

**The Lutheran World Federation
– A Communion of Churches**

150, route de Ferney
P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Telephone +41/22-791 61 11
Fax +41/22-791 66 30
E-mail: info@lutheranworld.org
www.lutheranworld.org

Editor-in-Chief

Karin Achtelstetter
ka@lutheranworld.org

English Editor

Pauline Mumia
pmu@lutheranworld.org

German Editor

Dirk-Michael Gröttsch
dmg@lutheranworld.org

Layout

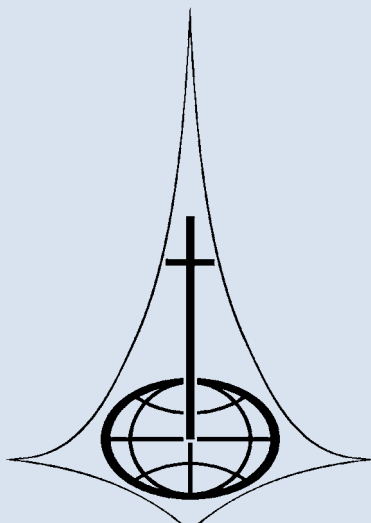
Stéphane Gallay
sga@lutheranworld.org

Circulation/Subscription

Janet Bond-Nash
jbn@lutheranworld.org

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Poverty Is a Major Cause of Rural Migration in Haiti



A total of 43 representatives from LWF-related agencies, partner organizations, member churches in the region, as well as LWF staff, from 13 countries, met for an LWF/DWS regional consultation 18–22 June 2007 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They discussed the various aspects of violence and migration in the Central America and Caribbean region, with a special focus on Colombia, El Salvador and Haiti.

Photo above: Some of the participants gather under a welcome banner to the consultation on “Violence, Migration and Their Impact on Citizenship and Democracy.” © LWF/J. Heyde (See pages 16–19)

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The Lutheran World Federation has expressed dismay and disappointment that a document released by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reasserts again for Roman Catholic theologians that the title “church” is not properly to be extended to Christian communities such as the LWF and its member bodies.

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“I will never do it again! If I hear of someone doing it, I will report [them] to the police!”

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The LWF Launches Blog for Young Adults

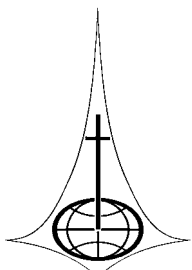
By introducing a blog (or Web log), a kind of collective Internet diary, LWF Youth is now providing a means of intensifying interaction among young people from throughout the global church communion. LWF Youth is the youth desk of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

At www.lwfyouth.org seven young adults from around the world are now beginning to write about their lives, their faith, their churches, and the social problems that concern them. "It is something like a global youth group," said LWF/DMD youth secretary Rev. Roger Schmidt. He added that the youth blog is there for the young adults

to talk about their own lives. "Alexandra from Colombia, for instance, talks about her difficulties in finding a job," Schmidt explained. "Benny from Indonesia shares with the others his experience in preparing for seminary teaching."

The youth secretary himself will write about the international ecumenical world. Blog participation is, however, not limited to these seven young people. Schmidt encouraged others to join in as "anyone can react to articles by submitting comments on the blog, or can send in requests for topics."

The youth blog can be accessed at: www.lwfyouth.org



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S SUMMIT ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ON HIV AND AIDS

Namibian Lutheran Woman Receives Global Award for HIV and AIDS Work

World YWCA Summit Focuses on Strategies to Address Rising HIV Infection

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA, 11 July 2007 (LWI) – A Namibian Lutheran woman was among 14 AIDS activists who received a World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) global award for outstanding leadership in the response to HIV and AIDS.

Anita Isaacs, 48, received the World YWCA Women Leading Change Award, which honors the leadership of community women in HIV and AIDS response.

other awards in Namibia but this is an international one, and being given by the YWCA which is a faith-based organization. That's important."

Women's Safety

Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki awarded the prizes to the winners on the summit's opening day. He said emphasis on women's leadership and communities' role in HIV prevention, care and treatment would strengthen the struggle against the pandemic.

"I am optimistic that the emphasis on women leadership will also serve as a wake-up call to all women and girls to take responsibility not only for their safety, but for the safety of others as well. This is because women are the foundation of the family and, indeed of society. Women are peace makers," Kibaki said in his opening speech.

With a participation of over 1,800 delegates, the summit focused on the strategies, skills and partnerships needed to address rising HIV-infection rates in women and girls.



The Kenyan delegation during the opening procession of the World YWCA International Women's Summit on women's leadership on HIV and AIDS, in Nairobi, Kenya, the host country. © LWF/F. Nzwilli

Isaacs, a member of the Oniimwandi congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) has been actively engaged in initiating support groups and networks of persons living with HIV. She has been advocating for increased access to treatment and services, and bringing to attention the links between HIV and AIDS and violence against women and children. She has also actively promoted the sexual and reproductive rights of HIV-positive women.

"I am proud of it. It [gives] me strength so that I can do more," Isaacs told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* in an interview in Nairobi, where she was attending the 4 to 7 July International Women's Summit on women's leadership on HIV and AIDS. The summit organized by the World YWCA in partnership with the International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS and other international organizations, took place in the context of the 1 to 11 July World YWCA Council.

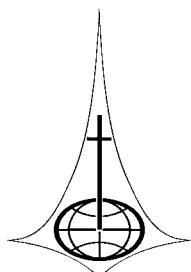
"I [realize] there are people who are seeing what I am doing, who are recognizing me. I have received

Effective Response

Joining the representatives of governments and non-governmental organizations, AIDS groups and business organizations, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Dr Asha-Rose Migiro stressed that change must



Ms Anita Isaacs, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), recipient of the World YWCA Women Leading Change Award, which honors the leadership of community women in HIV and AIDS response. © LWF/F. Nzwilli



give “more power and confidence to women and girls and transform relations between women and men at all levels of society.” She assured participants of her personal commitment and that of the UN system to a full and effective response to HIV.

“If we have learnt one thing over the past 25 years, it is that when we work together with unity of purpose, we can defeat AIDS. But to have real impact, [we] must be guided by two key principles: accountability and a drive to achieve measurable results,” said Migiro.

The World YWCA General Secretary Dr Musimbi Kanyoro highlighted women’s capacity to change societies, and urged more resources for women.

“One woman can bring change to a family and many women together will bring change to humanity,” said Kanyoro, while stressing the task of the conference was to mobilize the collective power of women to reverse the direction of the AIDS pandemic globally. “The response to HIV will not be effective without the leadership of positive women,” she added.

New Infections

Antiretroviral therapy has been scaled up to 2.3 million people globally, Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS executive director told the summit, but for each new person on antiretroviral therapy, the United Nations AIDS agency counted six new infections.

“This points to an urgent need to reassess and revitalize HIV prevention. Among the leadership that is required,



World YWCA General Secretary Dr Musimbi Kanyoro © LWF/F. Nzwili

women must be at the table whenever AIDS programs are designed, implemented and evaluated,” he said.

According to UNAIDS, almost 50 percent of adults living with HIV are women, with the proportions continuing to grow in every region. Currently, 17.5 million women are living with HIV globally, an increase of over one million within the last two years. The proportion is highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, where almost 60 percent of people living with HIV are women.

The YWCA movement includes more than 25 million women and girls in 125 countries, with a focus on developing leadership to achieve human rights, health, security, dignity, freedom, justice and peace for all people.

(Nairobi-based journalist Fredrick Nzwili wrote this article for LWI.)

Lutherans Share a North American Response to AIDS Pandemic at Global Women’s Gathering

“‘Stand With Africa’ Is About Praising God and Finding Hope”

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA, 17 July 2007 (LWI) – Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

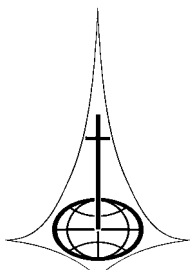
in America (ELCA) “Stand With Africa” campaign presented a North American response to HIV and AIDS during a recent international meeting of women on HIV and AIDS leadership in Nairobi, Kenya.

The campaign, a program of the ELCA Global Mission (GM) unit, seeks to support HIV and AIDS work, build peace and fight hunger both through direct congregational and community contacts in Africa, and through affiliated international organizations such as the Geneva-based Lutheran World Federation (LWF), World Council of Churches and Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

“Stand With Africa is about praising God and finding hope,” said Dr Belletech Deressa, director for International Development and Disaster Response at the ELCA-GM unit. She made these remarks during the 7 July ELCA-GM workshop at the World Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) International Women’s Summit (IWS)



From left: Dr Mamy Ranaivoson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Global Mission (ELCA-GM) consultant for Health Ministries and LWF HIV and AIDS consultant for Africa with Dr Belletech Deressa, ELCA-GM director for International Development and Disaster Response, during the “Stand with Africa” workshop. © LWF/F. Nzwili



focusing on women's leadership on HIV and AIDS. The ELCA unit sponsored 25 women living with HIV to attend the IWS.

The "Stand With Africa" campaign embodies the ELCA's longstanding dedication to HIV and AIDS relief, according to Deressa, who is a member of the LWF Standing Committee for World Service. "Global Mission has been addressing HIV and AIDS since 1988," she added.

