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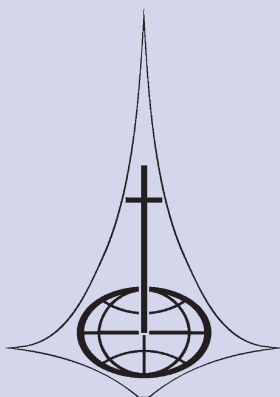
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LWF Consultation Underlines Open and Critical Approach to Biblical Texts



Dr Hans-Peter Grosshans speaks at the LWF hermeneutics conference in Nairobi, Kenya. © LWF/Fredrick Nzwilli

Focus on the Bible Central to 500th Reformation Anniversary

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran theologians from around the world meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 9-14 September, agreed that the best approach for interpreting Scripture is to be open and critical of the interpreter as well as the biblical texts.

Meeting for the first in a series of biblical consultations under the theme, “The Word of God in the Scriptures as Shared Space: Towards a Contemporary Hermeneutics for the Lutheran Communion,” they noted that such an approach is true to Lutheran heritage, which underscores salvation through Jesus Christ and justification by faith alone.

The initial consultation, organized by the Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), focused on the Gospel of John. The participants—35 theologians and church

leaders—came from various disciplines, including biblical, practical, ethical, systematic and feminist theology.

Scripture Comes First

Presenting an “Introduction to Lutheran Hermeneutics,” Dr Hans-Peter Grosshans, professor of systematic and ecumenical theology at the University of Münster, Germany, said that while the church lived from the Word of God contained in Holy Scripture, “Scripture needs faithful and creative interpretation.”

Grosshans added: “Sometimes interpreters do not respect the biblical material

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LWF Expresses Deep Pain over Deaths in Zanzibar Ferry Sinking

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) expressed heartfelt condolences to the people of Tanzania over the loss of more than 200 people, mostly women and children, in the sinking of the ferry MV Spice Islander off Zanzibar on 10 September.

In a 12 September letter to Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said the news of the accident, in which hundreds of people were reported missing, was received by the global communion of 145 churches with deep pain. “We join the people and religious communities of Zanzibar and

Tanzania in mourning and pray particularly for those families, relatives and friends who lost their loved ones or remain in the painful uncertainty regarding their whereabouts,” Junge wrote to Malasusa, who is LWF vice-president for the African region.

He commended Tanzanian authorities for the rescue efforts and establishment of a probe committee for the tragedy.

As Malasusa traveled to Zanzibar, Junge offered prayers that “God’s Spirit may grant you and your church wisdom so that your words and attitudes communicate God’s incommensurable love for all creation and for each human being.”

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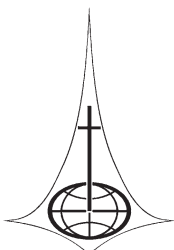
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile Urges Participation for Education Impasse

LWF General Secretary Says Underlying Political, Economic System at Fault

SANTIAGO, Chile/GENEVA (LWI) – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) has played a mediating role as students of all ages in Chile mobilized to demand free education and better standards.

In a series of sometimes strident protests, high school and university students, along with professors, called for changes in the country's educational system.

They said a more just system had been denied them since the era of military dictatorship under General Augusto Pinochet.

With its calls for dialogue and participation, the IELCH, a member of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), acted to help resolve the situation that had triggered violent clashes involving police and protestors.

Support for the Chilean students came from counterparts in Argentina, France, Germany and Spain.

Justice Issues at Core

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge noted that Chilean youth were following a pattern in other parts of the world revealing injustices in current social, political and economic thinking.

"A large segment of Chilean youth does not have access to free education of a good quality. These young people see their rights being curtailed and their future heavily mortgaged," said Junge.

Below the surface, the conflict was about moving Chilean society beyond a hard-line neoliberal approach to economy—an approach that had proven unable to address existing social inequalities and instead had exacerbated them, Junge commented.

"The conflict centers on the splendid macroeconomic image of the country and the dim microeconomic realities that many citizens face daily," the Chilean theologian remarked.

Junge said his prayers were for dialogue to prevail, "and that—as in other parts of the world—the clamor of the youth is understood as an opportunity for positive transformation."

A group of Chilean parliamentarians sent a letter to Minister of Education Felipe Bulnes urging him to visit a site where students had been on hunger strike, and for him to listen to them.

The IELCH through its Commission on Human Rights warned the community and government authorities that action was needed due to repressive measures being meted out to students on the streets.

More Inclusive Society

In a public statement, IELCH President Rev. Luis Álvarez Figueroa said that humanity and human dignity were fundamental principles of social, political and economic coexistence in making the Kingdom of God present.

"We hope that the demands of our society will be heard, and feel deeply moved by the reality of poverty and of dehumanization in our country... given the neoliberal economic model that sustains economic globalization and increases inequalities," he stated.

"It scandalizes us that some become rich with the money of all and the interests of the financial and banking world take precedence over the rights of the people."

The letter supports the Chilean family and students in their demands for a more inclusive society, noting the State is "not able to sense how profound the clamor of the majority of Chilean people is, and the authorities express their fear of a popular consultation."

Álvarez demanded that the voice of the students and professors be heard, because it was the only way to reach an agreement. The State, he said, should be there to serve people and should avoid "purposeless, indiscriminate and totally disproportionate repression."

The IELCH leader invited all Chile's actors to open channels of participation and dialogue so that all youth, as a right, have access to education that is the best available and that is financed by the national budget.

(Héctor Carrillo of the Latin America and Caribbean Communication Agency [ALC] contributed to this report along with LWI writer Peter Kenny in Geneva.)

6 September 2011

Religions Must Unite Against Evil of Violence

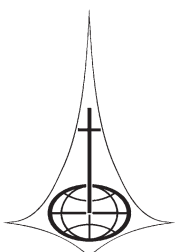
LWF President Stresses Common Values among Faiths

GENEVA – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan challenged religious leaders from every faith to stand up to their own extremists and say that violence done in the name of God is blasphemous.

Younan, who was speaking on a panel titled "September 11th 2001-2011" at the International Meeting of Prayer for Peace of the Community of Sant'Egidio in Munich, Germany, on 13 September, said when religious leaders remained silent about their

core values they contributed to the problem of intolerance.

"We, as religious leaders, need to become more engaged and to speak out more forcefully to 'dismantle the corruption' and give a vision of life together in all its diversity in the



whole globalized world,” added the leader of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

“Instead of dividing the world on the basis of religion, religion must be a uniting force against the evils of the world, when we focus on the common values we share,” he noted.

His words echoed those of LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, who said in a statement on the tenth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks that Christians needed to be co-workers in transforming society through dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation.

Younan said it was important to look also at the 22 July attack by a Christian extremist that killed 77 people in Norway. The two events,

“bookends for a decade of fear,” could help people of different faiths understand they are bound together.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam all preach love and therefore their followers should accept each other and promote peace and justice. Only a culture of trust could make the world a safe place for all, Younan maintained.

“In this way we may together combat all kinds of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Christianophobia, or xenophobia, in order that religion will be the true source of understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation in every civilization and culture,” he added.

The LWF president emphasized the role education could play in

building trust among different faiths, noting that it was a key mission of his own Middle East church as it worked for peace and justice in the region.

Education has also been important in the Arab Awakening, where it is helping to transform the Middle East into a modern civil society that seeks human rights, including the rights of women, and religious freedom.

“Only when students from different religions study together, play together, participate in extramural activities together during their education years, will they have the skills to work together and contribute together to society as good citizens when they are adults,” he concluded.

