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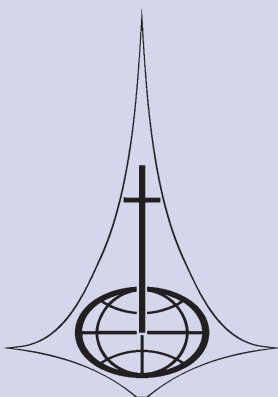
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"God Wants Me to Live a Positive Life"



Lutheran youth delegates at the 19th International AIDS Conference 2012 in Washington D.C., USA. © Paul Jeffrey/EAA

Young Lutherans Tackle AIDS at International Conference

WASHINGTON D.C. /GENEVA (LWI) – Drums thundered and cheers soared to the ceiling of the Washington D.C. convention center, where a teeth-rattling, youth-led percussion jam got underway at the 19th International AIDS Conference.

It was one in the afternoon in the conference's immense Global Village, an aircraft hanger-like hall whose acres of booths and banners hummed with chatter and motion.

Youth brought the buzz to this conference hall, and among the thousands of activists, leaders, and educators were Lutherans from all over the world. They were part of the throng of 20,000 that descended on Washington D.C., 22-27 July for this, the biggest global event dedicated to "turning the tide" against HIV.

"Being a teenager living with HIV, I thought it was a great opportunity to be here, to hear what other countries are doing about HIV," said Victoria Mumbula, 18, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia. She also took part in the 20-21 July Interfaith Pre-Conference on HIV, "Taking Action for Health, Dignity and Justice," which explored ways faith communities can use advocacy and on the ground responses to address the root causes of vulnerability to HIV and promote more inclusive societies.

"I've never had the courage to disclose my status to people back home, but since the interfaith pre-conference, I've felt I have that courage," she said.

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LWF Joins Urgent Call for Dadaab Refugee Camp Support

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a member of ACT Alliance, joined a number of aid agencies drawing attention to the looming funding shortage at the Dadaab refugee complex in northeastern Kenya.

The seven humanitarian actors issued a briefing paper in July detailing the perilous situation at the camps where money for vital services was anticipated to run out in two to three months.

“The 250,000-odd refugees who flooded into Dadaab over the past two years have meant that there is now a funding shortfall of at least USD 60 million for the five camps in the Dadaab complex,” said Lennart Hernander, LWF representative for the Kenya-Djibouti program.

Gaps in aid deny many children in Dadaab an education, he noted. “Alone in two of the camps, some 29,000 children are out of school because there are no funds.” The need for decent, permanent shelter is equally urgent, Hernander added, noting

that many refugees were forced to stay in makeshift huts or worn-out tents supplied during the emergency.

Hernander remarked that Kenya hosts some of the largest populations of refugees in the world, making it easy to forget that refugees are the responsibility of the international community.

Read more about the joint appeal and the impact of the funding shortfall: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Press-release-Dadaab-briefing-paper.pdf

Download the briefing paper: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/The-human-costs-of-the-funding-shortfalls-for-the-Dadaab-refugee-camps-2.pdf

Support the LWF response in Dadaab: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/ways-to-give

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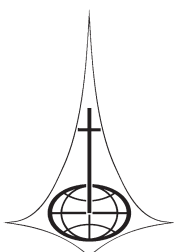
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LWF President Affirms Work for Peace with Justice in El Salvador

Solidarity Visit Underlines Concern about Violence in the Region

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador/GENEVA (LWI)

– The president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan expressed the communion’s solidarity with the Salvadoran Lutheran Church (ILS) during a visit that underlined the LWF’s concern about rising violence in Central America.

During the 21-25 June visit, Younan encouraged the LWF member church to continue to accompany those who live in vulnerable situations and poverty, and affirmed its prophetic ministry in response to the violence in the country.

“The pastoral accompaniment and ministry [of the ILS] speaks out of a vocation that concentrates in serving the neighbor and developing this ministry among poor people,” said Younan, who is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

The LWF president encouraged the communion’s Department for World Service Central America program, based in El Salvador, to continue its work upholding the rights of populations facing injustice such as small farmers, indigenous people and the Garifuna, who are descendants of Arawak, Carib and West African peoples.

“Our support is for both the member church and World Service in order to strengthen their ministries and to continue working with and among vulnerable communities,” added Younan.

In June, the LWF Council, meeting at Bogotá, Colombia, condemned the rising levels of violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in



LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan celebrates the Eucharist at La Resurrección Lutheran Church in San Salvador with (left to right) ILS pastors Rev. Guadalupe Cortez, Rev. Cecilia Alfaro and Rev. Eliseo Rodriguez. © ILS/Rafael Menjivar Saavedra

particular, calling for the formation of an ecumenical accompaniment program for human rights defenders and urging governments in the region to “hear the cries of their people” and protect human rights.

Younan’s visit to El Salvador was also an opportunity to meet with Salvadoran officials, including the president of the parliament and the vice president of the republic. While recognizing their efforts to decrease violence in the country, the LWF president challenged officials to continue investing in education because it is key to rebuilding society.

“We are concerned that in Central America rather than supporting human dignity, governments are introducing weapons. We must take command and make heard the voices of democracy and peace,” he emphasized.

In particular, the LWF president highlighted concerns about effects of the violence on youth and women, a point also made in the LWF Council statement, which called for “an end to impunity” for such violence.

ILS Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto underlined the significance of the visit, calling it a “milestone” in the life of his church. “The message of peace and reconciliation received from Bishop Younan encourages us to restore our task and to re-energize the ministry developed through our diverse areas of work,” he stated.

Read the Council 2012 Public Statement on the Violence in Central America at: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/central-america-council2012.html

6 July 2012

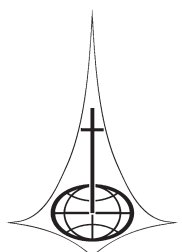
Rio+20 Disappointment Impassions Youth to Pursue Local Eco-justice

Brazilian Lutherans Promoting a Sustainable Future

GENEVA (LWI/WCC News) – Raquel Kleber spent an intense week in June at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as “Rio+20.”

