

Lutheran World Information

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The North East Asian Lutheran Communion women theologians together with the LWF Secretary for Women in Church and Society. Photo: LWF

Women in Ordained Ministry Reflect God's Call

Interview with LWF General Secretary on International Women's Day

GENEVA (LWI) – The International Women's Day is observed on 8 March. This year the theme is *Equality for Women Is Progress for All*. According to the UN, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made and to call for change. *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* asked General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge how The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is actively engaged in the issue.

How does the International Women's Day theme Equality for Women is Progress for All speak to you as the General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation?

The theme captures in a very poignant way that so-called "women issues" are not issues that affect women only, but

are issues that relate to the whole society in which they live, or in the case of the church, about the whole church. Equality of women speaks about the quality of relationships, and about the values that inform these relationships. For a church to be engaged in processes that work towards equality of women is not, therefore, a token, or an altruistic gesture towards those considered weak. Rather, such a process is the joint effort of men and women to make the church a better place, thereby becoming a powerful sign of our reconciliation and unity in Christ through baptism across the divides of ethnicity, social status and gender.

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News in Brief

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Enhancing advocacy and worship

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW) is expanding its worship and advocacy work. Dr Ojot Ojulu, a member of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), started work on 1 March as the LWF's new Advocacy Officer in the Office for International Affairs and Human Rights. In this newly created position, he will help develop policy and carry out advocacy, one of the cross-cutting priorities for the LWF.

“LWF member churches and country programs in several parts of the world are living amidst situations of violence and/or gross violations of human rights,” says Ralston Deffenbaugh, Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights. “The major challenge of this position is to figure out which interventions will be most effective in raising the voice of our constituency on the international stage in Geneva,” he adds.

Ojulu, who holds a PhD in Peace Studies from Bradford University in the United Kingdom, was president of the Gambella Synod of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

(EECMY). He has published in the field of peace studies, war, conflict and political violence. At the LWF Dr Ojulu will focus his attention on, among other topics, land justice, which is also an issue in the Gambella region where he comes from, as well as in many other parts of the world.

Also joining the team in the DTPW is the Rev. Rebecca Ruggaber, who as of 1 March assumed the position of Secretary for Liturgy and Worship. She trained in the church and graduated from Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen, Germany, in Theology. Recently ordained, Rev. Ruggaber has been seconded from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Germany.

“The living variety and deep connection between the communion of churches can be seen and felt in services and worship,” Rev. Dr Simone Sinn, Study Secretary for Public Theology, says. “Therefore DTPW is very grateful that a new colleague will attend to questions of worship with theological competence, liturgical diligence and creativity.”

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How has the LWF helped inspire equality for women and how does it see its future engagement doing so?

For the LWF the commitment to equality is given concrete expression through a number of governance decisions and programmatic activities. The LWF has a long history of project support to member churches that are committed to promoting the equality of women in church and society. In 1984, the LWF adopted at its Assembly the policy that at least 40 percent of women and 40 percent of men should be represented in its bodies, and therefore also in its governance.

The same principle is applied when it comes to LWF's activities and programs. This includes scholarship support, both for theological studies and for studies related to development. Since 1984 the LWF has recognized and affirmed the goal of seeing women in the ordained ministry. This has been reflected in all LWF Assemblies held during those three decades. The LWF campaign "Churches say 'NO' to Violence against Women", implemented during the first decade of the 21st century, had a tremendous impact. Our engagement in the field of humanitarian response and development work (Department for World Service) includes gender justice as a cross-cutting objective. The LWF Strategy "With Passion for the Church and for the World" includes gender justice as a cross-cutting issue. In 2011 the LWF Communion Office was certified for gender-equal salaries. Last year the 2013 LWF Council adopted a gender justice policy implementing a decision of its Assembly in 2010.

There is a solid and consistent journey behind us, yet there is a lot of new ground to break in the future.

In 2013 the LWF published a gender justice policy. What is the positive change the LWF hopes to see coming out of this new policy?

Through our journey we have learned to recognize that securing women's

participation through quotas does not automatically imply that women are participating under equal conditions.

This is the background for the call for a gender justice policy at the Assembly in Stuttgart.

The LWF Gender Justice Policy is meant to support and enhance the communion's journey towards inclusiveness. Based on biblical and theological understanding, and drawing from Lutheran theological identity, it provides guidance and methodologies for contextualized action plans at a regional and local level of the communion.

The LWF will follow up on these discussions. The positive change expected is to see the commitment for justice in relationships among genders as a matter of faith, and to produce more just relationships.

Seventy-seven percent of LWF member churches ordain women. Why is the question of ordination important for the LWF?

The statistics you mention go back to the year 2012. Meanwhile, more member churches are communicating their intention to ordain women or that they have already done so.

As Lutherans we believe that God has made us part of a new community through baptism and has called the whole people of God—men and women—to participate in God's mission. It is out of this understanding that we define the ministry of the church, which is open and reflective of this new community in Christ.

That is the reason why, in the LWF, we do not speak about the "ordination of women" but about "women in the ordained ministry of the church," a phrase which conveys our conviction of the importance of the inclusive character of the ministry.

In other words, the importance of this issue stems from the fact that the participation of women in the ordained ministry is ultimately about our understanding of the ministry of the church. And it is about how this ministry reflects God's call to the whole people of God, thus becoming a

witness of God's new creation in baptism, through which we are made a new community (Galatians 3).

The LWF is a communion with member churches in different cultures. Is the question of women in the ordained ministry of the church a question of different cultures?

The LWF is committed to an understanding of the ordained ministry as an office that is inclusive for both men and women. This is a goal that has been affirmed by LWF Assemblies since 1984 and has been owned by 77 percent of member churches, which includes 93 percent of the membership of the LWF.

As we accompany each other in pursuit of this goal, we hear and know that some churches need to move slower because of issues of biblical hermeneutics, cultural and ecumenical/interfaith relations.

