

Lutheran World Information

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Photo: LWF/M. Brown

2013 LWF Christmas Message From LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6)*

Dear sisters and brothers in the Lutheran communion around the world,

I send you my love from Jerusalem and I pray that the Babe who was laid in a manger in Bethlehem may be born daily into our hearts.

As the LWF's delegation to His Holiness Pope Francis presented the gift of a tea kettle used by Somali refugees in Dadaab camp, Kenya, this past October, the Pope excitedly called for an ecumenism of martyrdom, an ecumenism of common witness that shares the joy and peace of Christmas in our fragmented world. This is a challenge not only to us, but to the entire Christian community, to share this witness throughout the world and through our unity as Christ's children. Our common witness will only be strengthened if we recognize the faithfulness of the Gospel and the image of Christ in each believer and every human being.

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THE
LUTHERAN
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A Communion
of Churches

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LWF Gender Justice Policy

During the official launch of the LWF Gender Justice Policy at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge noted that several years of implementing a system affirming equal representation of both women and men in



LWF DTPW Director Rev. Dr. Kaisamari Hintikka speaks at the Gender Justice launch. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

the LWF had shown that quotas alone did not secure women's participation. "The Gender Justice Policy wants to address this particular dimension so that quota actually leads to and empowers participation."

The Women in Church and Society (WICAS) program at the Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW) coordinated the policy development together with the LWF Gender Advisory Group, comprising representatives from all LWF regions. The LWF Council officially adopted the policy in 2013. Junge thanked WICAS for leadership in the process and the advisory group members for their "time, wisdom and passion."

The launch on 10 December coincided with a joint DTPW and Department for Mission and Development workshop on women's mentorship and leadership training.

[Read reflections by some of the workshop delegates on the implications of the LWF policy for gender justice in their respective contexts: www.lutheranworld.org/content/lwf-gender-justice-policy-launch](http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/lwf-gender-justice-policy-launch)

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What did the people in exile think when they heard the message of Isaiah, a message filled with promise and redemption? Isaiah and all the prophets who responded to the challenges of exile carried with them a common witness of salvation to a people in mourning, a people who had been through great difficulties. This common witness breathed hope and joy to the hearts of the exiled people.

Today, let us carry this very same message of salvation and liberation for people yearning for wholeness and human dignity, for people struggling for freedom of religion, for nations seeking

economic and gender justice. Let us share this message to all who are oppressed, living in poverty, those who live as migrants and refugees, hopeless, displaced, or occupied.

Christmas is a time for remembering God's past faithfulness and recognizing our collective yearning for God's continued work of justice and wholeness in the world. Can this Christmas be a renewed call to our communion for an ecumenism of witness to God's continued faithful promise to us?

I pray this Christmas renew our commitment to a common witness that transforms hatred to love, oppression to freedom, war to peace, animosity to reconciliation, mistrust to trust.

Christmas will only have meaning if our common witness will offer Jesus a manger to be born into. The promised child has come to save us and he continues to bring this redemption to us. It is this Christmas that binds us together in the true hope of Christ that does not disappoint. For a child has been born to us.

And as we remember the Prince of Peace who found his way into the world in Bethlehem, we ask that you pray for the peace of Jerusalem, a city that is a mere kilometers away from where our Savior laid his head.

Merry Christmas and God's blessings to you for a new year.

Mandela Stood for Principle, Justice, Peace

LWF Praises Former South African President as "One of the Most Inspiring Persons of Our Time"

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has paid tribute to former South African President Nelson Mandela, who died on 5 December, aged 95, "as one of the most inspiring persons of our time."

"We join with his family, the people of South Africa, and people all across the world in prayer and mourning, but also in celebration of the character and accomplishments of this great man," LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said in a joint statement.

"He stood for principle, he fought for justice, he made for peace," the LWF leaders added in the message of condolence for the celebrated anti-apartheid activist, who served as South Africa's first democratically-elected president from 1994 to 1999.

During South Africa's apartheid period, Mandela was convicted of attempts to use violence to overthrow the then government, and was imprisoned for 27 years until his release in 1990, following a global campaign. In 1993, he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with former President Frederik W. de Klerk.

