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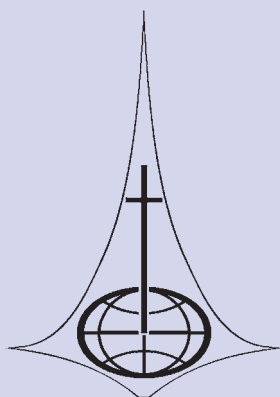
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International Scholarship Fund Enhances Life and Witness of Lutheran Churches



Scholarship support has enabled churches to increase their engagement in HIV/AIDS response including awareness raising as demonstrated by this group in Latin America. © ICLH Diaconia

Global Consultation Seeks New Strategies to Improve Decades' Long Program

GENEVA (LWI) – An international scholarship program of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) spanning a period of nearly 50 years has significantly contributed to enhancing the life and witness of LWF member churches in different contexts throughout the world.

A comprehensive evaluation of the scholarship scheme conducted this year reveals that the program, which started in the early 1960s, has continued to provide church-related institutions with nurses, doctors, teachers, lecturers as well as skilled personnel in management and administration. It has helped institutions of higher education to increase their personnel of lecturers and

professors and diversified graduate and post-graduate studies. Scholars have assumed leadership positions in a number of churches or church-related institutions.

The report of the independent evaluation calls for a continuation of the LWF scholarship program. An estimated 40 participants drawn from the member churches, supporting partners and coordinating reference groups deliberated the evaluation's findings at a global consultation in Montreux, Switzerland, from 5 to 10 October.

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Presiding Bishop Tells ELCA Church Leaders It’s Time to Move Forward

In a report to leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson said it was time for the church to move forward and get over being “timid” about mission and ministry.

“In the name of Jesus Christ our days of timidity are over,” Hanson told the ELCA Conference of Bishops, ELCA synod vice presidents and ELCA seminary presidents on 2 October.

In recent months the ELCA has been affected by losses of members, declining financial resources and disagreements over sexuality decisions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Hanson said.

The presiding bishop said he continues to have confidence in the two priorities for the churchwide organization: accompany-

ing congregations as growing centers of evangelical mission, and building capacity for evangelical witness in the world to alleviate poverty, and work for justice and peace.

Referring to The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, Hanson said the assembly would be remembered for its contribution to healing divisions in the Body of Christ. That occurred when the Lutherans asked God and Mennonites, on behalf of all Anabaptists, for forgiveness for condemnations and persecution of Anabaptists by Lutherans, noted Hanson, who served as LWF President from July 2003 until July 2010.

The ELCA has 4.6 million members, and has been an LWF member church since 1988.

ELCA News Service

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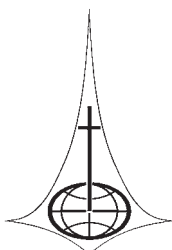
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LWF President Younan Urges Humanitarian Relief Coordination in Pakistan

Call for Churches' Prayers and Affirmation of Support through ACT Alliance

GENEVA (LWI) – The President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan urged organizations providing humanitarian relief to people affected by the recent flooding in Pakistan to coordinate such assistance effectively in order to reach those in need.

In a statement issued on 7 September, Younan called on all humanitarian relief agencies—religious and secular—“to draw on our shared common values and principles and find ways and means to coordinate our work together in a common strategy that ensures far-reaching support to the people in need in Pakistan.” Disaster, he emphasized, “does not differentiate along ethnic, political or religious lines; neither should we.”

Younan is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. He was elected LWF president at the organization’s Eleventh Assembly in July this year.

In his statement, he affirmed LWF’s continuing support to the current and previous disasters in Pakistan through the global emergency and development network ACT (Action by Churches Together). The country has faced a number of calamities since 2005—two major earthquakes, flooding, internal armed conflict and ongoing



Imran Munir, a Church World Service, senior project officer shows monsoon flooded area in Balokot, Pakistan. © CWS/ACT/Chris Herlinger

ing drought—further threatening food security and provision of other basic needs such as shelter and health.

Younan urged LWF member churches “to uphold in ceaseless prayers the people and churches of Pakistan, and their witness at this time.”

Recalling the Message of the July 2010 Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, under the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,” the president said the LWF member churches committed themselves to “sharing not only our material goods, but also our knowledge and know-how with others” and

by “caring for the environment, which we do not own, so future generations may enjoy the fruits of creation and lead wholesome lives.”

Younan especially urged churches and their related organizations carrying out humanitarian work to renew their commitment to the care of creation. “With one disaster following upon another, the environment is once again responding to humankind’s failure to care for the world God gave us,” he added.

The full text of the LWF President’s statement follows:

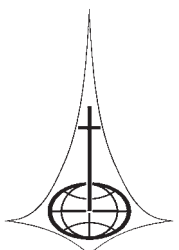
Message from the LWF President on Coordinated Humanitarian Response in Pakistan

The recent devastating flooding in Pakistan has affected more than 17 million people, and claimed more than 1,600 lives. Many of the survivors have hardly recovered from the impact of recent disasters in the last five years—two major earthquakes, similar flooding, internal armed conflict and ongoing drought—which further threatens food security in addition to other basic needs such as shelter, and health

In July this year, the LWF held its Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, under the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.” As a global communion of Lutheran churches, also carrying out humanitarian work throughout the world, the LWF affirmed at its Assembly the Christian prayer for “daily bread” as extending also to the care for the neighbor and for creation. In the Assembly Message, we committed “ourselves to fos-

ter the awareness of receiving and the blessing of giving” by among other actions, “sharing not only our material goods, but also our knowledge and know-how with others” and by “caring for the environment, which we do not own, so future generations may enjoy the fruits of creation and lead wholesome lives.”

The world over, many marginalized communities are experiencing the devastating impact of climate change



because of recurring storms, flooding, and drought. Such large-scale devastation as has occurred in Pakistan calls for global response irrespective of religious or political positions. The LWF welcomes the international relief response to this disaster, including from many of our partner agencies. But we also realize enormous human and financial resources will be required in both the emergency and reconstruction phases.

