the South and the Eastern part of the country, where the high influx of refugees in the last decades have stretched resources and put particular pressure on access to land for livelihoods. LWF and its partner ATURAD work both with refugees and host communities, providing seed capital for income generating activities to 149 beneficiaries (116 females, 33 males) investing in agriculture, breeding or other trades. 160 youth (71 females, 89 males) organized in eight groups were supported in developing their skills and activities in sewing, welding, carpentry and mechanics. 50 beneficiaries were trained on techniques for restoring degraded land for better yields in agriculture. As a result, 30 hectares of arable land have been restored for market gardening.

Through its partner APLFT, awareness on human rights and particularly vulnerable groups like refugees and women was raised through numerous community trainings, meetings gathering rights holders and local authorities, campaigns involving theater and drawing competitions, reaching over 5'400 people.



With the support received to develop his income generating activity, Harouna Adamou bought seeds and gardening equipment. His harvest is partly used to feed his family, and partly sold on the local market. Photo: LWF/M. Renaux

Thanks to the project, spaces were created for refugees to interact with host communities and authorities to negotiate and agree on access to land in a transparent and contractual way. Three champion villages that have done particularly well in this regard are being promoted as examples and rewarded with the realization of concrete projects to the benefit of three communities, like the drilling of a water pole. In addition, three information and community consultation sessions were held in conjunction with the National Commission for the dissemination of the content of the Asylum Law No. 027/PR/2020 and its implementing decree, reaching 137 people.

NATIONAL

LWF and its partner CADH (Collective of Associations for the Defense of Human Rights) have worked together to raise awareness

and capacity for civil society to engage in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). To prepare the drafting of an alternative report, data collection was conducted in 14 different towns through the local branches of the organizations in the collective. Interviews and focus groups were organized with victims of human rights violations, whistle blowers, key informants and authorities. Data was compiled on four thematic issues: institutional framework, socio-economic and cultural rights, civil and political rights and rights of specific groups and LWF priority issues of refugee and women's rights were included.

INTERNATIONAL

At international level, a delegation of three civil society partners and staff travelled to Geneva for the pre-session of the UPR and were able to express their concerns and recommendations as panelists in the pre-session as well as in an event organized by the EU delegation. They met bilaterally with five diplomatic missions and numerous other key stakeholders, including through extending their trip to Berlin. Emphasis was placed on recommendations on civil and political rights, children's rights, refugee rights and women's rights, particularly regarding female genital mutilation.

Refugee rights advocacy sees gains in Kakuma and Dadaab-Kenya

LOCAL

In Kenya, the project reached a broad spectrum of participants in the refugee camps of Kakuma and Dadaab, engaging 882 individuals directly (367 male, 515 female, and overall 20% youth). Through platforms facilitated by LWF, human rights issues were raised, with at least 30% resolved or referred for further action. Two legal aid clinics aided 149 community members, while advocacy forums enabled 60 rights holders to discuss issues with duty bearers. As a result, commitments were made, such as the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) investigating abuses related to loss of life, defilement cases, child labor, and assault cases by law enforcement officers, and adding a police post in Kakuma to address the issue of general insecurity.

Gender justice awareness was promoted during key international human rights days, with particular emphasis on Gender-based Violence (GBV) and relevant referral pathways. Additionally, a study was commissioned to develop a strategy to engage men in gender justice. Training sessions on human rights, advocacy, and related topics were held for representatives from refugee-led and community-based organizations as well as human rights defenders. The project also indirectly raised awareness for over 3,000 people through two radio talk shows in Kakuma and Dadaab, where information on human rights and relevant laws was shared, and participants' issues were addressed by hosts from LWF and the KNHCR.

NATIONAL

In collaboration with local partners and community-based organizations, including the Act Kenya Forum, LWF has significantly advanced refugee rights in Kenya, engaging 112 individuals (40% women). The continued collaboration and support to KNCHR since 2018 have resulted in a positive institutional change through the inclusion of refugee rights into the Commission programming, facilitating fact-finding missions, legal aid clinics, and training in Dadaab and Kakuma. This collaboration educates duty bearers on refugee rights, enhancing legal responsibility fulfillment. LWF also commissioned research on integrating preschool education for refugees into county and national education plans, specifically in Turkana County, to inform policy advocacy. Additionally, LWF's advocacy efforts with local partners increased knowledge on using the UPR for climate justice among 25 Act Kenya Forum members. LWF also supported the UPR Kenya Stakeholders Coalition thematic conveners to draft the UPR Civil Society Organizations Midterm Review Report for Cycle 3, indicating over 50% implementation of recommendations. A strategy aiming for 80% implementation before the 4th cycle underscores LWF's commitment to comprehensive advocacy and policy influence.