In Rio de Janeiro, Kleber, an international affairs student and member of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, highlighted the accomplishments of “Criatidade”, a

tional educational project that encourages Lutheran Christians and others to use creative attitudes in promoting sustainability and eco-justice. Along with other young people, she shared observations





Young people learned about sustainable consumption and care of creation at the Criatitude workshop during the People's Summit in Rio. © Alex Reblim

about the project at the interreligious space designated as “Religions for Rights.”

The outcomes of Rio+20—which environmental and social justice advocates worldwide agreed lacked detail and ambition—were a disappointment to Kleber and many others. But Kleber is using her experience at Rio+20 as fuel for turning political inaction into local action.

“Yes, Rio+20 disappointed us,” she said. “But the youth of Criatitude hold in their hands the hope and the power to make a difference and truly shape the future we want. The 40 young people of Criatitude are truly inspired to implement local eco-justice projects.”

Kleber has become an eco-justice leader among her peers, and constantly works to expand her knowledge.

In May she participated in “green&just,” a virtual conference on environmental justice organized by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The conference presented speakers in real time on the internet, with the opportunity for participants to ask questions using text chat.

Kleber also has built on knowledge she gained at Youth for Eco-Justice, a 2011 event planned jointly by the LWF and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

After two weeks of training on the theology and politics of ecological justice, Kleber was among the Christian youth participants who pledged to start, in their own contexts, initiatives to promote the new understandings they acquired.

“The capacity building provided by the WCC and the LWF was decisive for the implementation of this project,” said Kleber.

The WCC work on eco-justice is implemented through its Ecumenical Water Network, the Caring for Creation and Climate Justice project and the Poverty, Wealth and Ecology project.

Images of Water Justice

Marcelo Leites, regional secretary of the World Student Christian Federation in Latin America and the Caribbean, is another young person

who strives to have a local impact in the eco-justice arena.

Leites has been involved in broad-based, long-term eco-justice projects that aim to strengthen the ecumenical movement, youth leadership and social organizations in Latin America on environmental justice issues. At Rio+20, he displayed a photography exhibit titled “Accion Creacion” that depicted an array of riveting scenes related to water justice.

“The exhibition highlights local issues by telling the stories of communities that, every day, are living with the effects of water injustice,” said Leites.

The exhibition will be displayed in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru. “We are providing a space in which civil society can participate in arts and advocacy initiatives that hundreds of young people have done as they illustrate the water justice issues facing their communities,” said Leites.

Leites, like Kleber, participated in the Youth for Eco-Justice training in 2011 and said that the experience was a turning point for him as he conceptualized and created the framework for his eco-justice efforts.

“The input I received from the WCC and the LWF was inspiring,” he said. “In addition, I learned to effectively plan the process from the beginning, and my training continues to impact my progress at the local level.”

Watch presentations from the “green&just” virtual conference: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/eco-justice-virtual-conference.html

40 Days, No Emissions?

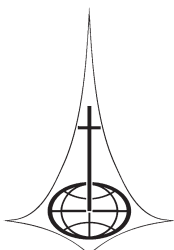
Swedish Lutheran Youth Undertakes Radical Eco-Justice Experiment

GENEVA (LWI/WCC News) – Joakim Book Jonnson, a salesman for a security company and a member of the Church of Sweden, transformed his urban com-

muter life when he decided to leave, at least temporarily, no ecological footprint.

Simply put, he gave up emissions for Lent. He managed to live for 46

days with 80-90 percent reduced emissions. At times, he admitted, his own project—called “40 Days–No Emissions”—made him furious.



“For the love of God, I wanted to give up! I spent hours, days, weeks, being furious for all sorts of things: plastic wrappings around vegetables, people driving cars, my roommate leaving the lights on.”

Sometimes Book Jonnson asked himself why he was even trying.

He found his answer in the people around him—his friends, family and even perfect strangers—who offered a surprising number of emissions-reducing solutions.

“To my great surprise, friends, strangers, teachers, parents and family all told me tip after tip of what to eat, how to wash, how to live. There seemed not to be enough problems to deal with all the solutions, proving once again that we already know what to do,” he said.

Inspired by Y4EJ

Book Jonnson said that he never would have launched his project without the support of his peers at Youth for Eco-Justice (Y4EJ), a 2011 event planned jointly by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

“If it wasn’t for the inspiration, meeting all those bright people who knew so much more about climate change, about sustainability, about biodiversity than I did, I would never, ever dream of starting anything like ‘40 Days,’” he said.

Since then, Book Jonnson has, in turn, spread the word of his emissions-reducing solutions to as many people as possible, both in person and through a blog he kept that recounted his experience.

“I’ve had the opportunity [to speak] to so many people about these ideas,” he said. “I even visited an international conference within the Youth Chapters of Church of Sweden. A couple of times every week, new people called me, sent me a message, or commented on the blog, telling me what a good inspiration I became for them, how weird the world works and how easily it could be changed.”

Ultimately his project changed the way he thinks about reduced emissions.

“After a while, I realized that the most difficult part was accepting that I’m only responsible for my own emissions. I can’t go around blaming everyone else for theirs,” he said. “I have to reduce mine, and be happy with it. After all, I started the project in order to be a role model for how a sustainable life could look like. Blaming everyone else certainly isn’t part of it.”

(Both articles were contributed by Susan Kim for Lutheran World Information and WCC News)

Read Joakim Book Jonnson’s emissions-reducing tips: www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/article/1634/40-days-no-emissions.html

More on the Youth of Eco-Justice training and LWF Youth eco-justice activities: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/tag/lwf-together and <http://lwfyouth.org/eco-justice/>

More on the WCC and eco-justice: www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/eco-justice.html

16 July 2012



Y4EJ participants during a project planning exercise © WCC/LWF/W. Noack

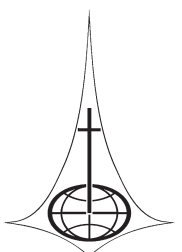
See God in the Other, Bishop Younan Urges

LWF President’s Visit to Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia/GENEVA (LWI) – Religions must reclaim faith as a force for justice, peace and love, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), told the Eighth Council of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in Addis Ababa on 12 July.

