

Lutheran World Information

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“Fast for the Climate” to Launch International Campaign

Press Conference in Paris in Front of French Parliament Building

PARIS, France/GENEVA (LWI) – A coalition of French religious and lay organizations will launch the monthly “Fast for the Climate” campaign – a global interfaith initiative spearheaded by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) – at a joint press conference in Paris on June 4.

The Fast for the Climate will take place on the first day of each month until December 2015 – when the United Nations climate conference (COP21) begins in Paris. It has grown into a global movement with the participation of youth, environmental and faith groups, who all want urgent action on climate change by governments this year.

The campaign was launched by the LWF together with many other global organizations on January 1, following an

initiative of the LWF delegation to COP 19 in Warsaw, Poland, in November. The delegation, which comprised young delegates from all LWF regions, was inspired by the plight of the Philippine delegate, Yeb Saño, whose own family was caught up in Typhoon Haiyan. In a moving speech, Saño, who will be a panelist at the Paris press conference, said he would not eat until countries at the Warsaw conference delivered actions that would “stop the madness.”

Lead Churches to Act

“This fast is an effective door-opener for the LWF. Through a practice that carries



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African Lutheran Churches Condemn Widespread Violence by Armed Groups in the Region

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Africa, have strongly condemned the widespread violence by militant groups in the region, and urged concerted global effort in ending the killings and abductions of civilians.



Participants of the 18-23 May 2014 LUCA meeting in Accra, Ghana.
Photo: LUCA

In a press release during the Lutheran Council in Africa (LUCA) meeting, 18-23 May, in the Ghanaian capital, representatives of LWF member churches also called upon faith communities to engage in interfaith dialogue in order to foster the spirit and culture of peaceful co-existence in Africa.

They affirmed that “Lutheran churches in Africa and their ecumenical allies will continue to pray for peace and work for justice in Africa and the whole world.”

Their statement underlined condemnation of all violence irrespective of the perpetrators, citing the Boko Haram group in Nigeria; Al Shabaab and its allies in East Africa; and Séléka and anti-Balaka militias in the Central African Republic. They urged the groups to desist from using violence as a weapon to air their grievances.

LUCA meetings bring together leaders of the 31 LWF member churches in Africa.

LUCA Press Release: www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/PressRelease_ACCRA-LUCA-May2014.pdf

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both a deep spiritual meaning and a strong symbolic message, the LWF can lead churches to act on climate change,” said Martin Kopp, who was part of the LWF delegation in Warsaw. “In France for instance, the fast is the first-ever common action on climate change of the three biggest Christian institutions. It serves as the first step of the ecumenical collaboration toward COP21, that will be held in Paris in late 2015.”

The hosts of the press conference, which will be held on a house boat facing the “Assemblée Nationale” are Chrétiens Unis pour la Terre, A Rocha France ; Bible et Création, Pax

Christi France, le Christianisme Social ; Justice, Paix et Sauvegarde de la Création-Alsace.

Panelists include Nicolas Hulot , Special Envoy for the Planet of the French President; François Clavairoly – Co-President of the Council of Christian Churches in France (CECEF) and President of the French Protestant Federation (FPF); and Tareq Oubrou, Great Imam of Bordeaux from the Great Mosque of Bordeaux.

Raising Awareness

“Fasting made climate change real for me, opened my eyes and brought me closer to my neighbors. This is one of the reasons why fasting once

a month is interesting: it raises one’s awareness on a regular basis and not only when extreme weather events happen,” Kopp said. “As long as you share your commitment around you, you help raising awareness about climate change. And that is, after all, what makes your fast matter.”

LWF members and staff from around world are taking part in the “Fast for the Climate,” as well as LWF council members during the Council meeting in Indonesia in June.

[Read more about the LWF and Fast for the Climate, and find out how to get involved: www.lutheranworld.org/fastfortheclimate](http://www.lutheranworld.org/fastfortheclimate)

Spiritual Community

Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue on the Ordination of Women

Pirita (Estonia)/Geneva (LWI) – From 8 to 13 May 2014, the Joint Commission for theological dialogue between The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Orthodox Church met in Tallinn, Estonia. The meeting took place on the invitation of the LWF and the Estonian Evangelical-Lutheran Church in St Bridget’s Convent in Pirita. Its purpose was to prepare for the 16th Joint Commission Plenary, and the meeting focused on the ordination of women. In this interview, Dr Jennifer Wasmuth, a theologian at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, talks about common and church-dividing standpoints and the difference between the universal and special priesthood.

Why did you choose such a controversial topic for your discussion?

Our dialogue with the representatives of the Orthodox churches from the start focused on certain issues and one of them is the question of ordained ministry. At earlier talks in Sibiu, Romania, we noted that the ordination of women is an important aspect of that topic, so we agreed to dedicate a separate preparatory meeting to it.

Where are the greatest differences in the issue of ordaining women?

The simple and crucial difference is that ordaining women is not recognized in Orthodox churches, while in most Lutheran churches it is not only recognized but already practiced.

What are the reasons for that?

That is a really interesting question. Men and women are created equal according to the Orthodox understanding as well—that was shown by the

dialogue in Tallinn. While there are also other viewpoints on the Orthodox side, Metropolitan Isaias expressly distanced himself from them in his paper.

Basically it is about different understandings of ministry: the Orthodox churches underline the holiness of ordained ministry. It is exercised by consecrated priests and they are successors of the twelve apostles called by Christ—all male. The Lutheran churches appeal to the priesthood of all baptized believers. While the ministry instituted by God



Dr Jennifer Wasmuth. Photo: Kenneth Appold

has a special position in our churches it is fundamentally open to all, men and women. Both churches, Orthodox and Lutheran, have a universal and a special priesthood. The difference is that, on the Orthodox side, the two understandings of ministry contrast with one another while, from the Lutheran angle, one is derived from, or understood in light of the other.

Where do you see starting points for a dialogue?

I see two different starting points: the **first** concerns the understanding of the universal and special priesthood that is present in both churches.