"He devoted his life to building a new South Africa—a country in which all are equal under the law, a country in which racial discrimination and apartheid have no place, a country in which, in the words of Martin Luther King, people are judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin," the LWF said.

During his time in prison, Mandela was resolute, never wavering in his confidence that the African National Congress anti-apartheid struggle was just and that it would end in victory.

"He taught the white South Africans—indeed all South Africans—that all have a place in the new South Af-



Tributes to Nelson Mandela in Soweto, South Africa.
Photo: LWF/I. Benesch

rica. All would be treated with dignity, all would be protected by the constitution, all would be full citizens,” Junge and Younan said.

Mandela, who voluntarily stepped down at the end of his first term as president, understood that reconciliation was key to a lasting peace in South Africa and that there was no room for

either vengeance on the one hand, or erasing the past and pretending there was no wrongdoing, on the other.

“He understood that a people without a memory is a people without a future,” the LWF emphasized. In setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Mandela allowed for a process of confession and forgiveness

so South Africa could move forward, the LWF statement added.

“Thanks be to God for Nelson Mandela,” the LWF leaders concluded.

[Read the full text of the LWF statement and view the illustrated story online:](#)

www.lutheranworld.org/news/mandela-stood-principle-justice-peace

Remembering Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918-2013)

The LWF paid tribute to the former South African President and anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela as a leader who “stood for principle, fought for justice, and made for peace,” in order to end racial discrimination in South Africa.

Mandela, a symbol of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, died on 5 December aged 95. He was buried on 15 December at his ancestral home in Qunu, Eastern Cape Province.

The LWF accompanied churches’ struggle to end the apartheid system from the very beginnings of Mandela’s imprisonment until his release. From 1963 until 1990, statements from LWF Assemblies, held normally every seven years, urged all LWF member churches to be actively engaged in opposing the apartheid system and all forms of racial discrimination in Southern Africa.

The Sixth Assembly in 1977 took the unprecedented decision to adopt a *status confessionis* declaring that the apartheid system must be rejected on the basis of faith and in order to manifest the unity of the church. The LWF governing body affirmed that “all Christians irrespective of race, through the sacrament of baptism are members of the one church,” and that the apartheid system in many ways hindered “the exercise of Christian fellowship.”

In the following years, tension between the Assembly call and the reality within Southern Africa was discussed. At its Seventh Assembly in Budapest



Mandela addresses the UN General Assembly in 1990. UN Photo/P Sudhakaran

in 1984 the LWF suspended two of its member churches in South Africa “intending that such action serve as a help for those churches to come to clear witness against the policy of apartheid,”

As the global advocacy against apartheid intensified, the LWF increased its engagement through other platforms such as study committees, consultations involving churches in the Southern African region, visits from the LWF and actions of the LWF Executive Committee and Council. The LWF Eighth Assembly in 1990 welcomed the release of Mandela from prison, and called for continued efforts to dismantle the structures and practices of the apartheid system. In June the same year, the LWF Council voted to lift the suspension of the two churches

and to maintain pastoral support to member churches in Southern Africa.

Freedom and Hope

Amidst ongoing negotiations for reconciliation in the country, then LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Gunnar Stålsett wrote directly to President Frederik W. de Klerk and Mandela in 1993, encouraging them to “show statesmanship and Christian responsibility by finding a creative and responsible formula to include all concerned for the sake of a peaceful South Africa, for which all of us hope and pray sincerely.”

The joint award of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize to de Klerk and Mandela was followed by the first ever multi-racial elections in South Africa in 1994,

with Mandela becoming the country's first black president.

"The victory against apartheid is one of the greatest prophetic signs in this century. The Lutheran churches around the world join all our sisters and brothers in South Africa in celebrating the new day of democracy," Stålsett wrote in his congratulatory letter to President Nelson Mandela, and pledged LWF's prayerful support to the newly elected leader of South Africa.

In his response to the LWF, Mandela thanked Stålsett along with many world leaders for his participation at his inauguration as President, describing the presence as "a clear sign of the acceptance of the new democratic South Africa on the world stage."

The Long Walk to Freedom

During the liberation struggle, LWF's stand against apartheid and colonial rule in Southern Africa included bursaries to

young people to study in different academic fields, with many of them returning home to take up leadership positions in church, government and society.