Dr Mamy Ranaivoson, a medical doctor based in Nairobi and serving as the ELCA-GM consultant for Health Ministries and the LWF's HIV and AIDS consultant for Africa, spoke about the church's essential role in the pandemic's response.

"[HIV and AIDS] response has to be a priority in the church," he said. "As a church, we must be bold in providing aid."

Assistance from the ELCA-GM is in the form of financial contributions, advocacy and grassroots' medical assistance, including provision of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for people living with HIV.

"My sister here," said Ranaivoson, referring to Ms Sellah Opiyo, a Kenyan IWS participant who had begun receiving previously inaccessible ARV treatments, "[now] is smiling."

Opiyo, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK), was widowed to AIDS. Now 12 years later, she serves as a trained counselor with the ELCK's faith-based HIV and AIDS program in Kisumu, western Kenya.

Ms Euni Motsa, coordinator for HIV and AIDS with the Lutheran Development Service in Swaziland, and a member of the Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, said she has also been empowered by Lutheran AIDS response programs. Public with her positive HIV status since 2003, she is an "ambassador of hope" for the organization, Churches United in the Struggle against HIV/AIDS in Southern and Eastern Africa (CUAHA), of which Opiyo is also an active participant.

"We need to emphasize to people that being HIV positive does not mean the end of life," Motsa said. "God still loves us with our positive status."

Ms Christine Hallenbeck, a volunteer and outreach coordinator with the Minnesota Council of Churches in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, wrote this article for LWI during her participation in the World YWCA summit, 1-8 July 2007 in Nairobi. She served on the World YWCA communication team on behalf of the LWF Office for Communication Services.



IWS participant and trained counselor, Ms Sellah Opiyo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, now receives the previously inaccessible antiretroviral treatment. © LWF/F. Nzwili

Women Challenge Faith Leaders Over Slow Pace in AIDS Response

Call for Critical Review of Religious Teachings

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA, 18 July 2007 (LWI) – A session of a recent international gathering on HIV and AIDS expressed concern that 25 years after the first known HIV case, religious leaders and institutions were taking too long to change, thus slowing down efforts to effectively respond to the AIDS pandemic.

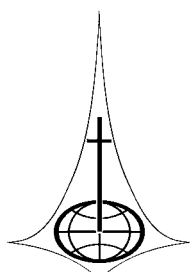
A pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rev. Andrena Ingram, St Michael's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, said she had encountered stigma and discrimination, even as a member of the faith leadership.

"I entered the candidacy process, my HIV status, which I disclosed openly, was questioned—rather, my ability to keep up with academics—before "AIDS dementia" set in. This concern was raised by an individual in the church office. I do not believe



Rev. Andrena Ingram of St Michael's Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA © LWF/F. Nzwili

it was said maliciously, but rather, out of ignorance," said Ingram at the panel discussion on "Religion and



HIV and AIDS,” during the July 2007 Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) International Women’s Summit on women’s leadership on HIV and AIDS in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ingram said she had made public her status, believing this way would help eradicate “illnesses” she listed as discrimination, silence, fear and shame.

“Unfortunately, these “illnesses and diseases” are sometimes found within the very institution which proclaims the message of God’s love,” she said. “[They] affect us, because they have manifested themselves in people and institutions around us. Sadly, the church has in some early instances chosen to focus on this diseases as a subject of moral deliberation—focusing on this disease as exploring the lifestyle of those infected.”

Tension

The session, with panelists from Africa, Asia, Latin and North America explored the role of religion in preventing HIV among women and girls, while examining



Ms Phumzile Mabizela, African Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV or AIDS (ANARELA+) © LWF/F. Nzwili

how religious groups could provide stronger leadership in preventing rising infection rates among young people. They also discussed the impact of religious leaders’ messages on women, and put forward strategies for balancing religious views with women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as an

analysis of the theological and non-denominational challenges associated with ecumenical responses.

“In our countries, religion is very important for us [but] the impact is not always positive,” stated Dr Mabel Bianco, president of the Foundation for Studies and Research on Women in Argentina. She said it was a problem when religious leaders talk about gender issues, with little regard for the women’s position on women’s rights and sexual matters.

“Religious leaders are not comfortable with criticizing their own faith or their own priests,” said Ms Anne-Marie Helland, special adviser for social and political rights at Norwegian Church Aid, who moderated the session. She added that these tensions were often not helpful for many persons living with HIV.

Holistic Strategy

Ms Phumzile Mabizela of the African Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV or AIDS (ANARELA+) said, “The challenge is for us to look critically at our teachings. Faith organizations all over the world have been strong in provision of care, support, treatment and capacity building. However, I think we have not reflected critically on our theologies and our religious teachings,” she said.

ANARELA+ was currently adopting a more holistic strategy called SAVE—S – safer practices; A – access and availability to treatment and nutrition; V – voluntary testing and counseling; and E – empowerment, she said. The much talked about “ABC” approach, (Abstinence, Be faithful and Condom use) did not work for women,” explained Mabizela, an elder and candidate for ministry in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

For Mabizela, HIV has made women’s resolve stronger, and they want to be seen as individuals who have a meaningful contribution to make, not just as victims waiting to be rescued. “We continue searching for ways in which women, especially those living with HIV can continue to challenge their religious leaderships,” she added.

(Reported for LWI by Kenyan journalist Fredrick Nzwili.)

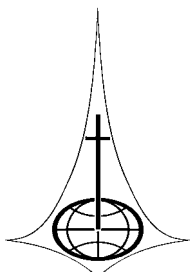
Lutheran Delegates Say AIDS Summit Successfully Mobilized Women’s Action

LWF General Secretary Noko Underscores Partnership with YWCA

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA, 18 July 2007 (LWI) – Representatives of churches and organizations from the Lutheran constituency attending a recent international summit on women’s leadership on HIV and AIDS, pointed out the conference had succeeded

in mobilizing women in the fight against the global epidemic.

Closing with an emphatic “Nairobi 2007 Call to Action,” the nearly 1,800 delegates to the 4–7 July International Women’s Summit (IWS) on leadership on





From left: Mr Ali Wario, Kenya, Assistant Minister of State for Special Programmes; Deputy President of South Africa, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, outgoing World YWCA general secretary, at the closing press conference of the World YWCA International Summit on women's leadership on HIV and AIDS. © LWF/F. Nzwili

HIV and AIDS declared they wanted to show AIDS could bring out the best of humanity, while listing compassion, justice, security, unconditional support, inclusion, love, solidarity and action, as key elements.

The World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) organized the summit in Nairobi, Kenya, in partnership with the International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS and other international organizations. It was held in the context of the 1–11 July World YWCA Council.

Ms Karin Achtelstetter, director of the LWF Office for Communication Services represented the LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, at the meetings. In his greeting to the World YWCA Council, Noko expressed gratitude for the collaboration and partnership at various levels with the global women's movement.

"National YWCAs encourage, inspire and strengthen women and girls to become leaders in their communities and churches, promoting new role models and challenging traditional structures within churches including those that are LWF members," Noko stated.

Lutheran World Information (LWI) interviewed some of the LWF constituency members attending the summit.

Quality Leadership

Dr Mamy Ranaivoson, a medical doctor based in Nairobi and currently working as consultant for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the LWF, said he was impressed by the show of quality leadership and



General Secretary Rev. Atle Sommerfeldt, Norwegian Church Aid © NCA/A.G. Handeland

Call to Action

The "Call to Action" identifies ten specific strategies, called the critical "actions for change," which can be implemented through individuals, families, faith groups and communities. They include, developing leadership for women; ensuring meaningful involvement; promoting gender equality and human rights for women; and ensuring physical and psychological safety and security, among others.

World YWCA General Secretary Dr Musimbi Kanyoro said at the summit's closing press conference that women could not afford to leave the conference with anything less than a commitment to act as individuals and as movement.

"That is why we have developed the 'Call to Action,'" said Kanyoro, a Kenyan Lutheran, who served at the LWF Women in Church and Society desk in Geneva, prior to taking up leadership at the World YWCA.

The summit, she noted, had not been about lamenting, but about sharing hope, developing skills, strategies, and the commitment that will transform the course of AIDS globally.

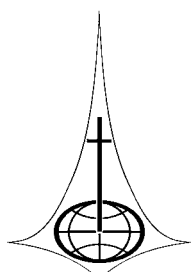
Churches' Role

Rev. Atle Sommerfeldt, general secretary of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), observed that it had been very clear from all the summit's sessions that leadership was needed from women living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. "I [realized] that a lot of the programming in HIV and AIDS has not been gender sensitive. The role of

mobilization especially by the women in the church.

At the start of the summit, around 300 women living with HIV, came together in a safe space to share their experiences, support one another, and empower each other to teach and lead in HIV and AIDS response.

"I am proud of the way it was organized and conducted. Including HIV positive women, young women, and inviting all the leaders, is a significant step in raising awareness," commented Dr Belletech Deressa, director for International Development and Disaster Response at the ELCA Global Mission unit.



female leadership has been under utilized, neglected or marginalized.”

The NCA general secretary said: “The churches’ role especially in Africa and globally is to fight all kinds of stigmatization of those affected by HIV. People often die of social exclusion rather than medical reasons, and I think that churches have a major responsibility in that.”