I wish to call on all humanitarian relief agencies—religious and secular—to draw on our shared common values and principles and find ways and means to coordinate our work together in a common strategy that ensures far-reaching support to the people in need in Pakistan. Disaster does not differentiate along ethnic, political or religious lines; neither should we.

I especially urge churches and their related organizations working



*LWF President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan
© ELCJHL/Elizabeth McHan*

in disaster relief to work toward renewing their commitment to the care of creation. With one disaster following upon another, the environment is once again responding to humankind's failure to care for the world God gave us. The whole international community bears responsibility in ensuring that future generations may "enjoy the fruits of

creation and lead wholesome lives," as stated at our recent LWF Assembly. Climate change affects all of us, and it is urgent that we take responsibility in taking concrete actions locally to safeguard life and livelihoods for future generations.

The LWF through the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) is committed with its resources, its expertise, and its prayers to accompanying the people of Pakistan in the midst of this tragedy.

I therefore appeal to all LWF member churches to uphold in ceaseless prayers the people and churches of Pakistan, and their witness at this time.

Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan
President

The Lutheran World Federation

7 September 2010

Buddhists and Christians Call for Measures to Counter Structural Greed

Joint LWF – WCC Consultation Defines Basis for Challenging Economic Crisis

CHIANG MAI, Thailand/GENEVA (LWI)

– A group of leading Buddhist and Christians has underscored the urgency for faith communities to engage with government and financial institutions to transform personal and structural greed and help promote the equitable distribution of wealth.

Thirty leaders, scholars, economists and activists from the two faith groups meeting under the auspices of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) affirmed that Buddhists and Christians shared similar teachings on greed, which should constitute the basis for engaging today's economic crisis.

"Engaging Structural Greed" was the theme of the LWF – WCC consultation hosted by Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 22 to 26 August.

Participants stated that one of the main reasons for the current global economic crisis was the drive for the

maximization of profits by capital owners, and they lamented the deregulation of the financial markets. The present situation, they said, was a moral and spiritual issue.

"The dismantling of these regulations a few decades ago resulted in an environment for the explosion of personal and structural greed, leading to a debt and mortgage crisis, to unparalleled disparities between the super-rich and those who go hungry every day and to the accelerated degradation of the environment," states the consultation's final statement titled, "A Buddhist-Christian Common Word on Structural Greed."

The consultation included Lutherans, Reformed, Anglican and Roman Catholic Christians, and Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhists from 14 countries, and aimed at continuing the host organizations' ongoing engagement with questions of economic justice.

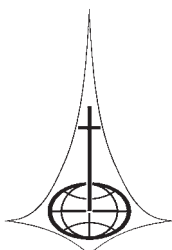
The process to engage the false ideology of neoliberal economic

globalization has been a central part of DTS' theological work for more than ten years, emphasized Rev. Dr. Martin Sinaga, secretary for Theology and the Church at the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS). "Now, this struggle should be extended to include people of other faiths. Buddhism's strong critique of greed can inspire the church to deepen its understanding and to benefit from the dialogue," he added.

"Christians do not have all the answers," added Shanta Premawardhana, Programme Executive for the WCC's unit for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation.

Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, a leading spokesperson of the Movement of Engaged Buddhists in Thailand, reminded the participants that, "Without inner peace, there cannot be outer peace."

The consultation's final statement recognizes that Buddhists understand that greed causes suffering but



that human beings can overcome greed by becoming generous, loving and compassionate. It states that Christians believe Jesus Christ resisted oppressive structures and was victorious over them.

Collective Power

“As Buddhists and Christians, we are convinced that greed has to be understood both personally and structurally. Individual and structural greed feed each other in their interactive relation of cause and effect. They need each other for their sustenance and expansion,” the statement says.

Structural greed cannot be tackled without well organized communities that act strategically, participants stated. These communities can learn

from groups operating at the margins of society and may be enhanced by the preaching and teaching of both temple and church.

“Collective power is enhanced when Buddhists and Christians work together; they are able to have an even more effective and constructive impact when they engage with other religious communities and grassroots civil society organizations and movements,” the statement adds.

Prof. Paul Knitter of Union Theological Seminary, a leading voice in interreligious dialogue, commented on the contribution of Buddhists, saying, “At the end of the process, the Buddhists reminded us Christians that all the efforts at the ‘local’ level meant to transform the ‘global’ level, won’t really work unless we

are continuously working on the ‘personal’ level.

“Our efforts to transform the world have to be rooted in our efforts to transform our own hearts,” he added, reminding the consultation of the sayings of a leader of the Movement of Engaged Buddhists in Thailand, Thich Nhat Hanh: “We cannot make peace unless we are peace.”

While the Buddhist and Christian leaders underscored the urgency of faith communities’ involvement, they also pointed out that the current financial crisis had also created an unprecedented opportunity to speak to government, financial institutions and their own faith communities.

“Our hope is that such ongoing interreligious engagement and cooperation can be a powerful contribution to overcoming greed and realizing a world of greater compassion, wisdom and justice.”



Left to right: Ven. Bhiksumi Chuehmen Shih (South Asian coordinator of Buddha’s Light International Association), Prof Paul Knitter (Union Theological Seminary, New York, USA), and Prof. Ulrich Duchrow, (Mission und Oekumene, Heidelberg, Germany). © Institute of Religion, Culture and Peace, Payap University

“A Buddhist-Christian Common Word on Structural Greed,” the statement from the joint LWF-WCC consultation is available on the LWF web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/WCC-LWF-Buddhist-Christian-Statement-on-Greed.pdf

More information about LWF’s work on economic justice is available at: www.lutheranworld.org/dts

17 September 2010

Lutheran Bishop Says Greed Led to Hungary’s Worst Ecological Disaster

Ecumenical Relief Body Assists Affected Population

BUDAPEST, Hungary/GENEVA (LWI) – A Hungarian Lutheran bishop strongly criticized those responsible for a toxic chemical spill in the country that has left at least nine people dead, injured 150, ruined many homes and damaged the environment.

Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny, head of the Northern District of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, said owners of the Ajkai Timfoldgyar plant in the western town of Ajka, the

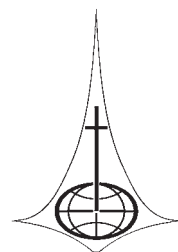
source of the waste, put profit ahead of people and the environment.

