

# Lutheran World Information

1504

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LWF providing relief materials (ready-to-eat food) to a family whose house was destroyed. Photo: LWF Nepal

## Nepal Earthquake Leaves Massive Destruction

### LWF emergency team fully operational for immediate response

**KATHMANDU, Nepal/GENEVA (LWI)** – Over 3,600 people were confirmed dead after a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April leaving massive destruction in its wake.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has launched an immediate large-scale emergency response with its emergency team already in place in Kathmandu in the LWF offices, which have escaped the worst impact of the quake.

The LWF is currently working together with the Nepalese government, the UN system and church partners in the

ACT alliance network to coordinate the response. Staff on the ground are preparing to distribute immediate life-saving supplies such as water, food, shelter and medication to those affected.

The epicenter of the earthquake was near the capital Kathmandu but many regions have been heavily affected, among them Bhaktapur, Lamjung and Pokhara in which the LWF has been operating for years. The LWF has staff on the ground and infrastructure in

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### A Life-Long Commitment to Ecumenism

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has praised Rev. Dr Philip Potter, the former general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), who died 31 March aged 93, as a “giant” ecumenical leader.

“The LWF gives thanks for the life and witness of Rev. Potter and we pray for God’s abundant love and grace at this moment of sorrow and pain,” General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said in a letter to Potter’s widow, Bishop-emeritus Bärbel Wartenburg-Potter of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

Potter, whose funeral service took place today, served as WCC’s third general secretary from 1972 to 1984, chaired the board of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) from 1960 to 1968 and was renowned worldwide for his commitment to churches as they struggled for justice and peace.

“The ecumenical movement has been richly blessed by Rev. Potter’s life-long and fruitful commitment. His leadership in the World Student Christian Federation and the World Council of Churches inspired generations of Christians in their witness and service,” Junge said.

Potter was born in Roseau, Dominica, in the West Indies and died in Lübeck, Germany. He worked for the Methodist

Missionary Society in London, represented the Jamaica Student Christian Movement at the 1947 world conference on Christian youth in Oslo, Norway.

Potter moved to Geneva in 1954 to work for WCC’s youth department.

His first wife, musician and composer Doreen Potter, who was the daughter of a Jamaican Methodist minister, died of cancer in 1980. He re-married in 1985.

In 2009 WSCF launched the Philip Potter Fund to support ecumenical leadership formation among young people, and WCC renamed its library The Philip Potter Library.

His prophetic voice, calling for peace with justice, challenging unjust systems and encouraging churches to be open and inclusive, will continue to resonate in the hearts of many people around the world, Junge noted.

“We extend our deepest condolences and pray that that at this time of loss you and all those who loved and admired Philip feed God’s loving presence even closer to you, supported by the prayers and love from many around the world,” the LWF leader concluded.

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place in the affected areas to offer immediate response.

“We are deeply concerned at the scale of this disaster,” says LWF General Secretary Martin Junge. “We are grateful for the leadership of the LWF emergency team on the ground who

are standing with people and communities affected and giving expression to the diaconal vocation of the LWF communion.”

The LWF has been operating in Nepal since 1984 on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness and Response; Sustainable Livelihoods, and Community-led Actions for

Governance and Justice. The LWF has a member church in Nepal—Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church—situated in the far East of the country further away from the epicenter of the earthquake. The church reports that members are safe and have escaped the worst impact.

## Rooting Gender Justice in Biblical, Theological and Local Contexts

### LWF WICAS Affirms Women’s Contribution to Inclusive Church in Asia

**TAIPEI, Taiwan/GENEVA (LWI)**—Local translations of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) policy on gender justice are helping to empower women’s active involvement in church ministry including leadership and decision-making.

Speaking at meetings of the LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) program in Asia, the WICAS program secretary Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt said it was encouraging “to have in hand” the LWF Gender Justice Policy (GJP) in Korean and Japanese. She expressed LWF’s gratitude for the recent local editions and for ongoing translations into other popular languages in the region.

LWF WICAS held meetings for women representatives during the 12-15 April Asia Church Leadership

Consultation (ACLIC), which was co-hosted by the Taiwan Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church of Taiwan and the China Lutheran Seminary.

Neuenfeldt said the publication of the GJP in 2013 and its distribution among the churches “had affirmed that a respectful dialogical attitude” to the local context is necessary in order to express the diversity of views on gender justice in the LWF communion. “The need to root the discussion on biblical and theological reflection was once more reaffirmed,” she added.

At the ACLIC, Neuenfeldt explained LWF’s focus on women’s contribution to the church in view of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. She elaborated the ‘Women on the

Move: From Wittenberg to Windhoek’ process, launched earlier this year, citing the “Her-stories” component as important in providing a critical reading of churches’ history by paying attention to voices from women.

Ms Ranjita Christie Borgeary, WICAS secretary at the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches of India (UELICI) and coordinator of the West South Asia Lutheran Communion (WESALUC) said women are not fully integrated in the structures of leadership and decision making of many churches in the sub-region including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The poor visibility of women leaders in the churches therefore makes it difficult for women to encourage each other and show how their contribution can be meaningful to the whole church, she noted.

Borgeary cited remuneration disparities between male and female church workers as one of the gender equality challenges that the UELICI is working to address. She said Bible studies are planned discuss how women could participate in leadership among the 11 LWF member churches that make up the Indian Lutheran church body.

### Encouraging Stories

But there are also encouraging stories from other parts of the region. Nora Samosir, WICAS representative for the South East Asian Lutheran Com-



Women’s meeting prior to Asia Church Leadership Consultation.  
Photo: LWF/Christy Chok



munion (SEALUC), said the status of women and men was equal in the workplace in Singapore, including the church. But, she noted, there are challenges in integrating women's contribution in decision making within the church structures. SEALUC is therefore developing a three-year capacity training program to enable women take up leadership positions in their churches.