For Achtelstetter, the IWS was “a truly inspirational and visionary summit in addressing gender-related issues with regard to HIV and AIDS,” and one that had proven that “the LWF and World YWCA not only share common concerns, but need to seek closer and improved cooperation and action.”

(Reported for LWI by Kenyan journalist Fredrick Nzwili.)



From left: Ms Christine Hallenbeck, who served on the World YWCA communication team for the LWF Office for Communication Services (OCS) with OCS Director Ms Karin Achtelstetter. © LWF/F. Nzwili

Germany: Mutual Recognition of Baptism

In late April, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the German Bishops’ Conference, Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, and national free churches in Germany, signed for the first time a formal declaration of mutual baptism recognition. The agreement was signed at an ecumenical worship service in Magdeburg Cathedral on 29 April.

There have been individual regional agreements between EKD member churches and Roman-Catholic dioceses for the mutual recognition of baptism for over 30 years. There had, however, not yet been an agreement at the national level, as represented by the EKD and German Bishops’ Conference.

In May 2002, Walter Cardinal Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, launched an initiative to work within the bishops’ conferences on the topic of baptism and the ecumenical significance of the mutual recognition of baptism, and to sign relevant agreements between churches. The German Bishops’ Conference has followed up on the initiative from the Vatican, suggesting as its goal the mutual recognition of baptism for the entire region represented by the German Bishops’ Conference and EKD.

A text was developed by a working group including representatives of the Commission of the Orthodox Church in Germany (KOKiD), the Evangelical-Methodist Church (along with other free churches), and the Old Catholics (along with the Anglican Church). The Council of the EKD and the Permanent Council of the German Bishops’ Conference have accepted the text.

The following churches signed the declaration of mutual recognition of baptism:

- Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Germany
- Council of Anglican Episcopal Churches in Germany
- Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Germany
- Evangelical Old-Reformed Church in Lower Saxony
- European Continental Province of the Moravian Church
- Evangelical Church in Germany
- Evangelical Methodist Church
- Catholic Diocese of the Old Catholics in Germany
- Orthodox Church in Germany
- Roman Catholic Church
- Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church

Canadian Lutherans Participate in Ceremony to Reaffirm Aboriginal Covenant

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), along with representatives of eight other Canadian church denominations reaffirmed a covenant recognizing the rights of the nation’s Aboriginal peoples during a ceremony at the June 2007 ELCIC Eleventh Biennial Convention and the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

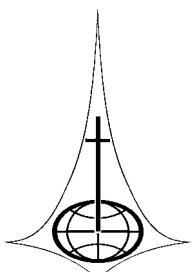
Titled, “Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada,” the covenant reaffirmed a previous statement by the leaders of Canadian Christian churches on Aboriginal rights and the Canadian constitution, signed 20 years ago. During the ceremony church leaders repeated a pledge committing to “the vision of a new relationship between Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal peoples based on sharing, respect and the recognition of rights and responsibilities.”

The 1987 covenant marked a major step forward in reconciliation between Canada’s Aboriginal peoples and the church, and recognizes the rights of Aboriginals to be distinct peoples, to an adequate land base and to self-determination.

ELCIC National Bishop Raymond Schultz said his church urges an early resolution to native land claims, many of which have dragged on for years. ACC Archbishop Andrew Hutchinson said progress had been made since the 1987 covenant was issued. The Anglican church has formally apologized for its role in residential schools and reached a financial agreement on compensation to those affected.

(ELCIC News)



Finland: New Phase for Women's Ordination Issue

Exclusion of Female Pastors Unacceptable

HELSINKI, Finland/GENEVA, 20 July 2007 (LWI) – The 1986 decision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) to open pastoral ordination to women has been featuring in recent debate within the Finnish Lutheran church. The church leadership says the situation has now reached a critical phase, with some male pastors in some of the congregations expressing opposition to working with their female colleagues in worship services.

Two incidents are currently under diocesan investigation, concerning a male pastor who did not report for duty when he should have served at the altar with a woman pastor.

ELCF Archbishop Jukka Paarma says he is “deeply disappointed,” and notes the situation is deliberately being driven into a kind of stalemate, in which there is no possible way out through consultation and mediation.

According to a 2006 survey on church-office holders, about 2 percent of pastors in the ELCF's 517 congregations were opposed to cooperation with women pastors.

When the ELCF Bishops' Conference had reported on the issue to the September 2006 Synod meeting, it had been proposed that the question should first be dealt with through pastoral discussion and guidance from the respective bishop. Those opposed to working with women pastors were expected to accept the church's decisions and commitment to the life of the church.

The ELCF Bishops' Conference, comprising the heads of the church's nine dioceses, pointed out that the 1986 synod resolution was, according to the law, a guiding recommendation, not a legally binding ordinance.

“The exclusion of female pastors cannot be accepted. It goes against the church's law, which naturally grows out of the Bible concerning principles of love, respect for each other and equality, as well as the laws of our society,” Paarma writes in a statement issued last March.



Rev. Terhi Laakkonen baptizes an infant in Kaarina Parish, Finland. © Parish Union/K. Saarela

The Bishops' Conference had underscored that church workers were required to carry out all tasks assigned to the position. The bishops had stated that a pastor could not refuse “to work” with another pastor, saying it was wrong for church workers to follow convictions that differed from common legislation or synodal decisions, which were not under the jurisdiction of law.

According to the Bishops' Conference, the gender of the office holder is not central to the church's beliefs and teachings. But gender-based discrimination remains judicially unacceptable, with an option that the church can apply sanctions, albeit only as a last resort.

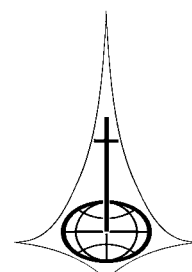
When the ordination was opened to women, the Synod had accepted a resolution stating

that church members and office holders with a negative stance toward the opening of the ministry to women should still have the freedom to work and possibility to be ordained and placed into different ELCF offices. But the resolution calls all church members and officers to joint responsibility in overcoming difficulties caused by the change, with the aim to protect the unity of the church.

It was in 1913 that the first Finnish woman earned her theological degree. The ELCF Synod voted on the ordination of women in 1963, 1976 and 1984, attaining



Rev. Anna-Liisa Varhiala celebrates the Eucharist in the mayor's chapel of Turku's cathedral. © Parish Union/K. Saarela



the required three-fourths majority vote, in favor, in 1986. The first 94 women pastors were ordained in March 1988. In 1990, the synod decided that women could be consecrated as bishops.

In 2005, the ELCF included 748 female and 1,449 male pastors, the latter representing 66 percent of all parish

pastors. Around 62 percent of all hospital chaplains were women, as were 69.8 percent of family counselors.

The ELCF has some 4.5 million members representing 82.4 percent of the country's population. It joined the LWF in 1947.

(A contribution of the ELCF Church Information Center.)

LWF 11th Assembly in 2010 Will Be a Milestone

General Secretary Noko at Kirchentag in Cologne

COLOGNE, Germany/GENEVA, 20 July 2007 (LWI) – The 11th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to be held in Stuttgart, Germany, in 2010 is to be “a milestone,” according to LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko. Speaking in early June at the German Protestant *Kirchentag* (church gathering) in Cologne, the general secretary said the dialogue with secular society, but also with other religions must be intensified.

“We must learn to listen to each other better and to speak with each other,” Noko said. He also called for the reduction of enemy images within the ecumenical world. One such effort, he said, was the continuation of dialogue between the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church.

(VELKD) at the *Kirchentag*'s “Market of Possibilities.” He reported to some 50 former LWF scholarship holders and participants of earlier LWF assemblies on the current challenges facing the organization. He also touched on the preparations for the 11th Assembly to be hosted by the Evangelical Church in Württemberg in Stuttgart.

For many of the former LWF scholarship holders, their time as students in another Lutheran church opened up new life perspectives. “During my year in Brazil, I developed an understanding for ecumenism, which still has an effect on me and influences my parish work,” one participant said. One former scholarship holder, who studied clinical

pastoral training (a program now also available in Germany) in the United States, can still recall today how important his time there was not only for his work but also for his own personal development.

Around 30 German theology students still receive GNC/LWF scholarships for study abroad each year. In addition, some 25 young people from Lutheran churches in Central and Eastern Europe, Brazil and the United States are granted scholarships to study theology in Germany. Upon their return home, they often serve as important contacts for partnerships between the Lutheran churches.

Oberkirchenrat Norbert Denecke, GNC/LWF executive secretary, was visibly pleased with the

enthusiastic reaction to the German national committee's invitation to “friends of the Lutheran World Federation.” He said that this was “a good sign for a sense of membership in the Lutheran world family!”

He invited those present to take a “close and familiar” interest in the preparations for the 2010 Stuttgart Assembly and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Wittenberg, Germany in 2017.

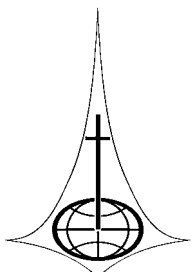
(Contributed by LWI correspondent Regina Karasch, GNC/LWF, Committee for Church Cooperation and World Service, Stuttgart.)