“What happened is not an ecological catastrophe caused by unbridled powers of nature, but a catastrophe caused by negligence and exploitation stemming from human greed,” Fabiny told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* in a 15 October interview.

On 4 October a wave of red toxic sludge—a mixture of water and mining waste containing heavy

metals—burst from a reservoir at the plant, flooding four square kilometers, directly affecting 7,000 people and forcing about 800 people to evacuate seven villages and towns. There have been fears that the waste would leak into the Danube River.

The plant was owned by MAL Hungarian Aluminum and Trade Company but was taken over by the Hungarian government last week. Bishop Fabiny who is also The Lu-



theran World Federation (LWF) vice president for Central Eastern Europe, said he supports the way the Hungarian government has handled the disaster.

The bishop said he had been in daily contact with pastors, church members and representatives of organizations in the affected area who had sent him “shocking” reports, including accounts from a nurse at the hospital where most of the injured were taken. A Lutheran pastor, whose village was partly hit by the red mud, spoke about the poignant impact on her Sunday school children.

Lutherans throughout the disaster zone continue to work to help victims of the catastrophe. In the village of Kertas, for example, the parsonage has been put at the disposal of fire and emergency workers. The Lajos Ordass Lutheran Institute of Education delivered hot meals to victims. Pastors and church members throughout the area have collaborated with the ecumenical Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) to evacuate victims and provide food parcels and hygienic kits.

HIA, which is headed by Lutheran pastor Rev. László Lehel, had also distributed tools for cleaning

houses and emergency assistance of EUR 20,000. Its attention is focused particularly on the hard-hit settlements of Kolontár and Devecser.

According to Hungary’s National Directorate General for Disaster Management (NDGDM), about 700,000 cubic meters of sludge escaped the plant, which is located some 160 kilometers from Hungary’s capital, Budapest.

The environment ministry described the flood as the worst chemical accident in Hungary’s history, saying the cleanup would take up to 18 months and would require significant financial support from the European Union.

Hungary has been working to prevent the red chemical mud from spilling into the Danube River, where it would be taken down river to six countries, including Croatia, Serbia and Romania.

Now it is time to begin to look at long-term solutions, said Fabiny, because many people will certainly not be able to return to their homes. “We are convinced that the church of Jesus Christ must take side with the innocent people in trouble.”

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary has more than 213,000 members, and it joined the LWF in 1947.



*Hungarian Lutheran church volunteer Vilmos Baráth assists in the HIA clean-up in Devecser village.
© ELCH/B. Kalinszák*

19 October 2010

LWF Churches Invited to Focus Anew on Meaning of Reformation

Emphasis on Ecumenical Significance

GENEVA (LWI) – As churches around the world commemorate Reformation Day on or around 31 October, incoming General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Rev. Martin Junge invited LWF member churches to observe this year’s anniversary with a special sense of gratitude as they reflect on the contemporary significance of the Reformation’s witness to the gospel.

In a letter addressed to LWF member churches, Junge reminded the Lutheran communion of the

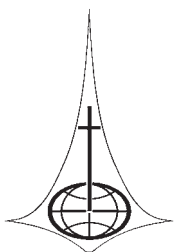
need to reaffirm God’s gift of grace especially in anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. “It is precisely because we live by grace that we have the confidence to look with honest eyes at the traditions we cherish and to seek God’s healing hand to make them live anew. Such a spirit is one for which our contemporary world thirsts,” wrote Junge.

On 31 October 1517 Luther nailed his “Ninety-Five Theses” to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, calling for reform in the Catholic Church

of his time. Today Lutherans observe the date as Reformation Day.

Junge reminded churches of the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly “Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of Anabaptists,” in which Lutherans asked Mennonites for forgiveness for the former’s violent persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century, and for the subsequent harmful depictions of the latter to the present day.

“In coming with repentance even to our own special festival, we are acting from the heart of our faith.



We are recognizing that the Spirit of God who called the reformers is still active among us now,” he wrote.

He noted that Luther’s actions marked “a crucial turning point, a beginning of the Reformation,” and that observing this day has become a practice not only for Lutherans but also for many other churches.

“We recognize that the Reformation is not ours alone; reformation is a continuous need of the Church in

every age, including this one. And we continue to work to address painful divisions among Christians, including those which date from the time of the reformers,” he stressed.

Junge invited churches to use the “Service of Repentance” prepared for LWF Sunday 2010. Liturgical materials can be downloaded at: www.lwf-assembly.org/uploads/media/Liturg-Service_of_Repentance.pdf and adapted as needed for local contexts.

“Consider how this spirit of repentance can speak to your own churches on this Reformation Sunday—for in such prayers and acts of repentance we touch on a profound dimension of the meaning of Reformation in our time,” he concluded.

See also LWI special edition “... and forgive us” at: www.lwf-assembly.org/uploads/media/LWI-Special_Mennonites-EN_01.pdf

19 October 2010

LWF Reiterates Collaboration with Global Emergency and Development Body

An Expression of Diaconal and Ecumenical Commitment

ARUSHA, Tanzania/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reiterated its commitment to the ACT Alliance, saying it would continue to enhance the contribution of its member churches and related diaconal institutions to the global emergency and development body.

“The LWF understands its participation in the ACT Alliance as an expression of its diaconal and ecumenical commitment,” said incoming General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge in a message delivered to the first assembly of the Alliance, jointly hosted by the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), 19–22 October in Arusha, Tanzania.

“Our joint diaconal action expressed in the ACT Alliance, is a vital expression of this ecumenical vocation and with it an important sign of hope in a globalized but fragmented world,” said Junge in the message read by Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, director of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS).

This was the first general assembly of ACT Alliance, created in January 2010 by merging two previous development and emergency relief networks. The LWF is a founding member of the alliance, which works in more than 130 countries throughout the world.

“As we serve people and strive to uphold their rights, we under-

stand ourselves as a communion of churches that participates in God’s mission and does so jointly with other churches and their diaconal institutions,” said Junge.

and to advocate for justice through capacity building at all levels.