Coming back to your question, there is a need to look carefully yet also critically at cultural realities, particularly in view of the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is in so many respects counter-cultural. For example, I do not think it is part of many cultures today to love one's enemy, yet we seek to announce this in words and deeds; I do not think it is part of many cultures today that one's God-given freedom will make us a servant to the needs of our neighbor, yet we seek to announce this in words and deeds; neither is it part of many cultures today that one will receive gifts for free, yet this constitutes the core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as proclaimed not only by Lutheran churches.

The Apostle Paul encourages the people of God to not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but to continue preaching and living it in our given cultures. Every church is called on a daily basis to discern how it wants to witness in its specific context, thereby also in its culture. At the same time it will seek to be faithful to God's mission, which in its substance carries so many counter-cultural elements.

The argument of culture is therefore a very relative one.

The LWF is engaging in ecumenical dialogue with partners who have different standpoints on the issue of women in the ordained ministry and women's engagement. Does this present a problem to the dialogues?

The LWF continues to be engaged in rich and meaningful ecumenical relations and dialogues. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed in 1999, therefore 15 years after the LWF Assembly in 1984 that recognized and affirmed the goal of women in the ordained ministry. For some decades already the LWF has been represented by ordained women in our different ecumenical dialogues, including dialogues with churches that do not ordain women. And these dialogues continue producing good

fruits. In the LWF audiences with Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, the LWF delegations have included ordained women, some of them holding the episcopal office.

We come to these interactions as the communion that we are, and I am grateful to be able to say I never felt that our interactions were at any point problematic because of the composition of LWF's delegation, or that a difference was made between members of the delegation. This is what adds value to our ecumenical dialogues and relations—the fact that they are based on honesty and transparency about who we are.

What is your vision for the positive change for women in the LWF you want to share on International Women's Day?

I hope and pray that violence against women—still a reality for many—is going to stop.

I hope and pray that we move from securing quotas for women's participation to securing conditions for women's participation.

And I hope and pray that more churches will own the commitment to women in the ordained ministry as we engage in open and respectful conversations that are faithful to the Word of God that invites the baptized to become a prophetic sign of God's powerful reconciliation.

More on International Women's Day and the LWF: www.lutheranworld.org/content/international-womens-day-2014

Strong Leaders In The Church

African Woman Theologian on Mentoring and Networking

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia/GENEVA (LWI)—Ebise Dibisa Ayana is teaching theology at the Mekane Yesus Seminary, a school of theology belonging to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). She now shapes and takes part in the women theologian's network in the African region. In an interview with Lutheran World Information (LWI) she talks about advocating gender justice, mentoring as a methodology of

empowering women, and her vision for her home church and the region

How did you hear about the women theologian's network?

I heard about WICAS (Women in Church and Society) launching networks in every region when I attended the global consultation held in Wittenberg, Germany, in 2012 from the LWF-

WICAS coordinator. Finally, I came to know that the African Theologians' Network will be held in Ethiopia from the women's department of EECMY.

Where did you find being part of the network supportive?

Networking needs to be practiced in everyday life. So it is related also to my family, my neighbors and the entire community. I am the mother of a girl and a boy. Parents are the primary teachers of their children. It is important to teach my children that we need to follow God's will. We are doing God's will in forming a community, in networking and supporting each other, and in promoting gender justice. As a teacher at the theological seminary I promote the issue of communality (sharing in the community), networking and gender justice also.

What is your methodology of promoting these issues?

I am mentoring my students at the seminary. The students are very impressed with mentorship, they share their story with me and with fellow stu-



Ebise Dibisa Ayana at the LWF global consultation on theological education and formation in Wittenberg, Germany 2012. Photo: LWF/Anli Serfontein

dents. We pray for each other and support each other in daily things. Mentoring means sharing lives. So I feel very happy.

In your opinion, how can mentoring be helpful for women in leadership?

For me, mentorship means lifting up the invisible, bringing the outcast

person to fellowship. It is important to encourage the spirit of unity. Mentoring is really a very important way to know each other and to address problems concerning the people..

In your opinion, what should be the role of women in your church?

- Leaders.
- Decision makers.
- God’s servants in all aspects.

What do you dream to achieve personally?

To see African women in church and society come up with strong potential and be leaders.

Twelve recommendations to advocate justice and dignity for Roma people

LWF and CCME issue action points for churches and church-related bodies

GENEVA (LWI) – A guideline on how to shape relations with Roma in Europe has been issued by diaconal workers and churches’ representatives from European member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). The 12 recommendations are meant as a framework for practical work in congregations and churches, says Rev. Dr. Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, Area Secretary for Europe in the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

“We are providing concepts”, she says. “The practical implementation has to happen locally, depending on the possibilities and the situation a community finds itself in.” This could mean focusing on Roma children and their family situation in a congregational kindergarten, convincing neighbors to take part in local festivities or offering a telephone hotline for special needs. “Each community has different gifts” she says, “some people are good at providing pastoral care, some know how to address practical needs, and there might be someone who knows how to form networks and raise awareness.”

Recognizing our own history

Roma has been an advocacy focus for many years. The LWF Assembly in Stuttgart 2010 passed a resolution calling upon member churches to “contribute to the empowerment and integration of



Church of Sweden delegation visiting income generating projects in Southern Mitrovica/a, Kosovo. Photo: Joakim Roos

socially disadvantaged ethnic groups as well as to the development of socially inclusive practices.” Even if ministry among the Roma have been established, as well as several projects targeting this ethnic group, “much more effort is needed if this problem is to be effectively addressed” states the resolution.

CCME has also been working on advocacy for Roma inclusion at the European level since 2001, focusing on the EU Framework for national strategies for the integration of Roma in the past 3 years. “History, including our own churches’ history with regard to relations to Roma minorities has many dark shades,” says CCME General Secretary Doris Peschke. “Recognizing where we have done wrong and where we have done right,

is important to in order to reconcile the different memories of our shared past to shape the joint future as equal citizens.”