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (right) converses with Rev. Richard Haug (left) deacon of the church district of Schwäbisch Hall of the Evangelical Church in Württemberg, and Bärbel Haug, a theologian and schoolteacher (center). In 1978 with an LWF scholarship, the couple was able to spend eight months in Peru. They visited Lutheran World Service development projects and studied church and theological perspectives of Latin America. © LWF/R. Lang

At the invitation of the German National Committee of the LWF (GNC/LWF), Noko took part for the second time in the *Kirchentag*, the largest lay meeting of Protestant Christians in Germany, which takes place every other year. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland hosted the 6–10 June 2007 meeting under the theme “Living and Active and Sharper.” According to the organizers, some 110,000 participants registered for the entire event and thousands more came for day visits.

Noko spoke on 7 June at the stand of the GNC/LWF and United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany



Bolivian Lutheran Church Builds on Teamwork and Improved Communication

Newly Elected President Visits LWF Geneva Secretariat

GENEVA, 26 July 2007 (LWI) – After some six months in office, the new president of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB), **Rev. Luis Cristóbal Alejo Fernández**, is pleased to note the considerable progress already achieved in his church. “We have made pertinent changes in our way of working,” he said in an interview with *Lutheran World Information* (LWI) during his 8 June visit to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

Accompanied on the visit by IELB treasurer, Mr Hilarión Rocha, Alejo mentioned a number of developments that had contributed toward change within the IELB. These included close cooperation at the congregational level, teamwork, improved communication and transparency, and work and thought on the church’s future form and structure. “We have been asking ourselves what kind of church we want to be 20 years from now,” he said. Before his election as president, Alejo worked for the church on a voluntary basis, as do most IELB pastors.

For the first time in the history of the IELB, Alejo pointed out, the church’s seven-member governing board now includes three women. He added that progress also had been made toward greater involvement of young adults. One such example was that of Rocha who had been elected treasurer both as a youth representative and as a qualified financial auditor.

According to the president the IELB, as an indigenous church, would like to contribute in a special way both ecumenically and internationally to the worldwide Lutheran church community. In his role as the newly



Rev. Luis Cristóbal Alejo Fernández, president of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church © ALC/N. Giese

appointed Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) coordinator for work with the indigenous people of the Andes region, Alejo anticipates new responsibilities for himself and for the IELB. For the LWF 11th Assembly, planned for 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany, Alejo pointed to the principle of cosmic interaction and respect for nature of traditional indigenous wisdom. He said it was imperative that indigenous experience be taken into account in relation to the Assembly theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

The IELB has around 22,000 members, the majority of whom are part of the indigenous population. The church has been a member of the LWF since 1975.

Pastor John Nunes Is New President of Lutheran World Relief

Effective 1 July, **Rev. John Arthur Nunes** is the new president of Lutheran World Relief (LWR), the international relief and development agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He was elected by the LWR board of directors elected on 21 May.

The 44-year-old succeeds Ms Kathryn Wolford, who left the LWR in October 2006 to become president of the McKnight Foundation in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Nunes has worked as a management consultant, pastor, teacher, youth director, and parish musician. He held the post of assistant professor of theology at Concordia University, River Forest, Chicago, Illinois, and served as a pastor for Bethany Lutheran Church, Chicago. He was director for church resource development at Concordia



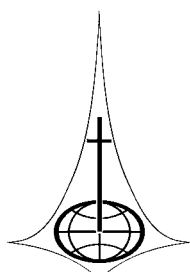
Rev. John Arthur Nunes, the new president of Lutheran World Relief © LWR

Publishing House, St Louis, Missouri. He is a doctor of philosophy candidate from the Lutheran School of Theology, in Chicago, Illinois.

Nunes earned a Master of Theology degree from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 2006. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan; a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada; and an honorary doctorate from Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

John Nunes and his wife Monique are the parents of five children.

The LWR works to end poverty and injustice by empowering some of the world’s most impoverished communities to help themselves. Its headquarters are in Baltimore, Maryland, USA.



Theologians Propose Responses to Counter “Empire”

Publication Planned in LWF Theology and Studies Program

ST PAUL, MINNESOTA, USA/GENEVA, 10 July 2007 (LWI) – An international group of mostly Lutheran theologians met recently at Luther Seminary, St Paul, Minnesota, USA, to develop theological responses to “empire.” “Confessing and Living Out Faith in the Triune God: Being the Church in the Midst of Empire,” was the title of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) seminar that brought together 20 theologians from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America. They discussed papers they had written for the subject, which is part of the “Theology in the Life of the Church” initiative of the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS). Luther Seminary hosted and provided partial support for the 27–30 June gathering.



From left: John Hoffmeyer, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, USA; Faith Lugazia, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, USA, and Deanna Thompson, Hamline University, St Paul, USA. © Luther Seminary/A. K. Schmitt

The participants, comprising lay and ordained teaching theologians and doctoral students, observed that although various empires have existed over the centuries, there is an ever-increasing sense of the United States of America being and acting like an empire today. This is why this seminar met in this context. “From the outside, Christians in the USA seem mostly silent and complicit with the assumptions and policies of empire, reinforced by expressions of religiosity that facilitate the imposition of ‘empire,’” said LWF/DTS director Karen Bloomquist.

Disturbing features of empire today were noted, such as the unlimited quest for power and profit and the avoidance of accountability, and, according to Deenabandhu Manchala of the World Council of Churches, how the powers of empire co-opt structures and cultures. Nation-states increasingly are subservient to corporate powers, added Cynthia Moe-Lobeda of Seattle University (USA).

Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, United Theological College, Bangalore (India) pointed to the interconnectedness between patriarchy and empire, with Margaret Obaga, a Kenyan graduate student at Luther Seminary, describing how African immigrant women in



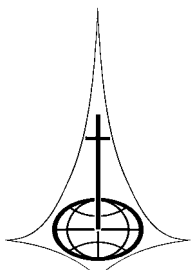
From left: LWF/DTS Director Rev. Dr Karen Bloomquist, and Mary Joy Philip, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA. © Luther Seminary/A. K. Schmitt

Minneapolis/St Paul find themselves trapped between these two powers.

Charles Amjad-Ali, Luther Seminary, analyzed how a particular kind of evangelical theology has provided support for the American empire. Yet as others underlined, theology can also provide the basis for resisting empire. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, University of St Thomas, St Paul (USA), highlighted the importance of anti-imperial and non-violent streams in the Bible. In assessing the challenges posed for Lutheran theology,

Guillermo Hansen, ISEDET theological college in Buenos Aires (Argentina), described how empire makes fundamentalism and totalitarianism more attractive. He added, and others concurred, that a theology of the cross is “at the heart, ... not at the margins, of this issue.”

Peter Lodberg, Aarhus University (Denmark), pointed to “the inverted Messiah”—with Jesus being identified not with the highest in society, the sovereign, but with the lowest—as a criterion for countering empire. Gary Simpson, Luther Seminary, called for “repentant patriotism.” The need to cultivate church identities and practices that are alternatives to empire was repeatedly emphasized, with Cheryl Peterson, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio (USA),



proposing an ecclesiology that begins with how the Spirit shapes the church's identity.

South African Johannes Swart, Luther Seminary, spoke of an ecclesiology in which belonging is constituted through the "otherness," while Michael Hoy, St Louis, Missouri (USA), set forth criteria for discerning when the church faces a time for confessing, when the gospel itself is at stake. Papers were also presented by Allen Jorgenson, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (Canada); John Hoffmeyer,



Charles Amjad-Ali, Luther Seminary, St Paul, USA
© Luther Seminary/A. K. Schmitt

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (USA); Faith Lugazia and Elieshi Mungure, Luther Seminary; Mary Joy Philip, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (USA); William Strehlow (USA/Geneva, Switzerland); and Deanna Thompson, Hamline University, St Paul (USA).

The LWF book proposed under the title "Being the Church in the Midst of Empire" is planned for publication later this year. For more information, contact Karen Bloomquist, kbl@lutheranworld.org

LWF Dismayed at Vatican Document Despite Significant Ecumenical Results

General Secretary Noko Affirms Lutheran Churches' "Understanding to Be Fully Church"

GENEVA, 11 July 2007 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has expressed dismay and disappointment that a document released this week by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reasserts again for Roman Catholic theologians that the title "church" is not properly to be extended to Christian communities such as the LWF and its member bodies.

In a statement issued today in response to the Vatican document, "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church," LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko affirms that "Lutheran churches do not accept the understandings of church or the description of our lived reality of faith," found in the document.

Referring to the September 2000 document "Dominus Iesus – On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church," Noko notes that while the current position of the Vatican is not new to the LWF, "we are saddened and disappointed that it is reasserted again for our current context, in which

the work of ecumenical partnership has produced such significant results."

Noko points to the "common understanding" articulated by the October 1999 adoption of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) as recognition of a "decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church." He says the affirmation of the JDDJ by the World Methodist Council, in July 2006, has shown the declaration's "power to become more than a statement on a sixteenth-century issue."

"Understanding ourselves to be fully church, where the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered, we remain committed to ecumenical dialogue, including continued conversation with our partners in the Roman Catholic Church," the LWF general secretary stresses.

He adds that the LWF understands Christian unity to be both God's gift to the "one Body of Christ and the task of the People of God."