Addressing the 200 participants representing 105 member organizations, ACT Alliance General Secretary John



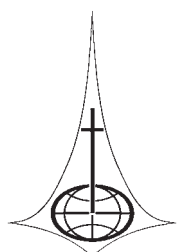
Hanne E. Serck-Hanssen, Norwegian Church Aid, listens as Dr MG Neogi, head of agriculture with LWF/DWS associate program RDRS Bangladesh, comments during discussion at the 2010 ACT Alliance assembly. © ACT/Sean Hawkey

He expressed his hope that decisions made at the assembly would translate into a deep transformation of the lives of the poor and of the structures and systems that systematically deny the poor access to their rights.

Opening the assembly, former Tanzanian Prime Frederick Sumaye urged ACT Alliance to use its power within and outside the churches in the global South and North to bring an end to corruption and poverty,

Nduna urged the organizations to listen and learn from one another. “One of the greatest lessons we have to learn is from the people we serve,” he said. He pointed out that development should not be approached from a top-down strategy but rather involve people in decision making and in owning the development projects that are implemented.

In his sermon at the opening worship service, ELCT Arusha Diocese Bishop Thomas Laiser urged the alli-



ance to advocate for economic justice at the international arena on behalf of the global South. He connected severe economic hardship with the plunder of wildlife and natural resources, including minerals and forests. He also linked poverty with global warming, corruption and injustices on the international market where agricultural and mineral exports fetched low prices while the price of imported goods continued to increase.

In agreements made at the assembly, ACT Alliance committed itself to improving the speed and strength of co-ordination between member organizations in order to respond more effectively to communities in

crisis. It also pledged to prioritize preventative measures in all its work and ensure continuity of care and recovery after an emergency.

The assembly affirmed the alliance's democratic "ACT Forum" structure, in which major decisions on strategy, financial resources and campaigns are taken at a country level rather than at the Geneva headquarters. The role of national members was emphasized, with delegates agreeing to make these country-level forums stronger and better resourced.

Setting the alliance's strategy for the next four years, the assembly affirmed that ending poverty and inequality was not just a goal but an obligation.

ACT Alliance assembly co-host TCRS is an associate program of DWS, LWF's humanitarian relief arm, and has been carrying out emergency and development work in Tanzania since 1964. The ELCT with 5.3 million members is the second largest LWF member church.

(Written for LWI by ELCT communication coordinator, Ms Elizabeth Lobulu, with additional information from ACT Alliance communications office.)

More information about DWS work is available at: www.lutheranworld.org/dws

28 October 2010

Despite Concerns Outgoing LWF General Secretary Optimistic about Ecumenism's Future

Interview with Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko

GENEVA (LWI) – In an interview with Lutheran World Information (LWI), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, who served as general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from 1 November 1994 to 31 October 2010, outlined significant decisions that have strengthened the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion of churches. He affirmed two historic actions with the Roman Catholics and Mennonites respectively as a sign that the ecumenical movement is alive and has a future. He emphasized that ethical issues should not be the basis for church division.

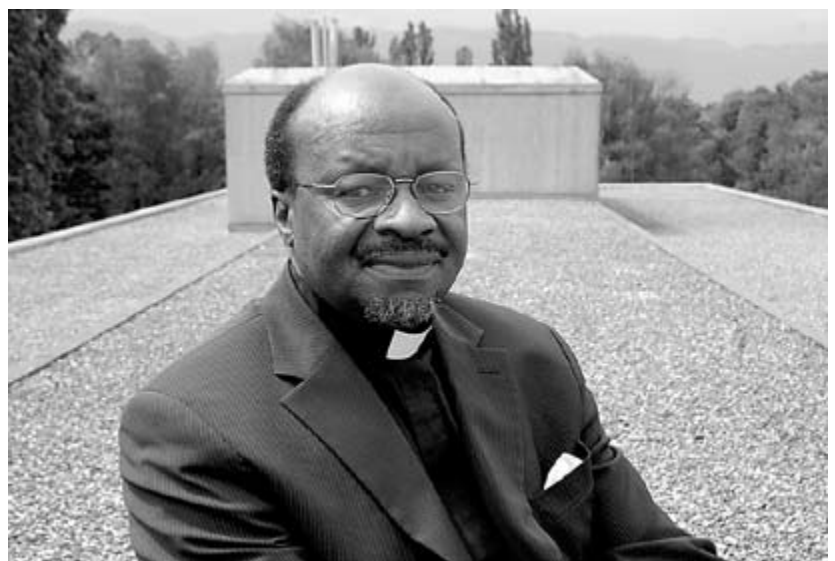
Noko's successor, Chilean theologian Rev. Martin Junge, assumed responsibility as LWF General Secretary on 1 November.

The full text of the interview with Noko, an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, follows:

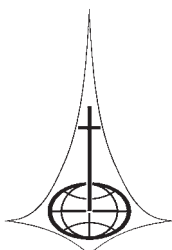
At your installation as LWF General Secretary on 3 Feb 1995, you underlined focus on the plight of children globally and tolerance between the world's faith. How far has the LWF addressed these issues?

Yes, back then there was a great concern globally with regard to children. The international community's attention was directed to other priorities while issues such as child labor and child soldiers were falling through the cracks. Abuse of children and violation of their human rights by adults in most societies was a dark chapter with respect to human decency. On my part it was a call to the Church to address such abuse as a matter of urgency and responsibility.

With regard to interfaith dialogues and co-existence, Christian communities had reached very high levels of recognizing the need for sharing space with people of other religious traditions. It was also self evident that issues concerning children were not only a mandate for Christian communities but for all people and all organized international bodies. The Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), which was launched five years after my instal-



Zimbabwean theologian Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko served as LWF General Secretary from 1994 to 2010. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet



lation, has become a platform where Christians and other religious communities could jointly address the question of children and children's rights, especially in Africa.

From 'Federation' to 'Communion' – can you elaborate emphasis on the 'communion' self-understanding?