Enhance knowledge

The recommendations now issued follow up on that call. Meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, 22-24 November, 20 representatives of European member churches of the LWF and CCME dedicated a conference to the topic. All of the participants, some themselves Roma, have had practical experience from working with Roma in educational and advocacy projects.

A main point in the recommendations is that knowledge about the culture and history of the minority Roma

communities needs to be enhanced in both church and society in order to stop discrimination and marginalization. The recommendations include

12 action points from practical aspects of including Roma into congregational and society life leading to media and advocacy against anti-ziganism.

A Call for Justice and Dignity for Roma People (PDF): www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-call-justice-and-dignity-roma-people

The LWF Pays Scheduled Accompaniment Visit to the ELCA

Unity in Christ Is a “Precious Gift”

CHICAGO, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – On 28 February 2014, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge accompanied by Bishop Cindy Halmarson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and Bishop Dr Ndagani Petrus Phaswana, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, met with the Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

The visit with the ELCA is the first in a series of three following a decision by the LWF Council in June 2013. The Council asked the LWF Communion Office to offer an accompaniment process to the three LWF member churches who are affected by a rupture of relations over the issues of family, marriage and sexuality.

“Our unity in Christ is a precious gift. It is precisely this gift of unity that makes it possible for members of the communion to have deep and even difficult conversations,” said ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton after the meeting. “The ELCA Conference of Bishops holds the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Church

of Sweden and the Lutheran World Federation Communion Office in prayer during this accompaniment process.”

“As a global communion of churches we believe it is healthy and normal to respectfully engage with each other in discussing complex issues,” said Rev. Junge. “In the LWF we are grateful for being able to uphold the values of being a communion in a time characterized by fragmentation, withdrawal and communication breakdown. The

accompaniment visits are an expression of these values in the LWF.”

Accompaniment visits have been scheduled with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Church of Sweden in the course of the coming months. The LWF Communion Office will offer an account of the accompaniment process to the LWF Council in June this year.



Council 2013 evening prayer Photo: LWF/M. Haas

Strengthening the Unity of Lutherans in Kazakhstan

Bishop Novgorodov Reflects on Reaching Out to Remote Congregations in a Multi-Faith Context

ASTANA, Kazakhstan/GENEVA (LWI) – Every year Bishop Yuri Novgorodov of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Kazakhstan (ELCRK) drives over 40,000 kilometers, a distance equivalent to the length of the equator, visiting the church’s 50 congregations.

Congregations that are included in the ELCRK together with their 10 clergy, are scattered over the world’s largest landlocked country, covering more than 2.7 million square kilometers. The maximum distance between congregations is about 3,000 kilometers.

While ELCRK’s core membership is around 2,500 people, a significantly higher number is linked to the church. In addition, there are some congregations in the country that are not part of ELCRK, and are represented by other Lutherans traditions.



Kazakhstan Lutheran Bishop Yuri Novgorodov (left) and Rev. Gennadij Khonin, leader of the ELCRK Almaty congregation, during a visit to the LWF Communion Office in Geneva. Photo: LWF/S. Gally

Despite these daunting distances and scattered congregations, the ELCRK's engagement in public life is growing in Kazakhstan society, a multi-cultural and multi-faith context, Novgorodov told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* in a recent interview. This is one of the reasons why the church has begun "taking major steps to strengthen the unity of Lutherans in the country," Novgorodov added.

The process began in October 2013 when pastors representing the three different Lutheran traditions met for the first time in 20 years and expressed "the unanimous opinion that there was need for unity among Lutherans in Kazakhstan," he added.

"That all of them may be one (John 17:21)," was the theme of the pastoral congress, held on the eve of Reformation Day, and attended by 21 clergy.

The bishop said such unity is critical for supporting peace and stability in a country where 70 percent of the 16 million inhabitants are Muslim; 23 percent are Orthodox Christians; and seven percent are Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, or non-religious.

Common Language

The ELCRK's responsibility for inter-religious dialogue is growing and the church has actively participated in the state-organized international Congress

of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held in Astana every third year since 2003.

"But how can we carry out a dialogue with other churches and communities if we have not yet been able to find a common language even in our small Lutheran society?" the bishop remarked.

"We don't need to be afraid of differences in traditions and opinions," he said. "That is not a source of weakness, but our strength. If we could learn to listen to one another, it would enrich us all."

He expressed gratitude to partner churches and organizations including The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for their devoted friendship and support, saying he hoped that they will sustain their solidarity towards "building a single, cohesive Lutheran church," as the Kazakhstan Lutherans embark on this process of unity.

A History of Persecution

Lutheranism in Kazakhstan dates back to the eighteenth century, when German citizens settled in the region. In the war years, they were resettled in Kazakhstan and Siberia. In 1941 alone, around 1 million Germans were deported out of the Volga region to Kazakhstan.

Following the collapse of the organizational structure and spiritual life of the Lutheran church in the then Soviet Union, it was not until 1955 that the

revival of the Soviet Lutheran church began in present day Astana. After years of prohibition, a church was registered, becoming the only official Soviet Lutheran congregation. Independence from Communist rule in 1991 brought mass emigration of Germans.

The ELCRK today "is a small church that has survived decades of persecution and prohibition. When we consider the damage done, let us also look at the statistics—from 228 congregations in 1993 to only around 50 today," Novgorodov noted.

Capacity and Sustainability

The church also plays an active role in society through its diaconal outreach programs to the elderly and the sick, free meals for the homeless and support to single parents.

The ELCRK's main challenges include insufficient capacity to educate much-needed church workers including pastors, and the spiritual and financial sustainability of congregations especially in remote rural areas.

In addition, the new religious law adopted in 2011 hampers the church's educational programs, Novgorodov emphasized.

Looking forward to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the bishop said for the ELCRK, this would be "a moment in which we need to look back, evaluate the path we have traveled, and make conclusions; and on the basis of those years of experience, we take up the path once again."