One of the main issues emerging from the WICAS representatives'

meeting was that training and capacity building alone would not be enough in encouraging women to take up leadership positions. Participants stressed the need to redefine and remodel church structures to accommodate the diversity of gifts in the communion. They also underlined the value of exchange visits for learning across the respective networks.

"Integrating women in full ministry and in all instances of the church is a key element to building sustainable

and inclusive churches. This includes specific attention to policy that ensures the equal presence of women in numbers and in participation," Neuenfeldt added.

"Holistic Leadership for Sustainability" was the theme of the 2015 ACLC conference, attended by church leaders including women and youth representatives.

*(A contribution by Christy Chok, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia)*

## Towards a Sustainable LWF Asia Region

### Engaging Neighbors and Communities 'Not within Our Walls'

**TAIPEI, Taiwan/GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Asia concluded their bi-annual meeting this year with a call on church leaders to nurture sustainable churches that promote justice and peace in communities throughout the region.

"Holistic Sustainability: Towards A Sustainable LWF Asia Region" was the theme of the 12–15 April Asia Church Leadership Consultation (ACLC), attended by 75 participants including church leaders from the region's 53 LWF member churches, mission partners and staff. The Taiwan Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church

of Taiwan co-hosted the conference held at the China Lutheran Seminary.

The LWF Asia communion is a diverse communion culturally—ethnically, politically, economically and socially—facing its own challenges and creating its own opportunities, participants observed. The churches in the respective sub-regions experience different situations that demand varying responses. However, one common key challenge is the need to create a church that is holistic—preaching the gospel, serving people in need and advocating for justice and peace—and sustainable.

In his keynote address, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, who

hails from the region, reminded and encouraged the Asian church leaders that their role is about strengthening the vision of a sustainable church with the ability to "engage neighbors and communities not within our walls."

Yunan emphasized the need to affirm Lutheran identity in the region's LWF member churches despite the different historical contexts. "It is important for us to articulate the things that bind us together, those things that are distinctively Lutheran, the things that bind us in unity with churches not in our tradition, and those things which bind us in love and care to all our neighbor," said the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

### Intergenerational Solidarity

In her welcoming address, Ms Eun-hae Kwon, LWF Vice-President for Asia said, "When we speak about sustainability, it is an issue of intergenerational solidarity. This task is one that we can only achieve when youth and adults work together to continue witnessing the gospel." She noted that shared accountability and valued contribution from the different generations are vital factors "that must not just be heard, but must be visible."



ACLC participants participating in the Holy Communion during the ACLC Opening Service 2015.  
Photo: LWF/JC Valeriano

In line with the ACLC conference theme, Dr Samuel Liu, President of the China Lutheran Seminary exhorted the participants to “walk on a journey from fear to faith, from doubt to affirmation and from experience to active living.” Reflecting on John 20:19-31, Liu said, “Jesus Christ is not only Lord and God, but he is also ‘my Lord and my God,’ thus an active relationship with Jesus Christ will ensure a sustainable relationship with my neighbor, liberating him or her from fear and doubt to

experience the eternally sustainable life in Jesus Christ.”

### Thailand to Host 2016 LWF Pre-Assembly

The conference also discussed the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and the Twelfth LWF Assembly to be held in Namibia the same year. The church leaders affirmed reformation as an ongoing process that challenges Asian church leaders to build

a sustainable church whose theology and spirituality contributes to building relationships and a society that are ultimately grounded in Christian ethics.

The ACLC agreed to hold the LWF regional pre-assembly in August 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The LWF Asia desk at the Department for Mission and Development coordinates the regional church leadership gatherings.

*(A contribution by Christy Chok, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia)*

## Young and Inspired for Reformation in Asia

### Asia Lutheran Youth Network to Nurture Leaders

**TAIPEI, Taiwan/GENEVA (LWI)** – Young Lutherans in Asia have established a regional network to strengthen their response to social, economic and environmental challenges in their context.

The Asia Lutheran Youth Network (ALYN) was inaugurated in Taipei, Taiwan, following a 16-19 April training workshop for The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in the region. Youth leaders from the LWF member churches in Asia say they see it as critical for sharing and learning, nurturing young leaders and contributing to global LWF initiatives.

The LWF Youth desk at the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) organized the workshop in the context of the Global Young Reformers Network (GYRN). DMD created the international platform in October 2013 to encourage young people (18-30 years) in the Lutheran communion to contribute to the 2017 Reformation anniversary and the LWF Twelfth Assembly.

In Taipei, 13 young leaders were trained on how to collaborate as a network representing the 53 LWF member churches via Skype meetings, working online with Google documents and establishing Lutheran profiles on the GYRN social media platforms. They also discussed theologians’ presentations on how to strengthen Christian identity in Asia from a Lutheran perspective.



*Delegates from LWF member churches in Asia, at the regional training workshop in Taipei, Taiwan. Photo: Johanan Celine Photography*

### Challenging Mindsets

“My expectations have been exceeded. In fact, I find that everyone who has come for this meeting is very well prepared, very articulate, very passionate and has actively participated in all the discussion and come up with brilliant ideas,” said Lee Darius Zhen Ying, Lutheran Church in Singapore.

Ying said he believes that youth leaders have a unique contribution from an Asian perspective in the upcoming celebration of the Reformation anniversary “by making disciples who will break down barriers, open a new path for the gospel and speak out for justice and righteousness.”

Reformation today, he said, “is about challenging certain mindsets and certain ways of thinking that are prevalent in society, and which threaten to silence or diminish the message of the gospel. The call to reformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a call to nail our own 95 theses,” he emphasized, referring to Luther’s public protest in 1517.

### Sustainability and Visibility

Chrisida Nithyakalyani, youth secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India said the ALYN platform will expose more youth to both opportunities and challenges in the region.