13 September 2011

LWF Consultation Underlines Open and Critical Approach to Biblical Texts

Continued from p. 1

in its entirety; hence, they relegate the Holy Scripture to a cafeteria by choosing parts that are appealing and leaving those which they cannot make sense of.”

He said that globally, in the Lutheran churches, “Scripture is a common point of reference” and should “always be considered in the life of Lutheran churches. Furthermore, the various contemporary contexts should be paid attention to.”

Grosshans added that to avoid confusion “there is the need to put Scripture first and not contemporary contexts.”

Grosshans said he believed that in light of today’s technological developments the best ways to mediate Scripture were by word of mouth and through text and images using computers, the internet, mobile phones and electronic books.

He explained that Luther believed that the best way of mediating Scripture was orally, since faith “comes by hearing.”

In his presentation, “Exploring Effective Context,” Rev. Dr Vitor

Westhelle from Brazil, professor of systematic theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA, underlined the fact that the meaning of a text changed depending on the reader’s setting or the circumstances under which it is read.

Westhelle pointed out that when reading the Bible, Christians must not only recognize its relevance to their lives, but also allow it to change them. Christians must not simply buy into everything said by others.

In an interview after his presentation, Westhelle commended the idea of convening the initial consultation that had attracted people from around the world who “show different ways of reading the Bible and that the way of reading Luther is also changing.”

Jesus’ Words Give Life

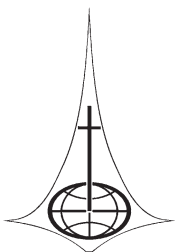
Rev. Dr Craig R. Koester, professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St Paul, Minnesota, USA, pointed out that the Gospel of John paid more attention to what Jesus said than to his actions and signs, and that Luther had affirmed that “the works do not help me, but his words are what give life.”

Dr Eve-Marie Becker, who teaches biblical studies in the Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, Denmark, said Rudolf Bultmann, a prominent successor of Luther’s theology in the field of New Testament, had emphasized Christology and downplayed mythology in response to his own context of modernity.

Bultmann (1885-1976), a German theologian of Lutheran background and professor of New Testament studies at the University of Marburg for three decades, defined an almost complete split between history and faith, called demythology, arguing that only Christ crucified was necessary for the Christian faith.

Referring to the important discussions on issues such as Christology, Rev. Dr Prasuna Gnana Nevala, of the South Andhra Lutheran Church in India, stressed the need to discover the Bible’s relevance in the face of oppression and the persecution of Christians, women and people of lower caste.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice at DTS, said the aim of the consultation was to revive the



focus on the Bible as a book for the church and the shaper of many world cultures, making it central to the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017.

Mtata stressed that the LWF also sought to deepen its identity as a com-

munion of churches by building unity through study, cooperation, discussion and common witness.

(Written for LWI by Elizabeth Lobulu, communication coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.)

Read more about the contemporary Lutheran hermeneutics consultation series: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/themes/bible-and-2017

16 September 2011

Biblical Interpretation Must Be Relevant to Issues Facing People

Biblical interpretation must be relevant to issues facing society, including HIV and AIDS, scholars urged during the LWF global consultation deliberating contemporary Lutheran understanding of Scripture.

“Our Lutheran tapestry is varied and vividly colored: in order to keep it whole and strong, we seek to find ways to recognize the integrity and authenticity of each strand in a spirit of mutual love,” stated the consultation’s final report titled, “Contemporary Lutheran Hermeneutics for the Life of the Church.”

The participants explored ways in which Lutherans of different cultures, contexts and backgrounds read and interpret the Bible and look for ways to deepen the Lutheran communion as it approaches the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. They called on the LWF to be “a liberating witness in affirming life and salvation.”

Recalling Paul’s statement “faith comes from hearing,” the consultation recognized that honoring the biblical text “involves listening to it, asking questions of it and of ourselves. Honoring each other also involves listening to one another and asking questions of one another that will help us learn.”

The theologians elaborated several important aspects of Lutheran hermeneutics and readings. They noted in the report that “Trained theologians, pastors and others should be aware of their leadership responsibility regarding issues related to power and agency by recognizing the importance of the priesthood of all believers as a guiding principle against the temptation of those in power to abuse that power.” They also said “The biblical text has to be interpreted in a communal setting in resonance with and dissonance

to present practices and the present contextual situation.”

In interpreting the Word of God, they stated, it is important to take into account the contexts within which the witness is made. “With a holistic approach, we articulate that God cares for people’s spiritual and physical needs and understand ourselves as coworkers with God in this mission,” the report states.

During her presentations, Rev. Dr Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon of Gurukul Theological College and Research Institute at Chennai, India, said the Bible must be read in ways that serves the needs of the community to rise above oppression, including caste systems, sexism and political domination.

Sometimes in multicultural and multi-religious societies such as Asia, biblical interpretations are used to stigmatize women or those who suffer from HIV and AIDS, she said.

Charity Not Enough

In his paper Rev. Dr Olehile Andries Buffel, who teaches Practical Theology at the University of South Africa, noted that those with HIV and AIDS in South Africa suffer from judgments based on misinterpretations of biblical stories such as Jesus’ encounter with the disabled man near the pool at Bethesda found in John 5: 1-18.

Buffel said AIDS can never be a private matter as it affects all people and illustrates how the world, including the church as the body of Christ, is not well.

“We, as Christians in the global communion, are not called simply to offer charity to those whose physical bodies have a virus. Our undeniable belonging to the community challenges us to embrace the fact, however

painful, that the virus has come into our bodies,” he argued.

“We should not absolve ourselves of the responsibility to help our neighbors living with HIV and AIDS. Our journeys with those living with the virus have to be wrapped up with grace instead of the usual neglect, judgment, condemnation, dehumanization and stigmatization,” Buffel added.

Holy Spirit Uncovers Truth

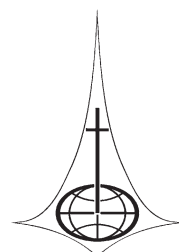
Dr Anni Hentschel of the University of Frankfurt, Germany, emphasized that by rejecting the authority of traditional interpretation of the Bible, Luther set Scripture free so that readers could uncover the meaning of texts on their own and also in community with other readers.

She explained that for Luther, reading the Scriptures was “more than recognizing the letters and words, rather it was application of the text to the heart of each reader initiated by the Holy Spirit.”

On the Reformation anniversary, the participants identified some key concepts for ongoing reflection toward defining Lutheran hermeneutics for the 21st century.

“We continue on the journey of the Reformation trusting in God’s liberating and transforming power in church and society, not only looking back to Luther, but also forward with Luther,” they stated.

The full text of the final report of the consultation is available on the LWF website at www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/DTS-Nairobi2011_FinalReport.pdf.



LWF CONSULTATION ON "INTERFAITH DIALOGUE ENGAGING STRUCTURAL GREED TODAY"

25-30 September, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

Faith Communities Urged to Challenge Greed in Global Market Economy

LWF Christian-Muslim Consultation Deliberates Ways towards New Ethics

KOTA KINABALU, Malaysia/GENEVA (LWI) – Religion condemns greed and philosophy sees it as a vice, but still it rules the world, Prof. Chandra Muzaffar, head of Global Studies at the University of Malaysia, told Christian and Muslim participants at a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) consultation taking place in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

“Speculative economics has become the driving force. Today greed rules the world so much so that even money has degenerated into a commodity to be traded rather than a medium for trade,” said Muzaffar, founder director of the International Movement for a Just World, in referring to the latest international economic crisis.

More than 40 delegates, including a dozen Muslims, church officials, economists and secular social activists are attending the 25-30 September meeting on “Interfaith Dialogue Engaging Structural Greed Today,” organized by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS).

