



Liberated by God's Grace

Annual Report 2017



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

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Liberated by God's Grace

What a good year 2017 was and what an opportunity it offered: we commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and we gathered as a global communion for the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Windhoek, Namibia.

There, we experienced a renewed call into God's mission, the on-going relevance of the message "Liberated by God's Grace," and the pertinence of the prophetic "Not for sale" that actualizes this message in our times: salvation, human beings, creation – not for sale!

We are once again reminded that being in communion is not an end in itself but we are called to participate in God's on-going mission. Bringing their gifts together as they respond to God's call into communion, the LWF member churches continue claiming their role as a global communion of churches in Christ that lives and works together for justice, peace and reconciliation in our world.

This Annual Report offers insight into the work of the Lutheran World Federation

during this past year. Here you will read about our ongoing commitment towards unity and cooperation, even in times of prevailing fragmentation. You will learn about serving our neighbor, thereby expressing God's love and upholding our vision of the intrinsic dignity of every human person.

Here you will read about church and leaders being strengthened in their local witness by working together and resourcing themselves from their knowledge and encounters of the communion. You will read about the LWF's commitment to the leadership of women and youth in church and society. Last, but not least, you will read about the LWF's advocacy and public voice. In all of this, our work is deeply grounded in our faith, responding to the call of justice and peace in our world, and connecting local realities with global discussions.

We remain committed to working for justice, peace and reconciliation, as the LWF has been for the seventy years since it was founded in 1947. May this report inspire the member churches in this commitment!

Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa
LWF President

Rev. Dr Martin Junge
LWF General Secretary

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge (left) and LWF President Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa (right).
Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

REFORMATION ANNIVERSARY

Marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation

The commemoration began early. The three years prior to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation were marked as the core period for commemorating the anniversary. On the way towards 2017, the LWF initiated a variety of events.

Study processes on Lutheran hermeneutics, the role of the church in the public space, and the self-understanding of the Lutheran communion were launched. The LWF published booklets on the Reformation theme and sub-themes: Liberated by God's Grace, and its sub-themes: Salvation – Not for Sale, Human Beings – Not for Sale, Creation – Not for Sale. Conferences in 2015 offered the chance for reflection: Global Perspectives on the Reformation: Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics took place in Namibia, and Marangu to Wittenberg: Being a Reforming Church in a Changing African Context, which took place in Tanzania, was a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the first gathering of all African Lutheran church leaders. An online course on Lutheran theology was created in order to give wide audiences a deeper insight into various theological questions.

Within the framework of the Global Young Reformers' Network, young reform-

ers across the Lutheran communion rolled up their sleeves to work with fellow youth and church leaders to find ways of making sure the church was kept in a state of reformation. Projects inspired by the anniversary sub-themes ranged from reflections on the notion of grace to protecting the environment by promoting cycling and planting Luther trees.

However, the primary event of 2017 was the LWF Twelfth Assembly that took place in Windhoek, Namibia, from May 10 to 16, as the means by which the global meeting of the Lutheran communion gathered the fruits from all the processes leading towards the Reformation anniversary.

The Assembly was organized around the main anniversary theme and sub-themes. On Reformation Day itself—October 31—Lutheran worship services from Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Tanzania, Hong Kong, Argentina United States, Sweden and Namibia as well as an ecumenical service from Switzerland, were broadcast online, giving a flavor of the global celebrations and reaching over 280,000 people.

Thousands of Lutherans and guests gather for a festival of worship, witness, song and celebration of the word and sacrament at the Sam Nujoma Stadium, Windhoek, on 14 May 2017 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



“The global meeting of the Lutheran communion gathered the fruits from all the processes leading towards the Reformation anniversary.”

Coming together as a Communion of Churches

As a communion of churches, the LWF convened for its Twelfth Assembly under the 500th Reformation anniversary theme, “Liberated by God’s Grace,” in May.

Almost 800 Assembly participants, including nearly 400 delegates from the 145 member churches in 98 countries worldwide, gathered in Windhoek, Namibia.

The Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the LWF and meets every six to seven years to direct the work of the organization and to elect the LWF President and Council to serve until the next Assembly. It speaks out on issues concerning the life and witness of the churches and the world.

Namibia has long held significance for the LWF. It was in this country that the LWF played a role in dismantling systems of apartheid and oppression, leading to its independence in 1990. The Assembly was hosted by The United Church Council of the Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches, which brings together the three Namibian member churches: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia – German Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The three LWF’s sub-themes addressed the contextual challenges the churches face in today’s world. These concepts help churches identify attitudes and policies that people who are liberated by God’s grace reject, given their incompatibility with the gospel. These themes oriented the keynote speech, as well as the plenary inputs, Bible studies, village groups and worship services.