"The LWF accompanied us—South Africa and Namibia [and other countries]—on the "long walk to freedom," recalls retired Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN).

Today, ELCRN is among 16 autonomous and independent churches in the sub-region that coordinate their common work under the LWF-supported Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa. LUCSA was first established in 1966 as the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa to respond to the growing need for communion within Lutheran churches that had been divided across racial lines.

LUCSA churches today remember Mandela's extraordinary contribution to the tenets of justice, peace, and reconciliation. "His humble and self-deprecating nature became an

example to the world and its leaders. After 27 years of imprisonment Mandela emerged not a bitter or vengeful person but as a person committed to unifying all South Africans under one banner of peace. Christ's message of forgiveness and reconciliation echoed the path upon which Mandela forged this new, free and democratic nation," LUCSA stated.

"As South Africa mourns the loss of their nation's father may we all remember the lessons he taught the world, lessons that embodied the pinnacle of the human spirit and permeated our human fabric to its core," said LUCSA.

Bishop emeritus Kameeta, a member of the LWF Council, expressed his respect and admiration for Mandela in a poem that he first wrote at the Book of Condolences at the South African Embassy in Windhoek:

*"You rose on wings like eagles,
you ran and did not get weary,
you walked and did not grow weak.
You proclaimed with your words
and deeds
the Good news of liberation,
justice, peace
and reconciliation, until the Holy
One who
gave you to us, called you back
home.
Rest in peace Comrade Mandela,
in God's
loving, consoling, forgiving mighty
Hand. (See Isaiah 40: 29 - 31)"*

In June 2013, the three Namibian Lutheran churches invited the LWF to hold its Twelfth Assembly in 2017 in Namibia, during the year that also marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.



During a visit to the Ecumenical Center in 1990, Nelson Mandela (right) met with then LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Gunnar Stålsett (left). Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

Lutheran Identity in Asia Boosted by Research Network

Renewing and Reforming the Church

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran leaders and theologians from across Asia have formed the "Asia Luther Studies and Research

Network" to enhance Lutheran identity in the region.

The decision came at the Conference on Asian Lutheranism and Lutheran Identity, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 5-8 November, which drew 22 participants from 14 countries.

The meeting was the second in a series organized by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development (DMD) to support member churches, theological institutions and networks in responding to their contexts.

Key components of Lutheran theology identified by participants as essential to Lutheran identity—justification by faith alone, law and gospel hermeneutics, theology of the cross, Lutheran liturgy and spirituality—were examined from an Asian perspective.

Noting Lutheranism's great contribution to Christianity, Dr Pilgrim Lo of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, said, "We should remember this and continue to renew and reform the church. Asian Lutherans should remain connected to this rich heritage despite their different contexts."

Dr Darwin Lumbantobing, principal of Huria Batak Kristen Protestant Seminary, Indonesia, cautioned that establishing a Lutheran identity has positive and negative aspects. "The positive is that it helps to mark the boundaries, the negative is that it is divisive as we highlight our differences with other churches."

However, Ms Chrissida Nithyakalani of the United Evangelical Lutheran

Churches in India (UELICI) youth desk emphasized that, "to be Lutheran is to accept others, to speak out against injustices, to bring reformation to our churches and society, to encourage and be in solidarity with the oppressed."

Participants wrestled with the challenges faced by future generations in shaping Lutheran identity in Asia in the midst of declining Lutheran membership, including charismatic churches and mega-churches.

Rev. Andrew Cheng of Taiwan highlighted that as a minority, Taiwanese churches put aside their denominational differences to maintain a common witness.

Entrenched Confucian philosophy and folk religions are challenging, participants from Japan and Korea added, suggesting that education is needed to forge Lutheran identity.

Secularism, commercialism and the theology of glory were affecting the spirituality and identity of Lutheranism in Asia, Lo said.

Professor Eom Jin-Seop of the Luther University Seminary concluded "Lutheran identity is important to the Lutheran Church of Korea as we are small. Lutheran liturgy alone is not enough to build identity. We need to teach our members Lutheran doctrines."