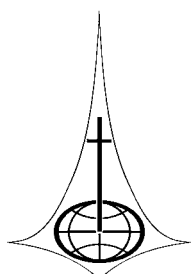
The full text of the LWF statement follows:

Statement by Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation

The Lutheran World Federation learns with dismay of the "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church," issued from the Vatican this week by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This document clarifies for Roman Catholic theologians that the title "church" is not properly to be extended to "Christian communities" like the member bodies of our Lutheran communion, which were shaped by the crucible of Reformation. While this position is not new to us, we are saddened and disappointed that it is reasserted again for our

current context, in which the work of ecumenical partnership has produced such significant results.

On 31 October 1999, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church together adopted a Joint Declaration that articulated a "common understanding" on the Doctrine of Justification and so accomplished what the signers recognized as a "decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church." In the years since 1999, as the Declaration was affirmed also by the World Methodist Council, it has shown its power to become more than



a statement on a sixteenth-century issue: its generous spirit provides an example of ways that “our churches have come to new insights”—both about their own particular traditions and about one another. In this Joint Declaration, a clarifying note states that the word “church” is used in the document “to reflect the self-understanding of the particular churches, without intending to resolve all the ecclesiological issues related to them.” This stance allowed the dialogue to proceed as between partners (“*par cum pari*”). The mutual respect and reserve of such an approach, so essential to the Joint Declaration, are helpful also in the wider ecumenical relations among churches. Without such an approach, problems arise not only on the world level but also locally, where pastors and faith communities are developing relationships as

genuine ecumenical partners as they seek faithfully to serve God in their communities.

Lutheran churches do not accept the understandings of church or the description of our lived reality of faith which are found in the “Responses.” Understanding ourselves to be fully church, where the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered, we remain committed to ecumenical dialogue, including continued conversation with our partners in the Roman Catholic Church. We understand Christian unity to be both God’s gift to the one Body of Christ and the task of the People of God. We will continue to pursue our vision of Christian unity as willed and prayed for by Christ himself.

Geneva,
11 July 2007

Mauritanian Delegation to UN Meeting Speaks Out on Women’s Discrimination

Government Urged to Put an End to Female Genital Mutilation

NEW YORK, USA/GENEVA, 20 July 2007 (LWI) – A delegation of seven women community leaders and one imam presented a chilling report about discrimination against women in Mauritania at a recent meeting of the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The delegation, sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), gave an oral statement to the 38th CEDAW Session on 21 May, and submitted a detailed “shadow report” to the committee.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania was one of eight state parties undergoing periodic review as required by the treaty. So-called “shadow reports” from non-governmental organizations (NGO) play a crucial role in the work of the CEDAW committee, because they give the UN experts an alternative view, which they often use to question policies of the government under review and make recommendations.

In their report and oral statement, the delegation members called for the Mauritanian government to put an end to female genital mutilation (FGM); pass legislation to fix the age of marriage to 18; and, craft legislation to make education compulsory for children seven to 14 years old, with an extension of up to the age of 18.

The delegation also called for finance revenue-generating activities for families of poor girls; and

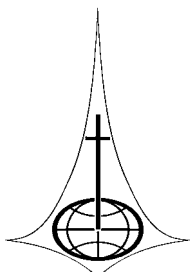


The delegation of women community leaders and one imam, sponsored by the LWF, who presented a report about discrimination against women in Mauritania at a recent meeting of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). © ELCA/D. W. Frado

spelt out the need for a study on the extent of fatal practices and violence against women, and the adoption of an action plan to eliminate the same. Other demands included the adoption of a gender budget, and assurance of the independence of the justice system from coercion.

The delegation also encouraged the strengthening of NGO capacity in the promotion and protection of human rights for women and children.

Diakonia students from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Ms Heidi Muurinen and Ms Hanna Nordblom accompanied the delegation. The Finnish students had spent the previous two months accom-



panying the delegation through the LWF Department for World Service country program in Mauritania.

In addition to presenting their shadow report to the CEDAW committee, the delegation members met with CEDAW experts, as well as with an officer from the New York office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Population Fund. The delegation also spoke at a panel with NGOs from Pakistan and Syria, where they particularly discussed how to improve laws for women in Muslim societies.

Upon their return to Mauritania, the women community leaders and imam will meet with the wider group of NGOs to share their experience and strategize how to continue working for women's advance-

ment. They will also follow up with the government about the recommendations made by the CEDAW committee.

The shadow report was prepared by the "Partners Network for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Mauritania," a coalition of some 100 NGOs, cooperatives and village associations.

The LWF/DWS program in Mauritania, Church of Norway and the Norwegian Center for Human Rights provided technical and financial assistance.

The shadow report is available at: www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/shadow_reports.htm

(Reported for LWI by Emily Freeburg, Lutheran Office for World Community, New York, USA.)

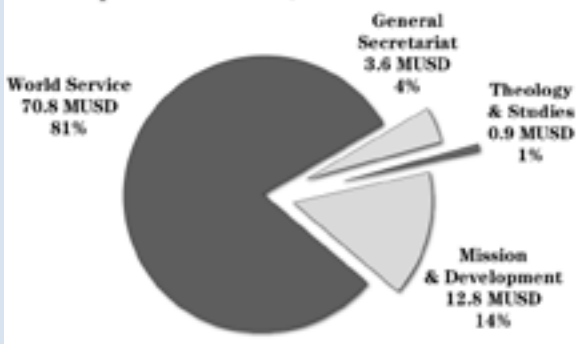
USD 76.6 Million for LWF Projects and Programs in 2006

Total income for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 2006 amounted to USD 91.4 million compared to USD 93 million the previous year. Out of this amount, USD 14.8 million was allocated for coordination and USD 76.6 million for the LWF programs and projects, according to the recently published LWF Annual Report.

Last year, LWF member churches and their related agencies provided financial support amounting to USD 59.4 million toward the organization's administrative support and programs, together with USD 3 million by way of membership fees. USD 8.7 million was received from different governments, and United Nations' agencies gave USD 5.8 million. The remainder includes local income in the field programs, as well as interest earned on short-term deposits etc.

Total expenditure in 2006 was around USD 88.1 million, compared to USD 92.1 million in 2005. Out of this amount, USD 10 million was used for the Geneva Coordination budget, which primarily includes staff and operational costs of the Geneva-based LWF Secretariat, as well as USD 1.47 million for

LWF Expenditure 2006, Total USD 88.1 Million



coordination of non-project activities in the Department for World Service (DWS) field offices. In 2006, USD 76.6 million went to LWF programs and projects. The General Secretariat spent a total of USD 3.6 million; the Department for Theology and Studies, USD 0.9 million; and the Department for Mission and Development (DMD), USD 12.8 million. The Department for World Service (DWS) expended USD 70.8 million for its work in 36 countries.

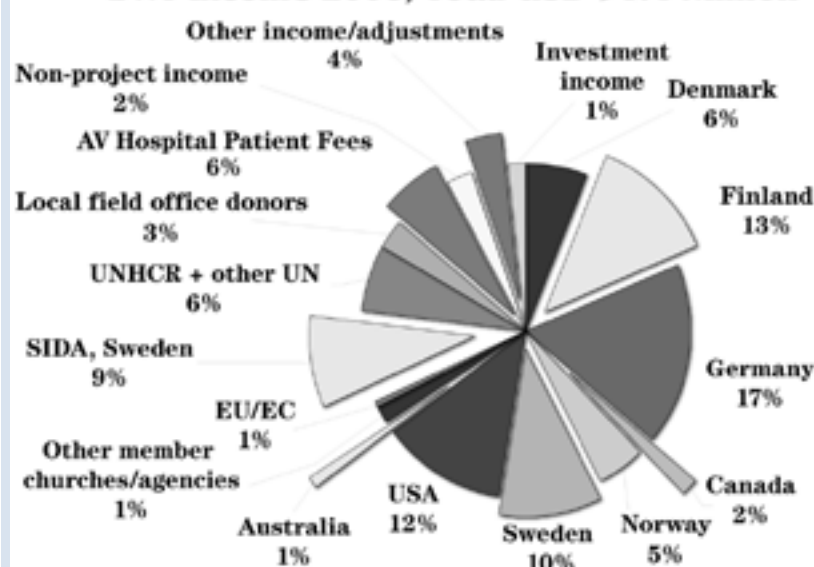
The Geneva Coordination in 2006 showed a surplus of USD 1.45 million. Some USD 283,000 were spent on project write-offs, resulting in a total surplus of USD 1.17 million.

By the end of 2006, the LWF's reserves amounted to USD 17.3 million.

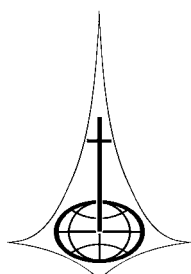
The LWF Foundation – Endowment Fund had an amount of CHF 10.5 million by the end of 2006. Formally established in 1999 to supplement financial support for the LWF's work, the fund's long-term goal is to build its retained assets to CHF 50 million by the year 2017.