“No religion has a monopoly on hate or extremism. All of us are equally responsible and equally called to work together to seek the common, positive values of love, compassion, justice and peace, and together to uphold the sacred value of all, regardless of color, race, creed or religion,” he said.

Younan, who is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), was addressing the Ethiopian church’s leaders on the topic of coexistence at the end of a four-day solidarity visit that included EECMY’s historic congregations, theological institutions and diaconal



ministries such as a center for children with mental disabilities.

The LWF president said the world was crying out for better vision and leadership in the midst of increasing violence, extremism and militarization, and he urged “moderate people of faith” to take back their religions.

“We, who are grounded in the real fundamentals of love, compassion, justice and peace, must affirm together that God has created every human life—indeed all of creation—to be cherished, protected and nurtured.

“We must stop demonizing one another in the name of God and instead try to see God in the other. We will then learn and grow from one another about what will give life, love, salaam (peace) to this earth,” Bishop Younan added.

The LWF president praised the EECMY as a strong and vibrant witness to the love of Jesus Christ in northeast Africa and throughout the world, which has illustrated a commitment to the idea that theology cannot be divorced from the realities of the world.

He noted that the ELCJHL and the EECMY had a great deal to learn from each other as they engage in their own unique social and political contexts.

In these contexts, Christians and Muslims need to commit themselves to coexistence, added Younan.

“In order to pursue coexistence with our Muslim neighbors, Christian religious leaders must model intentional engagement and dialogue with Muslims so we can provide an honest representation of them within our own communities. In dialogue, we erase our ignorance of one another,” Younan said.

Religions must adopt a kind of “prophetic dialogue for life” and engage each other in ways that address people’s suffering, challenge unjust structure and help to build a modern civil society, the LWF president noted.

“All too often religion has been part of the problem, dividing rather than uniting humanity. Our dialogue must work to bring us together to deal with the problems. Religion must be the solution, not the problem,” Younan said.

Speaking at a banquet in honor of the visiting LWF delegation, EECMY President Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idosa underscored the fact that the LWF is a communion of churches where members engage each other in a spirit of love, tolerance, respect and solidarity in order to make Christ known to the world.

Younan was accompanied by Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, LWF vice-president for Africa and Presiding Bishop

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania; Ms Pamela Akinyi Oyieyo, a member of the LWF Council from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya; and LWF area secretary for Africa Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure.

At the LWF’s Department for World Service office, Younan commended the staff for their work in minimizing the human suffering brought on by environmental disasters and those sparked by human conflict, noting that their work helps illustrate the practical engagement of the LWF.

His itinerary included meetings with His Holiness Abune Paulos, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; the president of the Ethiopian Islamic Supreme Council, and the Ethiopian deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs.

16 July 2012



LWF President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan is welcomed by a little girl at the EECMY-run center for children with mental disabilities. © LWF/Shibru Galla

From Conflict to Communion

Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission Urges Celebration of Fruits of Dialogue in 2017

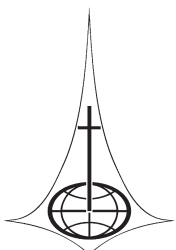
PADERBORN, Germany/GENEVA (LWI)

— As they approach the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017, Lutherans and Roman Catholic representatives affirmed that through baptism Lutherans and Roman Catholics are bound to each other as members of the one body of Christ.

The fourth meeting of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity took place from 12–19 July at Paderborn, Germany. The commission gathers under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU).

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 will also mark 50 years of dialogue between the two churches, which the commission noted offers cause for celebration.

“Catholics and Lutherans struggle in the face of their division to achieve the full catholicity of the church,”





Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity meeting in Paderborn, Germany.
© pdp – Erzbistum Paderborn

the commission said in a 19 July communiqué.

“On the one side there is joy about the communion they already share and have been able to make more explicit during the 50 years of official ecumenical dialogue. On the other side there is the pain about what is still dividing. The division of Christians stands in the opposition to the will of God.”

However, the commission added that by “harvesting the fruits of the

ecumenical dialogue,” Lutherans and Roman Catholics can celebrate the communion that has already been achieved, which the commission said is greater than what divides them.

At the Paderborn meeting, hosted by the PCPCU, the commission finalized the document, “From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017.” Plans

are underway for the publication and release of the document.

In addition, an outline had been prepared in previous meetings for another project of the commission, a study on “Baptism and Growing Church Communion.” Papers on the topic received at the meeting at Paderborn will be helpful for the future work, the commission said.

Members of the commission worshipped at a Pontifical Mass at Paderborn Cathedral and then met with Auxiliary Bishop Matthias König to learn about the work of the archdiocese in the Westphalia region.

The next meeting of the commission, 12–20 August 2013, will be hosted by the LWF.

The full text of the communiqué is available on the LWF web site at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Luth-Cath-Communiqu%C3%A9-July-2012.pdf

20 July 2012

Norway Hailed as Beacon of Hope One Year after Massacre

Lutheran Leaders Call for Reconciliation at St Olav Festival

GENEVA (LWI) – The President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan called Norway a beacon of hope and inspiration for the way it had dealt with the horror and pain of the Utøya massacre.

Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, was speaking at the week-long St Olav Festival running from 28 July – 5 August, following the one-year anniversary of Norway’s deadliest attack since the Second World War, where an anti-Muslim extremist killed 77 people in two separate attacks.

“You have shown, in the way you have processed the horror and pain of 22 July 2011 that you do not accept violence as a means of obtaining social and

political change. You represent today—in our tested, pluralistic world—values of social justice, multiculturalism and unity in diversity,” he noted.

“In this way, your country represents a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration also for us [in the Middle East], whose pluralism has still not reached the level of maturity, which is foundational for peace in any country.”

Younan participated in the festival, which this year focused on justice, reconciliation and interreligious dialogue—along with the Church of Norway Presiding Bishop and LWF vice-president for the Nordic region Helga Haugland Byfuglien.

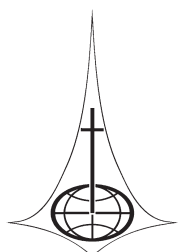
In an interview, Bishop Byfuglien said that it had been important for the church to be able to speak to the

grief and sense of loss caused by the killings, while bearing in the mind the biblical notion that the darkness ought not to overcome the light.