(A contribution by Rev. Martin Yee, Lutheran Church in Singapore)



Participants in the Conference on Asian Lutheranism and Lutheran Identity.
Photo: LWF/W. Chang

African Lutheran Theologians Establish Network for Transformative Biblical Interpretation

Strengthening Collaboration in Research and Publication

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran theologians from across Africa have formed the "African Lutheran Hermeneutics Network" to enhance theological study on the continent and contribute to the global Lutheran identity, in anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

The agreement came at the conclusion of a regional hermeneutics workshop organized by The Lutheran

World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW), 27 November - 1 December, in Johannesburg, South Africa. Twenty-five theologians from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa worked to identify how the biblical and Lutheran heritages can equip churches to be agents of societal transformation.

"The intent is to establish and strengthen collaboration among African Lutheran theologians in research and publications and strengthen the link between theological education and leadership development," said Rev. Dr Faustin Mahali of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Three seminars on Luther's texts, "The Freedom of a Christian" and "Trade and Usury" were conducted by

Rev. Dr Hans-Peter Grosshans of the University of Münster, Germany.

“Reading these texts together and relating them to contemporary issues sheds new light on our traditional understanding of the basic marks of the Lutheran tradition,” said Ms Toromare Mananato, Malagasy Lutheran Church.

LWF member churches in the region are preparing for the Reformation anniversary and celebrations in 2015 to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1955 inaugural gathering of Africa’s Lutheran churches in Marangu, Tanzania. The Johannesburg workshop discussed plans for the publication of a journal addressing issues related to the Bible, Lutheran tradition and African contexts.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice at DTPW said establishing the



*Theologians attending the regional hermeneutics workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa.
Photo: LWF/I. Benesch*

regional theological study network will enrich the LWF biblical hermeneutics program that seeks to create space

for reading the Bible together in the Lutheran communion.

Call for Justice-Oriented Engagement with Roma People

Diaconal Workers Develop Recommendations for Continuing Ministry

FRANKFURT, Germany/GENEVA (LWI) – Diaconal workers from across Europe have called on churches to promote service and advocacy with and for Roma people that are rooted in inclusive and justice-oriented theology.

Meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, 22-24 November, representatives of European member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) said more needs to be done to enhance knowledge in both church and society about the culture and history of the minority Roma communities, who suffer discrimination and marginalization across the continent.

“And then you will be citizens of the household of God (Ephesians 2: 19),” was the theme of the conference jointly organized by the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) and CCME, with a focus on migration of and equal citizenship for Sinti and

Roma in Europe. The participants emphasized the need for churches to create space for face-to-face interactions with Roma and sharing of life stories, culture and worship.

The diaconal workers agreed they should continue building alliances with other churches, non-governmental organizations and Roma advocacy groups, and work to create platforms where different minority groups can strengthen one another.

Churches in Europe, they noted, need to speak out against anti-zyganism (hostility directed at Roma people) and highlight both the connection with other prejudices such as anti-Semitism while recognizing that discrimination against Roma is often neglected.

“The [Frankfurt] conference is an important step in gaining an overview of where we as churches in Europe stand today, in relation to service with and for Roma, and especially in our public witness against racism, and

anti-zyganism,” said Rev. Dr Eva Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, LWF area secretary for Europe at DMD.

CCME General Secretary Ms Doris Peschke added that many churches both in the countries of origin and those receiving Roma are responding to the needs of the Roma communities. New ownership has developed since the conference on “Living in Community – Towards equal opportunities and overcoming discrimination” 12 years ago, she added.

Negative Public Discourse on Migration

Participants noted that the context of globalization and ongoing economic crisis in Europe contributes to the fueling of new nationalistic movements along with xenophobia and violence.

The churches’ activities are carried out against a backdrop of a negative public discourse on migration. While

freedom of movement for European citizens is regarded as an important value and right, Roma are regarded as abusing this right.

Ms Michelle van Burik of Kerk in Actie in the Netherlands told participants that discrimination against Roma dates back to the Middle Ages and was part of the genocide associated with Nazism and the Second World War.

“What do we see today? We see neo-Nazi and fascist parties rising, expanding and consolidating their networks worldwide; we observe attacks on Roma, Sinti and Jews again. Do we realize the dangers of this?” she asked.

Mr Ivan Ivanov, executive director of the European Roma Information Office in Brussels, noted that between 38 and 45 percent of Europeans say they do not want Roma neighbors or colleagues, thus segregated ghettos remain in Europe.