A breakdown of the LWF finances is available in the LWF Annual Report 2006, which can be downloaded from the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Annual_Report_2006-low.pdf

LWF Income 2006, Total USD 91.4 Million



"Country" refers to the respective member church (es) and LWF related agencies. © LWF



DWS REGIONAL MEETING IN HAITI

Poverty Is a Major Cause of Rural Migration in Haiti

Local Approaches Prove to Be the Best Solutions,
Says LWF World Service Director Hitzler

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti/GENEVA, 18 July 2007 (LWI) – That migration is a dramatic problem in Latin America and the Caribbean is best depicted in numbers: “Every hour, around 58 inhabitants of this region leave their countries of origin with the intention of not coming back. That results in an average of 1,388 persons daily, 41,670 per month, and about 500,000 each year,” said Mr Jorge Rojas Rodriguez, director of the human rights organization Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement in Colombia (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento – CODHES). Rojas was speaking at a regional consultation of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World service (DWS) on “Violence, Migration and Their Impact on Citizenship and Democracy,” held 18–22 June in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

The 43 representatives of LWF-related agencies and partner organizations, from some of the member churches in the region, and LWF staff, from 13 different countries, discussed the various aspects of violence and migration in the Central America and Caribbean region, with a special focus on Colombia, El Salvador and Haiti. “Migration is a determining factor in globalization and its occurrence is linked to socio-economic imbalances, models of exclusion, violence and natural disasters,” said Rojas.

In Haiti, migration started at the end of the 19th century, with peasant workers migrating to Cuba to work in sugar-cane plantations owned by companies from the United States of America, Dr Michèle Oriol, professor at the University of Haiti, pointed out. Today, many poor Haitian families still regard migration as the only solution. They mainly move to the USA, Canada, Dominican Republic, Bahamas and other neighboring countries. But those countries “seem to close their doors more and more.” Statistics show that between 1981 and 1991, around 20,000 Haitians were intercepted on the sea



From left: Dr Michèle Oriol, University of Haiti, guest speaker at the consultation, and Ms Sophie Gebreyes from Canadian Lutheran World Relief © LWF/J. Heyde

by the US coast guards. Between 1991 and 1994, that number had risen to about 40,000 people, she said.

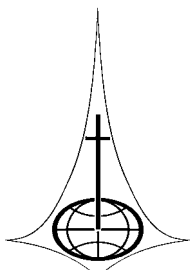
The people most affected by poverty and therefore most ready to migrate are farmers and peasants. In 1994, after the brutal reign of a military junta, the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was re-installed to power. In agreement with the International Monetary Fund, one of the government’s first measures was to lower trade barriers—today between zero and 15 percent—so that imported products such as rice, corn, meat, fish, milk, and sugar became far cheaper. With 66 percent of the Haitian population involved in agriculture, the measure

to reduce tariffs took away the livelihood of many farmers, and increased unemployment. “Day by day, we can see impoverished peasants coming from the countryside to the capital,” explained Oriol. The result is that rural areas are deserted, and slums are mushrooming not only on the city outskirts but also inside big cities like the capital Port-au-Prince, she told the consultation’s participants.

Mr Bernard Gianoli, program coordinator of the LWF office in Haiti, agreed that migration concerns most of all



Mr Bernard Gianoli, program coordinator of the LWF/DWS Haiti country program © LWF/DWS Haiti



the rural community of Haiti. “To diminish the migration flow, the rural population—which is in its majority excluded from the economic and social life—must be able to earn a decent salary for their work that allows them to live in dignity with their families and [also] stabilize themselves,” he emphasized.

In order to tackle the root causes of migration and change the situation in Haiti, the LWF works closely with local organizations and partners, said DWS director Rev. Eberhard Hitzler. “External intervention is

always the second-best solution. Local approaches in the end prove to be the best solutions,” he said.

In Haiti, LWF/DWS supports many local projects in the agricultural sector, for example milk production in Nan-Plak in the southeast, and a banana plantation site near Port-au-Prince. During the conference, participants had the opportunity to visit these field projects.

(Written for LWI by Mexico-based German journalist, Julia Heyde, who participated in the LWF/DWS regional consultation.)

LWF Consultation Focuses on Violence and Migration in Central America and the Caribbean

Participants Recommend “Advocacy by and for the People”

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti/
GENEVA, 17 July 2007 (LWI)

– Economic violence is the most imminent form of violence in Nicaragua, Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodríguez of the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope told participants in a recent meeting of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince.

Contributing to a discussion at the LWF/DWS Central America and Caribbean regional consultation on “Violence, Migration and Their Impact on Citizenship and Democracy,” Cortez stressed “Nicaragua experiences the violence of hunger and poverty.”

According to United Nations’ data, Nicaragua with some 5.6 million people is the second poorest country in Latin America after Haiti, with over 40 percent of the people living in the rural areas. Sixty percent of the rural population survives on little more than one US dollar per day.

Against this background, “The church has an obligation to help people living in poverty,” emphasized Cortez, LWF vice president for the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Reporting on the situation in El Salvador, which is part of the Central America program, DWS regional facilitator, Ms Celia Medrano said, “People and not the state are the subject of security. This security is linked to human development and human rights.” Twelve years of armed conflict in El Salvador have resulted in 75,000 deaths, 8,000 disappeared people,



From left: Ms Doris Pérez Mateus, program coordinator, LWF/DWS Colombia country program and Mr Jorge Rojas Rodriguez, director of the human rights organization Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement in Colombia (CODHES) © LWF/DWS Haiti

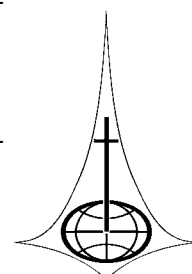
and 40,000 disabled persons, she noted. In addition, between 1.17 million and 1.65 million of Salvadorans, (25 to 30 percent of the total population) were forced to abandon their homes.

In his presentation on organized crime in Colombia, Mr Jorge Rojas Rodriguez, director of the human rights’ organization, Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement in Colombia (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento – CODHES) pointed out that the agendas of governments and social movements were often very different. “While [free] trade and the fight against terrorism are [high] on the government’s list, civil society

emphasizes the fight against poverty, peace and human rights, which again are far down on the governments’ agenda,” he noted.

Rojas pointed out that drug trafficking and illegal trade in other substances used in the production of drugs posed a special problem, as did the trafficking of arms and human beings. He named investigation, information, dialogue, advocacy and integration as strategies that can be used to fight violence and crime.

In Haiti, violence is mostly urban-based. “We went from small delinquencies to big-scale violence, with kidnappings, rape, and gangs,” Dr Michèle Oriol, a professor at the University of Haiti said in her presentation. “Violence has grown with the rural exodus, the closure of borders and the misery, but urban violence is closely connected to a social and political form of leadership that is based on social antagonisms: black-



mulatto, rich-poor, and privileged-excluded,” she told the DWS consultation participants.

“The Lutheran church in her identity has an answer to the cry of the people and that is the theology of the cross because the cross is the expression of divine love that identifies itself with pain as well as hope,” said Brother Balduino Ernesto Gómez from the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod in San Salvador, El Salvador.

After sharing their experiences in plenary sessions and working groups, the participants stressed the need to use “advocacy by and for the people”



Mr Hector Hermilo Soto Martinez (center) from Honduras, speaks up in a consultation working group. © LWF/DWS Haiti

to respond to issues on violence and migration at the local, national, regional and international level, where the LWF has access. They also recommended the documenting of the impact of the LWF’s work on violence and migration. Addressing the LWF member churches and related agencies, they advised that churches in the North use information from LWF/DWS programs for their advocacy work at national and international levels.

Mr Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, LWF/DWS program coordinator at the Geneva headquarters expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the conference. “The aim was to share experiences and to exchange information. Our cooperation has been strengthened,” he noted.

For Mr Bernard Gianoli, LWF/DWS Haiti program coordinator, the consultation “has shown us here in Haiti that LWF/DWS and our partners are committed and support our work. That gives us a lot of motivation.”

The LWF/DWS has field programs in 36 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Central and Latin America. Its regional consultations, held every two years, gather representatives of programs in a respective region, and the related partners, with a focus on commonly shared themes.

(Written for LWI by Mexico-based German journalist, Julia Heyde, who participated in the LWF/DWS regional consultation.)

FEATURE: A Cycle of Displacement, Violence and Poverty

LWF Empowers Communities in Colombia to Resist Armed Actors and Initiate Development Projects

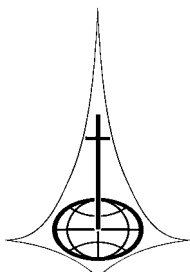
PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti/GENEVA, 18 July 2007 (LWI) – “In Colombia people suffer daily from acts of violence,” says Dr Alois Möller, representative of the El Salvador-based Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) regional program for Central America. “It is an extremely complicated situation, which unfortunately gets very little international attention.”

In a recent interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* about DWS work in Colombia, Möller explained that for almost 50 years, Colombia has experienced an internal armed conflict between different actors—the guerrillas, paramilitary groups and the national army. The conflict, which was initially begun over the unequal distribution of land and income, gradually turning into a struggle for territorial control, has led to the loss of many civilian lives and a great wave of internal migration within Colombia.

Data from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations working in the South

American country indicate it has the second-highest number (after Sudan) of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. According to the German organization for human resources development, training and dialogue, *InWEnt*, 60 percent of Colombia’s 43.7 million people live below the poverty line.