“In Norway, we experienced how in the midst of the deepest grief and sadness, in the midst of the heavy silence over towns and villages, whispers were heard, growing louder with each voice, and speaking the important words: love and dignity,” Byfuglien said.

“People came together to share their grief and to create the light that arises when we come face to face. The church has been challenged on its view of reconciliation and has had to reflect on that,” she added.

Byfuglien said that Christian faith is not just spiritual. Christians





24 July memorial service in Oslo cathedral for the victims of the terrorist attacks © Gunnar Grøslund

have a responsibility towards the world and that justice offers a way of responding to those responsibilities.

Speaking at the St Olav Festival in Trondheim on 30 July, the LWF president said the good news of God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ remains constant but must be engaged in the broken world differently in every age.

"When we look at our world today, we can easily be overwhelmed by what we see. Nevertheless, the Church must—together with other major religions—be a prophetic voice for peace and justice. I am confident that the religious communities working to-

gether can make a lasting contribution to the many great challenges facing the human family today."

The LWF president said that in a world where extremism prevails the church is called to promote respect and be a driving force for peace that is built on justice and reconciliation, truth and forgiveness.

Islam, Judaism and Christianity are not the problem; the issue is that certain individual followers of these faiths go against their core teachings of love for God and respect for others.

"When mainline Christians, Muslims and Jews—especially their

leaders—remain silent and timid about these core values, they allow themselves to be held hostage by the extremists, and they contribute to the problem.

"This is the reason I call on religious leaders to be prophetic. Religious leaders from every faith and ethnicity must have the courage to stand up and say to their own extremists that any violence done in the name of God or religion is blasphemy," Younan said.

For her part, Byfuglien said the Church of Norway has, despite losing its status as a state church, become an active player and contributor to the national commemorations around the acts of terror of a year ago. People have sought out the church's view and listened to it.

"Maybe the church has been confirmed in the knowledge that it means a lot to society, also to people who don't normally seek it," she noted.

In addition, the outpouring of condolences from churches worldwide following the tragedy has helped the church to confirm that it is part of a global community. "It reminds us that little Norway, which in many ways is used to being a peaceful and safe place on earth, both *needs* that fellowship and depend *upon* it."

3 August 2012

Installation of First Female Bishop of Icelandic Lutheran Church

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge welcomed the installation of Bishop Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir, Iceland's first female bishop, as an affirmation of the leadership role women play in the church.

"We celebrate your ordination as a bishop in the memory of Jesus' commissioning women disciples to become his followers and partaking in God's mission to the world," Junge said in a



Rev. Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir is installed as Bishop of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland. © Gunnar Vigfússon

congratulatory greeting conveyed on LWF's behalf by Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, Lutheran Church in Great Britain, at a reception following the 24 June consecration service in the cathedral of Reykjavik, Hallgrímskirkja.

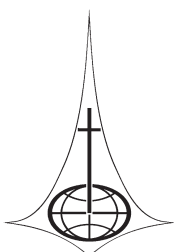
In her sermon, Sigurðardóttir emphasized that all church members have a role to play. "We are to serve God, the God who Jesus Christ revealed to us. This service is not meant for the few but for all [people], in all times," she said. Sigurðardóttir succeeds Karl Sigurbjörnsson, who retired at the end of June. The new bishop has worked with youth, as a parish pastor and as regional dean.

In his greeting to Sigurðardóttir, Junge noted that the Statement on Episcopal Ministry issued by the LWF Council in 2007 affirmed the church's role of offering healing and reconciliation to a wounded world, including those hit by the current economic crisis.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland has 247,245 members and has been an LWF member since 1947.

Read the LWF Statement on Episcopal Ministry:

www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF_The_Lund_Statement_2007.pdf



"God Wants Me to Live a Positive Life"

Continued from p. 1

"I can talk to anyone, because they've empowered me by talking about stigma," said Mumbula, who came to Washington D.C. as part of a delegation of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which aimed at equipping a number of member church representatives to serve as key actors on AIDS in the communion.

"I'm a human being made in the image of God, and this is what God wanted me to do—to live a positive life, and I've learned to accept who I am through this conference."

The Geneva-based Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, an LWF partner, was the lead international sponsor of the interfaith pre-conference.

Putting Issues in Context

Hannah Ball-Brau, a D.C. resident, said the international conference was helping her put local issues in context.

"I've known people who've had AIDS and passed away from AIDS[related illnesses], so it's been part of my life that way, but I know I'm incredibly ignorant of the global and domestic effects," said Ball-Brau, 18. "D.C. has huge problems with HIV, concentrated in impoverished communities and among women."

Ball-Brau said, "I don't know enough about treatment and prevention, and I haven't explored the social issues that surround HIV and AIDS." A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) delegation, she added, "But I do consider myself a member of the global community, and a global citizen, and to be one, it's incredibly important to learn about HIV and AIDS."

Some of the young Lutheran delegates at AIDS 2012 were already veterans, grounding their current knowledge and action in past conferences.

"I first came as an ELCA youth delegate at the 2010 AIDS conference

in Vienna [Austria], and since then, I've been working with the ELCA as a layperson on issues of HIV and AIDS, so that leading up to this conference I was nominated for the interfaith pre-conference local host committee," said Ulysses Burley, 29.

"I'm a physician, but I was originally interested in cancer, and while I was still a medical student I spent a year in South America working with their AIDS foundation," said Burley. "I saw HIV patients in the public hospital system, and it opened up my eyes in terms of a new epidemic that was impacting people on a different level, not just medically."

"I came home to the United States and realized there was an epidemic right in my own community, and the ELCA gave me a platform to address it in the African-American church and the African-American community," said Burley, who is a Houston, Texas, native.

who works with the Lutheran Office for World Community representing LWF and ELCA advocacy concerns at the United Nations in New York. "The young people learn from the elders because they have experience, and also for the elders, it's a chance to hear first-hand from young people about their needs."