“If the governments invested in education of Roma children and integration into society, States would, at the end, profit on many levels, including economic and social,” he added.

The director of the Roma Support Organization in Frankfurt, Mr Joachim Brenner, told participants that during the recent elections in Germany, politicians encouraged racist emotions against Roma by claiming that “many will come and burden our social services.”

He said that the number of Roma migrants to Germany remains very small and that the country should be able to respond to their needs. “We are ... responsible to share with them and support them in their striving for sustainable livelihood and integration.”

Ms Christine Heinrichs of the Frankfurt Association for Social Homes noted that while there are 48 different nationalities represented among the

homeless persons in the city, there are only 40 Roma among the 120 persons at risk who are catered for, but they are more visible because they live in groups.

Different Approaches

While reconciliation actions with the Roma minorities in Finland, Norway and Sweden at the end of the 1990s opened space for building new relationships, follow-up initiatives remain a constant process. For the churches, this calls for diaconal engagement that incorporates different approaches.

In Norway, churches work alongside the Red Cross to provide emergency shelter, while attempting to better understand Roma needs.

Church of Sweden congregations are involved in advocacy efforts and work with the Roma on their integration into society.

In Finland the church speaks out for Roma on housing and migration and

is engaged in diaconal support. A joint working group has translated Luther's Small Catechism into the Roma language.

Romas' statelessness in the Netherlands is a critical issue as many have had to wait 20 years for naturalization. Churches are among the few actors in Dutch society to advocate on behalf of the Roma because of the fear of right-wing groups.

In the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and the Slovak Republic, churches are addressing housing, sanitation and education issues, and offer skills' training and income-generating projects.

For the LWF, the conference was important as one of the resolutions at the Eleventh Assembly in 2010 called for attention to socially disadvantaged and ethnic minorities in Central Eastern Europe, especially the Roma.

“The conference has given us an important impulse for continuing this focus in the region” Vogel-Mfato concluded.



Mr Ivan Ivanov (left), European Roma Information Office, and CCME General Secretary Ms Doris Peschke.
Photo: Ilkka Sipiläinen

A Lutheran Church in Bolivia's Highlands

We Have Great Hope, Says Church Leader Aslla

LA PAZ, Bolivia/GENEVA (LWI)—Advocating for the rights of marginalized communities in Bolivia's remote areas remains

an important role of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB), says Rev. Emilio Aslla, head of the church

of which membership comprises mainly indigenous people living in the country's rural areas.



Bolivian Lutheran church leader Rev. Emilio Aslla. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

“We are not part of the government, but we are making communities aware that it is possible for change to take place. As a church we believe that the State should recognize the people in the rural areas,” Aslla told *Lutheran World Information* (LWI) in November during a visit to The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Communion Office in Geneva.

Aslla said the Bolivian Lutheran church today supports the reform process in the Latin American country by training its members to use the new Constitution adopted in 2009, guaranteeing citizens’ democratic right to vote and claim their rights in a secular state.

For the first time, the constitution accords respectful recognition to the indigenous people, so that they now have the right to preserve their own languages and have leaders representing them in the Congress, the IELB leader explained.

Nearly 70 percent of Bolivia’s population of 10 million people is made

up of indigenous people. Although the county is rich in minerals and hydrocarbons most people earn their livelihood from subsistence agriculture and experience high levels of poverty.

Solidarity with the Most Excluded

The Lutheran church began its ministry in 1938 among Bolivians living in the highlands, with no access to education, work or political involvement in the predominantly Roman Catholic country. “It [IELB] was excluded,” Aslla explained.

The early experience of exclusion defined IELB’s ministry and partnerships, Aslla remarked. “Our work has been with those most excluded such as rural people, and that has also been the reason for the growth of the Lutheran church.”

Today, the 22,000-member IELB has a rich cultural diversity shared by the Aymara, Eko, Guaraní and

Quechua indigenous people and the Spanish speakers. Around 30 pastors and over 100 lay leaders serve its 105 congregations located mostly in the highlands including the Andes region.

Aslla emphasized the church’s commitment to a sense of fellowship, inclusiveness and solidarity based on the Christian faith. “We have great hope: the Lutheran church in Bolivia is a church of the people. It is a church of the Reformation—a reforming, inclusive and hoping church.”