On the Orthodox side, it would be important to explain more exactly why the special priesthood may not be filled by women. In the conversation in Tallinn the historical fact was underlined that only men were called to be apostles. Dogmatically, the relationship was raised between Christology and theotokology (the teaching of Mary as the God-bearer -*theotokos*). It seemed to me that both these arguments called for more explanation: why is gender made the condition for following in the footsteps of the apostles today? For Paul and the Twelve Apostles it was just as essential to be of Jewish origin. Dogmatically we should ask whether Christ and the mother of God do not fundamentally change the gender relationship between Adam and Eve. Also, in Tallinn we did not talk about what in my opinion is also part of the

Orthodox background, namely an Old Testament understanding of priesthood and the related idea of cultic purity.

On the Lutheran side we have to clarify why the historical fact that only men were sent out as Apostles is no longer important to us. In addition, we should explain what constitutes the nature of apostolic ministry in the Lutheran understanding. We should also make it clear that, by contrast with the then “pagan” religions in which there were also priestesses, probably the only reason men were called to be apostles was that the early Christian congregations were of Jewish origin.

The **second** starting point is the ministry of woman deacon. In Tallinn, Father Chrysostomos gave a paper on this, explaining that the historical findings are by no means unambiguous. We must deepen our historical knowledge about the topic, on both sides, since the early church ministry of deacon, which women exercised as a sacred office, seems to be the closest point of contact with the Lutheran understanding of the ordination of women.

What was the outcome of the dialogue?

The outcome of the dialogue in Tallinn was sobering, as it is difficult to come closer on substantive issues. The question of women's ordination is regarded as church-dividing, at least from the Orthodox angle. The Orthodox side did not even dare to make an affirming statement about restoring the early church ministry of woman deacon. They

continue to be rooted in the cultural and social situation in their own churches. Consequently I think we on the Lutheran side have to think about whether progress in dialogue is to be expected at all.

On the other hand, there was an extremely friendly, even family feeling about the meeting of representatives of the two churches. The church-dividing factor of women's ordination was not evident at all, not even when it came to the Orthodox attendance at morning prayers on Saturday and the Lutheran service on Sunday, both occasions on which women played a “priestly” role. Consequently, although there was no ‘church fellowship’ in the strict sense, the encounter in Tallinn was filled with spiritual community which, in my opinion, was the most important thing. In the dialogue between the LWF and Panorthodoxy we should reflect on how to enable more of these ecumenical experiences in the Orthodox and Lutheran churches in future.

What agreement do you hope the 16th plenary of the Joint Commission will bring?

I hope that we from the Lutheran side will be able to present our position more clearly and understandably—naturally referring to the Orthodox arguments. Furthermore I hope that we will again experience the spiritual community that characterized our last meeting—even though the number of participants will be greater this time.

Women are Reforming the Church

Iceland's Bishop Guðmundsdóttir Reflects on her Leadership Journey

GENEVA (LWI) – Forty years ago Solveig Lára Guðmundsdóttir attended a worship service at the Reykjavík cathedral that changed her life.

It was the ordination service for Rev. Auður Eir Vilhjálmisdóttir, the first woman to be ordained in Iceland in 1,000 years of Christianity.

Guðmundsdóttir, now a bishop in the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Iceland, was touched to witness the

historic ordination of her classmate's mother.

“I was thrilled. I didn't want to miss that historic event although I wasn't much of a church goer at the time,” Guðmundsdóttir recalled in addressing the Women in Church and Society (WICAS) network regional conference at Meissen, Germany, 12-16 May.

“A woman could be an ordained minister in the church. That meant for

me that a woman could do anything. This ordination service changed my life. Two years later this minister's daughter and I both enrolled in the department of theology at the University of Iceland,” the bishop said.

Four years later, Vilhjálmisdóttir, still the only ordained woman in the church, introduced the female theology students to the work of the women's desks of The Lutheran World Federa-

tion (LWF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), urging them to form a feminist theologians group.

“For me, this was a dream come true. I was able to combine my interest in theology and my women’s rights,” said Bishop Guðmundsdóttir, who was elected bishop in 2012 and now heads the North Icelandic bishopric Hólar.

The bishop was speaking to one of a series of regional WICAS conferences focusing on Women in the Ongoing Reformation and the LWF Gender Justice Policy.

Over the years of her formation as a minister and bishop in the Icelandic church, Guðmundsdóttir’s journey was nurtured by the group of feminist theologians, and guided by the groundbreaking work of the LWF and WCC women’s desks.

“We read feminist theology together, we wrote new liturgies, we travelled together, and invited people to meet with us, both from our country and from abroad.”

They began to ask critical questions: How can we learn to understand Christian service as a mutual responsibility of women and men? How can women be encouraged to take leadership roles in the church? How can congregations served by female pastors enrich the discussion on the ordination of women?

They were guided by women such as American theologian Constance Parvey, who worked for the WCC, and Musimbi Kanyoro, Nicole Fischer and Lone Fatum of the LWF.

“The work of the women’s desks both at WCC and LWF had a remarkable effect in Iceland and had great influence on the feminist theology group. It has affected the life and work of all of us who took part in the work of the group.”



Bishop Guðmundsdóttir (third from right) and other participants of the European WICAS conference in Meissen. Photo: LWF/E. Neuenfeldt

“We considered ourselves devoted disciples of the LWF as we worked a pioneering job in feminist theology in Iceland,” Guðmundsdóttir added.

The LWF women’s desk was instituted in 1970 and in 1984 the LWF ensured that at least 40 percent of participants at assemblies would be women. The bishop noted that the LWF’s will was clear, though it has not been an easy journey.

“They wanted equal rights, but the ‘problem’ was that in many churches there were no ‘qualified women’. In my opinion that was just an excuse from the churches. The men wanted to hold on to their power and did not have the courage to hand it over to women on such a great scale.

“So the LWF decided: We will get them qualified,” she said.

The LWF International Young Women’s Leadership Program brought together 50 women from all over the world and Guðmundsdóttir commented that she was “incredibly fortunate to be selected by my church to take part in this program.”

In the lead up to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017, WICAS has been reflecting on the role of women in the reformation of the church. Bishop Guðmundsdóttir said that women have been reforming the church in Iceland for decades.

“Although we have had women in ordained ministry in the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Iceland almost 40 years now, we have had to wait a long time to have female bishops. In 2012, two out of three bishops in Iceland retired and everybody agreed that now was the time for a female bishop.

“To everybody’s surprise both positions were filled with women, so now we have 66 percent female bishops in Iceland. To our own surprise, both of us now serving as bishops in Iceland come from our old feminist theology group.