Rev. Aina Sheetheni, 40, a Namibian pastor member of the LWF delegation as an "elder," explained: "At home, I work in congregations, and since I work with people living with HIV and their support groups, I need a lot of the information I'm getting here."

"We're tapping into the know-how and wisdom of the young people," says Mangale. "Everyone is there to speak on their own behalf. This intergenerational linkage is crucial."

This approach seems to be taking hold in the larger AIDS movement,



19th International AIDS Conference: Protestors demonstrate outside the White House criticizing the United States' government support for pharmaceutical companies which resist generic licenses for drugs to treat people living with HIV. © Paul Jeffrey/EAA

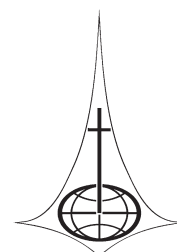
Education: Both Ways

The education at AIDS 2012 runs both ways, according to Christine Mangale, who was accompanying the ELCA and LWF delegates.

"[The delegation] has five young people and two elders," said Mangale,

said delegation "elder" Rev. Dr Veikko Muniyika.

"In the past, in the churches, even in NGOs and governments, the focus has been on the leadership, so that the leadership can then act as multipliers, and bring all the fire and passion to



the people,” said Munyika, who has coordinated HIV and AIDS work at the LWF over the past four years.

“But this time around, it seems people are saying: ‘Let’s go to the youth, the women, the marginalized, and empower them, because the change that we want will probably come from them.’”

Indeed, the young Lutherans at AIDS 2012 were poised to act when they head home.

“It’s been the tradition to make sure we [can] bring young people to the AIDS conference, which is very important because they’re key to ending this epidemic. When they go home, they

work in their own communities according to an action plan,” said Mangale.

Advocacy

Youth delegates like Burley were already participating in meetings with pharmaceutical companies, she added.

“The work on the AIDS conference is informing the domestic and international policy work of the ELCA advocacy department,” according to Mangale. “That advocacy includes pushing for less expensive [AIDS medications] and for child-friendly medicines, especially now, when budget cuts are looming.”

In the end, however, young Lutherans at AIDS 2012 were making connections that are more about people than they are about policies.

“I feel that it’s my duty to hear what people here have to say and make sure it’s brought back into the church,” said ELCA youth delegate Jessica Erickson, 21, a Virginia resident.

“It was easy for me to agree to come to [AIDS 2012] because I assumed it wasn’t going to be emotional,” said Erickson. “But the truth is, you come to this place and you find that it’s personal, and you can’t be here as a researcher—you’re helping to tell their stories.”

30 July 2012

Lutheran Grace: Keeping the Faith at AIDS 2012

A speaker in a lime-green vest belted about HIV with the energy of a carnival barker, while Lutheran volunteers patiently greeted a stream of participants in the Faith Zone of the Global Village at the 19th International AIDS Conference in Washington D.C.

The Lutheran Grace (Growing AIDS Compassion Everywhere) team was part of the community of educators, caregivers and people with HIV who had come to the United States capital, 22-27 July, to try and “turn the tide” against AIDS.

For the Lutheran Grace volunteers—from the Metro D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area—it was a matter of keeping the faith.

Flanked by posters that read “I believe in an end to stigma” and “I believe in dignity,” they collected prayers for people living with HIV, explained their mission, and adorned willing listeners with bright Lutheran Grace wash-off tattoos.

“Lutheran Grace’s goal is to normalize the discussions around HIV and AIDS, and make our churches welcoming places for people living with HIV,” explained Martha Jewett, a parish nurse at Christ Lutheran in D.C.

In a letter before the conference, ELCA’s Presiding Bishop Mark S.



Volunteers offer a visitor a temporary tattoo at the “Lutheran Grace” booth in the Global Village of the 19th International AIDS Conference in Washington D. C. © Paul Jeffrey/EAA

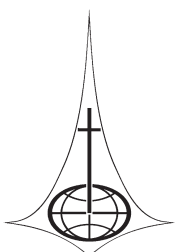
Hanson had welcomed faith delegates to AIDS 2012 alongside Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, urging them to make the event a defining moment in the history of engagement with HIV and AIDS.

Lutheran Grace’s focus was to get people involved in this defining moment, which gathered 20,000 international leaders on HIV for intense strategizing and collaboration, according to Jewett.

In order to connect members of their respective congregations and AIDS 2012 delegates, the group

asked D.C. area Lutherans to write down prayers for or concerns related to people living with HIV, which they shared with visitors to their Faith Zone booth. Delegates were invited to pass on names of people living with HIV, greetings, artwork or prayer concerns to the faith communities supporting Lutheran Grace.

Jewett said that after AIDS 2012 members of Lutheran Grace were going to share with their congregations the prayers and petitions they had collected in the Faith Zone as a way to engage children, youth and



adults about stigma reduction, and HIV and AIDS.

That the volunteers at Lutheran Grace were a mixture of lay and clergy members from 25 different local congregations was a sign that “HIV concerns have found their way into the hearts of the congregation members and their leaders,” noted Rev. Dr. Veikko Munyika, a member of the LWF delegation and LWF AIDS desk coordinator.

Reduce Stigma

“Every church can help reduce stigma by having programs to learn about HIV and AIDS, how stigma prevents people from getting tested and treated, how stigma makes them feel isolated and alone, how it increases their suffering, and makes them deny they could be at risk for HIV,” Jewett said.

“I’m a Lutheran, and I’m a Lutheran who lost a brother to AIDS,” said Lutheran Grace volunteer Nettie Horne. “He died in 2000, and he believed that the church—in the abstract—was against people like him. We know that’s not true in our church, and we need to do a better job of communicating.”

In 2009, the Church Council of the ELCA, an LWF member church, adopted the “ELCA Strategy on HIV and AIDS,” which aims to halt the spread of HIV through effective prevention, treatment, and care; eliminate the stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV; and reduce the conditions of poverty and marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV.

The Lutheran Grace volunteers such as Craig Shireman are making this strategy a reality at the local level.

“I feel it is important, as an ELCA member, to let people know that we care about HIV and other challenges such as tuberculosis, and that they affect us—not just Americans, but the entire world,” he remarked.