Muzaffar said that both Islam and Christianity acknowledge the human being as “custodian of God’s creation” and greed as “betrayal of God’s trust in humankind.”

However, he lamented the fact that there is strong resistance in both faiths to challenging greed as it manifests itself in the forces of globalization. Even Islamic nations have not been able to resist the power of the market despite injunctions against profiteering in the Koran, he added.

Dr Ulrich Duchrow, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden, Germany, noted that the market creates wealth for some by impoverishing others.

“Instead of farmers borrowing seeds from others [as in the past], now they are forced to buy seeds, lose

their lands and are indebted in slavery due to market driven prices [for their produces],” Duchrow said.

While suggesting that even the banking system has become an instrument of institutionalized greed, he lamented the fact that many churches are indirectly blessing the neoliberal market economy by pretending that it is still being regulated.

“Many of the European churches are not ready to accept the clear decision of the ecumenical assemblies rejecting the capitalist imperial market system,” Duchrow added, referring to church bodies that have taken a clear stand on economic injustice and related issues.

Transforming Structural Greed

In welcoming delegates to the consultation, Y.B. Yee Moh Chai, deputy chief minister of Sabah state in Malaysia, said such gatherings help highlight the role of religions in global affairs.

“Faith communities too must understand that strategies for transform-

ing structural greed need to be initiated at the micro [personal] and macro [community] level through mutual acceptance and cultivation of compassion for others,” said Yee, a Lutheran who is a member of the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM).

In his address, Rev. Thu En Yu, principal of the hosting Sabah Theological Seminary, pointed out that intercultural dialogue offers a way to articulate a new ethic for people in a pluralistic society. “Ethics has always had an inseparable link with religion,” noted Thu, a retired bishop of the BCCM.

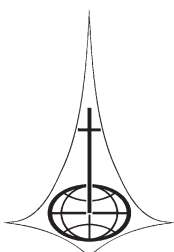
Rev. Dr Martin L. Sinaga, LWF study secretary for Theology and the Church, explained the consultation was a follow up to a similar dialogue with Buddhists in 2010 held at Chiang Mai in Thailand.

“It is important that we learn from each other in humility rather than criticize each other with an air of superiority,” Sinaga said. “Greed is all around us. It is global and personal. The common wealth is disappearing into our wealth.”

28 September 2011



Prof. Chandra Muzaffar speaks at the 2011 LWF interfaith consultation on structural greed. Left is Dr Ulrich Duchrow. © LWF/I. Benesch



Global Economic System Hazardous for the Common Good

There was a strong call for an urgent “re-embedding” of the market for the common good at the LWF-sponsored Muslim-Christian consultation on structural greed.

the poor in the country had not seen a dramatic decline.

Between 2004 and 2010, he added, the percentage of extremely poor people declined only marginally,

by referring to the “market of indulgence” that prevails today.

The excessive private debt in the United States that led to the 2008 market crash, Bruni reasoned, was the “direct consequence of the style of living based on consumerism.”

He urged churches to pay more attention to the systematic study of economics by suggesting that economics should be added to the curriculum of theological colleges and seminaries alongside philosophy, moral theology and ethics.

“Unless churches have experts to speak with competence on economic issues, they cannot make a mark when it comes to economic policies,” cautioned Bruni, who is a member of the Focolare Movement and vice-director of EconomEtica, the Milan based Inter-University Center for Economic Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Athena Peralta, a consultant from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, condemned the unfair distribution of food that leaves many in the world hungry.

“Over 11 million children under the age of five and others die of malnutrition and other hunger-related diseases every year,” she noted.

“This hunger is not an issue of food scarcity or lack of production. Sadly, it is happening despite the global food production being sufficient to feed 12 billion people—nearly double the world’s population,” added Peralta.

The current, dominant systems of consumption, production and distribution were geared towards the private accumulation of wealth and were founded in greed, she noted.

The challenge, she added, was to develop a ‘greed line’ or structural greed indicators to pursue the fullness of life for all.



Right: Athena Peralta (Philippines) called for the development of ways to measure structural greed.
© LWF/I. Benesch

“The current notion of the economy is conceptually and practically hazardous for the common good, ordinary people, the poor and humanity,” said B. Herry Priyono, a Roman Catholic priest and economist, speaking at the September consultation on “Interfaith Dialogue Engaging Structural Greed Today,” held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

“Rampant poverty and ordinary people’s livelihood remain ignored even amidst the bullishness of economic growth rates and stock market index,” noted Priyono, a professor at the Jesuit center for economic and management studies in Jakarta, Indonesia.

He pointed out that, for example, that though the Indonesian government’s budget had risen five-fold steadily from 18 trillion rupiah in 2004 to 94 trillion rupiah in 2010 (USD 10.3 billion), the percentage of

from 16.7 percent to 13.3 percent.

On the other hand, the priest quoted World Bank studies to show that the “social character” of the state was dying, not only in Indonesia but in several other countries as well, with governments cutting back on social programs.

Such reduction in social spending amid economic boom, he pointed out, was being carried out under the prescriptions of international financial bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Systematic Study of Economics

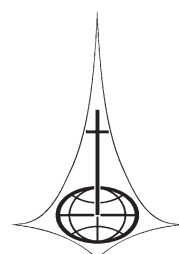
Commenting on the economic crisis in Europe, Luigino Bruni, professor of political economy at the University of Milan, Italy, pointed to the connections between the Lutheran Reformation and economic matters

Convergence on Providing Constructive Alternatives

Muslims and Christians at the LWF consultation on structural greed agreed to common ground for tackling the “death-bound” neoliberal economic system.

“In this monumental struggle, we should work with people of other faiths and those who may not belong to a particular faith community,” the 40 scholars and

religious leaders said following the 25-30 September gathering on “Interfaith Dialogue Engaging Structural Greed Today,” in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.



“In the course of this Muslim-Christian interfaith dialogue, there arises a convergence on the need to provide constructive, systemic alternatives to the current dominant reductionist, ‘death-bound’ neoliberal system,” added a dozen Muslim delegates from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia and the United Kingdom, who met as a group and put together a report, “Muslim Understanding of the Issue.”

Many of the plans the Muslim group proposed were similar to “common-good initiatives” undertaken by Christian churches and secular initiatives, said Adi Setia, assistant professor at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur.

“I believe Muslims can and should work in tandem with them, since we are all engulfed in this hailstorm of structural greed, and we need to work together to escape and chart a new course,” he noted.

In an interview with *LWI*, Setia added that “Both Islam and Christianity profess that humankind is only the custodian of God’s creation. This lies at the root of our unity on social equality.”

This theme was addressed by Benjamin R. Quinones, a development expert and member of the Christ the Living Stone Fellowship in the Phil-

ippines, who said, “The stewards not only manage the resources but also return what belongs to God.”

Noting the parallels between Islamic and Christian thought on economics, Quinones pointed out that the Quran banned the charging of interest and the Bible condemned greed and usury.

“In this contemporary era, usury refers to the practice of charging excessive and often illegal interest rates on loans,” added Quinones.

Lifeline

Participants in the consultation noted that there was a great deal of unity of thought among Christians and Muslims at the event.

“I thought we [Muslims] might have to quarrel on an ideological level with the Christians,” remarked Intan Syah Ichsan, an Indonesian Muslim economist. “But to my surprise, I find that there is great unity (of thought) among us (Muslims and the Christians) on the problem.”

“The common elements between Christianity and Islam on economic issues are very high,” said M. Hum Hulwati, professor of Islamic Economics at the Institute of Islamic Studies at Padang in Indonesia.

“Economy is the lifeline of the people and religions should speak out more for the people on such issues,” she noted.

Rev. Pedro Bullón Moreano of the Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church pointed out that until he came to the interfaith conference, he knew little of Islam.