Dr Denis Mukwege gave a powerful keynote speech, in which he explained the way violence against women is being used as a war weapon in his native Democratic Republic of the Congo. He reminded delegates that people who are liberated by God’s grace are liberated to serve the neighbor.

The keynote inputs on sub-themes addressed climate justice, diakonia and serving the neighbor, as well as the prosperity gospel and different attempts to market the gospel.

A highlight was the global Reformation commemoration at the Sam Nujoma stadium on 14 May. Some 10,000 participants, including people from neighboring countries, gathered for a joint worship service and cultural celebration in the presence of ecumenical guests.

Rev. Lydia Posselt from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America offered Lutherans from around the world a message of hope in her sermon at the closing worship of the Twelfth Assembly. Closing worship celebrates the communion, a successful Assembly, and the installation of a newly elected LWF Council and President. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



800 Assembly participants with
close to **400** delegates representing
the **145** member churches in
98 countries worldwide

Midday prayer takes place in the assembly hall after the first plenary session.
Photo: LWF/Johan Celine Valeriano.





“God’s liberating grace fills us with faith, hope and love to participate in God’s mission in this world. In this 500th Reformation year, we profess a message that the world needs today as much as ever: Salvation—not for Sale; Human Beings—not for Sale; and Creation—not for Sale! Liberated by the Triune God, we pray for the clarity and courage to go out enlivened by God’s transformative, reconciling and empowering presence in our relationships, church and society.”

— From the message of the Twelfth Assembly

Deepening ecumenical relations

The year 2017 was truly ecumenical. Several events reflected the principle of ecumenical accountability that guided the LWF commemoration of the Reformation anniversary.

The Reformation anniversary themes of Liberated by God's Grace, and the "not for sale" sub-themes, were well received by ecumenical partners. They were picked up by Anglicans and Lutherans from around the world who wrote 42 reflections to encourage both global communions to mark the Reformation together. A Lutheran-Orthodox seminar also drew on the themes. Held as part of the plenary meeting of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission in November, the seminar concentrated on the freedom of a Christian. The commission was also able to come to a common statement on ministry.

In July, the World Communion of Reformed Churches signed an association agreement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), in Wittenberg, Germany. During the same worship service, LWF and the Reformed churches signed the Wittenberg Witness, a statement affirming their common call to the unity churches have in Christ.

During a festive Reformation Day worship service at Westminster Abbey, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby

presented LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge and the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Bishop Brian Farrell, with the resolution on the JDDJ passed by the Anglican Consultative Council in 2016.

By endorsing the declaration, the Reformed and Anglican communions brought the number of communions ratifying the JDDJ to five. This prompted reflection on the implications of the declaration. A consultation on the JDDJ that will include all world communions involved is scheduled for 2019.

Mutual commitment between Lutherans and Catholics grew deeper. It became clear that the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation in Lund and Malmö in 2016 influenced the relationship between the two communions more profoundly than was anticipated and triggered new ecumenical contacts on the ground. Local conferences on the document *From Conflict to Communion* and prayers inspired by the Common Prayer were held in different parts of the Lutheran communion. New translations of *From Conflict to Communion* brought the number to 19.

While the path to unity comprises theological conversation, spiritual sharing and joint witness through diakonia, it also calls

Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Lutheran World Federation and World Methodist Council after signing the Wittenberg Witness and an association agreement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Wittenberg, Germany, 5 July 2017.
Photo: WCRC / Anna Siggekkow.



churches to be more attentive to concerns and questions posed by communities and individual members of the church, particularly the ecumenical challenges they face. As such, a spirit of “pastoral ecumenism” emerged among the churches.

The LWF surveyed member churches to map ecumenical relations and challenges in order to lay the groundwork for a document on LWF ecumenical commitments. The working group met in October to start producing that document for the 2018 LWF Council meeting.

“ By endorsing the declaration, the Reformed and Anglican communions brought the number of communions ratifying the JDDJ to five.”

Making theology available to all

Education was of great importance to the reformers, who advocated for general education for all. In the spirit of this legacy, the LWF offered an eight-week pilot online course in Lutheran theology during the year of the Reformation Anniversary. The course was carried out from October until the beginning of December in 2017.

The course was designed by an international working group of theologians. It consisted of eight modules that are accessible on the LWF website.

Modules were written on the subjects of transformative reading of scripture, church and churches, ecclesiology, creation, two kingdoms, faith and serving the neighbor – diakonia, Lutheran theology and interreligious relations, and Luther, Lutheranism and justification. The course was aimed at undergraduate students, but participants also included pastors and church workers who wanted to continue their Lutheran theological education. Modules took the form of video lectures, weekly readings, discussion boards and web-based meetings for tutors and students.

Twelve students, from Malaysia, South Africa, Estonia, Germany, the United States, India, Nigeria and Chile took part.

The LWF is always looking to deepen its identity and sense of communion around the world, and provide opportunities for deeper theological reflection across the variety of contexts in which the faith of Lutherans is lived.