INTERNATIONAL

In building a critical mass for faith-based advocacy voices, LWF Kenya facilitated training sessions on the UPR mechanism in forums organized in Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, where 45 clergy and church leaders drawn from over 20 countries participated. In addition, there has been an emphasis on increasing local voices in regional and international human rights platforms. LWF Kenya engaged in the NGO Forum and the 77th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in Tanzania, joining a large delegation, consisting of 36 members from LWF's World Service Country Programs, representatives from LWF Member Churches, and partners. During a side event, LWF addressed "Gender-based violence: A silent pandemic among refugees, hosts, and internally displaced people in the East and Horn of Africa," engaging with over 60 humanitarian, faith-based, and government actors. LWF supported two local representatives from KNCHR and the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) to

participate as panelists to raise the issue of education and gender justice, which are LWF Kenya thematic priorities.

Best practice: Advocacy skills in action

The training on human rights documentation and reporting conducted by LWF and KNCHR led to the KADANA Refugee Network documenting a complaint from the Kakuma Refugee community. This resulted in the network submitting a petition to duty bearers in Turkana County, prompting the KNCHR to deploy an investigative team to address the raised issues, including denial of information and participation in cases of deaths handled by the National Police Service. The report from the investigation is yet to be made public.

2. Rights of Women and Children

Enhancing women's leadership in Burundi

LOCAL

The Gender Justice project made substantial strides in empowering women at the local level. 1,000 women, divided into 40 cooperatives in Cendajuru commune and in Gisuru, were able to improve their livelihoods thanks to trainings in Income-Generating Activities (IGAs), Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) management and micro-project start-up kits. Project participants elected 40 women leaders to represent them and advocate for women's socio-economic rights. These leaders participated in four training workshops to develop their leadership and advocacy skills.

Subsequently, they were actively involved in an advocacy campaign for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence and shared their messages on national media and through mass sensitization events.

NATIONAL

Notably, a national roundtable on women's rights convened key stakeholders to discuss and prioritize women's issues, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing gender inequalities within communities. 22 women leaders from Cankuzo, Ruyigi, and Bujumbura exposed challenges faced by Burundian women in accessing family resources, leading to poverty and discrimination. Women shared solutions and recommendations derived from previous communal and provincial roundtables. Representatives from key institutions like the National Land Title Services and the Independent National Human Rights Commission contributed additional proposals to address women's rights violations.



Gender Action Teams displaying the symbol for gender equality, on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, organized by UNHCR and Turkana County. Photo: LWF/M.Lukulu



Félicule Nijimbere is one the 40 women leaders involved in the Gender Justice Project. During the campaign of the 16 Days of activism, Félicule developed advocacy messages and shared them with a large audience through Yaga, a famous national media. “We, women leaders, want to see gender-based violence end. With the local administration, NGOs and religious leaders, we’ll share our message through sketches, songs and dances.” Photo: LWF/L.Gillabert

INTERNATIONAL A delegation of civil society partners and LWF Burundi staff actively participated in the UPR pre-session advocating for the inclusion of key elements related to gender issues and women’s rights, following the submission of a joint alternative report at the end of 2022. Through engagement with diplomatic missions and active participation in the Human Rights Council session in Geneva, the project amplified the voices of Burundian women and ensured that their socio-economic rights were considered. Furthermore, the project’s recommendations were embraced by various states during the UPR session, reflecting the impactful advocacy efforts undertaken and signaling a significant advancement in recognizing and addressing the rights of women at the national policy level.

Addressing barriers to women’s economic rights in Jordan

LOCAL LWF has worked to enhance women’s economic rights through two local community-based organizations, the Naya Foundation in Zarqa and Zahr Al Rumman Association in Irbid, engaging vulnerable women in community-based businesses. Female participants completed various technical and business trainings to prepare for the following phase of the community project. In Zarqa, women pursue collective community livelihood opportunities through a digital empowerment business, while in Irbid they engage in a healthy community kitchen. Notable achievements include the empowerment of 29 women through tailored training sessions and the establishment of a digital hub for knowledge sharing

NATIONAL At the national level, LWF has made significant strides in advocating for women’s rights. The organization identified and trained 33 youth advocates on advocacy techniques and labor laws, em-

powering them to raise awareness on critical issues such as workplace harassment and refugee workers’ rights. Additionally, LWF facilitated the development of two policy papers addressing key challenges in Irbid and Zarqa, focusing on unsafe transportation and workplace harassment, respectively. Furthermore, LWF facilitated the engagement of several advocacy team members in a media campaign. Through collaborative efforts with civil society partners, LWF led a coalition that drafted a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) shadow report, highlighting the rights of women and girls in Jordan. This report emphasized priorities like economic rights, gender-based violence, and legal reforms.