“The presentations of Muslim scholars here have shown that their thinking on social issues is very close to us. They are also equally concerned about the impact of the greedy market economy on the lives of ordinary people,” said Moreano, professor of theology at the Latin American Biblical University in Lima.

For Esha Faki Mwinyihaji, a Muslim economic lecturer at the Maseno University in Kenya, the interfaith dialogue affirmed the conviction that “Humanity is one and we should work together.”

The final message from the consultation will be made available on the LWF Web site.

Read more about the consultation at: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/tag/DTSMalaysia2011

5 October 2011

Peruvian Pastor Underlines Communication of Faith Values

Pedro Bullón Moreano, pastor of the Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church and professor of theology at the Latin American Biblical University in Lima, Peru, was one of the participants at the LWF/DTS consultation. He shared his views in the interview below:

What were your expectations of this event?

I expected to get to know and to learn from the interreligious context of Asia.

What have you learned from this event?

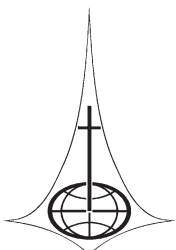
I have learned the importance of respect for culture and have gained a deeper insight into the different issues discussed at the conference. Furthermore, I have recognized the importance of humility when it comes to relationships with other people and to be of service to others. I have also been struck by the kindness of everyone participating at the conference and those who have helped to make this conference a success.

How can Christians and Muslims help one another to live lives less touched by the structures of greed?

I think that it is necessary to maintain the dialogue and find other opportunities for joint celebration. The common work at the community level is crucial as is the communication of our values, both Muslim and Christian, to all actors in society, above all the financial institutions.



Rev. Pedro Bullon, is a pastor of the Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church.
© LWF/I. Benesch



Lutheran Churches Pledge Improved Capacity for Holistic Mission

LWF Consultations Focus on Mission in 21st Century

GENEVA (LWI) – Following a series of regional seminars and consultations, Asian and African Lutheran church leaders have pledged to improve and integrate their human resources and institutional capacities to respond to the challenge of doing mission in the 21st century.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development (DMD) convened “Strategic Leadership Seminars/Consultations” in August, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and in Nairobi, Kenya, to enhance accompaniment programs.

Held under the theme, “Empowering Communion/Communities through Education and Training: Responsible Stewardship,” the consultations were geared to help implement a key priority of the LWF Strategy 2012-2017—assisting churches to grow in capacity for holistic mission while deepening relationships within the communion.

In 2010 an International Scholarship Program evaluation and a Global Consultation on Education and Training Impact and Strategy called for a strengthening of human resources and capacity development efforts, synergy in programs; and for developing a communion-wide policy.

In Kuala Lumpur, more than 30 Asian church leaders, theological educators, development/diakonia practitioners, women leaders, youth, human resources committee and disability network members, meeting 23-28 August, identified the need for leadership and management training.

“The church as an institution in the 21st century necessitates much wider capabilities than what we possess,” the Asian leaders said in a message from the consultation.

“Our member churches are blessed with diverse, plentiful resources for human and institutional capacity de-

velopment. However, systems to map these resources and network them, are inadequate,” the participants added. “Newer initiatives are important for optimizing, sharing and exploring of the available resources with the churches and sub-regions.”

The Asian forum expressed appreciation for the LWF’s synergizing of human resources and capacity development programs, acknowledging that similar efforts must be made regionally to make mission efforts more effective. Delegates urged the LWF to provide planning and policy development tools that can be adapted locally.

Addressing the meeting, Ms Eun hae-Kwon, LWF vice-president for the Asian region, noted the importance of nurturing leaders in the churches, while improving governance and enhancing accountability, transparency and inclusion.

Networking

At the Africa consultation, held 7-13 August, more than 40 participants from around the region agreed that human resources and capacity development should be integrated at all levels of the church.

“Theological institutions and centers’ networking should be encouraged to promote critical needs assessment, priorities and opportunities,” the African participants said in their message.

They recommended the formation of an “Eminent Leaders” forum to handle conflict management, resolution and transformation. They raised concern over the lack of well defined human resources processes in some churches, the lack of support mechanism within sub-regional offices and the dearth of strategic planning.

“We desire to employ human resources management in our churches and institutions to ensure construc-

tive needs assessment to determine strategic opportunities and capacities in achieving measurable results,” they said.

“Skills capacities are not fully tapped from the professional church membership due to the lack of defined systems and capacities in the churches,” the participants added.

Mr Abebe Yohannes Saketa, secretary for Human Resources Development at DMD, cited important changes that have been made recently to realign the human resources and capacity development initiatives carried out in conjunction with the LWF member churches.

Various segments of education and training that were running with separate plans and priorities have been integrated including leadership development, theological education, diakonia/development capacity and empowerment of people with disabilities among others. A framework for a communion-wide policy on human resources and capacity development has been drafted.

“As a living and growing body, the communion needs to nurture its constituency and continually develop its capacity for proclamation, diakonia and advocacy work among the communities,” Saketa concluded.

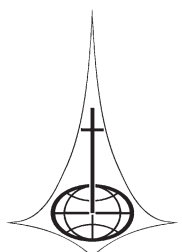
Similar consultations are planned for Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean regions in the course of 2012.

The full texts of the messages from the Africa and Asia consultations are available on the LWF Web site at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Africa-SLS-message-_Revised_Final.pdf and

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Asia-SLS-message-final-text-_revised-draft.pdf

30 September 2011



Lutherans Worldwide Are Allies in Quest for Mutual Understanding, Church of Norway Told

Helga Haugland Byfuglien Installed as Presiding Bishop

GENEVA (LWI) – Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), pledged the support of Lutherans in Norway’s fight against hate, two and a half months after the shocking attack on Norway.

Speaking at the installation of Helga Haugland Byfuglien as Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway Bishops’ Conference at Trondheim, Norway, on 2 October, Younan said Lutherans around the world still prayed for the victims of the horrendous act.

Byfuglien is the LWF Vice President for the Nordic region.

“We are your allies in combating—with peaceful means—any kind of incitement or hatred that some circles are trying to promote,” said Younan, the head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

“We are your allies for a culture of mutual understanding and we oppose all cultures of anti-Semitism, islamophobia, christianophobia and xenophobia that exist in our

world,” Younan stated during the installation service.

“We look forward to continued cooperation with the Church of Norway on these values because the Church of Norway has carried these values to the world,” he added.

The LWF president noted that the world watched with admiration as the Church of Norway, along with other religious organizations, the Norwegian king and political leaders offered care to the victims of the attack.

Churches within the global Lutheran communion were similarly connected, Younan said. Only by working together could they uphold their mission, witness and passion to engage in the world’s challenges.

Byfuglien has been the Bishop of Borg, southeast of the capital, Oslo, since 2005. She was elected unanimously to the position of presiding bishop in October 2010 and is the first woman to be named to the post.

Younan presented her with a Jerusalem cross from the ELCJHL as “a token of [the ELCJHL’s] prayer that the cross of Christ may be your comfort and strength.”

He asked Byfuglien to “remember us in the Middle East with your prayer that justice will soon prevail.”

7 October 2011



Bishop of Oslo Ole Christian Kvarme installs Helga Haugland Byfuglien as the Church of Norway’s first woman presiding bishop. © Ned Alley, Scanpix

Mennonite Dadaab Support More Than “Just Financial”

LWF Welcomes Contribution as Expression of Reconciliation

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as the Dadaab camp manager for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expressed profound gratitude to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for its pledge of a hefty contribution for work in the camps.