“People living with HIV are the people next to us, who we love and know; we just now know their status,” said fellow volunteer Kay Swift of Georgetown Lutheran Church. “Our representation here at AIDS 2012 is to pray for all the people who are working in care and prevention, and the people living with HIV themselves.”

(Both stories were contributed by Ecumenical Media Team member Jon Pattee)

Read other related stories on the LWF website at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf

30 July 2012

FEATURE: Fighting a Myth about Exclusion and Death in Mauritania

LWF Works with Local Partner to Combat HIV and AIDS

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania/GENEVA (LWI)

– Fatimata Ball recalls that when she first learned she was HIV positive, all she wanted to do was die.

She had already quit her job as a nurse and sold her valuables so she could afford to look after her husband, who had contracted the virus. When

she found out that she was HIV positive as well, she felt paralyzed by the diagnosis.

Today, however, she takes every opportunity to share her experience to combat the stigma associated with the disease. Ball is the first Mauritanian to publicly disclose her HIV

status. She campaigns tirelessly so that people living with HIV and AIDS can receive testing, treatment and preventive care.

“HIV is associated with two things—death and exclusion. Those who are diagnosed are traumatized. It feels as if life is over, like there is no turning back. And society is afraid. People do not know the difference between sick and infected. A woman who is infected will have to get herself tested but also her family, and that is not easy. It requires counseling,” Ball says.

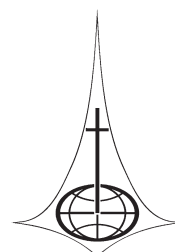
She gives testimonials at training sessions and talks about HIV, how she became infected, how she copes with the disease, and the discrimination associated with it.

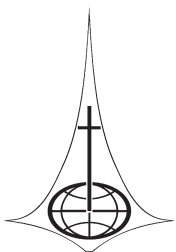
“HIV is not a sign of imminent death. We can live with the disease and still function,” she emphasizes.

Ball works at the National Executive Committee in the Fight against HIV and AIDS, an organization closely related to the Association



In Mauritania, Fatimata Ball is living positively with HIV and volunteers with LWF partner organization ACLS. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund





in the Fight against AIDS (ACLS), which is a partner of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its Department for World Service (DWS) program in Mauritania.

The list of HIV and AIDS cases at the ACLS office is long and sad. Ball noted, HIV is often seen as a death sentence, and a person living with the virus is considered worthless. But with access to medication those infected with the virus can live a long life, and with support they can feel valued.

ACLS was founded in 2007 and today is the only non-governmental organization in Mauritania working with people living with or affected by HIV, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion.

The association operates in all provinces of the country. Everyone working for the association is living with or affected by HIV. They work without pay but with passion and commitment. Moktar Salem Ould Lehibe, ACLS president, says it is important to know that everyone is welcomed.

“Muslims don’t have the right to discriminate; it’s against the first principle of Islam. I respect everyone,” says Lehibe.

The Most Needy

ACLS reaches about 1,500 infected or affected persons, targeting women, homosexuals, male and female sex workers, and children orphaned by AIDS. There are women cooperatives, groups for male and female sex workers, and a school for girls.

It is estimated that of the over 14,000 people living with the AIDS virus in Mauritania, only one in four have been tested and are under treatment. Lehibe says the needs are great and that today there is no possibility of assisting everyone.

Patrick Elis, program director at ACLS, says the organization’s primary goal is to make sure that anyone testing positive for HIV gets access to the free medication offered by the government.

Secondly, ACLS tries to assure that those fighting the virus have



ACLS and its members ensure that anyone testing positive for HIV has access to free medication provided by the government. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund

access to nutrition by distributing food and vitamins. ACLS also runs income-generating activities like the cash transfer project it sponsors together with the LWF, distributing money to 2,500 households.

ACLS can also provide counseling and psycho-social support to infected people and their families. But, Elis says, the needs are great. People living with HIV are exposed to so many other opportunistic infections and are often poor, which puts them at greater risk of exposure.

“ACLS has to choose from among those who are in need and that is terrible but unfortunately necessary,” he says.

Those who discover that they are infected often leave their village and move to the capital city, along with a family of between seven and 12 people, a very precarious situation. They need all the support, training and money they can get.

“When there are severe cases, we can assist with an apartment or a hostel, and basic needs like food and clothes. And we can help with mental health relief through counseling,” Elis adds.

Mauritania is in drought-stricken northwest Africa, where famine is a reality. With a global acute malnutrition rate of 10.7 percent, 10 percent of rural households are undernourished. The annual food deficit is about 50 percent and cereal prices have in-

creased by 50 to 75 percent due to imports and declining production.

This is a lethal situation for someone living with HIV as undernourished individuals are more susceptible to HIV infection than those who are well nourished. Conversely, good nutrition delays the progression from HIV to AIDS, and is essential for effective antiretroviral treatment.

The Only Ones

According to Lehibe, the Mauritanian government is very supportive and recognizes the work ACLS does following years of struggle by the organization to make its case. Today, there is a law protecting people living with HIV and all antiretroviral medication is free in the country.

The LWF is the only permanent partner but ACLS gets money from the United Nations and partners in Canada. Lehibe says that whenever the need is great, he starts knocking on doors.

“I recently got Chingitel, the largest phone company in Mauritania, to pay for a school for girls, which is now up and running. There are so many orphans left with nothing and in great need,” he adds.

(By LWF correspondent Thomas Ekelund, during a visit to Mauritania)

July 2012

LWF General Secretary: “Every Single Human Being Counts”

Call for Better Protection of Humanitarian Space

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) commended the efforts of humanitarian personnel worldwide while voicing concerns about the shrinking space for this work.

In a statement issued on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day on 19 August, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge called decades of humanitarian response by the Lutheran communion an “expression of [member churches’] faith and therefore an integral part of their mission.”

Often, local churches have the first contact with those in need, and in many cases the church itself “lives among people living in poverty and

the LWF’s Department for World Service” to support people affected by drought, violence and hunger.

This service provides assistance to 1.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons around the world irrespective of race, gender, creed, nationality or political conviction, he said. “Each of these refugees and displaced persons is supported by 47 Lutherans.”