This online course provided a platform for learning in different contexts and brought together youth and adults of all ages, cultures, languages, genders, lay and ordained from across our communion. The lecture and reading materials are available online in a shareable format. The goal is to expand and offer the course again in the future.

Rev. Dr Monica Melancthon speaks about theological implications of the theme “Salvation – Not for Sale” during the LWF Twelfth Assembly.
Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



January – LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge opens the year with a message of encouragement, saying member churches should find inspiration in the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this year and guarantee a space where all people can experience “compassion, solidarity and justice.”

As an expression of an inclusive communion, the LWF holds its first seminar for lay people in church leadership. Under the title, Priesthood of All Believers, 19 non-ordained leaders of LWF members study Lutheran theology and experience the worldwide communion of churches.

The LWF announces that 101 candidates had earned degrees and other qualifications through its training support program in the previous 12 months.

The LWF joins the World Council of Churches and ACT Alliance in issuing a joint statement calling plans by the United States to drastically cut the number of refugees an abysmal failure of compassion and responsibility.

The Europe pre-Assembly takes place, in Höör, Sweden. In her opening sermon, Church of Sweden Archbishop Antje Jackelén says four “dangerous Ps” threaten churches

and countries: polarization, populism, protectionism and post-truth.

February – In Johannesburg, the Africa pre-Assembly is held, finalizing regional preparations for the Twelfth Assembly. Delegates discuss how the Reformation sub-themes are poignant for churches in a continent where land, mineral resources and human dignity have a price tag.

Japan’s Niwano Peace Foundation recognizes LWF President Bishop Dr. Munib Younan for his work promoting peaceful cooperation among religions, particularly in places of difficulty.

The needs of refugees fleeing South Sudan to take shelter in north Uganda remain overwhelming. Of the 752,000 who fled, more than 350,000 are supported by the LWF.

March – Taking up the LWF Reformation theme, Liberated by God’s Grace, the Anglican-Lutheran International Co-ordinating Committee commissions 42 Anglicans and Lutherans from around the world to write a series of reflections as a way of engaging both communities in commemorating the Reformation.

LWF Nepal continues rehabilitating water supplies in remote

villages, bringing water for household and livestock consumption.

Representatives of nine member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean gather to review the LWF framework for improving church capacity.

April – Finishing touches to Assembly preparations are made. Eminent surgeon and speaker from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dr Denis Mukwege is announced as the keynote speaker. The winner of the contest to preach at the closing worship of the Assembly is announced. Rev Lydia Posselt, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, was chosen from 10 finalists.

The LWF signs a global petition in support of Syria calling for nations to uphold the rights of civilians fleeing the country, ensure refugees have help crossing borders, protect aid workers and provide medical and other assistance.

May – The youth pre-Assembly in Ondangwa, northern Namibia, brings together 120 young men and women from 61 LWF member churches in 44 countries.

— Followed on page 19

Promoting interfaith learning

Enhancing understanding between people of different faiths was the focus of the LWF program on public theology and interreligious relations in 2017. A new interfaith project initiated by the LWF, INGAGE, offered young Indonesians from different faiths in three cities training on religious diversity. Close to 400 young people applied. The 81 participants were drawn from Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and indigenous religious communities.

Through encounters in different places of worship and seminars they got to know one another and the religious tradition that is dear to the other. As the participants worked on issues of religious diversity, their understanding of equal rights was strengthened. They shared their positive experiences through creative story writing and social media.

In order to improve exchange among LWF member churches on interreligious matters, the LWF initiated an interfaith network in 2017. Each LWF member church was invited to name a participant, with the first online meeting taking place in October. An ad-hoc working group met two months later in Geneva to develop an outline for an online course on interfaith learning.

One area of interfaith learning that is both sensitive as well as promising is the

field of scriptural interpretation. To promote dialogue on meaningful and responsible interpretation, the LWF published *Transformative Readings of Sacred Scriptures: Christians and Muslims in Dialogue*. The book outlines hermeneutical approaches in the Christian and Muslim traditions and shows how these can be applied in the twenty-first century.

As policymakers increasingly show interest in exploring the connection between religion and development, the LWF program on public theology and interreligious relations contributed to this discourse in meetings with ecumenical partners and secular institutions. To offer insight into the debate from a Lutheran perspective, the brochure *Called to Transform* was published. It is based on the understanding of the role of church and religion in society as articulated in the 2016 study document *The Church in the Public Space*.

Young people taking part in a new interfaith project initiated by the LWF, INGAGE, share a communal meal after the Parmalim worship in Medan.
Photo: A. Yaqin



“ As the participants worked on issues of religious diversity, their understanding of equal rights was strengthened.”