Lutherans have for a long time, struggled with self-understanding namely: who are we within the Church of Jesus Christ. There has been conscious evolution of self understanding accompanied by joint action in the areas of mission, diakonia and theological engagement. Along the way LWF member churches became more aware of their confessional unity—with implications for altar and pulpit fellowship—that they gradually understood themselves as much more than a federation but a communion of Lutheran churches sharing a common faith and mission. They took common decisions in regular consultations, through pastoral visits and counseling one another.

I'll cite some examples:

- At the height of the apartheid era, Lutheran churches were faced with an ideology which challenged the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel and the first article of the faith. The ideology of apartheid falsely maintained that human beings were created unequal by God.
- There is a growing understanding and affirmation in the churches that ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ, and men and women are equally called to this ministry.
- Lutherans agreed in the late 1990s to establish an Endowment Fund for the purpose of strengthening their joint work and ecumenical priorities.
- In 2007 LWF member churches gathered in Lund, Sweden, adopted a historic statement affirm-



Dr Ishmael Noko's successor Rev. Martin Junge (left) listens as Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance director Mr Peter Prove (right) expresses words of gratitude at a 27 October farewell for the outgoing LWF general secretary, held at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva. © LWF/J. Latva-Hakuni

ing common understanding on the episcopal ministry (www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/EN/LWF_The_Lund_Statement_2007.pdf)

To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical, you've often emphasized, is this self evident?

I will refer to two ecumenical agreements—the October 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) with Roman Catholics and the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly “Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of ‘Anabaptists.’”

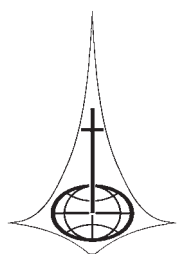
These two ecumenical events are cornerstones and landmarks in the ecumenical landscape. Both of them have a defining character. After nearly 500 years of a difficult history of relationships between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, we have, by God's grace managed to affirm common meaning on the message of the doctrine of justification. Furthermore, in 2006 the Methodist church family appropriated the Joint Declaration, undergirding the fundamental truths that justification is not the property of Lutherans and Roman Catholics only but of the Church universal.

With regard to the relationship with Anabaptists for which the Lutheran communion asked for forgiveness from God and from the Mennonites for Anabaptists' persecution in the 16th century, it is a watershed in the area of ecumenical relations. The significance of this action is better understood when one recognizes that we live in a world where seeking forgiveness for one's actions is perceived as a sign of weakness, instead the trend is to ask for more “clarification.” For me, this Assembly decision remains a very significant, spiritual and ecumenical gesture.

That both the JDDJ and the Eleventh Assembly action were celebrated in the context of ecumenical Church presence signifies that the ecumenical movement is alive and has a future.

A few months after you took office, you proposed a process of consultation between the world's Lutheran churches on issues related to human sexuality. What prompted your suggestion then?

In my report to the 1995 Council meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, I reminded the LWF that there was need to address growing concern



in the member churches about their pastoral and social role regarding matters of human sexuality. It was self-evident for me then that in one way or another, the issue would be a concern for the church globally. But it was not confined to sexuality alone—it was about the whole definition and understanding of family and marriage. In previous years, churches in Africa had approached the LWF seeking guidelines, on how to deal with the issue of polygamy when it came to individual membership and participation in a congregation. Thus, I was very happy when the 2007 Council meeting adopted the “Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue on Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality,” to facilitate discussion on this subject.

Today, the debate on human sexuality is real. While in classical Lutheran understanding ethical issues should not be the basis for church division, this particular issue has precipitated a very difficult context.

When you called for a renewal of the LWF in 2005, what were some of the issues that you hoped a renewed LWF would approach differently?

The general renewal of the LWF was intended to address every aspect of the organization with respect to structures, relationships to ecumenical partners and the reconfiguration of the communion office in Geneva. According to the present amended by-laws, the member churches in the regions are invited to spell out as clearly as possible the structures of diakonia that better serve the mission of the church in that particular region. It is important to emphasize that diakonia in context requires recognition that structures are to serve the needs of the church. The “To Whom It May Concern” approach which prescribes a ‘one size fits-all’ sort of strategy cannot be applicable in today’s contexts. It must be challenged.

You were the first African General Secretary of the LWF, how was this identity reflected in your approach to issues?

I asked myself this very question when I was elected to this position – what would be my specific contribution to the LWF? First and foremost I was a leader of the global LWF but drawn from an African identity. I hoped at the time that I would un-

derline Africa’s self understanding and definition of community from the perspective of *ubuntu*—“you are because I am.” It is a universal approach, also undergirded by Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s notion of a church for others—that the role of an individual in a community such as the LWF must be defined by relationships to and with others. I brought this approach to practical processes such as situations of conflict in churches; LWF’s diaconal work; and in ecumenical dialogues and conversations in which the LWF is involved. Even in matters of detail when negotiating with governments on issues such as tax exemption, I projected the entirety of the Lutheran communion.

What are your retirement plans?

I leave Geneva to go into “active retirement.” Certainly, I will miss those with whom I worked and have come to know as friends and colleagues. But I am also happy that I have completed my mandate at a time when I feel is the right moment to conclude my work. Whatever is not complete will be completed by those who will follow now and in the future. God’s work can never be finished by us but by God’s self. On this note I want to thank LWF member churches, national committees, related agencies and individuals with whom I have been in contact during these 28 years and six months—16 years of which I served in the capacity of general secretary.

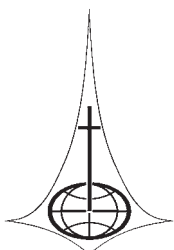
One of the things I look forward to doing is becoming a Sunday school teacher. As a pastor and lecturer, I have served in many roles including confirmation classes for example, but I never got a chance to teach Sunday school for which I have a great passion.

I look forward to sitting down with children and sketching out images that can help them learn about others, including other religions and cultures. A church that looks into the future must invest in raising awareness in its children today.

3 November 2010



Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko planted an apple tree on the Ecumenical Center grounds, 27 October, saying the tree was a sign of hope and a symbol of the embodiment of the ecumenical movement. © LWF/J. Latva-Hakuni



LWF Welcomes Appointment of Michelle Bachelet to Head New UN Women Office

Prayers and Support in Pursuit of Gender Justice

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) welcomed the appointment of former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet as head of the new United Nations agency, UN Women, saying it gives gender equality a high profile.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon named Bachelet to the post on 14 September. She was the first female president of Chile, and she is well known for her commitment to the pursuit of gender justice.