Junge commended the 5,000 World Service staff worldwide, who often work under difficult conditions and face considerable danger as they respond to humanitarian situations.

The general secretary also called for threats to humanitarian work to

diars, and the use of sexual violence as a military strategy.

Humanitarian workers as well as infrastructure such as hospitals are also increasingly targeted in conflict zones, while aid labeled as “humanitarian” is carried out with political motives by armed groups and fighting parties, added Junge.

He urged governments and the international community to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones, and to “uphold humanitarian principles and values.”

Cooperation with faith communities as “effective and vital actors addressing humanitarian needs” should be increased, Junge emphasized.

The statement also highlighted the LWF’s commitment to strengthening ecumenical cooperation through the ACT Alliance, of which it is a founding member, and furthering collaboration with interfaith partners, United Nations (UN) bodies, local and national governments, and others in civil society.

The UN General Assembly established World Humanitarian Day to honor those devoting their lives to humanitarian causes. It is observed each year on 19 August to coincide with the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Iraq, which killed 22 UN staff.

Read the LWF statement on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/LWF-Statement-World-Humanitarian-Day-2012.pdf

19 August 2012



Assisting an elderly man at the Dadaab refugee camp, northeastern Kenya. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst

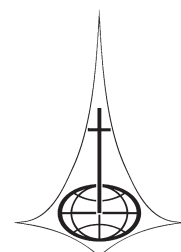
suffers displacement as it accompanies the poor and oppressed,” he noted.

Junge praised the “tireless effort of LWF member churches and their diaconal organizations in working together at the global level through

be addressed.

“International humanitarian law is increasingly ignored or intentionally disrespected in conflict zones,” he said, noting the misuse of civilians as human shields and children as sol-

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FEATURE: Their Courage Has Changed Entire Villages

LWF-Supported Solar Panel Program Engages Women Engineers

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania/GENEVA (LWI)

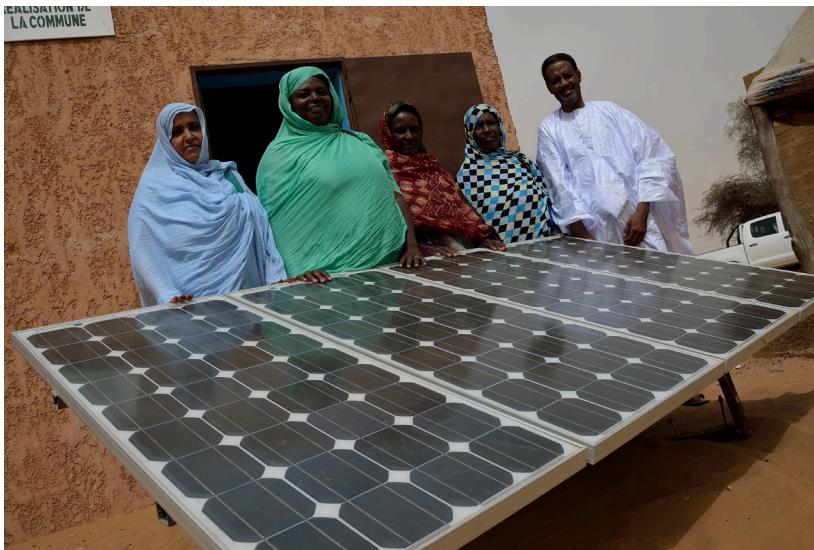
– Thanks to the courage of six local women, life has improved drastically for the people of three small villages, a couple of hours south of Mauritania’s capital Nouakchott.

Today, children can read and do their homework after sunset by solar light, women cook without having to worry about harmful fumes from an open fire, and families are enjoying better economic conditions.

The six women had volunteered in 2008 to be sent off for six months of training in India to become solar panel engineers. Hardly any of them knew how to read or write; none had ever left their villages.



Solar panel engineer Daida Mint Oumar at work in Mufta el Kheir, a small community south of Nouakchott, Mauritania. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund



The solar panels have helped improve the economic conditions for residents of Mufta el Kheir. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund

Daida Mint Oumar, the women’s team leader, says she thanks God that she found the strength to say yes to the training at the Barefoot College in India.

“This is the best thing that ever happened to me and to my village, it has made a big difference in our lives,” she says.

Providing the Most Necessary

Since the project started 5 years ago, more than 250 households in the Trarza

region have been equipped with solar panels. Every participating household pays a small monthly fee that covers all expenses, including maintenance and salaries for the six women.

Panels come with lamps and cooking equipment, and constant maintenance is required. It takes an hour to install the equipment, which includes panels placed on the roofs, switches and lamps inside.

“We work every day repairing lamps, checking installments. And after five years, batteries become useless and need to be replaced,” Oumar says.

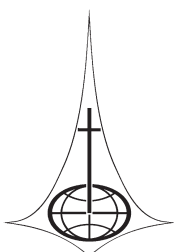
Ould Seyid Bechir, president of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) partner Bienfaisance sans frontières (BSF) and the driving force behind the project, says he is proud of the program. The fact that the project is led and managed by women marks a success in itself, he maintains.

“This is an excellent way to strengthen women in the communities. And we know that a salary given to a woman is money given to the family; men have a tendency to spend the money on other things,” Bechir notes.

Once-in-a-lifetime Journey

The BSF president says the Barefoot College in Tilonia, India, was looking for volunteers to participate in a six-month training to become solar panel engineers. With the help of the LWF, a search was begun among the most vulnerable villages to find six women who would be prepared to leave their families and pursue the training program abroad.

Saleka Maissa says she could neither read nor write when she signed up. “I had never even seen an airplane before. I had not even left my village before. But when my husband said yes, I knew I had to do it,” she says.



Working together, the women overcame language barriers and their illiteracy and completed their diplomas with excellent results. Since then Maissa has been to Mali and Senegal, sharing her experiences with other women. She says she would do it all over again.

“I dream of getting an updated version of the training. There is so much new equipment.”

Energy Poverty

Statistics indicate that just 30.5 percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa has access to electricity, with an estimated 585 million people lack-

ing electricity, more than two-thirds of whom live in rural areas.