“We are ... reforming the church,” says Guðmundsdóttir.

More on WICAS: www.lutheranworld.org/content/women-church-and-society

Pope Francis Prayed at the Separation Wall

LWF President Reflects on Pope Francis’ Visit to the Middle East

EAST JERUSALEM/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan

was among the delegation of church leaders who accompanied Pope Francis during his three-day visit to

the Middle East from 24-26 May. The pontiff attended more than 30 events in Jordan, Palestine and Israel, and on

Sunday secured a promise from Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to meet with him at the Vatican in June to pray together and talk peace.

“Here, at the birthplace of the Prince of Peace, I wish to invite you to join me in heartfelt prayer to God for the gift of peace. I offer my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer,” he said.

In his speech to Peres and the Israeli government, the pope also stated: “building peace is difficult, but living without peace is a constant torment.”

Following the visit, Younan, who is Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, reflected on Pope Francis’ meeting with the Palestinian Authority and particularly the mass that was held in the Manger Square.

The mass gave the Palestinian people—“both Christians and Muslims a feeling of hope. To see that the President, the Prime Minister, the Ministers, Heads of Churches, all of these people attending, with locals, with people from Galilee, with people from all over the world—over 10,000 people in the Manger Square—raised the morale of the Palestinian people,” Younan said. “While we are under occupation, we need a leader to show that the world is listening and hearing us and I believe that Pope Francis showed this to our people.”

During the visit, Younan said, the pontiff called for a two-state solution with each state having internationally-

recognized borders. This call echoes the LWF Council resolution from June 2013 on the relation between Israel and Palestine. The resolution called upon LWF member churches to advocate for a halt to “expansion and creation of settlements” and for an immediate resumption of peace talks that should lead to resolving the final status question about the conflict, end the occupation, and enable a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel, with peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

As well as visiting key sacred places in the old City of Jerusalem such as the Al Aqsa mosque compound and the Dome of the Rock, the pope stopped to pray in Bethlehem at a section of the Separation Wall near Rachel’s Tomb.

Younan stressed the importance of the pontiff not only meeting officials during his visit but being exposed to the reality of the people. “The reality is that there is a wall that separates Palestinians and Israelis, Palestinians and Palestinians, and Palestinians from their land,” Younan said. “Pope Francis, I believe, prayed that this wall would no longer exist and I say this prayer with him. And I hope that all people of good conscience would pray with him that this wall would no longer exist, that this wall of hatred would fall and become a bridge of justice and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis alike.”

“The Pope understood the complexity of the situation, especially when speaking with Palestinian families during a lunchtime visit in Bethlehem,”

Younan said. “It is important to me that the Pope saw the issues that the Palestinian people are dealing with.”

Younan also appreciated Pope Francis’ words to the Christian population in the Middle East during his visit. “Pope Francis said very clearly that the Christians who have been witnessing in the Middle East for over 2,000 years in sometimes difficult situations are important, they play integral roles in their societies, and that their role in this part of the world should not be overlooked,” Younan said. “I believe this gives even more importance to supporting Arab Christians who are witnessing in the Middle East.”

Younan also underlined the ecumenical importance of the pope’s visit. “In the Holy Sepulcher, the meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch has given a boost to ecumenism in Jerusalem. In Jordan, King Abdullah II gave a speech on Muslim-Christian relationships and the importance of Jordan’s role in facilitating those relationships. At the Haram esh-Shariff, this spirit of mutual trust was on full display in the meeting between Pope Francis and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. It has given a boost to Muslim-Christian relations and I hope this meeting will help to overcome Islamophobia around the world. At the same time, I hope that the meeting between Pope Francis and the two chief Rabbis of Israel on the Jewish side, will help in the fight against anti-Semitism as well as give a boost to Christian-Jewish relations,” Younan said.

LWF President Younan to Join Pope Francis in Prayer at the Vatican on Pentecost Sunday

Calls on all Lutherans to Pray for Peace in the Middle East

EAST JERUSALEM / GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan has called on Lutherans from around the world to join him in praying with Pope Francis, Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority Presi-

dent Mahmoud Abbas for peace in the Middle East on Pentecost Sunday.

During his visit to Jordan, Palestine and Israel last month, Pope Francis secured a promise from Peres and Abbas to meet with him at the Vatican to pray together for peace on 8 June. Younan,

also Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is the only non-Catholic leader from Jerusalem invited to be part of the delegation.

“I believe it’s prayer that can change our world and this is the reason that I would say very clearly that, as the Pope is



WLF President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan. © Servizio Fotografico "L'Osservatore Romano"

praying with Jewish chief rabbis, with the Muslim mufti of Jerusalem, with some of us Christian leaders there, as well as with Mr Peres and Mr Abbas, I would ask all the Lutherans in the world to support us in their prayers during Sunday services that God will change the minds of people towards peace," Younan said.

He underlined the importance of the LWF not only in joining him in prayers at the Vatican but also the fact that "for more than a quarter of a century, the communion has made decisions that only support peace based on justice for both peoples."

The LWF Council resolution from June 2013 called upon member church-

es to advocate for a halt to "expansion and creation of settlements." The Council also urged an immediate resumption of peace talks that should lead to resolving the final status question about the conflict, end the occupation, and enable a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel, with peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

"For me, when I go to pray as a Bishop of my church, I am emphasizing the role of my church in building peace in this country, either through education, through interfaith dialogue, or through our reconciliation ministry," Younan said.

"At the same time, I know that I have a communion behind me that

is serious to see a change in the current situation." Referring to the 142 member churches of the Lutheran communion, he added, "They believe in justice for this country. They want both nations to live side-by-side, with their own states, on 1967 borders, with peace and justice and reconciliation and equality. And they want to see that Jerusalem is a shared city between three religions and two nations. When I go to the Vatican, I know that I'm not alone."

During his 24-26 May visit to the Middle East, Pope Francis visited key sacred places in the old City of Jerusalem and stopped to pray in Bethlehem at a section of the Separation Wall.

"For me, what the Pope has done is very symbolic and it's very important. It's very important that there was a Muslim and a Jew with the pope coming here. That we, religious leaders, maybe cannot bring peace to the Middle East, but we can pray and we can be prophetic in speaking out for justice," Younan said. "Peace based on justice won't come without religious leaders. We have a role to teach our people: to love the neighbor, so that Israelis will see the image of God in me, a Palestinian, and that I will see the image of God in the Israeli."