Building a communion of churches

Communion-building took on a greater dimension in 2017, the year of the Twelfth Assembly. Major communion-building activities were related to the Assembly, which included regional pre-Assemblies, youth and women's pre-Assemblies, as well as the Assembly itself.

Communion implies interaction, strengthening connectivity within and

across regions, building on existing relationships across generations and throughout regions, all the while exploring contemporary global challenges together in ever-changing contexts. It means accompanying member churches in their growth, their capacity for holistic mission and mutual learning through interaction and exchange.

One of the main contributions of the LWF was supporting conflict mediation and transformation in the communion. Another was that of renewed focus on cross-regional initiatives, which are a natural development beyond regional expressions in order to build communion-wide relationships.

Communion building depends on the commitment of leaders of the member churches. Therefore, deliberate activities were implemented to promote interaction among leaders. The retreat of newly-elected church leaders played a major role in bringing together leaders from all regions for days of fellowship, and induction into the LWF, as well as mutual exchange on the challenges of leadership in different contexts. For the first time the LWF ran a retreat of lay leaders at the LWF Center Wittenberg, where lay leaders not only learned about the LWF but about also about being Lutheran, in general.

Symbols of Hope

In the Gospel, Jesus compels us to welcome the stranger. People have always had a right to move but also a right to stay. Migration is now one of the most important issues of our time, affecting more and more individuals every day. Churches are faced both with the challenge of young members leaving their country for life abroad, as well as welcoming back young and vulnerable young people after the trauma of failed migration attempts.

The intervention of churches is crucial. As a recognized moral authority, a church can offer a ministry that comprises personal guidance and counselling. In addition, this ministry benefits from the established nationwide outreach of many churches.

The LWF program Symbols of Hope, which began in July 2017, supports churches in their efforts to advise would-be migrants and help those who have returned after failed attempts. The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Development and Social Service Commission are the torchbearers of this program. Churches taking part in the program have three objectives: informing people considering making the journey of the risks involved, welcoming back those who failed, and training pastors and lay members in counseling.



The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia hosted a Eucharistic service on 5 November to mark the 500th of the Reformation and the 81st anniversaries of the church. Photo: IELCO

Between **2015** and **2017**, the total number of congregants of LWF member churches grew nearly **two percent** to over **75,561,552**.

The Global Young Reformers' Network proved to be a significant way of inspiring hundreds of young Lutherans to be engaged in their churches while taking a global perspective. They have built strong communion among themselves, which will continue to play a role as they grow into new leadership roles.

The global number of LWF Lutherans is growing. Between 2015 and 2017, the total number of congregants of LWF member

churches grew nearly two percent to over 75.5 million.

The greatest growth was seen in Africa, where membership grew 13 percent to 26.1 million. The largest church in the communion remains the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus with more than 8.7 million members. Churches in the Nordic countries still have the highest percentage of Lutherans, ranging from 61-75 percent of the population.



A large and colorful choir in Ethiopia sings and dances at the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Photo: Tsion Alemayehu

— From page 13

The women's pre-Assembly covers four working areas: herstories, women's empowerment in leadership and ordained ministry, the LWF gender justice policy, and women doing theology,

The LWF Twelfth Assembly takes place in Windhoek, Namibia. Keynote speaker Dr Denis Mukwege tells delegates Lutheran theology regarding women is a message of hope for all victims of moral, physical and sexual violence. In his speech, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan tells churches to capture Luther's drive to reform, rebuild and remake the church in a spirit of repentance and faithfulness to the gospel, while General Secretary, Rev. Dr Martin Junge says the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is a milestone, not an endpoint, as the LWF witnesses to a fractured world.

The Assembly elects a new president, Rev. Dr Panti Filibus Musa, Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. A new Council is elected. Resolutions and statements are issued, as is a message saying the Twelfth Assembly is an opportunity to affirm the Lutheran communion as a shared gift.

A day-long celebration of music and worship in Windhoek brings together thousands for the global commemoration of the Reformation anniversary.

June – With the UNHCR, the LWF clears land for a new camp in Angola to support refugees fleeing fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As the number of people forced to flee conflict and natural disasters reaches 65 million, the LWF calls on member churches to extend the hand of welcome to refugees and displaced people on World Refugee Day.

The LWF opens the Heaven's Tent at the World Reformation Exhibition, in Wittenberg, in which member churches, the communion and partners from all over the world present themselves and their work.

July – July marks 50 years of the international Catholic–Lutheran dialogue which is observed at the annual meeting of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) signs an association agreement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. WCRC and the LWF sign the Wittenberg Witness, a

common statement affirming their common call to the unity churches have in Christ.

August – Rev. Dr Martin Junge, LWF General Secretary, is announced as the winner of the 2017 Augsburg Peace Prize, which recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to promoting peaceful coexistence between different religions and cultures.

LWF calls for funds as the number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda surpasses one million.