“The Lutheran World Federation welcomes your appointment, both because it shows what a high profile is being given to this newly created office, and because we are convinced of the high quality contribution you will bring toward the office’s success,” said Rev. Martin Junge, incoming LWF General Secretary, in a 16 September congratulatory letter to Bachelet.

UN Women becomes operational in January, merging four UN offices and agencies: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); the Division for the Advancement of Women; the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women; and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

Junge, a Chilean pastor reiterated the organization’s support for UN Women’s objectives. “Within our own Lutheran theological understanding, enhancing women’s role and contribution in decision-making processes including leadership remains a key priority,” he said.



Former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet will head UN Women. © Oscar Ordenes

He pointed out that most of the LWF member churches around the world have ordained women as pastors, and many have women serving as bishops or presidents. “Our churches have been immeasurably blessed by our women pastors and leaders,” added Junge.

Still, Junge acknowledged the significant challenges Lutherans face in their quest for gender equality, a fact highlighted by the organization’s highest decision-making body at its last meeting in Stuttgart, Germany. “We believe that in order to be a legitimate and credible voice for gender justice in society, the church must first achieve gender justice within its own structures and practices,” he said, citing the Message of the Eleventh Assembly, held in July 2010 under the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

His letter reiterated the LWF’s commitment to overcoming the “sin

of violence against women” and said the Lutheran communion would try to learn from the experiences of churches like those in Chile, where they collaborate with government and civil society to protect women.

Junge underlined the LWF’s commitment to working in partnership with UN Women, continuing close collaboration on efforts around the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN Commission on the Status for Women and the Millennium Development Goals.

“We at the LWF wish you and UN Women rich blessings and great success. Be assured of our prayers and ongoing support in advancing efforts to improve the lives of women and the communities they represent throughout the world,” he concluded.

16 September 2010

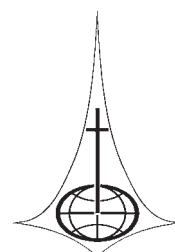
LWF Celebrates Election of First Woman to Head Church of Norway Bishops’ Conference

Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien Underlines Message of Hope

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) congratulated the

first woman to be elected chairperson of Church of Norway Bishops’ Conference,

Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien, noting her election is cause for celebration.



“The election is first of all, of course, a recognition of your own gifts and vision, and for that we join your church in giving thanks,” said incoming LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge in a letter to Byfuglien. She was elected to head the bishops’ conference on 21 October, succeeding Bishop Olav Skjevesland of Agder, who has held the post since 2006.

“We celebrate this new evidence that, within the span of a single lifetime ordained women’s leadership is becoming visible at the most senior levels of our churches,” Junge added.

He said that he looks forward to working with Byfuglien, who was elected LWF vice president for the Nordic region at the Eleventh Assembly in July.

Byfuglien has been bishop of Borg, southeast of the capital Oslo, since 2005, and one of four Church of Norway women bishops.

Her term as chairperson of the Bishops’ Conference will end in mid-2011 as the government will establish an additional office of bishop which will give the state church its first permanent function of presiding bishop based in the country’s ancient ecclesiastical capital of Nidaros or Trondheim as it is known now.



Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien © Church of Norway Information Service

She says the church’s main challenge is to pass on the “message of love, forgiveness and hope in such a way that people find our words and deeds relevant,” reports the *Church of Norway Information Service*.

Byfuglien has held positions in the dioceses of Nidaros and Borg. She is chairperson of a national project to reform religious education in the church. Since 2001, she has been

Secretary General of the Norwegian Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Associations.

The Church of Norway has nearly 3.9 million members, representing more than 80 percent of the country’s population. It has 11 dioceses organized in over 1,280 congregations. It joined the LWF in 1947.

28 October 2010

Pastor Nestor Friedrich Elected to Lead Brazilian Lutheran Church

The election of new church leadership for the period 2011-2014 was one of the highlights of the 27th synod of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), held 20-24 October, in Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brazil. The current general secretary **Rev. Dr Nestor Friedrich** was elected church president, and will succeed Rev. Dr Walter Altmann whose term concludes at the end of 2010.

Altmann, 66, IECLB president since 2002, is a former member of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Executive Committee, and has been moderator of the World Council of Churches Central Committee since 2006.

Friedrich, 53, has been IECLB general secretary since 2003.

Rev. Carlos Alberto Möller was elected to the position of first vice president, previously held by Rev. Homero Severo Pinto, who died last March, while Rev. Silvia Beatrice Genz was elected as second vice president, becoming the first woman to occupy this position.

Greeting the IECLB delegates, incoming LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed gratitude for partici-

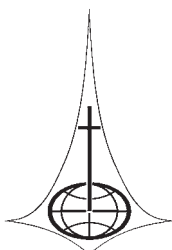
pating in an important moment of deliberations and decisions for the Brazilian Lutheran church “But I am here especially to pay homage to the leadership of pastor Walter Altmann,” he said. “We regard him as an impressive leader. We’ve seen the IECLB grow, with strong internal processes of planning, mission, diakonia, gender, work with Indian communities,” he added. Junge underscored the IECLB’s contribution to the understanding of mission—with an all-encompassing, holistic approach—comprising exchanges and partnerships between churches in the South and extensive investment in strategic planning, which is being developed in the midst of extremely diverse realities and experiences.

Junge said the election of a woman as second vice president was “without doubt a landmark.”

Rev. Dr Nestor Friedrich will be installed on 19 December in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

The IECLB has 717,000 members. It joined the LWF in 1952.

(A contribution by Susanne Buchweitz, IECLB)



FEATURE: International Scholarship Fund Enhances Life and Witness of Lutheran Churches

Continued from p. 1

“Many churches gave examples of institutional changes caused by interventions of ex-scholars,” stated the evaluation, which was conducted between January and May 2010 in nine countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. They included Cameroon, Tanzania and Zimbabwe; India, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea; Brazil and El Salvador; and Estonia.