“I look at this network as a connecting point between young people and LWF Youth desk, Asia desk, and the national committees to work together and to ensure that voices of Asian youth leaders are heard in the LWF communion at global and regional level,” she said. “However, the challenge is the sustainability and visibility of this network. It is therefore necessary to connect and collaborate with other existing youth and student networks around Asia and to the already existing and newly emerging networks in other LWF regions,” Nithyakalyani added.

Gideon Pan, Taiwan Lutheran Church, said it is a blessing that “different youth leaders from different

sub-regions and diverse cultures share similar enthusiasm to retain Lutheran identity by working on emerging issues due to globalization.” He plans to invite other youth leaders from the six Lutheran churches in Taiwan to a social media platform where they can discuss pressing issues in the country and listen to other Asian youth leaders.

Pimpinan Brades Sijabat from the Indonesian Christian Church (HKI) said the new regional youth network can create space and opportunities for those “who may not be privileged enough to be exposed to leadership trainings or conferences abroad.” The ALYN will play a vital role in reforming Asian youth leadership, he noted.

“I feel proud to be a part of Asia Lutheran Youth Network. I am convinced that this network will enhance my skills and capacity to work for the holistic development of my community. I am committed to share my knowledge and contribute my services to this network,” added Krutika Priyadarshini Mohanty, Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (India).

ALYN will be presented at the international GYRN conference later this year in Wittenberg, Germany.

*A contribution by Rev. Steven Lawrence, LWF regional expression officer for the Asia region*

**Global Young Reformers web site:** <https://youngreformers.lutheranworld.org/>

## 50 Years of Shaping LWF’s Ecumenical Vision

### Junge: ‘Many Good Reasons to Celebrate’ Support from Strasbourg Institute

**STRASBOURG, France/GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge has paid tribute to the Institute for Ecumenical Research at Strasbourg for supporting and shaping LWF’s ecumenical dialogues over the past five decades.

Speaking at the institute’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on 22 April, Junge commended the theological center for its innumerable accomplishments and valuable support that have significantly contributed to the strong ecumenical vocation that is one of LWF’s hallmarks.

“Outstanding support has been provided to all the LWF’s bilateral dialogues and some impressive milestones were achieved thanks to the institute’s active and committed support,” the LWF leader said at the anniversary event.

Junge highlighted the vision of “unity in reconciled diversity” and the notion of “differentiated consensus” as important specific approaches to ecumenical dialogues that have been developed from research and discussions at the Strasbourg institute.

The institute’s accomplishment include the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, signed with Roman Catholics in 1999, the Mennonite Action and its foundational document *Healing of Memories – Reconciliation in Christ* in 2010, and more recently the Lutheran–Roman Catholic document, *From Conflict to Communion*, on LWF’s ecumenical approach to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Junge underlined the institute’s role during the long preparation process for the dialogue with the Orthodox churches, its active involvement in the Reformed-Lutheran dialogue, and the critical groundwork it carried out for the dialogue with the Pentecostals.

“There are many good reasons for celebrating the institute’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ... beyond the fact of having reached five decades of existence,” he said.

### Unity of the Church: A Core Calling

LWF’s decision in 1963 to establish what was first known as the Founda-

tion for Interconfessional Research came prior to its first bilateral dialogues. Today, the Institute for Ecumenical Research consists of a multinational team of theologians who provide theological analysis and advice to churches in their efforts to understand and articulate the visible unity of the Church.

In his address, Junge said the establishment of the original foundation stemmed from LWF’s desire to express its belief that confessional theology does not stand in opposition to the quest for unity in the body of Christ, but constitutes the foundation for Lutheran ecumenical engagement.

“For us in the LWF, unity remains a core calling, which we want to continue to pursue, both with a long-term vision and with what I would like to call a ‘prophetic impatience,’” he emphasized.

“In times like these, when fragmentation and the mentality of withdrawal and segregation seem to be the order of the day and affect even the churches, I believe in the ecumenical endeavor to carry a prophetic message: No, we are not comfortable with giving in to fragmentation and segregation.”





LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge. Photo: Andrew Wilson

## Responding to Existential Questions

The search for church unity exists in a context that is also marked by healthy impatience, Junge noted. When people nurturing their faith in inter-confessional families express their “huge pain and discouragement [...] as separated churches at separate communion tables, how does this inform the overall setup of our ecumenical engagement?” Junge asked. There is a whole range of “different questions” and “different” angles on how to receive the gift of unity that needs to be articulated in the ecumenical dialogues, he added.

The general secretary said the evolving global context since the 1960s is also true for the church. There is a significant shift from one or a few critical centers of influence to many centers which are occasionally competing, cooperating, connected or disconnected and sometimes in “painful communication breakdown.” He argued that the next 50 years of ecumenical research should include a perspective on how the structure and methodologies of theological discourse relate to polycentrism and the variety of cultural contexts in which Christians express their faith.

## Global Church

The institute’s current and former staff, representatives of LWF’s ecumenical partners and theologians from across the world attended the jubilee celebrations. Speakers at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event included Bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Dr Christos Filiotis, Greek Orthodox Church in Strasbourg; Lutheran Bishop Dr Michael Bünker, General Secretary of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE); and Mennonite church leader Rev. Dr Larry Miller, General Secretary of the Global Christian Forum.

The CPCE Vice-President and President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches Rev. Dr Gottfried Locher preached at the opening worship held at the St Thomas Church in Strasbourg.

Württemberg [Lutheran] Bishop Dr Frank O. July, LWF Vice-President for Central Western Europe and the Strasbourg Institute director, Rev. Dr Theodor Dieter, presided at the jubilee’s opening. Other guest speakers at the day’s events included Lutheran Bishops Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm (Bavaria, Germany) and Dr Ndanganeni P. Phaswana (South Africa), and Dr Cecil M. Robeck, United States, representing the Pentecostals.