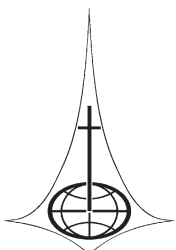
The LWF, a member of ACT Alliance, announced that MCC had com-

mitted to a contribution reflecting a value of USD 369,500 including funds for **non-food items that comprise 6,316 mosquito nets** along with expertise for education projects.

Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, director of the LWF Department for World Service, said on 4 October, “The LWF highly appreciates the trust and the solidarity from Christians all over

the world which we experienced in receiving a wide range of support. We are especially grateful about the latest development as we have received this contribution from MCC.

“This means for us much more than just financial assistance,” he underlined. “It is a symbol and an expression of the beauty that grows out of reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites. It



makes us free to serve the neighbor and contributes to a wider reconciliation.”

The population of the world’s biggest refugee camp is expanding rapidly at Dadaab. Currently the camp complex deals with some 480,000 refugees fleeing war and famine in Somalia. Numbers are expected to swell to around 550,000 by early 2012.

In a telephone interview from Nairobi, Canadian Ron Ratzlaff, who represents MCC in Kenya along with his wife Martha, told *LWI*, “The appeal was launched in North America and has been allocated for specific projects in Dadaab.”

The LWF, “is doing a good job as the lead agency in Dadaab,” he added.

At its Eleventh Assembly in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany, the LWF took the historic step of asking the Mennonites for forgiveness for past persecutions. Delegates unanimously approved a statement calling Lutherans to express their regret and sorrow for past wrongdoings towards Anabaptists, the forebears of Mennonites.

Then LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church



These young children wait with other new arrivals during the formal registration process at Ifo refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst

in America, described the act of repentance and reconciliation as “communion building and communion defining.” He underlined, “We will not just look back; we will also look together towards God’s promised future.”

“This sort of enhanced collaboration is exactly what we hoped for,” said Dr Kathryn Johnson, LWF assistant general secretary for Ecumenical Affairs. “The Stuttgart action could

build on longstanding commitments to the care of refugees already shared by Mennonites and Lutherans.

“Now as we join together in projects like Dadaab our cooperation is enriched by the new appreciation which our church families have for one another. There is a special joy in working together with those with whom we are celebrating reconciliation.”

5 October 2011

Mission Is Not Optional, Indian Lutheran Church Leaders Told

Emphasis on Seeking Justice for Marginalized Communities

CHENNAI, India/GENEVA (LWI) – Christians must rethink their spirituality and mission to engage a constantly changing world, Rev. Dr Augustine Jeyakumar told Lutheran leaders from throughout India gathered for the 28th Triennial Conference and General Body of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI).

“Engaging in mission in a pluralistic context such as India is a challenge but we must not be fazed by the challenge,” said Jeyakumar, a member of The Arcot Lutheran Church (ALC).

Around 100 leaders from the 12 UELCI churches attended the gathering held 26-28 September in

Chennai, India, under the theme “Participating in the Mission of God.” Founded in 1926 as the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, the UELCI represents 4.5 million members, predominantly from the Dalit and Adivasi (aboriginal) communities. Eleven of the churches belong to The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

The Triennial Conference and General Body, which meets every three years, is UELCI’s highest decision-making body. Delegates set direction for the grouping and address the major themes confronting their churches.

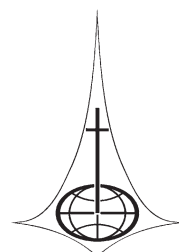
Discussion ranged from gender justice, HIV and AIDS, peace build-

ing and health ministries, to youth leadership, capacity building and human resources development.

Reflecting on the theme, Jeyakumar noted that Christians had a unique and holistic mission to look after the needy of the world. “Today, the new generation translates mission so that it addresses the total transformation of life, both physical and spiritual.”

Churches were called to show concern for the poor, needy and suffering, and to demonstrate the love of God through both words and deeds, added Jeyakumar, a member of the LWF Meeting of Officers.

In his keynote address, LWF Deputy General Secretary Rev. Dr





LWF Deputy General Secretary Rev. Dr Chandran Paul Martin, delivers the keynote address to the 28th UELCI conference in Chennai, India.
© UELCI/Timothy Melvyn

Chandran Paul Martin, noted that mission was the *raison d'être* of the church, which flowed from its nature as a witnessing community.

“To be a missional church is not an option, it is discipleship,” said Martin, a former executive secretary of the UELCI.

In his presentation, Martin highlighted the significant landmarks in the history of the Lutheran churches in India, noting the engagement in diakonia, women’s ministries, as well as the partnership between Lutheran churches and mission boards developed in the 1970s. He underlined also the emergence of young dynamic leaders in the 1980s and the ordination of women by the ALC and Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1991.

On the local contexts, the LWF deputy general secretary pointed out that “One cannot discuss mission in India without speaking of the ethical trappings.” Martin maintained, “Scores of communities, both adivasis and dalits, continue to be dispossessed, displaced and discriminated against.

“Caste, according to many, has been the most heinous of all systems of discrimination, keeping a large section of the people under the bondage of several forms of slavery. The existence of such a system in itself is an invitation, a calling to participate in

the journey for justice for Dalits and other marginalized communities in India,” he stressed.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, however, offered new hope and identity to the marginalized, oppressed and excluded, he said. It calls for inclusion and emancipation of the dispossessed and urges Christians to be involved in these struggles.

Christians are “the salt of the earth” and are called to be the conscience keepers of society and agents of change in the world, Martin added.

Ordination Ministry

Presenting the UELCI Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk report, Ms Ranjitha Borgoari pointed out that there were two churches that were not ordaining women yet and women were asking when they would start to act on this. She noted that there were churches ordaining women but not providing them a place to develop that ministry and that women were asking for action in this area as well.

Sharing reflections from the LWF WICAS desk, Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt said discussion on women’s ordination should not be taken as a “women’s issue” but as a church concern—“a theme which defines what image, what practice the church wants to be known, wants to witness. It is an ecclesiological concern, and therefore, should be discussed in every level in the church, especially in the decision-making body.”

The ordination ministry, said Neuenfeldt, was more than a “rights issue; it is a call, a gift we receive from God.” The question therefore is of the kind of human structures that churches set up to enable all people—women and men—to develop, live the call they receive and want to follow.

In his closing sermon, ALC Bishop R. Devadoss Vijayakumar affirmed, “Mission is part of God’s nature, and it is meant to become a part of our nature too. It is not just an option, it is a mandate.”

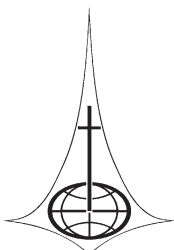
The governing body re-elected Jeyakumar as executive secretary. Others elected included Bishop Godwin Nag of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States as UELCI president.

(By UELCI Communications Secretary Rev. Timothy Melvyn)

17 October 2011



Ordained and lay ministers conduct the closing eucharistic service at the 2011 meeting of the UELCI’s highest decision-making body. © UELCI/Timothy Melvyn



Dialogue, Reconciliation and Cooperation Are Key

Statement by LWF General Secretary on the Anniversary of the New York Attacks

GENEVA (LWI) – In a statement marking the tenth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 horrific attacks on the United States, Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said the LWF joined many others in continuing to mourn the numerous victims of this catastrophe that shook the world, and to pray for all those who still suffered the traumas of that day.

Junge prefaced his remarks with words from the Letter to the Romans (Rom 12:21), which is also this year's watchword: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good!"

"A decade later, I grieve at how many negative things were triggered by those events and at how many innocent people have suffered," the general secretary said in his statement.

"Tragically, many of those opposing the terrorist acts also fell into the simplistic use of enemy images," he commented. "Out of fear and in the quest for security, many people lost their moral compasses and allowed

themselves to be overcome by evil. Rather than breaking the cycle of violence, it spiraled up." He noted that the pain of thousands and hundreds of thousands had been added to the pain of 11 September.