“These [changes] relate to new strategies and concepts of a diakonia [church social service work] shifting from a charity orientation to a more pro-active orientation by creating opportunities for the poor,” the evaluation noted. The study also revealed the emergence of new concepts of pastoral care, increased engagement in HIV and AIDS work, and focus on organizational change and strategic planning.

The international theological study programs are supported by partners in Germany coordinated by the German National Committee, while the non-theological study programs are supported by Germany’s Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst – EED), Norwegian Church Aid and Church of Sweden.

The scholarship program, according to the evaluation, has enabled churches to increase their involvement in ecumenical initiatives. They have also made significant effort in incorporating the importance of cultural and ethnic aspects in theology and mission, and are more open to renovations in worship and liturgy, among other changes.

More Women Scholars

“One church attributed [its] acceptance of women as pastors to the intervention of ex-scholars,” the evaluation noted.

Conducted by a team of seven consultants and four resource persons

led by Dr Karin Stahl from Germany, the evaluation showed significant improvement over an earlier survey which was completed in 2000 looking at the years between 1975 and 1999. The financial support provided to the program through the LWF is USD 1 million per year.

Overall, 932 scholarships in 93 churches were approved between 2000 and 2010, supporting 1,516 scholars. Nearly half (48 percent) of the scholarships were awarded to students from Africa, 29 percent from Asia, 17.6 percent from Latin American and 3.3 percent from Eastern Europe. A few scholarships supported also persons from other parts of Europe and the USA for exchange study programs in African countries.

While in the earlier study women made up only one third of participants, the figure rose to virtually one half during 2000-2010 (761 men against 755 women). The balance between theological and non-theological scholarships has reversed with only 46 percent of scholars now studying theology, according to the most recent evaluation.

The evaluation found that the international scholarship fund had significant personal and professional impact on participants and a critical bearing on the scholars’ respective member churches. Men and women both referred to their enriching experiences abroad or in contact with students from different countries.

“Especially female scholars emphasized that the studies [facilitated] by the LWF scholarship contributed to their empowerment, raising their self-respect and self-esteem. They learned to move in an unknown environment, feel encouraged to talk in public and generally grew as persons,” the evaluation noted.

Church representatives interviewed in the survey acknowledged a visible professional improvement in

the scholars upon their return. They brought new spirit, an improved work attitude and innovative ideas to their home churches, the evaluation said.

Challenges

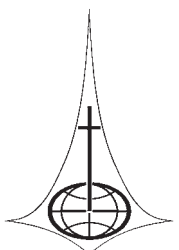
The evaluation also raised some significant concerns that for discussion at the global gathering in Montreux. For example, the number of agencies involved in offering scholarships suggests a need for a more coordinated effort by the LWF. Member churches need to find better ways to utilize the new theological insights and rich varieties of professional skills offered by scholars.

“There is a trend of the scholarship program to concentrate on the sharing of resources in one direction from the North to the South. The philosophy of mutual sharing in a broader sense that includes also the sharing of ideas, experiences and perspectives from the North to the South as well as from the South to the North is getting lost,” the evaluation noted.

“We hope the global consultation will be a unique learning space for the representatives of the various stake-holders of the program, where we mutually reflect on the overall findings, recommendations and strategic directions arising from the evaluation,” said Mr Abebe Yohannes Saketa, secretary for human resources development at the LWF Department for Mission and Development, organizing the four-day consultation in Montreux.

He expressed his hope “that this particular event will enable the churches, partners and [the] LWF to jointly identify the most crucial priority areas for the program, in view of making it more able to respond to the strategic human resources/capacity development needs of the churches for the years ahead.”

1 October 2010



Junge: The LWF Is Endowed with an “Ecology of Knowledges”

Program Has Made a Difference for Churches and Society

GENEVA (LWI) – The consultation called to review the international scholarship program of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) opened in the Swiss city of Montreux, with a call to effectively utilize the available resources and synergies in the Lutheran communion to promote ongoing learning.

The LWF is endowed with an “ecology of knowledges,” said incoming General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge when he addressed participants to the three-day global consultation on “Education and Training Impact and Strategy.” He argued for a plural form of knowledge, emphasizing the diversity of information and learning as was evident at the organization’s July 2010 Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, meeting under the theme “Give Us today Our Daily Bread.”

One of the objectives of the Montreux consultation was to identify and systematize the most crucial priority areas for the LWF scholarship program, with a view to making it respond to the strategic human capacity development needs of the churches for the period following the LWF Eleventh Assembly.

Junge said the Assembly resolutions related to the different forms of bread and hunger and how members of the Lutheran communion, as global citizens, can respond together to these myriad challenges. “I am grateful that we continue to address social, ecological and other outside perspectives. We are not withdrawing, but paying attention to these crucial issues,” he added, referring to Eleventh Assembly resolutions on climate change, gender justice, human trafficking and food justice among others.

He emphasized the consultation as a significant part of a broader process of re-visioning the organization’s work in view of the LWF Renewal Process and the Strategic Plan



Incoming LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge addresses the Montreux consultation.
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

process for the period 2012 to 2017, which also take into account the Assembly outcomes. The question of synergies in the Lutheran communion remains crucial, said Junge. “How does this process become more connected to other programmatic processes? How do we continue to share the many resources, capacities and knowledges that we have in the communion?”

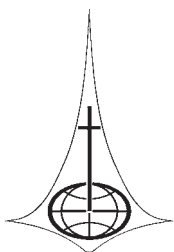
Junge underlined the polycentric nature of the LWF—having more than one center—as important in promoting strong participation and different expressions to respond to various needs. “How do we learn together from the different contexts?” he asked participants in the global consultation coordinated by the human resources desk of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

In his welcoming remarks, Rev. Dr. Musa P. Filibus, DMD director, pointed out that while the statistical data in the evaluation report

highlighted some of the success stories—932 scholarships between 2000 and 2010 comprising 1,516 scholars—the issue went beyond figures. “It is about the difference the LWF is making in the life of member churches and society. The scholarships contribute to broadening the professional and leadership competence of those trained, which in turn inspire new experiences in their churches,” he emphasized.