The Government of Djibouti officially welcomes refugee children into the national education system, recognizing the work of the LWF in refugee camp education.

First bi-regional capacity development program meeting is held in Chennai, India. Participants discuss outcomes of a series of training workshops in different countries over the past six years.

— Followed on page 31

Strengthening the capacity of churches around the world

In 2017, the LWF worked closely with churches to develop their ability to serve their communities. Workshops were held focusing on strengthening the capacity of churches to respond to the needs of the people they work with.

Skills training workshops on disaster preparedness and emergency response were held in Nepal, Bangladesh, Costa Rica and Malawi. The focus was on theological reflection on disaster response and its link to humanitarian principles. Capacity development for the LWF is in line with both theological and humanitarian principles, in that all humans are made in the image of God and therefore must be served impartially.

The LWF frameworks for capacity development were revised to make them more practical and accessible for church leaders, staff and volunteers. The insights and practical skills gained have meant churches have improved leadership, staff management and service delivery.

In Kenya, participants said their workshop was motivating. Regardless of diversity, diaconal work shared common challenges. The workshop taught them to balance short and long-term needs, see

problems as opportunities, and pick up issues before they become unmanageable. The Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church has made a commitment to use the framework to ensure all parishes and missions provide compassionate services to vulnerable groups and individuals at congregational level by the end of 2025.

Under the LWF's scholarship program, 66 new candidates from LWF churches were supported in their studies, which included theology or fields related to diaconia and development. Some graduates used their new skills to improve the capacity of their churches. One student from the Lutheran Church of Senegal, who studied science, said his church could now be fully involved in projects that support the environment.

Leadership and good governance is a central topic within the framework of church sustainability. It is integral to the LWF pilot project, Learning through Exchange among Leaders, launched in 2017, and in the Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders. A better understanding of good governance is the bedrock of these programs, especially as they promote participation and inclusion.

The Retreat of Newly-Elected Leaders brought together members from all regions of the LWF for a week-long retreat at the Communion Office. For the new leaders, it was a chance to deliberate on what it means to be part of the global communion. Photo: LWF/S. Gally



“ Capacity development for the LWF is in line with both theological and humanitarian principles, in that all humans are made in the image of God and therefore must be served impartially.”