INTERNATIONAL On the international stage, LWF has been actively engaged in advocating for women’s rights in Jordan at the United Nations Human Rights Council. A delegation of staff from LWF Jordan and two local civil society partners participated in the UPR pre-session as well as bilateral advocacy meetings with diplomatic missions and key partners in Geneva. Our key issues were taken up and quoted in the final OHCHR document, underscoring the significance of its advocacy efforts at the international level.



Areej Az-Zoubi endured low wages and lack of formal contract and benefits in her job as pharmacist. Discovering the RBA project, she embraced advocacy for workers’ rights. Areej hopes that she can drive change starting at a personal level, aiming to create a community that resists unfair employment practices and fights for just and equitable working conditions through a cascade effect. “This will be achieved by small steps. First, by raising awareness about laws, we want to let people know it is alright to say “no” to such conditions. We will not be able to change the laws right away. But the plan is to raise awareness for 50 people, and then they will raise awareness for another 50, so through the cascade effect, we hope to achieve a meaningful change within the community.”

Photo: Zahr Al Rumman / Nusaiba Bashaireh

Advancing children's and women's rights in South Sudan

In the ongoing pursuit of advancing children's and women's rights, the year 2023 witnessed concerted efforts across local, national, and international levels, with a total of 1,802 rights holders and duty bearers directly benefitting from targeted interventions.

LOCAL

At the local level, emphasis was placed on capacity building, community awareness programs and economic empowerment endeavors. Specifically, initiatives such as the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence engaged 355 individuals, comprising 220 females and 135 males, facilitating crucial dialogues and actions to combat harmful practices affecting women, girls, and persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the establishment of Child Rights Clubs in schools directly empowered 115 children (56 females and 55 males), equipping them with the tools to recognize and address various forms of violence in their communities. The #EVAC campaign conducted in Ajuong Thok and Pamir refugee camps aimed at raising awareness and preventing violence against children.

Notably 437 children and youth (225 males and 212 females) from community structures like Child Rights Clubs, Child Parliaments and Child Protection Committees took the lead and participated actively in radio talk shows, inter-school debates, and community processions. These localized endeavors underscored the transformative impact of community-driven initiatives in advancing children's rights and fostering inclusive, resilient communities.

NATIONAL

At the national level, collaborative efforts between civil society organizations and government bodies yielded significant progress in monitoring and implementing Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations. Notably, LWF supported the South Sudan Civil Society Coalition for the UPR (SSCSC-UPR) to facilitate training sessions for its members (13 males and 12 females), enhancing their capacity in monitoring, documenting, and reporting on UPR recommendations. Significant events such as the commemoration of Universal Children's Day and the launch of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa underscored the collective commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of children nationwide. Additionally, the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, supported by the National Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, saw the participation of 2,000 individuals, predominantly women.

INTERNATIONAL

Internationally the regional advocacy workshop held in Juba in June 2023 saw participation from 20 staff members representing LWF Country Programs of Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda, among others. This collaborative effort facilitated the identification of key priority issues and effective strategies for regional advocacy, culminat-

ing in meaningful engagement during the 77th Ordinary African Commission Session in Tanzania. LWF and its partners used this platform to address the silent pandemic of gender-based violence among refugees, hosts, and internally displaced persons in the East and Horn of Africa. These efforts underscored the interconnectedness of children's and women's rights with broader human rights agendas, emphasizing the need for collaborative action on a global scale.



Students raising awareness on child protection during a public match commemorating the Day of the African Child. Photo: LWF/D. Godfrey

Advancing land rights in Angola

LWF Angola program holds the distinction of being the longest-serving international NGO in the country, having launched relief operations during a period of intense civil conflict in 1986. Over its 37-year history, the program evolved from emergency relief to long-term development. As peace gradually took hold in Angola, LWF expanded its efforts to include sustainable development and rights-based approach initiatives, such as securing land rights and fostering economic resilience among communities. Following a thorough assessment, LWF decided to conclude its programmatic activities by the end of December 2023.