Lutherans in Crimea to Decide their Church Affiliation

Ukrainian Church Offers Continued Supervision

TBILISSI, Georgia/ GENEVA (LWI) – The episcopal supervision and pastoral care of the seven Lutheran congregations on the Crimea peninsula will remain with the Ukrainian Church, officially registered as the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ukraine (GELCU). This was stated in a letter addressed to Lutheran congregations in Crimea following a meeting of the Bishop's Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Russia and Other States (ELCROS) from 7-9 May 2014 in Tbilissi, Georgia.

ELCROS is a federation of Lutheran churches in the former Soviet Union, among them GELCU and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the European part of Russia (ELKER).

After a referendum on 16 March 2014 rendered Crimea to the Russian Federation, the Lutheran congregations on Crimea found themselves

under Russia political jurisdiction. This raised the question of whether they would remain under the pastoral care of GELCU which has congregations in all the Ukraine or join ELKER, which supervises Lutherans in Russia.

According to GELCU bishop Serge Maschewski the congregations expressed the wish to remain under the episcopal supervision of the Ukrainian church.

“Situation Quiet Enough”

The congregations are however free to change their affiliation to another church, says the letter which has been jointly signed by ELKER bishop Dietrich Brauer and GELCU bishop Serge Maschewski: “We respect the decision of each congregation concerning their future affiliation with another church.

As Crimean congregations under the new political administration are required to register anew, they would choose their church affiliation in the process as well, Maschewski explains. Both churches have offered assistance in the legal proceedings. “I am confident that with the help of our lawyers we will be able to solve all legal issues pertaining to the new situation,” Maschewski stated in an interview *with Lutheran World Information (LWI)*.

He also mentioned that the local pastor of those seven congregations is back on Crimea after he left the country

during the civil unrest. “Pastor Göring and deaconess Donetzkaja are at work as before, serving the congregations on Crimea”, he said. “Church events are taking place especially in diakonia and working with young people.”

“The situation is quiet enough. There is worship, bible studies, house calls etc. The people of Crimea are confronted with many new and different bureaucratic tasks, concerning the reception (or lack of reception) of identity cards and other legal documents.” Maschewski added.

Preserve Spiritual Unity

“We in ELKER are in full episcopal communion with GELCU, we are both part of the ELCROS federation”, Rev. Dr. Elena Bondarenko, dean of ELKER, says.

“The most important thing for us now are these congregations. We stay in dialogue with the Ukrainian church

GELCU. We pray for peace and hope that our communion with the Lutheran Church in the Ukraine can contribute to this peace, even though the situation in the Ukraine is extremely complicated.” Dean Bondarenko adds.

In their letter to the congregations, both bishops emphasize the aim to “preserve spiritual unity and an adequate pastoral care for our church members”.

“Considering recent events which led to a change of political and juridical facts in our countries“ both churches promised to assist the congregations in the necessary formalities with the new Russian authorities.

Strong Witness

Emphasizing on centuries of a “common history” as one church, they assure each other of full support in all matters pertaining to the new situation. “In spite of changes in the political life of our countries, we remain in spiritual and church communion”, the letter states.

“We recognize the strength of the recently formed ELCROS federation to join together in these difficult moments to support one another. They give a strong witness of our Christian faith in public”, Rev. Dr. Eva-Sybille Vogel-Mfato, The Lutheran World Federation Area Secretary Europe, says.

“Not knowing which choices the congregations will take, or will be able to take, they need to know that they will continue to be part of the LWF global communion of churches, which is praying for them and accompanying them.” Rev. Vogel-Mfato adds.



Bishop Serge Maschewski with members of the congregation in Simferopol.
Photo: GELCU/Jevgenija Donetzkaja

Keeping Hope Alive for Africa’s Poor

Land Insecurity and Climate Change Linked to Poverty

ACCRA, Ghana/ GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran church leaders and diaconal actors from across Africa have called for renewed efforts to keep hope alive for Africa’s poor.

Meeting at Accra, Ghana, 15-18 May, 48 members of the Lutheran

World Federation (LWF) Task Force on Poverty in Africa, diaconal actors from the LWF member churches in Africa and youth said that while hope is fading among the poor, the church must continue to raise concerns about poverty.

Presiding Bishop Paul Fynn of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ghana challenged participants to ask themselves what they can do to alleviate poverty, stressing that church programs must be designed to address



Council member Elijah Zina (second from right) discusses topics for the COP 20 meeting in Paris with a group of Youth delegates. Photo: Moses Aboka/ALCINET

the issue. “We must approach the poor with the right hand,” Fynn said.

Geoffrey Kalugendo of Tanzania, a member of the anti-poverty task force set up in 2007, said church programs need to be adapted to attack new poverty trends such as poor wage bill levels, inflation, the commercialization of friendship and the diminishing of hope for the unemployed.

Theology of Promoting Agriculture

The church leaders and activists gathered under the auspices of the Lutheran Communion in Africa for one of a series of sessions on Regional Training on Advocacy on Contemporary Issues in Poverty and Economic Justice in Africa. In parallel, the LWF Youth Advocacy Training on ecological and economic justice took place with 13 participants from 10 African member churches.

The meeting was organized by the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) to focus on land rights and climate change advocacy, and help member churches in the African region to engage on such issues alongside ecumenical and civil society partners and the marginalized.

Participants came from Nigeria, Malawi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Madagascar, Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana.

Zimbabwean Bongi Baker noted that the 2000 land reform in her country was poorly resourced, extremely slow and involved illegal occupations. She said the Zimbabwe Evangelical Lutheran Church has called for a theology of the land that promotes agriculture as a viable option.

Rev. Anicet Maganya of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania’s advocacy desk said her church was working with government and other

officials in seeking land justice and sustainability in the country.

Sustainable Human Development

In calling for action to create awareness on development issues in Africa, Rev. Dr Elieshi Ayo Mungure, LWF Area Secretary for Africa, stressed that climate change is putting the livelihood of Africans at risk.

The role of the church is to promote sustainable human development that enhances people’s lives and the environment, added Dr Abeya Fufa Wakwoya of the Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus’ development and social services arm.

For that reason his church is active on issues such as food security, emergency relief, nutrition, climate change, natural resources management and renewal energy, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene.