Junge urged that this anniversary be used as an occasion to remember and pray for all victims of violence and war, both those who were in the news and those who suffered in obscurity.

He asked how cycles of violence and hatred could be broken and concluded that dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation were key. By way of example, the general secretary cited Indonesia, where interreligious tensions were rising. The LWF leader unequivocally stated, "The more the violence, the more we dialogue."

He also mentioned Nigeria, where political, economic and ethnic conflicts took on the "garb of religion." "The vast majority of Christian and Muslim leaders call on their people to reject violence and to love and respect the neighbor."

Junge also referred to the situation in the Middle East, where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land carries out prophetic witness for reconciliation and a common future for Jews, Muslims and Christians. He mentioned Brazil, where the church's mission among indigenous people after 500 years of suffering had been to establish a respectful interreligious dialogue.

"Let us use this anniversary not only to remember the tragic events but to recommit ourselves to be co-workers in processes of transformation that overcome evil. As we say in the LWF Strategy 2012-2017, we are liberated by God's grace to live and work together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world."

Read the full text of the statement on the LWF Web site:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Statement_11_September2011.pdf

7 September 2011

Helmut Frenz – Champion for Justice and Human Rights

Junge Praises Bishop's Prophetic Witness

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge paid tribute to the life, work and witness of Bishop emeritus Helmut Frenz (1933-2011), a lifelong campaigner for human rights in Germany and Chile.

Junge, recalling his early encounters with Frenz as a congregational pastor in Chile, offered both his personal condolences and those of the Lutheran communion to the family, friends and colleagues of the renowned church leader, who died on 13 September in Germany.

"He was one of the major Lutheran prophets of his generation, a brave and uncompromising champion for justice and human rights," said Junge, a Chilean theologian.

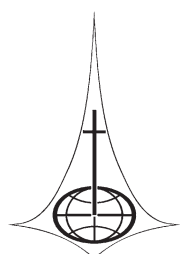
In a 13 September statement, Junge said that to Frenz, who came from Germany to serve the Evangelical Lutheran Church in



*Bishop Helmut Frenz (1933-2011)
© Gustav-Adolf-Werke e.V., Leipzig*

Chile in 1965 and was elected bishop in 1970, the gospel's call to work for justice was clear.

"Already before the violent coup of 11 September 1973, he was one of the leaders of the lifesaving efforts to protect Latin America who had fled to Chile. After the coup, he helped organize efforts to protect those



being targeted by the Pinochet regime, and to hold the regime accountable for its use of torture, ‘disappearance,’ exile and other grave violations of human rights,” Junge said.

Frenz was an important ecumenical figure in Chile, working with Roman Catholics and Protestants on justice issues.

In 1974 the bishop was recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with the Nansen Award. A year later, while visiting the LWF offices in Geneva, Frenz heard that the Chil-

ean regime would not allow him to return to his adopted country.

However, Junge noted, Frenz continued his advocacy for human rights in Germany, serving for nine years as the general secretary of the German Section of Amnesty International.

“In service with the church thereafter, he was a champion for victims of torture, refugees and migrants in Germany and around the world,” Junge added.

The LWF general secretary noted that it was fortunate that Frenz lived long enough to see the end of the

Pinochet regime and was in 2001 awarded a Medal of Honor by the Chilean Parliament.

Frenz, who had said that Chile had grown into his heart, was in 2007 made an honorary citizen of Chile by President Michelle Bachelet.

“Thanks be to God for Helmet Frenz!” Junge concluded.

Read the full text of the statement on the LWF Web site:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Statement_Helmut_Frenz.pdf

14 September 2011

Nobel Prize for Peace Shows Link between Faith and Peace-building

LWF Celebrates Three Extraordinary Women

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) celebrated the awarding of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize to three women peace campaigners as a reminder to the world that faith and peace-building are inseparable.

nary people and for women’s rights to fully participate in peace-building.

Announcing the prize, Nobel Committee chairperson Thorbjørn Jagland said: “We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the

affects everyone, whatever one’s religion. Peace is both a gift and a task for humanity as a whole.

The Liberian example, in particular, showed how a women-led process of interreligious dialogue, friendship, and courageous non-violent action was vital to making for peace, he commented.

“Coming from his context in the Holy Land, the LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan continues to remind us that faith, religion, and peace are inseparable,” the general secretary stated.

Junge said it was his prayer that the three Nobel Peace Prize winners would inspire younger women to see that women’s leadership is critical at the grassroots and at the highest levels.

“Our world is diminished if women are marginalized. Each of our communities, each of our countries, each of our churches needs the full participation of women,” he concluded.

Read the full text of the LWF statement on the Web site at

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-Nobel-Peace-Prize-FINAL.pdf

7 October 2011



(Left to right) 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureates Tawakkul Karman, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee © REUTERS/Khaled Abdullah | courtesy www.trust.org/alertnet/

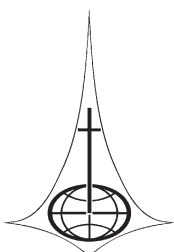
The prize winners were announced in Oslo on 7 October—Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist; and Tawakkul Karman, a leading figure in Yemen’s pro-democracy movement.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge congratulated the three “outstanding women,” saying he was thankful for their inspirational example of non-violent struggle for the safety, dignity and inclusion of ordi-

world unless women achieve the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society.”

Junge noted that these were values fully shared by the LWF, which is committed to being inclusive and enabling the full participation of women. Only if women were full participants was humanity whole, he said.

“It is important to note that each of these women has been strongly motivated by faith. The lack of peace



Work More Closely with Civil Society on Horn of Africa Crisis, UN Urged

LWF Says Religious Groups Are Active throughout Region

NEW YORK, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) called on the United Nations (UN) to intensify its collaboration with civil society in the Horn of Africa in dealing with the “grave crisis” caused by drought and conflict in the region.

“Churches and religious organizations of other faiths are present and active throughout the region. They are engaged at the local level in impressive interfaith dialogue and acts of reconciliation, compassion and human solidarity,” said LWF representative Mr Dennis Frado, who presented the organization’s statement at the 24 September UN ministerial-level mini-summit on the Horn of Africa crisis, held in New York.

The LWF, which has consultative status with the UN and manages on behalf of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, is active in the Horn of Africa through its member churches and its humanitarian relief arm—Department for World Service (DWS). It provides skills training, water and sanitation assistance and environmental protection.



Refugees living on the outskirts of the Hagadera camp collect their belongings to move to tents in the Kambioos settlement at Dadaab, Kenya. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst

“We strive to see that each person arriving at a camp is being met with dignity and treated as an equal,” said Frado, director of the Lutheran Office for World Community, which represents the LWF at the UN headquarters.

The LWF noted that many members of Lutheran congregations in the Horn of Africa have been affected by the drought, the worst in almost 60 years. Water levels are low and livestock herds have been diminished.

Still, local churches are drilling water holes, organizing schools and supporting farming project.

“The people and churches of host countries, such as Kenya and Ethiopia, need our solidarity and support not only so they can sustain their generous welcome to the refugees, but also so that they can sustain their livelihoods in this time of drought,” Frado said.

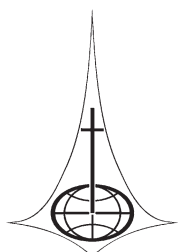
The LWF asked the UN to take urgent measures to protect women from violence in the region, stating that they have been attacked while travelling to the camps and in Dadaab and that this remains an “enormous concern.”