The RBA L2G project was one of the most successful projects of the program over the past eight years, supporting over a hundred communities to secure their land, and raising their capacity so they were able to conduct their own advocacy initiatives, enabling access to essential services such as transportation, education, and healthcare. At national level, support was provided to various platforms and CSOs across Angola to bolster their capacity in advocating for human rights and organizational sustainability, thus preparing for a smooth transition before LWF's exit of the country. This included technical assistance extended to a CSO coalition called the Human Rights Monitoring Group (GTMDH), to enhance their advocacy against legislative threats such as the proposed new NGO law and facilitate their participation in international human rights forums.

Examples of Impact in 2023

	Key processes	Key achievements
 LOCAL	In Ethiopia, LWF translated third-cycle UPR recommendations into local languages and distributed educational materials to national CSOs and human rights institutions, facilitating public education and awareness-raising efforts on human rights issues.	A total of 830 (480 females, 350 males) refugees accessed justice and legal support through court hearings, individual case support and legal information dissemination. In addition, nine refugee cooperative groups accessed work permits and business licenses (33 females and 12 males).
	In Uganda, LWF conducted trainings with local leaders on GBV prevention and response, including sessions on alternative dispute resolution, and facilitated engagements to promote environmental protection and land justice, enhancing community awareness and capacity in areas such as deforestation reduction and wetland protection.	Legal aid clinics in Adjumani, Pader, and Rwamwanja, sensitized refugees and host communities on human rights, Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms, and GBV prevention, resulting in 78 cases registered and significant community outreach with 731 participants.
	In Angola 25 agricultural cooperatives successfully delimited their land, a crucial step towards the final legalization process and thus already securing their land rights.	Communities demonstrated increased knowledge about human rights, leading to 24 successful advocacy initiatives (15 were led by women). These actions resulted in tangible improvements in social services, including transportation, education, healthcare, and agricultural support.
	In Myanmar, LWF upheld efforts to promote women's rights, distributing comic books on women's empowerment and gender-based violence to women's groups, in collaboration with local civil society and Community-Based Organizations (CBO).	LWF facilitated a national women's forum bringing together 40 attendees from local level CBO from Ann Township, Yangon, and Ayeyarwady regions) in a unique opportunity to share experiences, network and learn about peace and protection.
 NATIONAL	In Mozambique, LWF's partners JustaPaz and ASCUT were actively engaged in reviewing land laws through roundtable discussions with the government commission responsible for the revision. Their input is valued as a recognized platform advocating for inclusive land rights and protection against land grabbing from communities.	LWF's partners were actively involved in influencing the new National Land Policy. As a result, many concerns raised by civil society were integrated. It was ensured that land continues to be distributed through customary occupation, good faith, and obtaining Land Use and Benefit (DUAT).
	In Iraq, LWF reached out to four different organizations that submitted alternative reports in the previous Universal Periodic Review to plan joint engagement for the following year.	A training was provided for staff and civil society partners on engaging in the UPR and two LWF Iraq staff participated in a Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training in Geneva, leading to LWF Iraq designing an initiative for women participation in the upcoming UPR.
 INTERNATIONAL	LWF Geneva supported its country programs and local partners in Burundi, Chad and Jordan to submit alternative reports to the Universal Periodic Review. All highlighted women's rights.	Delegations from Burundi, Chad and Jordan participated in their respective UPR pre-sessions in Geneva. As a result of multi-faceted advocacy engagements, recommendations were made to the States Under Review highlighting LWF and partners' priority issues.
	LWF participated in the NGO Forum and the 77th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in Tanzania with a delegation of 36 members (16 females, 20 males) from LWF Country Programs and its civil society partners, All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) representatives and representatives from Member Churches.	A side-event titled "Gender-Based Violence, a silent pandemic among refugees, hosts, and IDPs in the East and Horn of Africa", was hosted by LWF, AACC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. The event featured the Special Rapporteur on refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in Africa and speakers from four countries highlighting the challenges of SGBV faced by refugee women, emphasizing the need for intervention by CSOs, collaboration with institutions, and learning from best practices.
	LWF Uganda submitted a joint CSO shadow report to the ACHPR on refugee rights that highlighted the human rights issues on the ground not raised by the government in the State party report.	As a result, the Special Rapporteur on Refugees used the CSO report and gave recommendations to Uganda on refugee rights for implementation in the next two years.

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Cover photo: Aline Bucumi, trained as an advocate through the LWF Gender Justice project in Burundi, speaks to national media Yaga during the 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. Photo: LWF/L. Gillibert

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