MEMBER CHURCHES

North America

2 Member Churches

3,672,858 members

Africa

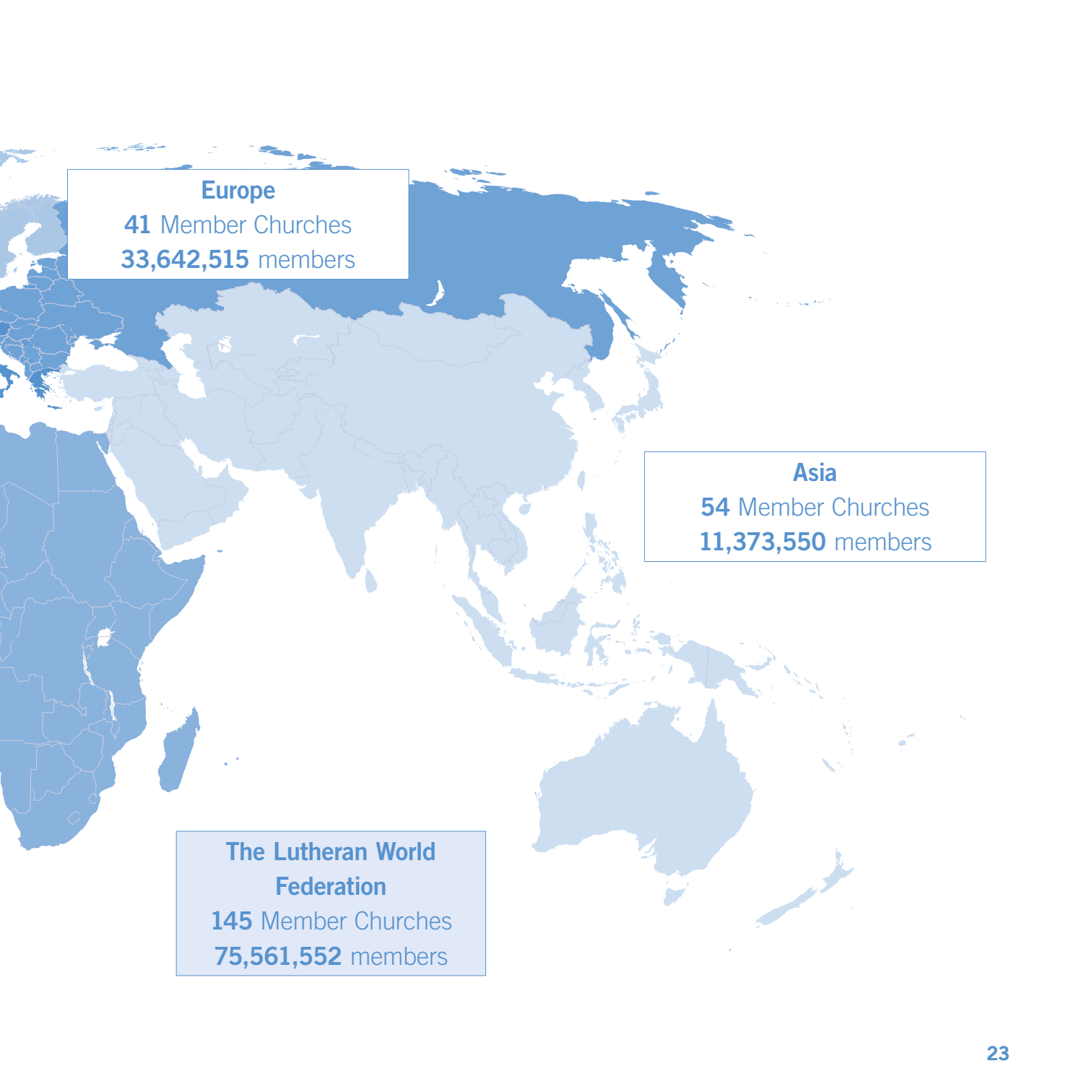
31 Member Churches

26,108,234 members

**Latin America and the
Caribbean**

17 Member Churches

764,395 members



Europe

41 Member Churches
33,642,515 members

Asia

54 Member Churches
11,373,550 members

**The Lutheran World
Federation**

145 Member Churches
75,561,552 members

YOUTH

Young people leading an ongoing reformation

Young people have a place and voice in all aspects of church and communion life. At the Twelfth Assembly, delegates reiterated the importance of youth participation in the churches. It called upon the member churches to act on the implementation of 20 percent youth participation at all levels, ensuring youth involvement in decision making, planning, strategizing and rights to vote.

In the lead-up to the Assembly, nearly 130 young men and women from LWF member churches met for the youth pre-Assembly in Ondangwa, northern Namibia. From the pre-Assembly message, three key commitments – reviving churches, striving for equity, and education – were named as a call to action for all. “We are happy and proud to share, participate, in this ongoing reformation and strive to carry this commitment into the next 500 years,” the youth pre-Assembly message said.

The year 2017 was a chance to make visible the young Reformers who had launched Living Reformation projects, an expression of reformation in the churches launched by the Global Young Reformers’ Network two years earlier. Projects melded creativity and pragmatism: tree-planting, Reformation-themed postcards, teaching

on salvation rather than materialism, help to ease people out of unemployment, music and art to teach children about peace, church leadership training, efforts to encourage cycling and courses on the dangers of drugs.

Hundreds of young people sang and danced during the Global Commemoration of the Reformation Anniversary, bringing this historic moment to light. This spirit would live on in the World Reformation Exhibition, in Wittenberg, in which young people demonstrated their passion for the LWF.

As a theme that has mobilized youth, climate change was again a focus of attention. The annual United Nations’ climate change talks provided the venue for young people to advocate, network and bring this complex issue into the public space. The LWF sent a delegation of 12 to the COP23 in Bonn. The young people were deeply involved in the ecumenical advocacy and calls for action.

International exposure benefits the churches, as well. In addition to creating awareness of climate change within the churches, many of the Living Reformation projects sought to answer local environmental problems and were endorsed by the entire church.



A new publication, *Youth who made the Lutheran communion*, celebrated 29 young people whose courage and determination shaped the LWF and the communities in which they served.

The theme of peace building was highlighted by Peace Messengers, a new LWF training project, launched in Jerusalem. Member churches nominated a candidate from the church and one from another

denomination of their country to the training session. Participants had to replicate training in their own countries. Soon after, youth from The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria used the training manual to guide them through the topics and elect officials to carry on the process.

Participants in the LWF Peace Messenger training walk through the streets of Jerusalem. Photo: ELCJHL/Ben Gray

Promoting gender justice and women in leadership

The LWF is committed to gender justice. The Twelfth Assembly approved four resolutions on women and gender issues, namely to overcome barriers of full participation to women in ordained ministry, take further steps to implement the LWF gender justice policy, eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, and ensure gender parity in nominations for the offices of LWF president and general secretary. Other resolutions made significant mention of gender justice.

Prior to the Assembly, the women's meetings of the regional pre-Assemblies brought new ideas and energy to the women's network and generated outcomes that impacted the Assembly.

In advocacy, the LWF played the role of convener of issues, such as tackling gender-based violence and developing the ability of member churches to use United Nations mechanisms. By working jointly with ecumenical and funding partners, WICAS strengthened its visibility and opened opportunities for member churches to work closely in the field with NGOs and churches from global partners.