While he expects such commemorations to include Bible conferences, solemn liturgies and so on, Bishop Novgorodov emphasized his major preoccupation: "I will most likely be on the road again, visiting distant congregations, to support and encourage them. This is very important."

The ELCRK is part of the Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS), which joined the LWF in 1989.

Nigeria: People of Faith Affirming the Sanctity of Life amid Challenges

Interview with Lutheran Archbishop Nemuel Babba

DEMSA, Nigeria/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) held its Annual Convention, 19–23 February 2014 in Demsa, Adamawa State, in the northeastern part of the country. LCCN Archbishop Dr Nemuel A. Babba talked with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* about the “largest-ever gathering” in the church’s history; standing “firm as Christians”; and the church’s responsibility in enhancing peace and reconciliation in “a worrisome context.”

cause of the continuing deadly attacks by the Boko Haram militant group on entire villages, mainly targeting churches and Christian institutions of education, but also mosques, military and public places—all in the name of religion. The church is being persecuted.

In your opening address, you said this was the largest-ever gathering in LCCN’s history. How many people attended, and why such a huge turnout?

But it is fundamentally an opportunity for LCCN members to reaffirm their faith and seek spiritual renewal, express solidarity with one another and community at large, and simply get to know each other. I felt a lot of encouragement from the huge turnout and enthusiastic participation this year. In a context where people are becoming increasingly afraid of even attending Sunday worship, this event showed that we are growing in our faith, and we want to stand firm as Christians despite the challenges we face.

Which were the major outcomes from this year’s convention?

Support and solidarity: The huge attendance showed that LCCN members support their church and its work, and they stand in solidarity especially during these challenging times. There was deep appreciation for the solidarity messages from around the world including from Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and LWF member churches; from our ecumenical and religious partners in West Africa and in Nigeria, as well as government representatives.

Peace Building: We affirmed that peace building throughout Nigeria is an urgent task of the church in which we must be involved. And, we felt strengthened by Christ’s assurance: “My peace I give to you [...] not as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, [...] and do not be afraid (Jn 14:27).”

Sustainability: We affirmed that the LCCN belongs to its members and they must sustain it. One cannot continue to be child after 100 years of existence. At one of the bazaars we raised some 20 million Naira (over USD 121,200), one diocese collected 3.9 million



LCCN Archbishop Dr Nemuel A. Babba Photo: Felix Samari LCCN/LWF

Please explain the theme chosen for the 2014 Annual Convention?

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (Heb 4: 7),” was the theme for this year’s meeting. The Convention is an annual, open LCCN gathering, to which all Lutheran members, other Christians and the general public are openly warmly welcome.

We [LCCN leadership] chose this theme to remind ourselves that God is calling us now and today to reaffirm our faith as Christians against all odds. This is particularly important in northeastern Nigeria where we Christians especially live in fear, in a worrisome context be-

Firstly, in view of security, we worked with the administration to ensure all the necessary measures to secure all those entering the convention grounds, an area of around one square kilometer. By the end of the convention on Sunday [23 February], we had recorded a total attendance of around 1 million people. This is way beyond the number at the 100th anniversary celebrations in October 2013.

The convention includes official speeches, sermons, Bible study groups, choirs and many other performances, bazaars at which congregations raise funds by trading various goods, and so forth.

Naira (USD 23,620), and we received local pledges to develop the convention grounds into a more conducive meeting place, among other commitments. Nigeria is a rich country, and we need to pull together our resources to strengthen our educational and agricultural institutions, and create more opportunities for our youth and women.

Our core ministry is spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and affirming life in its fullness in all the communities we serve. Our evangelism work received huge support, including a planned visit that I will lead to the northwestern state of Zamfara near Niger, where we already have 40 preaching points, a Bible school and primary school in Gulbin Boka town.

Why is peace building an urgent task for the LCCN?

Peace building is as urgent today as it was in the 1980s and other periods when the country experienced violence that used the name of religion to persecute Christians and Muslims alike. However, the perpetrators of violence associated with the Boko Haram group have infiltrated our communities, and they are armed with sophisticated arms.

When a brother can stand up and kill a brother, this is not religion. It is therefore the collective responsibility of every Nigerian to denounce these individuals and the people supporting them; the government needs our support.

As faith leaders, we will continue to appeal to these groups to come and dialogue about what they want instead of using arms. We will preach and advocate peace, as violence only leads to destruction.

How can the global Lutheran and ecumenical community support you ministry particularly in peace building?

Continue to pray for us: this is my message to the LWF, and to our brothers and sisters in the global church. Also, speak out loudly to your governments and the international community, asking them to intervene to stop these senseless killings. We want to hear the Christian voice encouraging us, supporting us and pleading on our behalf, and affirming the sanctity of life.

[The LCCN was established in 1913. An LWF member church since 1961, it currently has 2.2 million members in 2,400 congregations throughout Nigeria. Its eight dioceses are each headed by a bishop, and Archbishop Babba leads the national church.]

Namibia: Bishop Veikko Munyika Consecrated

“Ministry of oversight and unity”

WINDHOEK, Namibia / GENEVA (LWI) – Rev. Veikko Munyika has been consecrated as bishop of the Western Diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN). Munyika had been elected by the ELCIN synod in November. The consecration took place on 26 February in Windhoek.

On behalf of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge congratulated Munyika, sending “good wishes for the ministry of oversight and unity that you are taking on.” In his greeting, conveyed by retired Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta of ELCIN, Junge especially emphasized the calling “into cities, fields, villages, roads and even the most difficult places of human existence”.

Munyika was the coordinator of the LWF HIV and AIDS desk at the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) between 2008 and 2012. Prior to joining the LWF he served as general secretary of the ecumenical Churches United Against HIV and AIDS in Eastern



Bishop Veikko Munyika visiting a local congregation prior to his election. Photo: Dirk Haarmann

and Southern Africa (CUAHA) network, coordinating church response to the AIDS pandemic in 13 African countries. He also helped establish an AIDS action plan for his church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN).