# Radical Forms of Inclusion Can Strengthen Diaconal Practice

## Reformation Focus at LWF Latin America and Caribbean Gathering

**LA PAZ/Bolivia/GENEVA (LWI)** – In a context marked by increasing exploitation of natural resources, forced migration and human trafficking, Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have called for stronger advocacy to affirm that salvation, creation and human beings “are not for sale.”

Meeting in Bolivia’s western city of La Paz, leaders of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in LAC reflected on the LWF Twelfth Assembly

theme, “Liberated by God’s Grace” and its implications for service or diakonia.

“It is clear that creation is not for sale because none of us is for sale! And, if that was not the case, I wonder at what moment we would stop looking at creation as if we were not part of it,” said Rev. Gustavo Gómez, president of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU) of Argentina and Uruguay.

The 65 delegates—heads of churches, women and youth leaders, and persons

linked to networks in the region—and invited guests at the 7-10 April conference discussed how Lutheran churches in the region can strengthen the practice of diakonia to integrate radical forms of inclusion as shown by Jesus himself.

Lutheran diakonia in LAC focuses on ongoing training; making the churches’ diaconal work visible; and working in networks to sustain learning and sharing of experiences. It integrates inclusion, climate justice,

human dignity and creation, all of which are linked with gender justice and youth participation.

## Greater Awareness about Values

The participants who included representatives of the LWF member churches in North America said the main challenges to survival in both regions include labor and sexual exploitation, disappearance of young people, sex tourism and the sale of children. Trafficking in body organs, violence against women, forced migration and deportation were also mentioned as activities that increasingly threaten life and human dignity.

The LAC Women and Gender Justice network encouraged churches to promote the empowerment of women based on compassion, solidarity and justice. The network's coordinator, Ms Elizabeth Arciniegas Sanchez, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, decried the injustice of human trafficking. "The value given to human beings calls for greater awareness that their dignity, their life and dreams are not for sale," she added.

In the context of Easter, participants reflected on Christian and Lutheran faith. "I must confess that sometimes my ability to claim the free gift of God's salvation is threatened by the culture in which I live," said Na-

tional Bishop Susan C. Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. She spoke of a culture of consumerism that emphasizes economic growth, the accumulation of possessions, the search for youth and acquisition of lasting beauty, and prioritizing focus on the individual [self].

"All these false gods demand work and a large amount of money and other resources in order to obtain 'salvation'," added Johnson, LWF Vice-President for the North American region. "Let us renew our baptism; let us abandon the paths which lead us away from God in order to be closer to the body of Christ and to be strengthened to keep the promise of God's salvation – a free gift!"

Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at the conference included LWF Council members Ms Christina Jackson-Skelton and Mr Joseph Villalon. Jackson-Skelton is chairperson of the LWF Finance Committee.

## Celebrating God's Grace

The conference discussed how to strengthen the processes of participating in the LWF pre-assemblies and the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek (Namibia) in 2017, and how to affirm the celebration of God's grace as a central element which is not for sale.

In preparation for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, the region is organizing various activities in the academic field and in public and ecumenical witness.

The LAC churches welcomed the LWF "Women on the Move: From Wittenberg to Windhoek" (WMWW) three-year process, launched in early 2015 to articulate women's contribution to the churches in the context of the 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation anniversary.

Churches are taking up the WMWW objectives. Rev. Dr Nestor P. Friedrich, president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), said the church has started collecting stories of women ('Her-stories'). "As a church, we have deliberately forgotten the work of women although they are pioneers and the central body for passing on the faith to new generations. We already have many stories of young people, adults and older people who are a very important part of the church," he added.

## Suriname to Host 2016 Regional Pre-Assembly

The annual leadership conferences support the LWF member churches in nurturing "a more visible expression of regional Lutheran communion," noted Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, area secretary for LAC at the Department for Mission and Development.

Cuyatti said church leaders have expressed gratitude for the generous space in which churches have the possibility to establish closer ties, experience communion and collaborate across the various networks. "I have seen concrete acts of solidarity and support which are inspired by the grace of God," she added.

The LAC leaders agreed to hold the regional LWF Pre-Assembly from 29 August to 2 September 2016 in Paramaribo, Suriname. This year's conference was hosted by the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

*(A contribution by Argentine pastor Rev. Eugenio Albrecht, journalist in the LAC Communication Network)*



Participants at the April 2015 LAC Church Leadership Conference in La Paz, Bolivia.  
Photo: Eugenio Albrecht



# A Clear and Compelling Need to Save Mediterranean Refugees

## LWF Reiterates Calls for Europe-Wide Actions

**GENEVA (LWI)** – Shocked and sickened by massive loss of life among desperate people seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea to find refuge in Europe, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has appealed to its member churches in the region to urge their governments to adopt Europe-wide life-saving actions.

The need for such efforts “is clear and compelling,” LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin wrote to the churches. He called on them to appeal to their governments to urge the European Union to increase search and rescue efforts for migrants at sea in an effective and meaningful way. Legal and safe pathways also need to be developed for refugees to get to Europe by increasing refugee resettlement and lifting visa requirements, he said in a 20 April letter to the churches.

The LWF leader noted that the recent death toll from two boats alone could be as high as 1,000 people. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) more than 36,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in southern Europe by boat this year.

If the recent loss of life is confirmed, Junge added, more than 1,600 people have died this year. In 2014, nearly 219,000 people crossed the sea, with 3,500 perishing.

Junge said people are desperate to flee war and persecution in the Middle East, particularly Syria’s four-year con-



*Vessels used to transport migrants across the Mediterranean Sea lie rotting and decayed in a ships’ graveyard on the Italian island of Lampedusa. Photo: CCME/Franca di Lecce*

flict, which has forced millions from their homes. Others are escaping severe human rights violations in Eritrea and Sudan.