The Women Human Rights Advocacy Training for churches and faith-based organizations held in Geneva attracted 46 new

participants from six ecumenical partners. Evaluations showed faith-based organizations engaged in promoting women's rights highly valued the methodology. Highlights of the training included the chance to take part in the session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and meet staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who led some sessions, as well as the opportunity to build participants skills as they shared perspectives and tools with women and men from other churches and faith organizations working on advocacy issues in the different countries.

Results of the training are most visible through local to global advocacy, such as in Indonesia for the Universal Periodic Review submission and in Guatemala on protecting both human rights defenders and sustainable natural resources.

The LWF took part in the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in New York. A woman leader from the member church in Costa Rica, together with a joint delegation of WICAS, the LWF communion office and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America represented the LWF. The group organized a side event. The faith and



feminism working group, of which WICAS is a member, submitted a written statement.

The ecumenical and inter-religious campaign, “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence,” was run with the slogan, Precious in God’s Eyes. It brought together constituencies from 10 Christian and Muslim platforms. Both Christian and Muslim religious leaders were involved. A strong social media campaign was run for the duration of the campaign, in which dozens of religious leaders were portrayed as committing themselves and encouraging

their communities to overcome the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence.

The LWF analyzed the way in which member churches received and used the gender justice policy by collecting stories of their experiences and ways in which they adapted the policy to suit the context of their church and community. It found the policy was useful for creating a common language among churches and country programs to address gender justice as theological and faith issue.

Bishops, pastors and other women in church leadership positions met in Wittenberg, Germany, at the World Reformation Exhibition in August 2017 to reflect on their experiences and to share advice and support. LWF/Marco Schoeneberg

Committed to ensuring climate justice is realized

Climate justice is a priority for the LWF, and an issue addressed at all levels and in every aspect of its work. For the LWF, climate change is both an issue of creation and of justice, peace and human rights. In 2017, the Twelfth Assembly, addressed the sub-theme *Creation – Not for Sale* and issued a resolution calling on the communion to strengthen climate justice efforts.

Young people have taken leadership in the LWF as it addresses climate change, approaching climate justice as a matter of intergenerational justice. The LWF has sent a youth delegation to the United Nations' largest climate change conference, the Conference of Parties (COP) to the Framework Convention on Climate Change since 2011.

In 2017, 12 LWF youth delegates took part in COP23, which was presided over by Fiji and held in Bonn. In addition to being a means of lifting the voices of young people, the delegation is an expression of the LWF's efforts to raise new climate leaders and support church engagement for climate justice.

As a faith-based organization, the LWF works closely with ecumenical partners for climate justice. With sister organizations, the World Council of Churches and ACT

Alliance, the LWF issued a call for climate justice. Their joint call was that world leaders follow up on the Paris Agreement to enable accountable and ambitious action.

The LWF was also one of many faith organizations behind the COP23 interfaith climate statement, *Walk on Earth Gently*, presented to the conference. The focus on climate action at church level and the strong message of the Twelfth Assembly have built bridges between the global political process and the work of Lutheran churches nationally.

Many churches in the communion are taking steps to limit the impact of climate change and advocate for more eco-just policies. The Living Reformation Projects of the Global Young Reformers' Network focusing on "Creation – Not for Sale" are just some of the many examples of climate action in the communion.

During the COP22 program 2016 in Marrakech, LWF delegates started to address the specific challenge of climate change in Africa. The delegation developed recommendations, which were then adopted in the Africa pre-Assembly in Johannesburg. Among others, they recommended African member churches set

The Interfaith Climate Statement "Walk on Earth Gently" was delivered by faith leaders on bicycles, promoting sustainable lifestyles. Photo: WCC/Sean Hawkey



“ Climate Justice is also a matter of intergenerational justice and about churches acting now.

— LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge

up climate justice projects involving young people.

In 2017, climate project training resulted in five new youth-led climate projects being set up in African member churches: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (education on climate change – Green ELCSA), Evangelical Lutheran

Church in Sierra Leone (plant trees today and save lives tomorrow), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (Save the Pra River), Malagasy Lutheran Church (Scouts – stewards of creation) and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo (“Reboisement et éducation environnementale dans la Province du Haut Katanga”).



We want to see the church involved in climate action because we are suffering very much from climate change already.”

— Cedrick Yumba Kitwa,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo

— From page 19

September – The Retreat of Newly-Elected Church Leaders brings together heads of churches from across the LWF regions to jointly learn about the communion’s work, the role of church leaders and how to support one another.

LWF Youth interfaith program, Peace Messengers, gathers in Jerusalem. A five-day workshop includes sessions on understanding peace and conflict, conflict analysis and conflict resolution.

The 10 LWF member churches in the Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa discuss church engagement in the global SDGs and commemorate the Reformation.