Archibon Mfonobong, national youth president of Nigeria, pointed out that the decline in agricultural productivity in his country was linked to ecological issues such as unpredictable weather, deforestation and flooding.

In hearing descriptions of the irregular weather and its devastating effects on the economy, people and livestock across the African continent, including torrential rains, deforestation, soil erosion and food shortages, the participants pledged to utilize the resources of the churches to counter climate change.

Guyanese Church Secretary Goolsarran Reflects on the Reformation, Challenges Facing the ELCG

Planting Trees as a Living Memorial to the Beginning of the Reformation

WITTENBERG, Germany/GENEVA (LWI) – During a recent visit to Geneva, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana (ELCG) Secretary Samuel Jerry Goolsarran

spoke about the importance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, planting a tree in commemoration, and the challenges his small

church faces today in training enough pastors and being relevant in society.

The ELCG secretary also planted a tree at the Luther Garden in Wit-

tenberg, Germany on 10 June, joining other church representatives who plant trees in the park, leading up to the celebrations in 2017.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has set a goal of planting 500 trees in the park and around the town to commemorate the anniversary of the Reformation, when on 31 October 1517 Martin Luther nailed his theses on the church door in Lutherstadt, Wittenberg. Churches of all denominations from all over the world are also invited to become “godparents” to one of the trees in Wittenberg and to plant a second tree in the area of their home parish.

“We want to re-identify that we are long-standing members of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and we are happy to be connected with this great historical event in solidarity with the Lutheran world communion,” Goolsarran said. “We are only instruments in planting the seed and the Holy Spirit does the rest.”

The Guyanese Lutheran church was initiated in 1743, when a group of Dutch colonists assembled at the home of Lodewyk Abbensetts to start a church at Fort Nassau. Nine years later it received its first pastor, Johan Henrik Faerkenius, and constructed a sanctuary. A Guyanese pastor represented the church at the 1947 founding Assembly of the LWF. In 1950 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in then British Guiana was received into LWF membership.

Goolsarran said challenges the ELCG faces in proclaiming the gospel in the Caribbean country today include a shortage of pastors in full-time ministry and keeping young people engaged in the church.

With 16,000 to 17,000 members, “in terms of resources—dedicated pastors in full-time ministry—we are really stretched out in keeping the services and Sunday activities going,” he said. “We really need about 20 full-time pastors and we only have nine, and 13

deacons. We have created a situation where we are training them locally as we do not have the resources to send them abroad.” Migration has also had an impact on the number of pastors as “large numbers of our clergy are working in North America,” he added.

“On any Sunday, you will find a strong lay leadership in the church and half the congregations are lay people and that has been the case for many years,” Goolsarran said.

The ELCG is the first Christian denomination in Guyana to embark on local training for its members to become pastors and deacons. It is promoting a new model of being church by including in the pastoral ministry ordained pastors and deacons. The ELCG Lutheran Lay Academy (LLA), launched in 2005, offers a two-year program with pastors serving as lecturers and resource persons for biblical studies, church history, homiletics, worship and liturgy. External experts in theology provide additional support.

In Guyana, “evangelism needs to be revitalized to reach out to the communities, children and young people and to keep the youth in Sunday school ministry,” Goolsarran said. “There is a lot of competition for the time of young people these days from TV to the internet and all these gadgets that we have around and the attraction of modern society life.”

“The main challenge for us is to get the gospel out, to bring in the people to plant the seeds so that the Holy Spirit can work to bring them into church,” he added.

More about the Luther Garden:

www.luther2017.com/en/orte/luther-garden-in-wittenberg



ELCG Secretary Samuel Jerry Goolsarran plants a tree at the Luther Garden in Wittenberg, Germany, on 10 June. Photo: LWF Center in Wittenberg/Annette Glaubig

Indian Churches Plan Network of Female Lawyers

Council advisor Busi Suneel About Actions to Address Violence Against Women

GENEVA (LWI) – Starting a network of female lawyers assisting victims of gender-based violence is but one of the actions taken by Lutherans in India for the implementation of the LWF

gender justice policy. Bishop Prof Busi Suneel Bhanu of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College in Kilpauk, India reports that the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELICI) have

increased their initiatives to overcome violence against women.

Triggered by public protests following the death of a student who was gang-raped in December 2012, churches

engaged in the debate on the rights and protection of women. In a letter to the UELCI, which groups LWF member churches in India, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge had encouraged the churches to support civil society in the “courageous step” towards the deep transformation so that situations such as the one experienced by the young woman “are eradicated forever.”

“Civil society and the churches made an appeal to the government.” Bishop Bhanu recalls. “The courts had already come up with certain guidelines to protect women. After that case, the courts have actually enacted a law.”



Bishop Bhanu. Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

Raising Awareness

Even though Christian churches in India had advocated for women’s rights for more than a decade, the student’s tragic death raised a new awareness, Bishop Bhanu explains. “In India, traditionally a woman is considered an object of pleasure; her dignity is below the dignity of a man.”

Being a dean at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, the national seminary training future pastors, Suneel is working with the objective to introduce the LWF Gender Justice Policy “to the people in the pews”.

“It was distributed to all the church leaders and we have asked them to translate this into the regional languages,” he said. As most rural congregations would not read the English version, pastors were encouraged to use their own words and the local language when talking about women’s rights, including gender justice in sermons, formal church gatherings and local meetings.

“It has to trickle down to the masses,” Bishop Bahnu emphasized. “I’m glad that some of our pastors are quite aware of these arguments and they bring information as well as awareness and advocacy to the pews”.

“Theologize the Law”

Gender justice is not just a civil and human right, but also deeply rooted in the Bible, Bishop Bahnu points out. “Jesus was always trying to bring dignity of life to those deprived of it.”

This “theologized enactment of the law,” as Bishop Bahnu calls it, is being discussed in courses with pastors from all parts of the country.

“Once in a while we invite them back to our seminary for three days and try to discuss with them things that are happening in civil society and the responsibility of the churches.”

The main project of the seminary however is a network of female lawyers.

“We thought about a national consultation bringing together women lawyers especially from Christian churches, but also selected lawyers from other faiths, highlighting the possibility of networking” Bishop Bahnu explains.

This network would have a division in all major Indian towns and provide support and legal assistance to victims of gender-based violence. The consultation is planned to take place in early 2015.