“As a communion of churches, we appreciate the ways in which you helped

so many churches to understand this commitment as one belonging to the very essence of being the church,” Junge added, encouraging Munyika to continue this ministry and to be inspired by it while assuming the bishop’s office.

The ceremony was attended by church representatives and govern-

ment officials. In his sermon, Munyika called Namibians to work hard in order to overcome the effects of the country's current drought. Namibia is currently suffering from the effects

of the worst drought in over 25 years. Even though there has been rain at the beginning of this year, vulnerable rural communities are still relying on international food aid until the

harvest, which is expected in May. The Lutheran World Federation and ACT Alliance are assisting Lutheran churches in Namibia in their response to the drought.

Trilateral Dialogue Discusses Significance of Baptism

Prof. Peter Li Brings Perspectives from Hong Kong

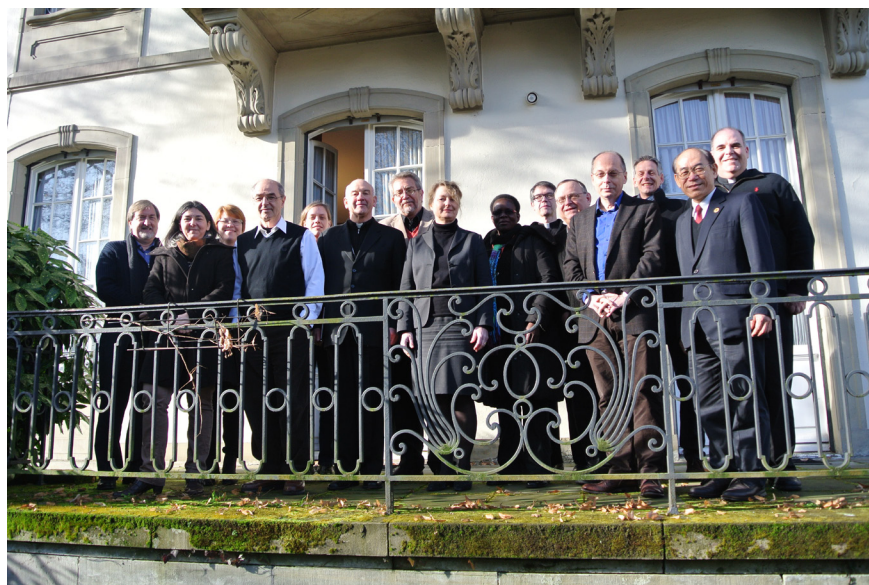
GENEVA (LWI) – “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church” is the topic of an ongoing dialogue between scholars of Lutheran, Catholic and Mennonite Churches. The Trilateral Dialogue Commission on Baptism had its second meeting from 26-31 January in Strasbourg, France. “Baptism: God’s Grace and Human Sin” was the focus of this particular meeting, relating the different understandings of baptism to the concept of sin and grace in the confessions. While the dialogue is an ongoing process, Prof. Peter Li from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong shared with *LWI* about baptism in his region.

LWI: The main theme of the trilateral dialogue relates to baptism. What does baptism mean to you and your church?

Baptism to me, and my church, always means a beginning relationship with God in and through Jesus Christ and his church.

As stated in article 9 of the Augsburg Confession, “baptism is necessary for salvation” even though many Protestants and their churches in town do not share this conviction which is biblically grounded and theologically correct.

LWI: According to the self-understanding of the LWF to be Lutheran is to be



Participants from the dialogue in Strasbourg. Photo: MWC/Elke Leypold

ecumenical. What does this mean in your own context in Hong Kong?

As a member of the LWF, we share the same self-understanding though we may prefer using also the term Evangelical-Catholic to describe ourselves. It means on one hand, we share the common apostolic tradition with the Church universal; on the other hand, we recognize the precious Reformation heritage re-emphasized if not re-discovered, by and since Luther.

LWI: What are you going to take back home into your church from the meetings of the trilateral commission?

It is a privilege to me as the only Asian and Chinese recommended by my church, the Evangelical Lutheran

Church of Hong Kong, to participate in the meetings of the Trilateral Commission. I will have the obligation and honor to report to my church council and the ministerium respectively in our following meeting. As always, I also share with my students in class and my colleagues in the seminary. To keep my community informed about this meaningful trilateral dialogue on the theme of Holy Baptism may help to encourage both the spirit of Christian unity and the growth in faith, love and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Read the official communiqué:

www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-communique-trilateral-dialogue-commission-baptism-strasbourg-26-31-january-2014

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Angola: Going Back to Normal Is Still “Many Rain Clouds Away”

LWF and ACT Forum Partners Continue Food Distribution to Drought Affected Communities

LUANDA, Angola/GENEVA (LWI) – A woman and her children dig a hole in the dry riverbed, hoping to find at least a drop of water. The merciless sun has not made way for rain clouds here. This has been the worst drought in Angola in more than 30 years, locals say.

In Oxavikwa village, the residents gather on a hot Sunday morning to receive their rations of maize meal, beans and cooking oil. Kaveliunwa Katjipaleke, who is pregnant, came to collect her share with her mother Emilia Katiti.

“We are so thankful for this help. I am pregnant and staying hungry is not good for the baby,” Katjipaleke explains.

“Sometimes I can’t take the hunger anymore and I go to the neighbors to ask for food even though they don’t have anything either,” Katiti says, adding that many families eat only one meal per day or nothing at all.

Even though the rains have started in parts of Angola, the situation is still critical in some regions after nearly three years of drought. In the southern provinces of Cunene and Huila, over 629,000 people, representing nearly 57 percent of the population, still require emergency assistance.

In a drought response initiated for Angola in August 2013, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its local ACT Alliance partners including the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Angola and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola continue to distribute food to the most affected vulnerable groups in critical regions. The distribution is planned to last until April 2014 when the first harvest is expected.