“Still others are fleeing, not from persecution, but seeking to escape grinding poverty,” Junge said.

He said concern for refugees is deeply rooted within the LWF because so many Lutherans have histories as refugees. At the end of the Second World War, one out of every six Lutherans was a refugee or displaced person. Lutherans worldwide helped provide relief, and it is out of this effort that the LWF was founded.

LWF continues to operate major programs to assist refugees and other displaced persons and this work is at the core of LWF’s witness “of which

you are an important and integral part,” Junge told the European churches.

He reaffirmed LWF’s profound commitment towards displaced people, reiterating that the LWF Council in 2011 expressed concern that many wealthy countries were “not offering as generous a welcome as they could to vulnerable people who have been forced to flee their homes. This can be a matter of life and death, as is now seen with migrants drowning in the Mediterranean.”

The general secretary expressed sadness “that those words are as timely today as they were four years ago.”

The LWF appeal is being coordinated with the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

## Saxony between Refugees and ‘Pegida’

### A Welcome Culture for Refugees and Willingness to Talk

**DRESDEN, Germany/GENEVA (LWI)** – Since October 2014, what are now known in Germany as “Pegida” protests have been taking place in Dresden, the capital of Saxony. PEGIDA is the Ger-

man acronym for “patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West.” The number of demonstrators had dropped, but it is now rising again. In this context, it is time to take a look

at the activities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony.

The Lutheran bishop and the central church office have written to congregations to encourage them to

respond to the current political situation by offering to facilitate talks.

Here is part of the letter:

“The present political situation and the increasingly harder fronts between supporters and opponents of the Pegida demonstrations is preoccupying Christians too, and confronting our church in Saxony with new challenges. On the one hand, Christians from our local churches are involved on both sides—the dividing line runs through groups of friends, families and, indeed, congregations. On the other, many people—Christians and non-Christians—are looking for guidance and wanting to discuss these new political and social developments. We notice that ourselves almost every time we talk to someone, whether privately or at work. And it is becoming clear that at present only one thing will help: we have to talk to one another and keep on talking!

Furthermore, in the congregations we are also feeling the challenges and conflicts in the localities where refugees have already been housed or are due to arrive in group accommodation soon. Besides dealing with anxiety in the population we are witnessing efforts to help and support refugees. Here too: We must talk to one another and keep talking!

On the whole there are still too few places for encounter and conversation. As a church we have facilities and a possibility of giving the encounters and conversations a spiritual framework, thereby bringing biblical standards for guidance into the discussion.”

The letter encourages the congregations to enable opportunities for discussions at the local level and also to invite the public to discussions and events in their church buildings. That way the church could contribute to a dialogue of all citizens. Many moderators, supervisors, pastors and congregational advisors have already offered to support the congregations in facilitating and hosting such discussions.

In addition, the church office has adopted a “guide for promoting a culture of welcome for refugees.” It aims to support congregations and church districts in assisting refugees when they arrive and taking the first steps towards integrating them. Here too, the churches are encouraged to seek opportunities for encounter and discussion around the issues.

In most cases, the activities proposed are meant to be easy to organize

by volunteers in the local churches. For example, mentoring, accompanying refugees to public offices, supporting children with school integration or helping to find accommodation and work. Very soon, Saxony’s Lutheran church will appoint six regional coordinators to equip volunteers for targeted, practical assistance to refugees. The coordinators will be responsible for guidance in dealing with refugees and recruiting voluntary multipliers, for project advice and monitoring, keeping in contact with refugees and mediating between them and government offices in the region. A total of EUR 400,000 has been made available for the project fund for refugee assistance.

*(Adapted from a press release of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony)*

EVLKS/FH



*Anti-Pegida: demonstration for openness, humanity and dialogue in front of the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) in Dresden. Photo: Bernd Gross/CC BY-SA 4.0*

## Unleash Your Super Powers and Conquer Climate Change

### LWF Youth Desk Launches Board Game

**GENEVA (LWI)** – If you are ready to take on the challenge of climate change with just the roll of a dice, *Climate Hero* is for you. The Lutheran World Federation’s new board game is the perfect

chance to share your ideas on cutting carbon and creating a world free from the threat of global warming.

Drawing on the success of LWF’s online climate game in 2013, Climate

Hero takes inspirational examples of carbon reduction programs and lets players come up with green ideas for reducing emissions in their own backyard.



LWF program officer Lokiru Matendo Yohana (left) and youth secretary Caroline Richter come up with creative ideas for ending climate change as they play the LWF board game, Climate Hero. Photo: LWF/S. Cox

The game was developed by the LWF Youth Desk as part of the climate justice program.

LWF Youth secretary Caroline Richter says the game is appealing because it is a concrete way of teaching climate change to a young generation. “It’s an easy tool to start the conversation and promote climate change action, as well as offer a window to specific climate change projects.”

More than a board game, Climate Hero also offers hard-hitting narrative about the political state of the world for the people suffering the worst effects of climate change. Packed with stories of political inequality, but also examples of uplifting social activism and theological reflection, Climate Hero is designed to spur greater

understanding of why the effects of climate change are so devastating in some countries.

The game is another way the LWF demonstrates its commitment to turning the tide on climate change for the sake of the world’s poorest communities.

In 2010, the LWF called for greater efforts to address the impacts of climate change on development and poverty in the most vulnerable communities. In recent years, the LWF has sent delegates to high-level United Nations climate negotiations.

In March, the LWF and ACT Alliance told the UN Human Rights Council that people in Africa and the Pacific were facing irreversible impacts of climate change. More droughts,

extreme weather and rising sea levels were disproportionately affecting people already vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The LWF is a founder of the monthly fast to show solidarity with the people worst affected by the warming planet, Fast for the Climate.