The list consists of 30 names, but the Professor expects the numbers to rise significantly once the consultation is being advertised on regional levels. “Implementing women’s rights takes a lot of time, India is a very traditional society”, Bishop Bahnu says. “But we are really looking forward to making this a reality.”

Chile: LWF Vice-President Rojas Appointed Chaplain to Presidential Palace

Creative Witness of the Church

SANTIAGO, Chile/ GENEVA, 22 May 2014 (LWI) – LWF Vice President Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas Vargas has been appointed chaplain to the presidential palace in Chile.

The appointment was issued by Chile President Michelle Bachelet on 14 May.

Rev. Rojas was the first woman ordained into the pastoral ministry of

the IELC in 1985. She later became the first female President of the Church in 2001 – 2011. At a regional level, she was the first female leader that took on

the role of moderator of the Bishops and Presidents Conference of LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. She is the first female LWF Vice-President of the region.

As chaplain to the Palace La Moneda, the seat of the Government of the Republic of Chile, Dr Vargas will be responsible for the pastoral care of the palace employees and the organization of worship services.

Since 1999 a law granted equal legal status to all churches and religions registered in Chile. As part of the implementation of that law, the govern-

ment has instituted a Roman Catholic and an evangelical chaplaincy for the presidential palace. Of Chile's 16 million people, approximately 17 percent are Protestants. The IELC has 3,000 members and is served by 13 pastors, who are also engaged in social ministry and inter-religious dialogue.

“Peace and Justice for All”

In announcing the appointment of Vargas as chaplain to the presidential palace, the President of the IELC Rev. Luis Jorge Alvarez, said the church is

praying that Dr Vargas' pastoral work and prayers will rise like incense to the heavens.

“Our joy and prayer as Protestant and evangelical people, will accompany our sister pastor in the prophetic words of peace and justice for all who dwell in or come to our homeland, without exclusion or discrimination,” Alvarez said.

LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan expressed “pride and great joy” at the appointment of Rev. Rojas. Younan said that the position was well deserved, and reminded him of the words of St. Paul, who said, (1 Cor. 12:26): “If one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.”

“Your appointment is but another assurance that the strength of the Church is nether in its numbers nor in its size, but the strength of the Church of God is the holistic witness to our Lord Jesus Christ that we carry in our societies,” Younan said.

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELC) is a vivid example of that creative witness in which it serves its society” the LWF president noted.

Yunan concluded: “Our Lutheran communion will pray for you and your ministry, so that God may give you strength and wisdom for this demanding ministry.”



Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas Vargas during the 2013 LWF Council meeting.
Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

Costa Rican Bishop Joins Government

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Costa Rica (ILCO) has expressed its joy over the appointment of its president, Bishop Melvin Jimenez, as prime minister in the new Costa Rican government following elections that concluded in April.

ILCO executive director, Rev. Carlos Bonilla P. Avendaño expressed his expectation that the appointment of Bishop Jimenez will help promote social justice, dialogue, consensus-building and the defence of human rights in the new government.

Jimenez was consecrated as Costa Rica's first Lutheran bishop in 2008. Ordained in 1990, he has been a youth leader and a passionate defender of ethical and Christian education. Since 2000 he has been president of the church. Bishop Jimenez is regarded in his region as a church leader speaking up for the marginalized and oppressed.

From 2008 to 2011 Jimenez served as the moderator of the bishops and presidents of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Latin America. The ILCO has 1387 members in 30 communities throughout the Central American country.

While losing the bishop's experience, knowledge and wisdom, Rev. C. Bonilla said he hoped that Jimenez' presence in the government will be reflected in policies that favour minorities and disadvantaged populations.

The church's board has accepted Jimenez's resignation and granted him a leave of absence while he serves in the government and given him its full support. In his absence the church will continue its restructuring that began two years ago with the assistance of the LWF's sustainability program.

Rev. C. Bonilla added that the ILCO is at a kairós moment. “Today, God call us to further deepen the path begun by Bishop Jimenez – building a church of Lutheran identity that is clear and deep, and a church of the poor and excluded, and a reformed church in permanent transformation, nurturing and nourishing the global Lutheran communion,” he concluded.

LWF Intervention in Jordan Engages Syrian Refugees in Peace Building

Interview with Bavarian Delegation Visiting Za'atri Camp and Al Mafraq Communities

AMMAN, Jordan/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continues assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan through initiatives for peace building and reconciliation in Za'atri camp, and social cohesion and economic empowerment activities among the host communities. Such intervention is made possible by strong support from LWF's partners including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELKB), Germany.

In May, Rev. Michael Martin, ELKB director for ecumenism and church life led a delegation to Za'atri refugee camp and Al Mafraq in the north, where the LWF is assisting both Syrians and Jordanians in a context of interfaith collaboration between Christians and Muslims. In this interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, Martin shares impressions about LWF's work in Jordan.

LWI: Since the LWF began assisting Syrian refugees in Jordan, ELKB has maintained its strong support. What is the rationale for your assistance to refugees in the camp and in the host communities?

Firstly, ELKB works in a two-pronged approach:

Inside Germany, our social service (diakonia) work includes support to migrants coming from Syria. We promote the peaceful integration of refugees into Bavarian society.

We are also engaged in ecumenical cooperation globally. As part of our support to Syrian refugees, our partners in Lebanon include CAPNI (Christian Aid Program Northern Iraq) and the foundation "Wings of Hope," which is specialized in trauma therapy and working in a refugee camp near Dohuk northern Iraq. Therefore, there is a connection between our support to refugees in Iraq and LWF's intervention in Za'atri refugee camp. Father Emmanuel Youkhana from



Rev. Michael Martin shares a tin of sweets with a Syrian family at the Za'atri refugee camp. Photo: LWF Jordan/E. Gano

the Apostolic Church of the East (Assyrian Church) joined us on the visit in order to provide a comparative analysis of the situation and approach.

The ELKB partnership with the LWF goes back to LWF's founding—more than 65 years. We have continued to strengthen these links around the world by supporting LWF's emergency work. We wanted to intervene and help Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. LWF (World Service) is the only humanitarian organization in the Lutheran communion family working in Jordan, and we feel very much attached to your work there. We have had good experiences with the emergency response mechanisms through the ACT appeals and the associated reporting, which all resonate well with our strategy for global humanitarian response.