Running Away from Hunger

In Oxavikwa, a remote village in Cunene province, the prolonged absence of rains has led to cases of malnutrition and outbreak of diseases. Livestock is dying, and the few animals left are merely skin and bones.

Due to the desperate situation, many people are making plans to leave their homes and move to places where they can find pastures for their animals, and to cities in search of means of survival.

“The day we will finish selling the goats, we will move. Then we will have nothing left. But I really hope the rains will continue and we don’t have to move,” says Jeremias Munekamba, a father of seven.

It is difficult to encourage people to stay, according to Rev. Salomão Tchoya, the local IELE pastor. Without rains, he adds, people can’t grow the staple food, *mahangu* (millet) and take care of their animals.

“They are running away from hunger. They have nothing left,” he sighs.

Increase in Cholera Cases

According to a January report by the ACT Forum in Angola, the current drought and food crisis has led to an outbreak of cholera, with significantly more numbers reported compared to the previous year. In 2013, over 3,840 cholera cases and 133 deaths were recorded in Cunene province, while Huila had over 1,440 cases and 46 deaths. Although the fatalities in Cunene were fewer compared to the 221 reported in 2012, partly due to quick intervention by the government, awareness about good hygiene and sanitation is still needed in order to prevent outbreaks.

There are fears that the cholera outbreak may spread if the rains increase. The remote villages do not have pit latrine systems in place, and people relieve themselves in holes dug in the bush. With heavy rains, there is a high risk that the exposed human waste will increase the spread of diseases.

“The cholera outbreak is a result of poor hygiene and lack of toilets. It is also a problem that people drink from [artificial] dams. The same water is used for cooking, washing clothes, bathing and as cattle’s drinking water. We are now going to raise health awareness by educating people, that’s the second phase of the emergency response,” says Abrao Mushivi, emergency coordinator for the LWF/DWS program in Angola.

A few hundred meters away from a food distribution point, a woman



Rev. Salomão Tchoya oversees the food distribution in Oxavikwa village, southern Angola. Photo: FELM/Laura Meriläinen-Amaum

lies under a tree with her baby. She has been diagnosed with cholera and barely has energy to lift up her head.

“Usually cholera takes 24 hours to make you weak, but because she [the woman] was already so weak from hunger, she deteriorated in a matter of few hours, just like that,” Cipriano Kaluhongue an assistant nurse, explains.

“But luckily she is getting better now.”

Too Weak to Attend School

As the sun starts to set, a small number of people are still waiting for their share of maize meal and beans. Some voice

concern that the food will run out before their turn. But Tchoya assures everyone that they will receive food; he is well aware that the maize meal is needed urgently so that they can go home and cook. “We have never experienced anything like this before. There was a severe drought back in 1981, but it was not this bad,” he says.

The food crisis has also led to social problems, which IELA Bishop Tomás Ndawanapo sees as a great concern. According to many parents, children do not have enough to eat, and are therefore not attending school because they don't have the energy to walk the long distances and stay alert in class.

“The country will not grow if [children] are not attending school. We need well educated youth. It is important that we as a community and as a church work together in this situation,” he adds.

While some parts of Angola are currently experiencing more rains than in recent years it is not yet enough. In Oxavikwa village, they are convinced that going back to normal is still “many rain clouds away.”

(A contribution by Laura Meriläinen-Amaumo, Communication Officer at the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), during a recent visit to Angola.)

Relief Support Still Needed Despite Rains in Namibia

Lutheran Churches Seek Additional Assistance for Vulnerable Households

AMPERBO, Namibia/GENEVA (LWI) – It is looking green again in many parts of Namibia, thanks to heavy rainfall after a prolonged period of drought, and some farmers have started planting their fields. But for thousands of rural communities who lost entire livelihoods in the disaster, relief support is still needed as most people have depleted their food stock and market prices are high for both food and farming inputs including seeds.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its member churches in Namibia are appealing to their partners for additional support to extend a drought response initiative through which vulnerable households receive a cash grant to buy food and other basic necessities. The cash transfer program (CTP), running from September 2013 until February 2014, has helped nearly 6,000 people cover gaps in household incomes and empowered families to prioritize their own needs during one of the worst disasters in the country's history.

Through the CTP coordinated by the LWF and the United Church Council of Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches (UCC/NELC), vulnerable families in remote rural areas receive a monthly cash grant of 100 Namibian dollars (USD 10) per head.



Ndapanda Mentte Shandingi shows a Nampost debit card. Photo: LWF/M. Hyden

In a follow-on drought response appeal under the global churches network ACT Alliance, the LWF and UCC are seeking an additional USD 235,429 to extend emergency support until the end of May 2014. This will enable families that are still affected by food deficits to cope during the critical transitional period before the next harvest.

When Namibia declared a national emergency in May 2013, the government said the drought had severely

affected livestock owners and farmers, and nearly 40 percent of the 2.1 million people in the country needed emergency assistance.

Appreciation for Cash Pay Out

Feedback from the participating communities indicates appreciation for the cash method and its outreach. Selma Ndeutapo's family lost most of their live-

stock to the drought; only two donkeys survived. The mother of a four-month old son says she is grateful for the UCC cash pay out, which she used to feed her child. “There was no salary coming in and so the monthly amount was an important gap filler,” adds the 34-year-old.

Beatrice Brogadega says she used the money to ensure a steady food supply for her household, bought winter clothes for her children and paid school fees. “We pray the church will continue to remain with us,” she adds.

A pensioner, 87-year-old Ndapan-da Menette Shandingi says she initially received news about the initiative with some skepticism. Today, she is “very grateful for the assistance provided through the churches.”

When she first heard about the cash grant at her local church, Shandingi thought “it was simply a scam either for buying election votes or a ploy to get the community to sell their goats.” But when she saw the church logos on the assessment team cars visiting the community, she came forward and registered, and has been receiving cash for herself and five other people that she supports.