Bechir has high hopes for the solar panel program. He says solar is the way of the future when it comes to providing energy and that it can be accomplished profitably. The current technology and knowledge has to be invested, not allowed to become obsolete, he adds.

The women’s proficiency, as demonstrated by the solar panel program, has also caught the attention of other organizations and villages.

“My dream is to start an education center here in Mauritania. Besides giving more villages the advantages

of this technology, we can sell the knowledge to other organizations and companies,” Bechir says.

Kasongo Mutshaila, the LWF representative in Mauritania, says he too has high hopes for the future.

“We have an understanding with the Indian government and they have agreed to finance solar panels for another 500 households. UNICEF (the United Nations Children’s Fund) has planned to install solar energy in schools and has requested the women in Trarza to do the installment.”

(By LWI correspondent Thomas Ekelund, during a visit to Mauritania)

10 August 2012

FEATURE: Tents Mushroom in the Mauritanian Desert

LWF Workers Provide Shelter for Malian Refugees

MBERE CAMP, Mauritania/GENEVA (LWI) – Even for people living here in southeastern Mauritania the heat is unbearable.

On a typical day, it approaches 50 degrees Celsius in Bassikounou, where The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) staff acknowledges that the power supply has been out for 10 days and generators cannot function in such heat.

Through its World Service program in Mauritania, the LWF manages the Mbere refugee camp at Bassikounou for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR). But despite the high temperatures, thousands of Malians fleeing famine, insecurity and conflict are crossing into neighboring countries, including Mauritania, and streaming into the camp located 50 kilometers from the common border.

Arriving from Nouakchott

The Mbere camp management team is headed by LWF project coordinator Demba Niang and outgoing coordinator Pape Diallo. On a Friday evening, the staff receives a

message—25 refugee families from Nouakchott will arrive in five hours.

This is the first day of the weekend and normally not a working day in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. But there are rarely any normal days when managing a camp.

Both Niang and Diallo immediately get on their phones to try and gather the team. Twenty-five families mean 25 tents that have to be put in place. “That is our responsibility, no matter what day or time,” Niang says as he reaches for his cell phone.

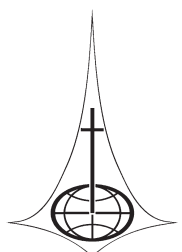
Two hours later, 12 people from the LWF are huddled in three cars headed towards the camp, and as the sun is setting the first pins are being driven into the ground indicating where to put up the tents. Building a camp is all about knowing the rules and regulations regarding such details as the distance between tents, sanitation and fire ways.

But something is wrong. A dark blue, four-wheel drive vehicle zooms onto the site with an angry police captain shouting in Arabic. With help from a translator, Niang is told that the team is at the wrong end of the camp. The reasons are far from clear but 10 minutes later pins are being pulled up and tents are repacked onto cars.



Refugees join LWF staff to set up tents for newcomers in Mbere camp in southeastern Mauritania.

© LWF/Thomas Ekelund



“It’s all about diplomacy,” Niang says. “And having good relations with the local gendarme is absolutely vital to us. Without their goodwill, we cannot function here.”

Almost an hour behind schedule the 25 new tents are finally up in the desert sand. Groups of Malian refugees volunteering to help are led by LWF staff. “Normally this would take us 30 minutes,” Niang says. “We put up 300 tents per day.”

A Moment of Chaos

As the last vestiges of daylight disappear, the sounds from over 64,000 people in the camp suddenly take on a surreal quality with the cacophony of crying babies, laughing children and honking donkeys hovering above the sand.

Tents are in place, and as Niang is trying to coordinate work with the UNHCR staff, water, an absolute necessity, is mentioned. Someone had forgotten to order a water tank for the arriving guests. Everyone looks at Niang with a silent question: what now?

The black sky suddenly flashes with light as a caravan of over 15 cars slowly moves into camp. There is an apparent moment of chaos before Niang and Diallo shout out orders and the LWF cars are placed so that their headlights light up the site.

“It’s our job to get people installed,” Niang says as he guides the newly arrived refugees to designated tents. Each family has received water tanks, chairs, kitchenware and rice.

Seeing it for the first time, the following 25 minutes seem totally disorganized. People are everywhere. There is no way of knowing who is who in the dark. One family seems to be missing luggage. A young mother



Around 300 tents were set up daily at the Mbeere refugee camp in Mauritania. © LWF/Thomas Ekelund

holds a small baby, who just won’t stop crying. There are children everywhere, playing, screaming or fighting. Another mother puts down her crying newborn in her sister’s lap and leaves.

What about water? Niang has managed to get in touch with Doctors without Borders and a green lorry with fresh water arrives, suddenly catching everyone’s attention.

Doesn’t Add Up

Another caravan of 10 cars arrives carrying another 10 families that need places to stay. The LWF staff begins again the procedure of finding temporary homes for the newly arrived. In another 15 minutes all the families have a place to stay and all the tents are occupied.

Then a driver says that three cars have been left behind. Suddenly the numbers don’t add up.

The original message that all had arrived turned out to be wrong. It is almost half past nine in the evening and people have been working to set

up the site for nearly five hours. Still, a small group is called on to put up another three tents.

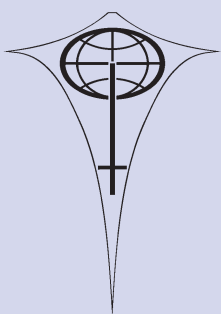
One of the UNHCR staff is seen carrying a very small baby. She saw the mother leaving her child with her sister and could not help getting involved. She has managed to get the baby to stop crying.

As the last three tents are unpacked the UNHCR gives the message: “It’s time to leave camp!” The crew cannot stay; it’s all about security. Without really knowing why, all the LWF staff climb into their cars and drive off into the night.

But they are only gone for a few of hours. As soon as the sun rises the following day, everyone will be back, setting up new tents, making sure that the families who are fleeing the famine conditions and civil war in Mali are welcomed at the camp site in the desert that might be their home for months or even years to come.

(Written for LWI by Thomas Ekelund in Mbeere, Mauritania.)

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