Celebrations in Bolivia to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 will include “Following the Footprints of the Reformation,” a project that highlights music and liturgy because “singing for life is our hope,” the IELB leader said.

Diversity in the LWF Communion

Belonging to the communion of churches in The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is important, Aslla said of the church that joined the LWF in 1975. “The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ unites us in our diversity and that gives us strength, whereas otherwise we would be isolated,” he added.

Aslla’s message to churches in the LWF communion: “We must pause and consider what the Good Samaritan did, so as to recognize one another, whether large or small, strong or weak. That enables us to journey on together toward ‘the good life’. Even with our differences we are a strong community, and we must journey together and work together. With the LWF we do not feel that we are excluded.”

Lutheran Leaders Affirm ‘Distinctive Marks of the Church’ as Basis for Equal Participation

LWF Workshop on Religion and Development

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran leaders from churches in Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe have

affirmed that the distinctive marks of the church - “oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity” - call it to be more participatory and empowering.



Participants in the workshop on religion and development.
Photo: LWF/I. Benesch

The consensus emerged at an intensive three-day workshop ending on 6 December at Johannesburg, South Africa, on religion and development, organized by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Public Witness.

The church leaders said the distinctive marks of the church are an important lens through which the church should view its role in the world, adding that these marks have certain implications regarding the way in which current church leadership structures are arranged.

“We will need to revisit our church structures and constitutions and equip our pastors and students with skills that

enable them to analyze and identify the needs in society,” commented Bishop-elect Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia.

Munyika said that the workshop had helped him to see the possibility of separating the responsibility of the bishop from that of the management board. “The bishop has to ensure the oneness of the church,” said Munyika.

Rev. Elitha Moyo, gender coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ), emphasized that if oneness is a mark of the church, “then it is clear that we must consider everyone as equal in the church.” Furthermore, she stressed, there is a need for the church to empower women.

Deaconess Mary Sally Nyabaro, national women’s coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, who is also a Member of Parliament, said the workshop was an eye-opening call to action for the church.

“Many women are afraid to go for pastoral training and do not understand [they have] the right to become pastors. We therefore need to ensure that we empower women socially, economically and in terms of education,” Nyabaro urged.

ELCZ General Secretary Mr Munatsi M. Dube noted that the workshop had also stimulated the church leaders to revisit their strategic planning processes related to development work to allow for good governance.

“Such a comprehensive approach will promote better relationships between clergy and laity. We need to overcome the ‘them’ and ‘us’ syndrome so that we truly become one church based on the priesthood of all the baptized,” he said.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice, who led the workshop, emphasized the need to bring together theological and sociological understanding to strengthen the church’s capacity as a credible actor in political, economic and social spheres.

Merry Christmas from The Lutheran World Federation!

We pray this Christmas season especially for those who live in places of conflict and strife. May God’s peace that takes roots in our world through Jesus Christ continue transforming us and all of creation.

Ms Meidy Naomi Kesek of the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) in Indonesia designed this year’s LWF Christmas card.

The design structures portray the different ethnic groups in Indonesia and represent the country’s diversity. They stand firmly together, creating a tree of life and a vision of peace.

LWF member churches in Indonesia including HKBP will host the 2014 LWF Council meeting.



Another Harsh Winter, LWF Reaches Out to Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Gas Heaters, Bottles, Carpets and Winter Clothing for Families in Al Mafraq

AL MAFRAQ, Jordan/GENEVA (LWI) – As the Syrian conflict rages, and the cold wave and rainfall sweep across Jordan, the growing number of Syrians living in camps and host communities considerably strains the capacity to provide services for the refugees and increases their vulnerability.

Jordan, where The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) provides assistance to refugees in camps and host communities, currently hosts more than 567,000 people who have fled Syria. At the Za'atri refugee camp, home to around 100,000 Syrians, the LWF supports the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Jordanian government.

By mid-December, the LWF emergency program in Jordan had distributed winter relief items such as gas heaters and bottles, carpets, blankets and clothing to 860 families in Al Mafraq Governorate in the north. Another 150 families in the area will receive similar items as part of a large-scale winterization program aimed at supporting 3,000 additional families.