It urged the UN to recognize that camps like the one at Dadaab, which houses more than 400,000 refugees, should not be considered long-term solutions, particularly for young people growing up there. “They have little opportunity for education, have very limited opportunities to imagine a better future and are vulnerable to be recruited into armed groups,” the LWF maintained.

In its statement the LWF underlined the need for long-term rehabilitation, adaptation for climate change and disaster preparedness in



Desk space is at a premium at Undugu Primary School in the Dadaab refugee complex. © LWF/ Melany Markham



the region, and urged a redoubling of international efforts for peace in Somalia.

The LWF also raised a pointed funding question at the UN: “Why is there a funding shortfall of almost USD 700 million to save the lives of so many unfortunate vulnerable people, when sums of 50 or even 100 times that amount can be quickly raised to rescue the global financial industry?”

At the one-day summit, some USD 218 million was pledged in new aid to the Horn of Africa, according to UN news sources. This amount is a shortfall of around USD 500 million to the nearly USD 2.5 billion emergency appeal for the region.

The full text of the LWF statement is available on the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/

[wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Statement-Horn-of-Africa_Sept11.pdf](#)

Watch the Webcast of the mini-summit at: www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/09/ministerial-mini-summit-on-the-humanitarian-response-in-the-horn-of-africa-english-2.html

28 September 2011

In Dadaab Faith Is a Binding Factor

After almost three months of living in temporary settlements in refugee camps around Dadaab, Kenya, over 20,000 Somali Muslims were relocated to permanent sites at the end of August, in time to celebrate Eid ul-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting observed during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

The new camps, an extension to the Ifo camp and another called Kambioos, have everything that a new town should have—water, latrines, schools, worship centers and health posts, and 17 plots for mosques. Land has also been allocated for mosques and madrasas (classrooms where Islamic religion is taught) which will be built once the community becomes more established. On the morning of Eid, thousands gathered in the large spaces in the middle of the new camps to pray together.

“Around 200,000 Somali refugees are celebrating Eid in Kenya for the first time,” said Fred Otieno, emergency coordinator for The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which manages the Dadaab camps for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“Faith is often a binding factor in a community. Celebrating Eid in the new camps will help refugees to re-establish their communities in the new locations,” said Otieno.

The massive relocation began mid-August when the LWF took a group of Somali leaders to the new location to survey the new camp. The leaders assured the community that the move was a positive one and the first families to move affirmed this by calling their friends to tell them about the new camp and to encourage them to move also.

Between January and August, approximately 120,000 refugees from Somalia had arrived in Dadaab. Overcrowding forced

many families to live together or to erect makeshift huts on the outskirts of the official camp. Some of these people live on floodplains, so it was critical that they go to higher ground before the rainy season in October. This would involve moving between 8,000 to 10,000 families by the end of November.

Afra Mohammed and his family of three were among the first to arrive at the new site and he was relieved that his family had their own tent instead of sharing with another. “We are ready for anything because we are refugees who are looking for a place to settle,” he said. “But I am happy to have this plot.”

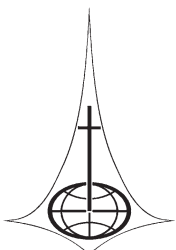
“One of the admirable traits of the Somali community is that they are very enterprising. After the first day, they were already running small shops. The move did not get in the way of their new activities, they had no problem living together in the new location,” said Moses Mukhwana, LWF acting area coordinator.

(Written for LWI by Melany Markham in Dadaab, Kenya, with additional information from LWI.)



Somali refugees in Dadaab pray on the morning of Eid. © LWF/Jonathan Ernst

More LWI News at
www.lutheranworld.org/lwf



Lutherans Answer Call “to Show Practical Compassion”

Churches Worldwide Mount Appeals for Horn of Africa Drought

GENEVA (LWI) – Australian pastor Rev. Matt Anker of St Paul’s Lutheran Church in Shepparton, Victoria, has seen firsthand the suffering of refugees in the Horn of Africa.

So when his congregation held a concert on 9 September, he gave a personal report on his visit to the region last year, and then appealed for help: “With the gift of three dollars, you can buy 27 meals and save lives,” he said.

In the midst of the worst drought in 60 years and a horrific refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa, this kind of story is being repeated around the world as Lutherans respond with great generosity to the appeal for help from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

Few remain unmoved in the face of the repeated television images from the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, which illustrate the distress of those crammed into the makeshift community.

Many people are responding to these news reports and want to help in a practical way.

Worldwide Support

The wave of support is enormous, the LWF says. Donations are pouring in, both to international aid agencies and to local organizations.

The LWF manages the huge complex of camps in Dadaab in northeastern Kenya for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees through its Department for World Service (DWS). The LWF is receiving donations from all over the world, particularly from its member churches.

The donations are desperately needed to run the camp and look after the basic needs of over 400,000 refugees.

DWS is also assisting in other parts of Kenya, providing food and

drinking water in the south and in the northwest, in the Kakuma refugee camp.

Leading church aid agencies, the United Nations and other organizations are doing their best to raise funds but many donors who barely have enough to live on themselves have also donated money at great personal sacrifice.

Often, like the congregation in Australia, they use their imagination to come up with original forms of fundraising.

Small and Large Churches Contribute

In fact, the LWF says, it is striking that many small churches from the Lutheran communion are making their contribution to the emergency, even though they do not have much themselves.

One contribution came from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, which had appealed for donations in cooperation with the Reformed Church and Hungarian Interchurch Aid.

Many other churches and their related organizations in several countries including Hong Kong (China)

and Taiwan, Canada and the USA, among others, have been collecting funds for the Horn of Africa drought crisis.

Solidarity

The President of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), Rev. Dr Nestor P. Friedrich, implored his congregations to reach out with compassion to their “neighbors” in Africa.

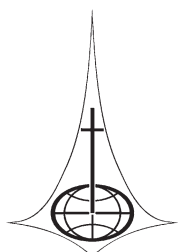
“The message of the gospel calls forth new starts, compassion and movement. It leads us away from indecisiveness towards a merciful heart and deeds of solidarity. That is how the IECLB understands the relationship between grace and faith,” he wrote to Brazilian congregations.

“We thus feel near the people in the refugee camps of Dadaab and the surrounding area, thanks to the presence and action of the LWF there. Regardless of where and why: when people suffer we are called to be neighborly and show practical compassion.”

Individuals have also collaborated to raise funds for the people of the Horn of Africa. DWS staff persons in Colombia ran an appeal and trans-



Refugees learn of Plans are announced to relocate them to newer, better-serviced dwellings in the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya, August 18, 2011. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst



ferred a total of EUR 580 to Geneva. Many other DWS offices in other regions, as well as staff in Geneva, have also expressed their concern and solidarity by donating.

In the Horn and East Africa regions, churches in Ethiopia, Kenya

and Tanzania are doing everything in their power to help those suffering from the drought.

In view of the fact that up to 540,000 refugees from Somalia are expected in the Dadaab camps, DWS director Rev. Eberhard Hitzler says

he is grateful for every single donation.

“We are gradually reaching our limits,” Hitzler said. “But we want to, and we must continue to give what is necessary for people to survive.”

16 September 2011

FEATURE: LWF Small Business Support Breaks Dependence in Djibouti Camp

Restaurants and a Television in a Large Tent

ALI ADDEH, Djibouti/GENEVA (LWI) – The vibrancy of the main street in the Ali Addeh refugee camp makes up for its short length.

Clothing shops, grocers, restaurants and even a butcher are housed in wooden shacks, staffed by owners eager to make money.

It’s mid-morning and in at least two of the restaurants, brightly-clad, smiling women are preparing lunch for customers’ arrival in a couple of hours.