Möller spoke of the beginning of DWS work in Colombia. In 2001, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) invited the LWF/DWS to support their work among IDPs. At the end of the same year, DWS started implementing four emergency projects in cooperation with Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, the Geneva-based alliance of churches responding to emergencies worldwide. The main areas of work were shelter, risk management, water and health. In 2004, the IELCO expressed interest for an institutional long-term presence of DWS in Colombia, and after approval by the Standing Committee for World Service, the LWF office was opened in the capital, Bogotá, in July 2006.





From left: Dr Alois Möller, LWF/DWS regional representative for Central America and Ms Doris Pérez Mateus, program coordinator LWF/DWS Colombia country program © LWF/J. Heyde

The office focuses on five main objectives—the empowerment of communities, human rights, peace alternatives, advocacy and emergencies. DWS Colombia is currently active in two regions of the vast country: Arauca, mainly inhabited by peasants, and Chocó, the poorest region, with a population mainly composed of people of indigenous and Afro-Colombian origins. The LWF office works mainly through local partner organizations. One of their empowerment strategies is to strengthen communities, building up their ability to resist the armed actors and initiate their own development projects, for example in the area of agriculture.

“Farmers are induced by armed actors to grow coca or the African palm tree, which are easy to cultivate and have economic value. But when an armed group occupies a village, people soon run out of food,” said Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, LWF/DWS program coordinator at the Geneva headquarters. Therefore, the LWF/DWS supports agricultural diversity and only organic products, he explained.

The LWF office in Colombia currently employs three persons, including the national coordinator Ms Doris Pérez Mateus, who has worked in the human rights’ area for 15 years, and whose family has experienced poverty, displacement and violence. She said motivation for her difficult job comes from her deep concern for justice and dignity for the Colombian people.

“Eight out of ten Colombians have been displaced, and ten out of 100 have emigrated,” said Mateus, stressing the urgency of the situation. On a regular basis, she organizes workshops with local organizations, for example in Arauca. But her work is hindered by the military conflict. “We have a lot of plans but cannot always [accomplish] them. People often have difficulties traveling because they are stopped by militia groups,” she added.

Mexico-based German journalist, Julia Heyde, interviewed the LWF Colombia staff during the DWS regional consultation on “Violence, Migration and Their Impact on Citizenship and Democracy” held 18–22 June in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.



A young girl fetches water for her family in El Oasis Shantytown, Ibagué, Colombia. © LWF/DWS Colombia/D. P. Mateus

Union Says Danish Pastors Are Leaving Because of Stress

The 2,000-strong Danish Pastors Union is concerned at the number of pastors leaving their posts for other work because of stress-related symptoms, with 30 departures recorded in one year alone.

According to the June 2007 edition of *Church News* from Denmark, the union’s chairperson Rev. Sabine Bech-Hansen, has expressed frustration at the lack of serious effort to remedy the situation despite a report five years ago, revealing that one in five pastors suffered from stress.

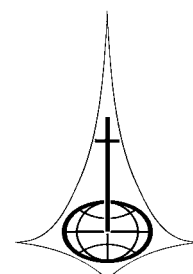
The minister responsible, Bertel Haarder, set up a committee three years ago to study the problem, but so far little had happened. “It’s lamentable that nothing has happened five years on,” says Prof. Finn Gyntelberg, of the Clinic for Work-related Illnesses in Copenhagen. “We met a

large number of pastors with serious problems all over the country. And the numbers are certainly not lower now.”

Bech-Hansen said the committee’s recommendations were often blocked at the highest level. “The church is not a particularly good working environment at the moment,” she told the Danish newspaper *Christian Daily*. “I have never known my colleagues to complain so much. If something isn’t done soon, it will be difficult to hold on to the pastors we have, and even harder to attract new ones.”

Around 87 percent of Danes belong to the 4.5-million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD), an LWF member church since 1947.

(Church News from Denmark is published by the ELCD Council on International Relations.)



The LWF Invites Online Donations

An Opportunity to Support the Communion's Worldwide Activities

GENEVA, 27 July 2007 (LWI) – It is now possible to donate directly online to the humanitarian and development work of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), as well as to its general programs. A new donation portal with the slogan “Get Involved – Make a Difference – A Better World is Possible,” invites Internet users to support the communion’s worldwide activities.

An opportunity is offered to enter into partnership with the LWF and accompany its work on a long-term basis. As described by LWF Office for Communication Services Director, Ms Karin Achtelstetter, the portal allows LWF Web site visitors to “go on a voyage of discovery, find out about the LWF’s many different programs and projects, be surprised, return, and tell others about it.” Achtelstetter explained that it was not just a matter of transferring money. She said she hoped that many Internet users would lend themselves “to discover the wide range of LWF work, advocate for change, and thereby contribute to its success.”

In making it possible to contribute to projects and programs online, Achtelstetter continued, the LWF was responding to an oft-expressed wish. She said, “time and again we have received inquiries from visitors to our Web site asking how they could contribute directly to our work through donations.”

LWF Department for World Service (DWS) Director, Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, has great expectations for the donation portal. He said he hopes that more people, especially young people, can be reached in this way. “We also want to make clear that, in our rich world,

there are millions of people who are refugees, or who suffer from the effects of natural disasters and wars, and that we, as a worldwide communion of churches, want to and are able to help these people,” he said.

“It would be good if, through the donation portal, we could also raise people’s awareness in Africa, Asia, and Latin America about our work. Not everyone on those continents is poor and receives assistance. My greatest wish is that Christians the world over support World Service so that we, in their name, can help wherever in the world help is most needed.” Hitzler said he was very eager to see whether contributions would be received not only from rich northern countries but also, for example, from Christians in countries such as India or South Africa who wanted to help lessen people’s suffering in other places such as Nepal or Chad.

Donations to any of the LWF programs and projects of the LWF departments’ global humanitarian and development work, as well as to the LWF in general, and to the LWF Endowment Fund, are gratefully accepted via credit card. The fund serves primarily to strengthen and supplement, through capital returns, financial support for the work of the LWF. The programs and projects can also be selected according to specific issues.

In a second phase, the portal will be expanded to include an online shop and online billing.

The LWF online donation portal can be accessed at: <http://donations.lutheranworld.org>

Malasusa Elected Presiding Bishop of Tanzanian Church

At its meeting on 18 July, the Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) elected **Bishop Alex Gehaz Malasusa** to a four-year term as ELCT Presiding Bishop. Malasusa, 47, was among the three contestants presented by the ELCT Executive Council to the assembly, the church’s highest decision-making body. He received 132 out of 184 votes cast.

Malasusa succeeds retired Bishop Dr Samson Mushemba, 72, whose term as presiding bishop expires this July. His tenure ended in July last year but was extended to July 2007.

Mushemba has served as presiding bishop since 1992, and as chairperson of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) National Committee in Tanzania. He was a member of the LWF



Bishop-elect Alex Gehaz Malasusa
© ELKT

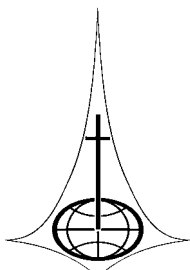
Council and Executive Committee from 1997 to 2003, serving as chairperson of the Program Committee for World Service.

Born in 1960, Malasusa holds a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the ELCT’s Makumira University College, and is currently pursuing his Master of Theology degree by distance education. He is married, and has three children.

With some 3.5 million members, the ELCT is the second largest church in Tanzania after the Roman Catholic Church with a membership of 10 million in a population of about 35 million people. The ELCT joined the LWF in 1964.

(ELCT Communication Office)

More LWI News at
www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html



Communication Networks Like KALME Preserve the Community of Churches

Firmly establishing communication as a strategic element in church boards at the national and European levels is an important goal of the Communication Committee of Lutheran Minority Churches in Europe (KALME), said the new KALME president, **Ms Praxedis Bouwman**, 39.

The Dutch journalist was elected to her new office at the KALME plenary meeting, held 19 to 22 April in Utrecht, Netherlands. Bouwman explained that after 30 years of KALME, the organization's proven work in training and seminars for media professionals from European Lutheran minority churches would be continued. She pointed to the strong interest attested to by the high numbers of participants in these courses.

Commenting on the organization's 30 years of existence, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), area secretary for Europe Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, said that KALME had played an important role as a communications network among Lutheran churches by providing space for further education in media work over the past 30 years.

"[Thirty] years in the life of a communication network is very unique and special. Your motivation and focus to build bridges with the power of the small numbers manifests your significant and excellent work," said Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, LWF deputy general secretary. "Networks like KALME keep the communion as a community through communication."

Ms Marina Chudenko from Russia was elected as the new KALME vice president. The four-member KALME presidium also includes Rev. Marco Uschmann of Austria as treasurer and



The newly elected KALME board of directors, from left: Bishop Pavils Bruvers, Latvia; Ms Phoebe Luk, Great Britain; Mr Meelis Sued, Estonia; Ms Praxedis Bouwman, Netherlands; Ms Marina Chudenko, Russia; Rev. Marco Uschmann, Austria; and Rev. Roland Kauffmann, France. Board member Rev. Sebastian Zebe, Italy, left early. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

Rev. Roland Kauffmann of France as secretary. The assembly delegates also elected to the eight-member KALME board of directors Ms Phoebe Luk of Great Britain, Bishop Pavils Bruvers of Latvia, Mr Meelis Süld of Estonia, and Rev. Sebastian Zebe of Italy.