Filibus also highlighted the program’s contribution to envisioning gender equity through the numerical increase of female scholars and integration of women, their gifts and leadership in their churches. He cited “opportunities for deepening relationships and incorporation of deep contextual experiences and insights into theological thinking, mission practice, renewal of worship and liturgy,” as equally important aspects of the scholarship program.

The DMD director however stressed the need to acknowledge



and pay attention to the gaps and limitations identified by the evaluation report. He cited inadequacy in terms of institutional learning

and how the experiences transform church institutions.

There was also limited knowledge and utilization of policies and

guidelines in member churches in discerning their priorities for human resources training.

7 October 2010

FEATURE: A Powerful Tool in Churches' Struggle for More Just Societies

Calls for Increased Synergy in Capacity Building Efforts

GENEVA (LWI) – Capacity building remains a powerful tool in the churches' struggle for development and transformation toward more just societies.

"It's a two-way traffic: it's what the church can contribute to society through the training of committed people, and what these committed individuals contribute to the church. For me, it has been more of a contribution of the church to society through my skills. But as an active member of the church, I have been able to participate in discussions, it's difficult to assess the impact of that," said Dr Kaire Mbuende from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia.

The former high ranking Namibian politician, diplomat and international development director was speaking about the profound effect The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) International Scholarship Program, has had on his life and career.

Mbuende first received a scholarship to study at the Lutheran College in Tanzania (now Makumira Univer-

sity) in 1975, when he was a refugee living in Zambia. He obtained a bachelor of divinity in 1978, and proceeded to Sweden, also with an LWF scholarship, to study sociology of religion. He received non-LWF support for his PhD in economic sociology from Lund University, Sweden (1986).

"If you are talking about impact, I am here," he remarked at the four-day consultation held in Montreux, Switzerland, early October. Participants reviewed the findings of a January-May 2010 external evaluation of the LWF international scholarship program and formulated recommendations on how it can continue to respond effectively to the strategic human resource and capacity development needs of the churches. Lead evaluation consultant Dr Karin Stahl from Germany presented the report.

The consultation convened by the Human Resources Development desk of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) called for increased synergy between program

partners, LWF departments, and theological and diaconal training institutions, and in communication and information sharing.

Diakonia and Development

Former DMD director, Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, Church of Norway, pointed out that diakonia (church social service) has experienced a paradigm shift due to experiences gained from the South. The understanding of diakonia has shifted from individual vocation and action by committed persons to an expression of being church, and from charity work to holistic church action, he said.

"Today, diakonia is seen more as bold action, calling for justice and sustainable societies," said Nordstokke. A new understanding of civil society and networking, a "return of religion to our post-secular societies" and recognition of "religious assets" are creating new opportunities for diaconal action, he noted.

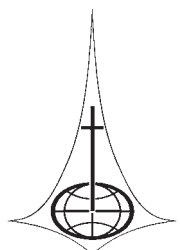
Still, many Lutheran churches have a long tradition of seeing social work as distinct from "church work" and training is conducted on two tracks, in theology or secular fields. Church-related theological institutions, added Nordstokke have not given priority to diaconal action.

Ms Jutta Hildebrandt, representing Germany's Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst – EED), which gives financial support for non-theological scholarships, understands the tension between the diaconal and theological mission of the church.

"We come from the same history but have different mandates regard-



The participants included Ms Tammy Jackson (left), director for Leadership Development, Global Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Dr Kaire Mbuende (right), until recently, Namibia's ambassador to the United Nations. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet





Ms Jutta Hildebrandt (right), Church Development Service (EED) provides input during one of the sessions. Looking on are DMD secretary for human resources Mr Abebe Yohannes Saketa (middle) and Ms Grettel Maria Gamboa, from the Lutheran Costa Rican Church. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

ing our work in the world,” she noted. EED focuses on development, not theology. “We sometimes have different strategies on how to get to where we want to go. We should be aware of this, but also point out commonalities. We should be transparent and accountable so that we know what others do, maintain trust and confidence, and stay in dialogue even when we disagree,” she emphasized.

More Synergy

Rev. Dr Dong Sum Kim of the World Council of Churches Asia Desk/Solidarity, Diakonia and Scholarships, noted that while scholarships are the main tool for human resources development, they are very finance-intensive. When churches try to do it by themselves, this duplicates efforts and puts a strain on available resources. Sharing of resources

between different members of the church family can address the issue of sustainability, he said.

Kim evoked the possibility of a “core curriculum, adaptable to different contexts, to help us develop these issues together.”

Several participants mentioned a need to overcome the distinction between theological and diaconal training. Describing HIV and AIDS work in his region, Dr Rudolf von Sinner of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in São Leopoldo, Brazil, said, “You can’t deal with HIV and AIDS without getting into issues of religion and theology.” If the congregation doesn’t accept deacons, then the answer is socially-trained theologians, he suggested.

Participants also gave examples of models that work. Dr Noro Raoniarisa of the Lutheran Graduate School of Theology (SALT) of the Malagasy Lutheran Church told the consulta-

tion that students from the institution who receive LWF scholarships make a significant contribution to their churches. “We have had at least 100 students coming to the faculty who are now working in different synods.”

In a final message, the consultation recommended that the LWF strengthens processes that simultaneously promote institutional and human capacity development for sustainable churches and their witness.

Communication and Information-Sharing

Pleading for more inclusive forms of communication, participants pointed out that information sometimes stays in church offices and fails to reach the whole church, particularly women and youth. They suggested that the relevant documents and application procedures be made available in the official working languages of the LWF and posted on the LWF Web site.

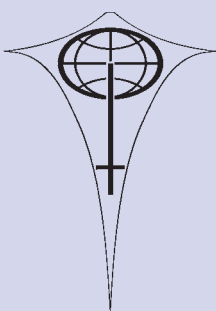
Mapping available resources and exploring the possibility of sharing scholarship funds were also recommended by the consultation. An interactive resource-sharing Web site with contributions from member churches was proposed.

(Written for LWI by Miriam Reidy Prost.)

The final message from the consultation is available at: www.lutheranworld.org

26 October 2010

This article is in the continuing LWI features series on the topic “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,” the theme of the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly.



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