What was your perception of the psychosocial and trauma counseling work that the LWF is providing in the camps and the support to host communities?

First of all, what the LWF is doing at Za'atri camp falls in the first level of community-based psychosocial support: involving group approach, and not trauma counseling which would imply a one-on-one approach.

LWF works in the area of non-violent communication, and through the "Peace Oasis" project (inside Za'atri) offers a unique setting as the only agency in the camp that is providing this kind of service for Syrian refugees. This project comprises group sessions which offer free space for learning among boys and girls (organized in separate groups); opportunities for young people in different age groups to exercise the capacity to express their emotions; activities to engage with one's neighbors in a non-violent way; space to become more balanced emotionally, and to engage actively in peace building, conflict mitigation and reconciliation. We appreciate this approach, and found it very relevant for the context.

The Peace Oasis project also relates to other aspects of LWF's work among the refugees and their hosts, including sports facilities at the refugee camp. There is also a strong connection to the economic empowerment project in Al Mafraq that engages the refugees and host communities in preparing meals for groups in a communal kitchen operated by Syrian and Jordanian women, as well other income-generating activities. Such approaches single out the relevance and importance of LWF's work.

Overall, what are your impressions about the quality of services the LWF is providing to the refugees in the host communities and in the camp?

The quality of services is high, and we appreciate the way the work is implemented. For example, we learned that Ms Wejdan Jarrah, team leader of the Peace Oasis project and other staff members train qualified Syrian refugees to conduct the peace-building training sessions among the refugees.

This is an important approach in working with the refugees.

We left Jordan with a strong affirmation of ELKB's commitment to continue supporting LWF's humanitarian intervention as necessary. What we saw encouraged us further and we are looking into possibilities of facilitating technical exchanges between staff of the Peace Oasis project and CAPNI in Iraq, our partner for 20 years, in order to learn from each other.

We have also observed very good team work, constructive and flat hierarchies and good communication—which facilitate the successful implementation of a demanding, program in challenging circumstances.

(Kirchenrat Thomas Prieto Peral, ELKB coordinator for ecumenism, migrants and development, and Fr Emmanuel Youkhana accompanied Rev. Michael Martin on the 8-9 May visit to the LWF program in Jordan.)

Finding Refuge in Central African Lutheran Church

LWF Member Church Needs More Assistance for Civilians Caught in CAR Crisis

BANGUI, Central African Republic /GENEVA (LWI) – It is Sunday evening at the St Timothy Lutheran Church in Bangui, and the main gate to the stone-walled compound is locked. Inside the poorly lit compound, different activities are going on: children running around playing; small groups of young people gathered under two largely empty tarpaulin tents, a woman stoking an open fire as she prepares a family meal, and some mothers with children standing near the church door.

At the parsonage, the parish pastor Rev. Paul Denou and a few people are seated under a thatched reception area, engaged in a lively discussion on the differences between an internally displaced person (IDP) and a refugee. “And does it matter in the end, whether you are here or outside the country? The fact is, you have been driven out of your home,” says Mr Jean Georges Haman, somewhat concluding the debate.

A retired police commissioner, Haman, 65, and six members of his family have been living at the Bangui parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of CAR (EEL-RCA) since December 2013 after armed groups raided their home in the capital's Fondo neighborhood. “We fled with nothing but the clothes on our back,” he recalls. All together, 17 members of his family were displaced during the attack. None of them has been able to go back home, as many houses there were destroyed and looted, and armed

militia groups allied to the Séléka rebels or retaliating anti-Balaka groups continue perpetrating violence including kidnappings, torture and killings.

Haman is among the 120 displaced persons currently living at St Timothy Lutheran parish, some 500 meters opposite the M'Poko International Airport. In Bangui, more than 142,000 IDPs have sought refuge in church buildings, mosques, open fields near the airport and other sites, as well as with host families.

“At the height of the crisis in December this place was overcrowded,” Denou says, gesturing towards the now largely empty tents that he says accommodated up to 1,800 people, from all sections of the capital. Despite the church being a place of refuge, it has not been spared of armed attacks, the Lutheran pastor says, showing a bullet hole on the side of his bedroom window, after an armed group scaled over the compound wall on 23 February. “They ransacked the house, took away money, TV screen, church motorcycle, a child's bicycle ... anything they could carry. But luckily, no one was killed.”

Many of those who have opted to continue staying here support each other in creating a conducive living environment while struggling to provide for themselves and their families. Assistance received from local and international non-governmental organizations has dwindled, the Lutheran pastor says, as many IDPs mainly join the growing number of refugees in

neighboring countries. “How can we make it without this solidarity? There is very little help coming in nowadays,” he adds.

“With no formal security in place, or other assistance, we organize ourselves in teams that make the parish compound function in an orderly manner,” Denou notes. Angèle Vanguéré, a volunteer, explains her work in the hygiene and sanitation team at the Lutheran site. “As the person in charge of displaced women, I make sure the little water available is distributed well, that the latrines are clean, look out for those who are sick and refer them to hospital, and support the others in keeping the place clean.”

Inside the church: women, men, children and young people, are seated alone or in groups on pews, cardboards, light sleeping mats or the few mattresses on the floor, under mosquito nets or quietly alone in a corner. Behind one of the pillars, Armelle Kagale spreads out a sleeping mat as she pushes aside a big basin packed with small blue polythene bags, each containing pieces of charcoal, weighing around 500 grams. She buys in bulk and retails at about 750 CFA francs (1.50 USD). Recently diagnosed with tuberculosis, Kagale says she doesn't know how she will buy medication, as she can hardly feed herself with what she makes in a day.

Near the church altar, Ruth Nambeyam cuddles her five year-old son Michel Biro, his sister Esther Yvele,



Internally displaced mother Naomie Komessé, inside St Timothy Lutheran Church in CAR's capital, Bangui.
Photo: LWF/P. Mumia

seven, standing silently beside, occasionally touching her brother. The boy had been hospitalized recently because of malnutrition. Vanguéré reassures the mother: the church team will support her in getting the prescribed treatment. But it is difficult, since some of the non-governmental organizations that were providing free treatment in the city closed down because of insecurity.