LWF Deputy General Secretary Rev. Chandran P. Martin brings greetings from the Federation. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

KALME is an association of media experts from Lutheran minority churches in Europe with the objective of improving communications. Founded in Güstrow, Germany, in 1977 as a means of bridging a divided Europe, it encompasses 23 member churches. The communication committee continues to foster ties between big and small churches in Europe, and to present a forum for media professionals and church leaders to meet.

For further information on KALME, please refer to: www.kalme.net

Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada Celebrate Six Years of Full Communion

A "day-long Eucharist" on 21 June marked the celebrations of six years of full communion between the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). Nearly 1,000 members of both churches gathered at the Winnipeg Convention Center, the venue of the ELCIC's Eleventh Biennial Convention and ACC's 38th General Synod for the joint event. "The river of life, the everlasting wellspring, the fountain of resurrection," was the theme of the worship service, planned by the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission.

ELCIC National Bishop Raymond Schultz and ACC Archbishop Andrew Hutchinson presided at the event, which included so-called table discussions on the meaning of

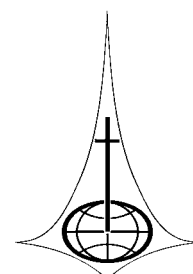
full communion relations. Also discussed was a "Water Declaration" of the Canadian ecumenical organization KAIROS, which advocates water as a human right and common good.

In June 2001 the ACC and ELCIC entered into full communion under "The Waterloo Declaration." It is not a merger but a union of mutual recognition of each other's rites.

The ELCIC is Canada's largest Lutheran denomination with over 174,500 members in five synods, comprising 624 congregations.

The ACC includes nearly 642,000 members in 30 dioceses with some 1,790 parishes.

(ELCIC News)



FEATURE: It Is Not Circumcision

LWF Supports Mauritanian Women's Struggle to End Harmful Practice

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania/ GENEVA, 20 July 2007 (LWI)

– “I will never do it again! If I hear of someone doing it, I will report [them] to the police!”

Ms Aminata Louli sits with a group of women in a dusky house yard in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott. The women around her respond to her remarks with gentle laughter. Reed mats are spread across the ground, and more women gather in the space, some carrying children. Others are more elderly. There are young girls too. Louli used to be a professional female circumciser.

The women have one commonly shared resolve: to erase the exercise of painful female circumcision in their country. They do not speak in a roundabout way about circumcision, but about female genital mutilation (FGM). They know what they are talking about. All of them have undergone FGM, the term used to describe the removal of all or just part of the external parts of the female genitalia.

“We call Aminata Louli a commissioner,” whispers one woman. “She is nowadays a wholehearted op-



Ms Aminata Louli used to work as a professional female circumciser. Aware of the harm it causes, she now opposes it. © LWF/DWS Mauritania/P. Laajalahti

ponent of female genital mutilation.”

Louli's eyes twinkle mischievously. Even though the question is about such a painful and difficult subject, the women still preserve their sense of humor.

“When I realized [the] awful things I had done to the girls, I stopped at once,” she remarks seriously. “I even went to apologize to those who were there to receive an apology.”

On their laps, the women have an informative brochure produced by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) Mauritania program. The protest “No! to female genital mutilation” shouts from its cover in French and the local Hassaniya dialect.

Painful, Perilous

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), most of the girls and women who have undergone FGM live in 30 African countries, but some live in Asia. They are also increasingly found in Australia,

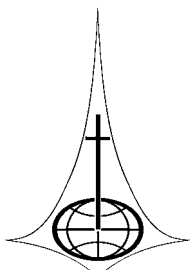
Canada, Europe and the USA, primarily among immigrants from Africa and southwestern Asia.

FGM is mainly perceived as a cultural practice, performed on adolescents and children; and in some countries, even on infants under one year old. The practitioners are specialized women, generally traditional birth attendants or midwives, who have no medical training. In communities where it is carried out, it is a highly-valued service with financial rewards. A practitioner's social status and income can be directly linked with the operation's performance.

Several reasons are put forward for the practice of FGM, including



Residents of a girl's hostel in Kaédi, Mauritania. Villagers in Séyène Gababé rented the hostel in Kaédi so the village girls could attend school closer to home. Two adult women stay one month each at the hostel to take care of them. © LWF/DWS Mauritania/P. Laajalahti





Throughout the country, women's groups warn about the dangers associated with FGM. Ms Hawa Amadou Ba is a trained FGM campaign community animator. © LWF/DWS Mauritania/P. Laajalahti

the mistaken belief that it is a religious requirement; that it strengthens girls' sexual morals; and, provides better chances for initiation into womanhood including marriage.

Harmful Tradition

In many countries it is also believed that the Islamic faith requires FGM. Some traditional Mauritanian Muslim leaders want to change such belief and entirely erase the practice.

"Some misunderstand religion," says El Hassan Ould Moulaye Ely, secretary general of the Saudi Islamic Institute in Nouakchott. "That is why it is important that those who understand holy writings also explain things."

He emphasizes the need to distinguish between traditional beliefs and religion. "If a traditional habit is harmful to health, it needs to be [eliminated]. We can preserve good traditions but give up harmful ones."

The institute's traditional leaders also speak out through the informative brochure used by the

Girls' Rights

There is a decree forbidding FGM in Mauritania. "[But] for many people it is something new that women, and even children, have rights. Nobody [should] be hurt," explains Ms Houleye Tall, the LWF country program coordinator for human rights and the promotion of

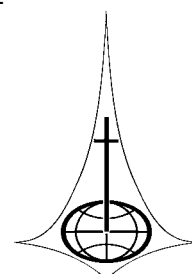
peace. She observes that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the country has signed, plays an important role.

The rights of young girls are often violated. Education is not always effective even among women, says Tall, who narrates one of many situations she encounters in her daily work: "I was told about a woman who had decided that her daughter would not be operated [circumcised]. As we drove in her car on the way back home one day, she explained her primary-school-age daughter came home with bloody clothes."

Tall continues: "The woman learned later that one of her aunties had taken the young girl to a circumciser without informing anybody. But the mother had only realized what had happened to her daughter when the young



Education is not always effective even among women, says Ms Houleye Tall, the LWF/DWS Mauritania country program coordinator for human rights and the promotion of peace. © LWF/DWS Mauritania/P. Laajalahti



girl returned from riding her bicycle. Her clothes were bloody. The wound had opened.”

The DWS Mauritania brochure depicts a young girl’s death caused by bleeding after the removal of her genitalia.

The girl on the bicycle lived.

* DWS work in Mauritania emphasizes the cross-cutting issues of human rights promotion, gender equality and HIV and AIDS. The LWF program is the primary international non-governmental organization involved with the government in developing human rights policies, in collaboration with UN agencies. Its work focuses on female genital mutilation, women’s and children’s rights, schooling and the rights of physically handicapped persons.



Having realized the advantages of literacy, these Mauritanian village women study eagerly in their class. © LWF/DWS Mauritania/P. Laajalahti

(Finnish journalist Paula Laajalahti wrote this feature for LWI during her visit to DWS Mauritania project work. She is a communications officer of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission – FELM.)

**** This article is part of the ongoing LWI Features on Healing focusing on the LWF Tenth Assembly theme, “For the Healing of the World.”**

Michael Bünker Is New Lutheran Bishop in Austria

Oberkirchenrat Prof. Michael Bünker, 53, has been elected bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria. At its meeting in Eisenstadt, Austria, the church’s synod elected the theologian to succeed Bishop Herwig Sturm, who will retire at the end of the year. Bünker was elected in the seventh round of voting, receiving 38 of 55 valid votes, the necessary two-thirds majority. The new bishop will take office on 1 January 2008.



Oberkirchenrat Prof. Michael Bünker (left), bishop-elect of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria will take office on 1 January 2008 to succeed Bishop Herwig Sturm (right). © epd-Ö/M. Uschmann

In the run-up to the election, Bünker declared his intention to work toward an “open and reform-minded church.” He said that numerous church areas of endeavor were only made possible through the commitment of individuals “who were not theologians.” He also expressed his support for measures to be taken to encourage and enable women to participate in all types of decision-making structures within the church.

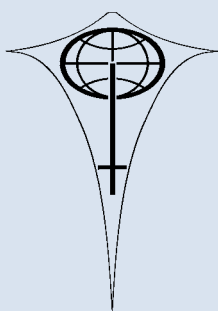
Bünker was born in Leoben, Austria. After studying Protestant theology in Vienna, Austria, he taught religion

and trained for the ministry, attaining his doctorate in Protestant theology in 1981. He served as pastor in the Floridsdorf district of Vienna, and began his tenure as the director of Vienna’s Protestant Religious Education Academy in 1991. Eight years later, Bünker was elected *Oberkirchenrat* for spiritual matters. He has been active as an adjunct professor at Vienna’s Faculty for Protestant Theology since 2003. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

elected him general secretary in autumn 2006.

Bünker is married with two children and one grandchild.

The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria has some 314,300 members in its dioceses of Burgenland, Carinthia/East Tyrol, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg/Tyrol, Styria, and Vienna. The church has been a member of the Lutheran World Federation since 1947.



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Tel. +41/22-791 61 11
Fax +41/22-791 66 30
E-mail: info@lutheranworld.org
www.lutheranworld.org