Those who enter the restaurant enjoy at least one cup of tea from the large pot on a charcoal burner just outside.

Women with businesses in Ali Addeh can thank the income-generation program run by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a member of the ACT Alliance, with funding from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The program began in 2009 and, since then, almost 200 people at the camp some 150 kilometers south of

Djibouti-Ville, the capital of Djibouti, have received livelihood grants.

Before the program started girls were dropping out of school as their families sent them to Djibouti-Ville to earn money. Other families did not have enough food.

The UNHCR assessed a need for income sources that promote self-reliance rather than dependence.

Success Stories

Fatima Ahmed works in one of the loan-funded restaurants. She prepares the lunchtime meal, surrounded by her five daughters.

The business started 18 months ago and she will pay off the loan by December. She feeds her family and manages to save USD 28 a month. When asked if her husband is employed, she smiles and says he works for her.

Abdi Awol Hassan and Mohamed Abdi Yazeem, both refugees, have

helped administer the program since it started. They help chase repayments, resolving disputes, and will tell you that Somalis have a keen business sense.

The most successful group has created five businesses from a loan equivalent to almost USD 800, but the program contributes more than just economically.

One business is a large tent with a television at one end—a movie theatre. At night, paying customers watch films and play games offering both a source of income and more liveliness to camp life.

Still, a bustling main street has brought challenges, says Vitalice Ochieng, a Kenyan who coordinates the program at the camp housing some 14,000 refugees, most of whom have fled war and hunger in Somalia.

“In microfinance, time is needed to get to know people. It’s not like a formal bank where people are bound by the rules. They must believe in your idea first of all and then you must work with people who are hardworking and that you can trust,” says Ochieng.

He also needs to get people to understand why they should repay the money, explaining it can only be given to those few people who deserve it.

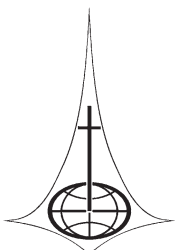
“A refugee camp is like any other society. There are those who are honest and some, who after receiving the money, then left the camp,” he said.

Improving the Program

Since a review in August, Ochieng and his team are improving the program. One idea is that the LWF will not give the refugees money directly.



Fatima Ahmed runs a restaurant in Ali Addeh refugee camp in Djibouti. © LWF/Melany Markham



Instead, says Ochieng, “If they want to buy goats, they tell us where to buy them and we will purchase them from that vendor.”

The LWF is also establishing a community committee to whom they will delegate some of the responsibility so they can do specific tasks.

“We want them to own this project and to feel responsibility when someone does not pay,” says Ochieng.

Some of the women who have been in the program since 2010 and have repaid their loans are highly regarded.

“They are people who can openly come to us and vouch for others,” says Ochieng. “These people will form the committee and will help us select beneficiaries.”

Business Planning

Along with their application, refugees have to submit a budget and a small plan. The LWF provides a simple template that is similar to business plans anywhere.

The first questions it asks are, “What is your target market? How will you advertise? How will you set prices?” The business plan is in Somali and, as many people in the camp speak it, in English.

Even so, most of the beneficiaries are illiterate, so income generation assistants, who are educated refugees, are recruited to help them.



Farid Obado and her son, one of eight children she supports with the shop she started in Ali Addeh using a loan from an LWF income-generation program. © LWF/Melany Markham

At one time, there were some who thought the program disbursed a lot of money. However, the cost of doing business in Djibouti is high.

Stock must be purchased from Djibouti-Ville and the fare costs USD 11. There is also the wait for the arrival of a lorry. Ochieng says, “Doing business here is not for the faint hearted; it’s a challenge.”

Regardless, hard work has changed some groups’ lives. One woman says that when she came into the camp she owed people a lot of money and was indebted for a number of years. She was motivated to work hard and now she is debt-free.

“If an approach doesn’t work, it just wasn’t the best for the situation, so we try another one,” says Ochieng.

The program has recovered about 5 million Djiboutian francs (USD 28,000) of the initial grants which will help implement the second phase.

(Written for LWI by Melany Markham in Ali Addeh, Djibouti)

Support the LWF Horn of Africa response: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/donate-somali-refugee-crisis.html

Read more: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/tag/somali-refugee-crisis

Further updates available at: <http://lwfworldservice.wordpress.com/>

27 October 2011

FEATURE: It’s Not the Rain, But Type of Rain Causing Havoc in Central America

LWF and ACT Take Action as UN Office Says 150,000 Affected in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR/GENEVA (LWI) – It rained for almost a week.

But that’s not the real problem, says Carmen Osorio.

“When I was a child it rained for weeks, but it never caused any damage,” she explains.

Osorio is the coordinator of health in Ayutuxtepeque, one of the affected suburbs of San Salvador following a deluge that news

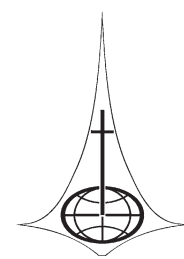
agencies said had led to more than 100 deaths.

The soil is saturated and there is no place for the water to go. People have been fleeing.

A tropical depression known as 12-E formed on 11 October and parked over the region. It was followed by more intense rain and flooding, harmfully affecting people in six Central America countries.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that in Costa Rica 1,000 people were hit badly by the floods while in El Salvador more than 150,000 were affected; in Honduras, 38,000; in Guatemala, 154,000; in Nicaragua, 134,000 and in Mexico 92,000 people were affected.

Bishop Medardo y Gómez Soto from the Salvadoran Lutheran





Juan has lost his two acres of corn. Most farmers do not own the land and leased it for USD 200 per acre for only two crops. Many are indebted. © LWF/DWS Central America/M. Boulogne

Church (SLC), the regional coordinator for the ACT forum in Central America, said, "I admire the commitment shown by our pastors, who work under constraints and risks, putting themselves in danger to save others, their people and the people from our communities."

The SLC is supporting refugees in a shelter located in Cara Sucia area.

"The Lutheran World Federation's [LWF] Department for World Service office in Central America is helping and accompanying us. Recently we worked together in the Disaster Prevention Center located in Cara Sucia, Ahuachapán. It was a wonderful experience," said Gomez.

Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodriguez from the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope, however, expressed sadness at the new reports rain causing havoc in people's lives.

"We have received reports from our communities confirming damages caused by the floods. Our pastors are at the front of providing support

to refugees in Aquespalapa and in El Bonete," said Cortez.

Authorities in El Salvador said about 15,000 people were in shelters and news agencies reported more than 105 dead in the six countries.

A Salvadoran government weather expert said that almost 2,200 millimeters fell in the deluge. In rainy Scandinavia the yearly rainfall

figures range between 1,000 and 1,200 millimeters.

This part of Central America is considered by the UN to be one of the most vulnerable regions of the world for natural disasters, climate change, environmental degradation and deforestation.

It is exacerbated by being one of the world's most unequal societies, according to international agencies.

Maize and bean crops were scheduled to be harvested. But they were all immersed in water.

The LWF, an ACT Alliance member, started an emergency response in El Salvador following a needs assessment of the most vulnerable areas as there had been little or no state intervention.

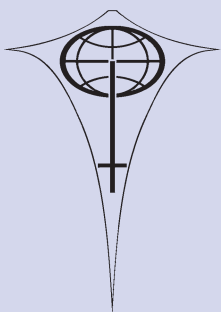
The LWF has distributed hygiene kits and food in metropolitan areas and the area along the Rio Lempa, reaching almost 1,000 families.

(Thomas Eklund contributed to this story from San Salvador and Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti from Geneva.)

26 October 2011



Flooded road in San Francisco Menendez, Ahuachapán, El Salvador. Recent rains in the country have caused millions of US dollars of damage. © Marcos Cerra Becerra



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