## Fast for the Climate

For the last 16 months, people from around the globe have voluntarily gone without food on the first day of every month to show support for people worst affected by our warming planet and send a message to governments that people from all walks of life and all corners of the globe expect governments to take drastic action to curb escalating climate warming.

The LWF is a strong advocate of the fast.

April 1 is the ninth month before crucial United Nations climate talks in Paris, at which the LWF and other climate change campaigners are pinning hopes on countries agreeing to a global climate action plan.

Fast for the Climate has grown into social media campaign and global movement widely supported by youth, environmentalists and people of faith.

**Get hold of Climate Hero: Copies of the game can be obtained from LWF youth officer, Caroline Richter, Caroline.Richter@lutheranworld.org**

## Affirm Dignity of Human Beings, LWF Encourages South African Churches

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed “dismay and pain” about the xenophobic attacks in South Africa mostly targeting other Africans living there and foreign-owned business.

In a letter to the LWF member churches within the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), Junge said there is no justifiable reason or explanation for such violence.

At least seven people are reported to have died in the April attacks on foreigners and foreign-owned property in South Africa.

Junge said the “dignity of every human being regardless of their origin is the basis to affirm that such manifestations of violence are unacceptable and must be rejected.” He said prob-

lems caused by poverty and marginalization “have much deeper roots” than the presence of foreigners and therefore require a political approach.

He encouraged the LUCSA churches to offer “strong and clear messages” that reject violence and advocate for living together in community with respect for the dignity and justice of every human being.

LUCSA is a sub-regional LWF body made up of 17 autonomous Lutheran churches including 13 LWF member churches in 10 Southern African countries.



# Uganda: Regional Workshop on Child Protection

## Mechanisms to Safeguard the Most Vulnerable

**BUNJ, South Sudan/KAMPALA, Uganda/GENEVA (LWI)** – “Be very careful with the pigs,” is one of the first things aid workers learn when arriving in Maban County, South Sudan. The animals are frequently found wandering in the middle of the red dusty road which connects the four refugee camps Gendrassa, Yusuf Batil, Doro and Kaya and the host communities that lie in between.

Although the animals roam about freely and don't seem to belong anywhere, accidentally knocking even a small piglet can easily cost hundreds of US dollars: The animals are the local currency for bride prices in the Mabanese host communities, visible proof of a network of long-standing arrangements, family ties and the power of local communities which pose one of the biggest child protection challenges in the region.

“Early marriage is very common here,” Julius Tiboa, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Child Protection Coordinator and interim team leader in Maban, says. “It's a complex problem which has to be handled with great sensitivity.” The situation in host communities and refugee camps in Maban was one of the local contexts discussed in a workshop on child protection in Kampala, Uganda.

### Challenge to Implement the Law

21 participants, almost all from LWF Country Programs in Africa, discussed local child protection issues from 3-6 March 2015. The workshop, organized by the LWF's Department for World Service, was supported by the Australian Lutheran World Service, the overseas aid and resettlement agency of the Lutheran Church of Australia, and by the Australian Government. The workshop was facilitated by Keeping Children Safe, a network of organizations working on child protection. Founded in



Child rights club in Kaya refugee camp, South Sudan. Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

2001, the network consists of regional aid agencies, including the LWF.

Key objectives of the workshop were to develop awareness on and to increase participants' understanding of international standards for child safeguarding and protection, and how to apply them in local contexts. The workshop introduced the LWF child protection policy and complaint mechanisms and taught participants how to assess risks to children and how to develop capacities to address those risks.

Legally, the child rights act in South Sudan protects children from being married before they have reached adulthood at 18 years. Practically, there is little power to enforce that law, Tiboa says: “We are talking about defilement, which is a criminal case. But how can that be handled in an environment where there is no effective child law enforcement?”

In the Maban context, the team found two main options in dealing with the situation. “First, it is important to report child abuse cases with protection, education and camp management partners and together with them find ways to support the children,” Tiboa says.

The second approach is working closely with the communities. Child rights clubs in the primary schools try

to sensitize children and parents alike about the dangers early marriage poses to young girls. School enrollment also gives some protection for boys from being forcefully recruited as child soldiers, a common occurrence in many conflict-stricken countries. The militias usually focus on unaccompanied and unregistered children. Still many families depend on children grazing animals and working in markets for additional income, thereby also denying them a possibility to join the child rights clubs.

Also, measures need to be taken to ensure the safety of children in interaction with aid workers. “The important thing I learned in the workshop was that while child safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in LWF, managers need to ensure that staff are compliant,” Tiboa concludes.

Child safeguarding does not only protect the children we work with, it also protects the organisation's staff interacting with children and above all LWF's reputation. By protecting children, we are instilling trust and confidence in our beneficiaries”.

In Maban, the team works together with the camp's traditional community leaders, the sheikhs and umdas who are revered by the community and custodi-

ans of traditional values. “In the workshop we had a very interesting discussion about the community’s perception of children,” Tiboia says. “In many African communities girls are viewed as a source of family wealth and boys as protectors and continuation of the family lineage”.

Often, the matches are arranged when the girls are infants. The girl’s family then starts receiving dowry pay-

ments. When the girls are married at the age of 12 or 13 years, they have little possibility to refuse, Tiboia explains. Additionally, to speaking up against their elders, they would cause financial problems for the family which has accepted animals and food on their behalf for years, and is hardly able to pay them back: “We are challenging traditional values cherished over generations”.

Therefore, child protection also means celebrating the small steps. “In one case, we had a girl in second grade who was supposed to marry,” says Abraham Loyangi Mawa, LWF Child Protection Officer in Gendrassa. “The child rights club organized a rally and went to her parents. They succeeded and brought her back to school”.