The cash intervention mainly targets the most severely affected communities

in Hardap region, southern Namibia; and in Kunene, Omusati and Okavango regions in the north, where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCRN) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) are present. So far, more than 500 people have also received psychosocial support, and training was conducted for emergency preparedness and advocacy in the partnership that also includes the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia.

“Some people mentioned they appreciated that the project did not benefit only the ‘Lutherans’ but included all segments of the community,” notes Michael Hyden, humanitarian coordinator at the LWF Department for World Service (DWS), following a recent visit to affected communities.

Slow Recovery

The rate of drought recovery is slow, and until the next harvest, an estimated 778,500 vulnerable people are at risk of food insecurity, according to an assessment by the government’s disaster and risk management directorate. Most families have depleted their 2012 harvest and now depend on

the market and drought relief food provided by the state and other partners.

Enhanced Collaboration

The Lutheran churches’ initiative involves a first-time collaboration between the UCC and the Namibian postal and banking services Nampost, which provides individual debit cards for the cash transfer pay out.

The DWS Southern Africa Emergency Hub supports the churches through training in emergency preparedness and humanitarian interventions for the local pastors. The capacity development curriculum is a joint effort between DWS and the LWF Department for Mission and Development, with support from the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.

The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) and its Theological Institute for Advocacy and Research in Africa (TARA) provides technical advice, and coordinates data collection for the program. Possibilities are being explored for an independent external evaluation on the CTP impact together with the Namibian Red Cross that has a similar pilot project in Kunene region, Hyden adds.

Life-Saving Water for South Sudanese Refugees

LWF Reconstructing Boreholes in Uganda

ADJUMANI, Uganda/GENEVA (LWI) – “We are not used to fetching water from a borehole,” says 25-year old Sara Tarakila. With many others, she is waiting at one of the boreholes in the Nyumanzi refugee settlement in Adjumani district, northern Uganda. Together with thousands of South Sudanese she was forced to flee to Uganda after fighting erupted on 15 December, 2013, in Juba.

“We are very happy to be here in safety in Uganda, and it is good that we can now get enough water. Before we were struggling,” says Tarakila. The borehole at the Nyumanzi refugee settlement has been reconstructed by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). “There was

not enough water, but now things are improving here,” Tarakila adds, smiling.

It is estimated that more than 59,000 refugees from South Sudan have arrived in neighboring Uganda through different border points, and are now in Adjumani, Arua and Kiryandongo districts.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports severe shortages of water, sanitation and health provision, as well as in resources aimed at protecting the refugees, saying more funds are urgently needed.

LWF was among the first to arrive in Adjumani, providing refugees with basic items such as plastic cups,

plates, water cans and soap. Through its Department for World Service (DWS) program in Uganda, the LWF has rebuilt four boreholes in Nyumanzi settlement, and the drilling of six new boreholes is underway; three of which will directly benefit refugees in the settlement, and one for use by the host community. “This is important in order to ensure peaceful co-existence between the refugees and the host community,” says James Drichi, who is in charge of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services for the LWF.

Thirty-year-old Aurelia Mesiku comes from Ige village, which is located near the Nyumanzi settlement,



Borehole rehabilitated by LWF in Nyumanzi refugee settlement, Adjumani district, northern Uganda. Photo: DCA/ACT/LWF/Mai Gad

where more than 43,000 refugees from South Sudan are currently residing. It is afternoon and dust hangs in the air. There has been no rain for months and Mesiku joins the many women from the local community who

are also waiting to fetch water from a borehole in the settlement.

“This borehole did not work for a long time, but LWF came and repaired it. Before I had to fetch water three kilometers away, but now it is near

my home. I am happy it has been repaired,” says Mesiku who is also chairperson of the borehole committee. “The only worry I have is that many people now share this borehole.”

But she can empathize with the situation of the South Sudanese. “I was a refugee and went from Uganda to Sudan when I was just 13-years-old. I am happy that we can also welcome the South Sudanese here,” Mesiku adds. However, the water situation at the Nyumanzi refugee settlement remains critical.

“The situation is improving, but we are not yet there at all. We still need to construct at least 90 boreholes, as well as latrines and bathing shelters, and, as Nyumanzi gets full, we need to also construct and rehabilitate the new settlements,” says Arnold Kasoba, UNHCR WASH officer in Adjumani.

(A contribution by Mai Gad, communication officer for DanChurchAid)

CAR Refugees Find a New Home in Camp Dosseye, Chad

LWF providing a safe haven in the midst of conflict

GORÉ, Chad/GENEVA (LWI) – The field seems to stretch all the way to the horizon. In the midst of this dry semi-desert of red and dusty roads, a green haven unfolds. There are carrots, herbs, sesame and beans, all appearing even greener in the light of the setting sun. Men and women are bent over every plot, pulling out the weeds with skilled hands. And scattered over the field are streams and ponds. Everywhere the green cans marked with “FLM” can be seen, “Fédération luthérienne mondiale,” the French abbreviation for The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). This is Camp Dosseye in southern Chad.

“Life is okay”

Loubandin Kim Copin is tall, slim and dressed in a white t-shirt. He is not a man of many words, but his eyes and

hands show compassion. When civil unrest came to the Central African Republic (CAR) and his village Pawa in 2003, he was a student. He and his wife had to flee the country along with most of their neighbors. Since then Camp Dosseye has been their home.

He and his wife Madjitenem Annette have seven children “and we are all doing okay”, Loubandin Kim says, smiling. Madjitenem, wearing a beautiful yellow sari, stands up from the boiling pan and swiftly gathers her children. It is time for the family photo.

“Thanks to LWF I have the animals, veterinarian care and fodder,” Loubandin says, proudly pointing to the small wall-less stable in front of the house. “We get seeds to grow different kind of vegetables, which gives us enough to eat and often to sell. But what is more important, I have been given the opportunity

for personal development thanks to LWF,” he says. “And that is what’s going to feed me and my family in the future.”