“The situation of refugees in both camps and host communities is difficult and a large percentage of families are not prepared for winter,” said Mr Nader Duqmaq, manager of the LWF emergency program in Jordan.

“In Za'atri camp, the rain has flooded numerous tents and the strong wind has uprooted many tents. Many

families whose tents were damaged moved to the caravans of their neighbors to be protected from rain,” Duqmaq reported on the current situation.

He pointed out that most of the Za'atri camp areas are “full of mud,” making it difficult to walk around. In addition, majority of the camp areas do not have electricity, “which means that even those families who own electric heaters can't use them.”

The LWF's partnership with UNHCR and the Jordanian government started in 2012 at a time when the country hosted around 105,000 refugees from Syria, including some 25,000 at the Za'atri camp. Camp residents initially received winterization kits and heaters for tents, blankets and quilts, basic food and other non-food items, and mental health and psy-

chosocial support. The numbers and needs in the camp have since grown significantly, making the situation dire for many of the people there.

Today, LWF's support to refugees and host communities living in Al Mafraq includes training in peace and conflict mitigation; construction of additional classrooms to expand the capacity of local schools to accommodate the refugees; and vocational training for Jordanian and Syrian women to help them generate income to sustain themselves and their families.

By December, an estimated 2.3 million refugees from Syria were living in neighboring countries and another 6.5 million people had been internally displaced since the current conflict began in March 2011.



Children walk near flooding in tented settlement Jordan. Photo: Karl Schembri/Oxfam (CC-BY-NC-SA)

Hygiene and Sanitation to Contain Cholera Spread in Drought-Hit Angola

LWF Intervention Prevents Emergency from Deteriorating into Disaster

ONDJIVA, Angola /GENEVA (LWI) – In the southern Angolan provinces of Cunene and Huila, more than 600,000 people

face severe food and water shortages, including a lack of pastures for animals, as the result of prolonged dry spells.

Recent rainfall combined with the after effects of drought has resulted in new outbreaks of cholera in the



Children taking animals to drinking water points in Gambos Huila province, Angola.
Photo: LWF/Abrao Mushivi

region, which risk causing significant loss of life.

More than 1,000 cholera cases and 48 deaths were recorded during late November in Cunene province due to an outbreak of the disease. A small number of cholera cases were also confirmed in neighboring Huila. With heavy rains now falling, it is feared infection will spread more rapidly due to poor sanitation, lack of portable water and dead animals contaminating running water supplies.

In response, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its partners in the ACT Forum are promoting improved practices for water storage, hygiene and sanitation through awareness education. The LWF is also calling on the government for transportation and distribution of water for drinking,

cooking and domestic use, and also the use of tanks in the future for water harvesting.

In February 2006, a year-long cholera outbreak that started in the Angolan capital, Luanda, and spread to 16 out of 18 provinces, resulted in over 80,000 reported cases and 3,000 deaths.

Ongoing Response

An ongoing response to a drought appeal by the LWF and its partners in the Angola ACT Forum has already brought relief to thousands of vulnerable people, who are currently receiving basic food stuffs. The distribution will continue until March or April when some harvest is expected. Recent rainfall has been sufficient to start planting

but will not be enough to offset the chronic food shortage in the region. Heavy rain has also increased the threat of flooding and reduced access to vulnerable communities.

The LWF took part in a joint ACT Forum field trip in November to witness first-hand the distribution of food supplies in Cunene and Huila. With its partners, LWF is acting to prevent the slow-onset emergency deteriorating into a disaster. Drought has destroyed thousands of hectares of crops and livestock pastures in the hardest hit areas of the two provinces.

Urgent support is needed for people to survive through the hunger months. Many elderly internally displaced persons (IDPs) are completely reliant on food distribution for their survival, because younger people have flocked to the cities in search of work and in order to support their families.

“My heart has settled down,” an elderly woman said after receiving her monthly food ration.

Acute malnutrition rates as high as 25 percent in areas experiencing food shortages due to the drought have left children highly susceptible to waterborne illnesses such as cholera.

Cholera is easily treatable with rehydration salts but, if untreated, it can result in death in 24 hours, according to the World Health Organization. Although the risk rating for cholera in Angola is currently moderate, three municipalities in Cunene province—Cahama, Ombanja and Curoca—registered a total of 13,223 cholera cases in 2013.

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