## Assistance to Survivors of Sexual Violence

### Giving Hope and Material Support to Traumatized Refugees

**KAMPALA, Uganda/GENEVA (LWI)**—When she speaks, her voice is barely audible. Sixteen-year-old Mary (all names changed) did not choose to be a mother, but a week ago she gave birth to a baby boy, whom she named Emanuel, “God with us.”

The baby, wrapped in a pink blanket, lies sleeping on a mat while Mary tells her story. She is from Juba, South Sudan. When fighting broke out in December 2013, she fled the conflict together with her family, but was separated from them. As she fled, she was attacked and raped. Later she found her grandmother and made it to a refugee camp, where she discovered she was pregnant.

“When I realized I was pregnant, I wanted to take a drug and get rid of the baby,” she says, “but my grandmother told me not to. She said she would help me take care of him.” At the refugee

reception center, Mary was identified and enrolled into a medical and psychosocial support system.

Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) is one of the main intervention points for LWF in Uganda. The program carries out psychosocial support aiming at assisting survivors to attain a stable life and restore hope, dignity, mental and social well-being, as well as a sense of normalcy.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) program in Uganda built a hut and supports Mary and her grandmother with cash grants and psychosocial support. “The reason for my being here is not good, but here I have help,” Mary says, while carefully picking up the infant and trying to breastfeed. “My grandmother advises me on child care. I don’t even know how to properly hold a newborn.”

Most of the refugees hosted in the country are coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. “I would say ninety percent of my countrywomen in this settlement have been raped,” Ruth (48) says.

### Breaking the Silence

Ruth is a strong, tall woman with expressive eyes and hands that tell as much as her voice, but before she starts her story, the 48-year-old mother of five has sent her children from the room. Her voice drops, sometimes to an angry whisper for fear that neighbors might overhear. The teenagers do not know their mother has been raped, or about the dire consequence: When she came to the refugee reception center, Ruth opened up to an aid worker and was taken for a medical examination, where she was diagnosed with HIV. “In that instant, I lost all my energy. I could not stop crying. I could not even leave the room,” she recalls the fateful moment.

“In the following two weeks, I lost twelve kilos.” Ruth takes a crooked nail from her fireplace and scratches two numbers into the clay floor: 86, 74 – the body weight recorded on her medical files. “The LWF worker advised me that HIV is not a death sentence. She said others might die earlier than me from other causes. She told me to accept myself, and offered help,” Ruth continues.

The silence surrounding rape and HIV is strong. The women in the com-



Mary holding her baby. Photo: LWF/M. Renaux

munity are afraid to open up to each other, even though they know there are other survivors among them. Ruth's husband, who was killed in the conflict, never learned about what had happened to his wife. "If he'd known, he would have divorced me immediately," she says, touching the wedding band she still wears. "To keep your family and the respect of the community, you have to remain silent." The aid worker who assured her confidentiality was

the first person Ruth felt comfortable talking to.

Like other survivors of SGBV, the LWF provided Ruth with building material for a hut, and a cash grant to open a small business. She sells cassava flour, tomatoes and silver fish, which she keeps in a green plastic bucket. When business does not go well, she and the two youngest children eat some of it themselves, additional to the food ration provided to all refugees in the camp.

Ruth is also receiving antiretroviral drugs. She takes them each day and goes for a medical check-up once a month. The biggest help however is the psychosocial support and counseling LWF has given her. "I was feeling like the poorest person on earth," she says. "Now when I have a problem, I know I can tell LWF staff, and at the end of the day half of the problem is gone. You have changed my life – now I have hope".

## LWF Advocates for Gaza Reconstruction

### World not Delivering on Gaza Reconstruction Promises, New Report Warns

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The international community must urgently change its approach to Gaza and deliver on promises of reconstruction, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) together with 45 other agencies said today in a new report on the lack of progress since last year's conflict.

"Six months since donors pledged \$3.5 billion towards Gaza's recovery, many people are worse off and not a single one of the 19,000 destroyed homes has been rebuilt. 100,000 people are still homeless and many are living in makeshift camps or schools," the report says.

The report, "Charting a New Course: Overcoming the stalemate in Gaza," warns that further conflict

is inevitable—and with it the cycle of destruction and donor-funded reconstruction—unless world leaders implement a new approach that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict. Donors must insist on a permanent ceasefire, accountability of all parties for ongoing violations of international law, and an end to the Israeli blockade that seals in 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza and keeps them separated from the West Bank. Rather than challenging the blockade, the report found that most donors are accepting ways to work around it.

LWF's response to the Gaza crisis in 2014 through the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) included sending two

volunteer medical teams, totaling six doctors and six nurses, to Gaza to care for the people injured in the ongoing conflict with Israel. The teams included specialists in emergency medicine, intensive care, surgery, internal medicine and pediatrics, with accompanying specialty nursing. The team also brought in much-needed medical supplies and medicines. Five hospitals and 34 clinics have been shut down in Gaza due to the insecure situation. The AVH sent more than 10 missions to Gaza. As an additional aspect of its emergency response, AVH assisted in evacuating and receiving wounded casualties during the war. Twelve surgical and four intensive care beds were reserved, and on 31 July 2014, AVH received its first trauma patient from Gaza.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam, said: "The promising speeches at the donor conference have turned into empty words. There has been little rebuilding, no permanent ceasefire agreement and no plan to end the blockade. The international community is walking with eyes wide open into the next avoidable conflict, by upholding the status quo they themselves said must change."

William Bell of Christian Aid said: "We must ensure that this most recent and most devastating conflict was the last one. There must be consequences for continued violations. By facilitating



Dina Khoury, OR and infection Control Nurse, and others who were part of the AVH team sent to Gaza in August 2014, shared their experiences with an assembly of AVH staff upon the team's return to Jerusalem. Photo: LWF Jerusalem



a culture of impunity, the international community is committing itself to indefinitely picking up the pieces.”