Seated on another church pew with bags containing her few belongings, Naomie Komessé takes in the scene around her: clothes airing on pews, slippers strewn across the floor, cooking utensils, water bottles in a plastic bucket, several mosquito nets secured across the pews, and more. She doesn't say much. She nods, for now she is secure here.

Back at the reception area, pastor Denou and the security team discuss

the deteriorating security situation, and the growing fear and uncertainty for civilians, since political tensions in December 2012 peaked to widespread attacks by groups linked to the Séleka rebels and subsequent retaliations by the anti-Balaka militia groups. "Who would have thought it could ever come to this?" the Lutheran pastor asks. "We have always lived peacefully side by side—Muslims, Christians and other faiths," he adds.

At the church headquarters in Bouar, some 400 kilometers northwest of the capital, EEL-RCA vice-president Rev. Jean Gbani emphasized the overwhelming need for assistance to civilians and urgency for dialogue in order to get out of the current impasse. "Everyone is affected by this crisis. We have lost a lot and people live in fear of

more attacks," he said during a meeting with staff from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) emergency team in CAR.

Gbani explained that the Lutheran church and leaders from the Muslim and other Christian communities have formed an interfaith peace platform to encourage communities to work together to end the violence and restore peace in the country.

"Religious communities play an important role in restoring peace in the Central African Republic. We will continue building on this collaboration with the Lutheran church in order to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by this crisis irrespective of their faith affiliation," adds Serena Badenhurst, leader of the LWF emergency team in CAR.

With support from the LWF and its partners in the ACT Alliance network, EEL-RCA has been providing food items to thousands of IDPs in Ouham Péné and Nana Mambéré, and in the parish in Bangui. Assistance by the LWF emergency program to displaced populations in the northwestern prefectures includes non-food items to restore food security and access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, CAR had registered more than 560,000 IDPs and nearly 350,000 refugees by 15 May. An estimated 2.5 million people (54 percent of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance.

(Interviews for the feature story were conducted in May during visits by the LWF emergency team members in CAR.)

Food Insecurity in South Sudan, as LWF Seeks More Financial Support for Intervention

Poor Response to Funding Appeals for Refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda

JUBA, South Sudan/GENEVA (LWI) – Since the December 2013 outbreak of violence in South Sudan, food insecurity has deteriorated at an alarming rate in the three conflict-affected states of Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile, leaving farmers unable to sow or harvest their crops and herders prevented from migrating between grazing areas.

Despite recent ceasefire agreements between the government and rebel group, humanitarian access remains difficult for communities supported by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Maban, (Upper Nile State), Ajuong Thok, (Unity State) and Bor and Twic East (Jonglei State) counties.

An estimated 3.9 million people in South Sudan are experiencing emergency levels of food insecurity, according to the World Food Program (WFP), with a high risk of famine for some parts of the country in the coming months if urgent supplies do not get through. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 1.5 million people have been displaced in the conflict affected states since the violence erupted, placing previously food secure communities under increasing strain.

Intervention is compounded for people living in remote areas such as Dhiam-Dhiam village, one of 20 islands along the banks of the White Nile, says George Taban, education officer for the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in South Sudan. They not only lack basic sanitation and educational services but also have limited access to health facilities. "The nearest healthcare unit in Patiou is 12 km away from Dhiam-Dhiam, a whole day's journey through the river, which is the only means of transport," Taban adds.

In the three states, gains made by the LWF and its partners over the past years in helping rural communities build sustainable livelihoods, promote peace, human rights and reconciliation and strengthen capacity to respond to disasters and access education, have largely been obliterated by the ongoing violence.

The LWF is seeking funds to continue scaling-up not only its humanitarian emergency support to internally displaced South Sudanese and bridge the food gap but to also support the 400,000 who are refugees in neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

Poor response to funding for ACT Alliance appeals for South Sudan issued earlier this year continue to hamper efforts to provide adequate essential services to the refugees supported by DWS programs.

At the sites in western Ethiopia's Gambella refugee camp, the LWF program

provides water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, and psychosocial support to nearly 100,000 South Sudanese. However, additional funding is required for basic non-food items (NFI) and livelihood support to the refugees, 95 percent of who are women, and children below the age of 17 years.

The Leitchour site, originally planned for 20,000 people has been expanded to shelter around 47,000 persons to cope with the influx. Still, insufficient funds to the ACT appeal and other sources, uncertainty on camp stability due to flooding, and anticipated new refugee influx from Somalia due to famine there are major challenges cited by Sophie Gebreyes, LWF representative for the DWS Ethiopia program.

Influx to Kakuma Puts Pressure on Old Infrastructure

In northern Kenya, Kakuma refugee camp, originally designed for 100,000 inhabitants has been expanded to a capacity for 120,000 but now hosts 168,000 refugees, out of whom nearly 40,000 are South Sudanese. LWF focus there includes education, child protection, provision of water and community services.

While 65 percent of the South Sudanese refugees at Kakuma comprise children, this number includes about 20 percent unaccompanied minors (UAM), a majority of who are boys. The camp's reception and protection centers are congested, shelters are insufficient and there are no alternative care systems for vulnerable groups such as UAMs. Access to water has been significantly reduced

as water levels in all boreholes are dropping and some of the holes are collapsing. In addition, the supporting infrastructure is old and poorly maintained; therefore leakages in the pipe network among other factors make it impossible to include water distribution in any camp extension.

The education services at Kakuma face similar challenges as schools are dilapidated and there is no available space to put up new buildings. The existing classrooms are insufficient and there are not enough teachers, school materials and meals for students. "The ACT Appeal has been very slow in attracting resources," says Lennart Hernander, the LWF representative for the Kenya/Djibouti program. The recent Kenyan government security operation to send all urban refugees to designated camps is also increasing the numbers at Kakuma, he adds.

In northern Uganda, the LWF is providing NFIs, psychosocial and livelihood support, child protection, WASH and community services, and peace building activities to over 87,000 refugees from South Sudan currently located in all the new settlements in Adjumani district. Women and children account for 87 percent of the refugee population there, with the latter representing more than 64 percent of the nearly 137,000 South Sudanese who have sought refuge in the country. "That 79 percent of all primary-age children are not attending school," is one of the main challenges, adds Jesse Kamstra, LWF representative for the DWS Uganda program.

LWF response to the South Sudan crisis: www.lutheranworld.org/content/emergency-south-sudan-conflict

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