Life in a refugee camp is costly, Loubandin Kim says. He has to pay for school, water and the doctor. As he and his wife walk through the field, looking at their plants in the evening light, Loubandin Kim says that this is what he wants to do: “I’d like for me and my children to be able to finish school. That is so important. I need to know that my kids will have a different life, hopefully back in our country.”

LWF has been working in Chad since 2007. Dosseye has about 16,000 inhabitants and is one of three camps in Goré hosting mainly refugees from the CAR, who have been displaced by the political unrest in their country. In partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),

LWF and ACT Alliance will be building shelters and infrastructure at the camp in the upcoming year, supporting the inhabitants in earning their livelihood, ensuring a safe environment and a secure food supply while providing vocational training for selected refugees and host communities at five centers.

“Working with host communities is as important as supporting the refugees,” says Jan Schutte, who is the LWF representative in Chad. “I guess that our holistic approach, our well known local staff and long experience have made LWF the most trusted partner to the UNHCR in Chad.”

Major refugee movements

Chad was already home to about 290,000 Sudanese refugees and 60,000 CAR refugees before the new arrivals. More than 20,000 new refugees from CAR were registered in Chad during 2013 and more are coming every day. Since 21 December 2013, more than 50,000 Chadians have been evacuated from CAR. A UN Emergency Response

Plan has been prepared to assist up to 150,000 returnees and 50,000 new refugees over the next six months.

In discussions with refugee and local leaders, Schutte says that it has been determined that the priorities for the coming year are disaster preparedness, continued support for host communities, agricultural support and income generation.

“But,” says Schutte, “We need to be even more visible in relation to our funding partners. Since the LWF and ACT Alliance program became a major partner of UNHCR in Chad in 2013, UNHCR is also expecting a higher level of contribution from within the ACT Alliance. That is a challenge we have to stress.”

(With Contribution by Thomas Ekelund, Church of Sweden)



*Loubandin Kim Copin made a life for himself and his family at Camp Dossiye, Chad.
Photo: LWF/Thomas Ekelund*

Scarred by Rape but Spreading Hope among Women Refugees

LWF Uganda Seeks to Increase Protection for Congolese Fleeing into Uganda

RWAMWANJA, Uganda/GENEVA (LWI) – Sitting on a mud floor at the Rwamwanja refugee camp in southwest Uganda, Shama (not her real name), a 35-year-old Congolese from North Kivu Province, recalls how she was attacked and gang-raped by four men at her home in 2010. She later tested positive for HIV but kept her ordeal a secret, afraid to share her shame.

The mother to a four-year-old daughter lost contact with her husband, and eventually fled to Uganda in early 2012.

At another settlement for refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 27-year-old Farida reflects on some painful experiences over the

last year. “Back home [...] I was raped, but I only got assistance when I arrived at the refugee settlement here,” says the single parent to three children.

“Looking back now, I can say that today I feel valued and recognized from a local and international level. Because of the support I received here, I have become empowered and independent to the extent that I have managed to sustain my family since my husband died,” she adds.

The two women are among thousands whose lives have been scarred by rape and sexual and gender-based violence as a result of the conflict in the DRC. Millions have lost their lives since the conflict began in 1998. And, despite

the 2003 peace agreement formally ending the war, intermittent fighting between armed groups continues to claim more lives and displace tens of thousands internally and into neighboring countries. Recent resurgence of violence in the North Kivu province had pushed more than 66,000 Congolese into southwestern Uganda by the end of December 2013 (UNHCR).

But refugees also face the threat of gender-based violence in the host countries. “One day I asked a *boda-boda* (motorbike taxi) to take me to a [local] market outside the settlement so that I could buy vegetables to retail in the camp,” Shama recalls. “On the way back, as it was dark, the

bodaboda driver on reaching a bushy area, stopped and raped me. He threatened to kill me if I resisted or made an alarm.”

At Rwamwanja refugee camp, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is working with humanitarian partners including The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to support the refugees, who mostly include women and children.

Through its Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Uganda, the LWF provides community-based volunteer groups with skills on raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Greater Access to Counseling and Family Planning

Today, thanks to LWF training, Shama is a social worker at Rwamwanja refugee settlement. She helps women like Farida to access services such as family planning and counseling for HIV and AIDS at the camp's health center.

At Rwamwanja, home to over 50,000 refugees mainly from DRC, 142 cases of rape had been reported between January 2013 and January 2014. “We apply different psychosocial approaches to support the victims including individual counseling, encouraging round-the-table dialogues when a couple is involved, and involving parents or guardians when the victim is a minor,” says Betty Lamunu, monitoring and evaluation manager at LWF Uganda.

The LWF works with UNHCR and its partners in the global churches’



Most DRC refugees in camps southwestern Uganda are women and children. Photo: ACT/DCA/Mai Gad

network ACT Alliance to increase access to essential services such as food, water and sanitation, alternative livelihoods and food security, as well as conflict resolution and peace-building activities. It plans to provide more SGBV protection and community services in the settlement camp and in the host community.

Deterrent Measures in DRC

The UN refugee agency says its monitoring teams had registered 705 cases of sexual violence in eastern DRC between January and July 2013, including 619 cases of rape. UNHCR describes rape as a growing threat for women and girls, noting that recorded cases of sexual violence in North Kivu soared from 4,689 in 2011 to 7,075 in 2012, and many more are not reported.

“Fighting the rape phenomenon in DRC needs deterrent measures,

especially bringing the perpetrators to justice,” says Emile Mpanya, LWF representative in DRC.

He, however, notes that most court houses that can handle such cases are located far away from places where the abuse takes place. In addition, the victims do not have the means to move back and forth from their villages to the courts to follow their cases, explains Mpanya.

Pressure needs to be exerted on the DRC government, its army and also on all armed fighters who are the main perpetrators of the violence, the LWF representative stresses. He adds that the LWF collaborates with local organizations such as the *Dynamique des Femmes Juristes* lawyers’ network, which assists survivors of sexual violence coming from rural areas.

(Betty Lamunu, monitoring and evaluation manager at LWF Uganda contributed to this article)

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