Only 26.8 percent of money pledged by donors six months ago has been released so far. Even when funded, many reconstruction projects have not yet begun due to restrictions on essential material under the blockade. Most of the 81 health clinics and hospitals that were damaged still lack funds for reconstruction, but the few that have funds do not have the material needed to proceed.

Tony Laurance, CEO of MAP UK, said: “The world is shutting its eyes and ears to the people of Gaza when they need it most. Reconstruction cannot happen without funds, but money alone will not be enough. With the blockade in place we are just reconstructing a life of misery, poverty and despair.”

Since the temporary ceasefire, violence against civilians has continued, with more than 400 incidents of Israeli fire into Gaza and four rockets fired from Gaza into Israel. The report calls on all parties to immediately resume long-term ceasefire negotiations. It

calls on Israel to end its blockade and policy of separating Gaza from the West Bank, and for Palestinian political actors to reconcile and prioritize reconstruction. It also calls on Egypt to open its border to allow humanitarian relief.

Recently, donors have managed to achieve some small increase in the flow of construction material, but not enough to meet needs and its impact is extremely limited while the blockade remains in place. The report sets out specific recommendations to the international community to break the cycle of conflict and destruction, including ways to:

- Speed up reconstruction, by delivering pledges and insisting on the entry of essential material in line with international law.
- Ensure all parties are held accountable for violations of international law, including by considering obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on weapons known to be used indiscriminately against civilians, and seeking compensation for destroyed aid projects.

- End the blockade and rehabilitate Gaza’s shattered economy. The blockade has reduced Gaza to dependency on aid, with 80 percent of the population receiving international assistance and 63 percent of youth unemployed. Exports from Gaza are at less than two percent of pre-blockade levels with the movement of people and goods between Gaza and the West Bank practically non-existent.

- Support the development of a unified Palestinian government. Palestinian leadership on reconstruction has at times been weak and uncoordinated and is further complicated due to Israeli restrictions on government officials’ travel. Keeping Gaza separated from the West Bank has entrenched the already problematic split between Fatah and Hamas, with enormous negative impact on the delivery of aid and services in Gaza.

## Healing the Wounds Left by Lethal Landmines in Colombia

### LWF Supports Victims’ Demand for Legal Rights

**ARAUCA, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI)**—Lightning has struck Kevin twice in his short life.

However, the 25-year-old Colombian, who lives in Arauca province, has not been literally hit by lightning. Instead he has twice been struck by something all too common and lethal in his South American homeland—landmines.

When he was three-years-old, Kevin was happily playing outside when a land mine exploded, injuring his leg. He still walks with a limp. When he was 17, he got hold of something that looked exciting. However, it was a landmine that exploded ripping away both his arms.

Colombia is the world’s second most mined country after 50 years of fighting between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas and the government. Since 1990 landmines have wounded or killed about 11,000 people. The number is likely higher as families fear informing authorities lest they be marked as terrorists.

Victims include more than 1,000 children with the guerrillas and the military mining unpaved roads river valleys and football fields. Almost all accidents occur in rural areas, and most of the survivors are left with permanent disabilities.

Many of the families of the victims of Colombia’s landmine explosions are internally displaced persons who have lost their main breadwinners—the men. Women have to support their families, often supplemented by allowances and health care services.

In addition, many of the male victims of landmines have psychological problems and are frustrated and lacking in self-respect and desire to change their lives because of their injuries. The State has not arranged the kind of support and assistance that they need.

The charity TAME and staff from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)



A member of the Caracoles community in the department of Arauca learning how to avoid landmine accidents. Workshop, March 2011. © LWF/DWS Colombia/M. Sjögren

recently visited Arauca, which is Colombia's second most heavily mined region. Driving to the capital city, Arauca, heavily armed soldiers stop the car several times.

Along the way, schoolchildren march on the road, while soldiers armed with machine guns watch. This is not an unusual scene in Colombia.

The landmine survivors' charity is housed in a school. Many are missing limbs, some have internal injuries as well. One young girl, who has lost both her arms, is pregnant. They tell stories of their futile struggles with the government bureaucracy as they try to get support.

But it is clear there is some hope for those who are getting help from the charity, which is supported by the LWF. They receive training and learn how to demand their legal rights and improve the quality of their lives.

The project has established a new mine victims association ASODIGPAZ (Asociación de Sobrevivientes de Minas Antipersona Luchando por la Dignidad y la Paz), which has some 100 members.

Victims and their families are gaining the skills to help improve their means of livelihood, becoming entrepreneurs, learning how to raise small livestock. The project also aims to prevent new landmine accidents by increasing public awareness and capacity through training.

The project is necessary because landmine victims are left alone to fight for their rights with the authorities. Victims have been labeled as guerrillas and the support organizations as supporting guerrillas, so authorities refuse to help.

ASODIGPAZ has made training as a priority with a number of small

projects planned for the start of 2016. They also work to provide prostheses to make life a little easier for those who have lost limbs.

## Demining: A Peace Gesture

Meantime negotiations between the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas have been taking place in Havana, Cuba. As a peace gesture, the parties have agreed to initiate demining. One of the first provinces is Arauca, Kevin's hometown.

The task ahead is a staggeringly difficult one as the landmines have been planted there for almost 50 years. The terrain is very difficult and it is not clear exactly where the landmines are located. Frequent flooding in the area has carried some landmines to different locations.

For his part, Kevin has acquired a hook arm through ASODIGPAZ, though he still dreams of getting a proper prosthesis.

He will travel to Finland in the autumn at the invitation of the church there to help others to think about how to alleviate the suffering caused by landmine accidents, which have wounded so many people and changed their lives.

Kevin will help focus on how to now change their lives again—for the better.

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