The International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue on Christian identity meets, focusing on Christian identity

The LWF hosts a side event on the fourth review of the human rights situation in Colombia by the Human Rights Council Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

October – The communion commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, looking back to 31 October 1517 when Martin Luther presented his 95 theses.

The LWF offers a live-stream of commemoration worship services from churches and communities in 10 countries on six continents.

During a special service at Westminster Abbey to commemorate 500 years of the Reformation, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the LWF are presented with the Anglican Communion’s affirmation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

To follow up on the LWF Assembly resolution on theological education, educators and leaders of member churches, academic institutions and mission organizations from the seven LWF regions gather for a roundtable meeting.

The LWF reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council on abuses in Indonesia and South Sudan, the promotion of measures to guarantee transitional justice around the world, and the role of faith-based organizations as partners in development work.

November – Twelve young Lutherans from all over the world advocate ecumenically for climate justice at the UN Climate Change Conference COP23. The World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance and the

LWF issue a united call for action on climate justice.

Islamic Relief Worldwide and the LWF renew their landmark commitment to working together on humanitarian causes.

A plenary session of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission under the theme “Legacy of the Reformation – Lutheran and Orthodox approaches” is held

The Asian Church Leadership Conference gathering in the Philippines brings together church leaders from the 54 member churches in Asia.

December – LWF President, Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa, and the seven regional vice-presidents meet Pope Francis at the Vatican. During the audience he expresses gratitude for the deepening ecumenical relationships between the two church traditions.

In his Christmas message, LWF President Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa invites LWF member churches to share the gospel in word and deed, as the shepherds did on the first night of Christmas.

SOUTH SUDAN

Scaling up to address growing emergencies

War and instability in South Sudan continued unabated. Since late 2013, more than two million people have been displaced within the country and another 2.5 million fled to neighboring countries, according to the United Nations. When refugee numbers into northern Uganda spiked in late 2016, the LWF was quick to scale up its response and received more than 200,000 alone last year.

New arrivals at the Moyo settlement in north Uganda peaked in February, by which time LWF staff had not taken a break for months. Once Moyo filled, nearby Lamwo camp was opened. In order to receive the refugees, the LWF emergency hub in Nairobi was mobilized. Among staff deployed was a water engineer. Water had initially been trucked into the camps but the installation of handpumps ensured water could be sourced within the settlements.

Later in the year, the response became truly pan-African, with staff called in from Mauritania to northern Uganda. The number of international and national staff increased. At the same time funding was secured to expand programs in water provision, livelihoods, child protection, shelter, energy and environment and to counter gender-based violence.

In all, the LWF scope of work in neighboring countries of South Sudan included education, child protection, psychosocial support, water sanitation and hygiene, food security and livelihoods support. The Kakuma camp in Kenya received 60,000 people, bringing the number of refugees in Kenya to over 180,000. The LWF response in Kakuma was primarily in education and protection. The refugees valued the schooling offered by the LWF in Kakuma. The small refugee response operation in Ethiopia included livestock and crop production in the camp, and small-scale and business support and small cooperatives, such as village savings and loans schemes.

The LWF continued to work within South Sudan itself. In the Jonglei region another crisis unfolded simultaneously: hunger. The refugee host area of Panrieng was one such area. The LWF offered cash grants for residents to buy the food staple, sorghum, from local markets supplied by traders from Juba and Sudan. Local production had been hampered by conflict and prolonged drought, leaving residents helpless. Without either the food or cash support, residents of the region would have been unable to survive and the crisis was prevented from escalating.

At the Lefori center in north Uganda, where refugees arrive from South Sudan, an LWF worker offers a chair to an elderly woman. The LWF identifies people with special needs and makes sure they receive appropriate relief. LWF/ C. Kästner



The Kakuma camp in Kenya received **60,000** people, bringing the number of refugees in Kenya to over **180,000**.

Working together to address humanitarian needs

Collaboration between the LWF and a member church resulted in access to the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an area that had become engulfed in conflict.

The joint assessment by the LWF and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo (ELCO) in September 2017 made access to the region easier and resulted in a sense of deep respect between authorities and the LWF.

When the ELCO/LWF team entered the Kasai, they heard numerous stories of abuse. They visited a village where fighting had taken place and met displaced people from neighboring towns. The psychological impact on the population was severe. Many people, particularly children, had been forced to serve as soldiers and many civilians faced malnutrition, having had to abandon agricultural plots and flee their homes with nothing.

The crisis left more than 1.4 million people internally displaced by October 2017, while 30,000 sought refuge in Angola.

With the presence of ELCO, authorities better understood the mandate with which the joint assessment team came. Several meetings with community members and

those displaced by fighting provided valuable insight. In addition, meetings with other partners, such as Caritas and local ACT Alliance members took place to identify the gaps for future support.

The relationship was built on a foundation of respect, which created a good atmosphere from the start when humanitarian work began in January 2018. The LWF country representative in the DRC said the visit demonstrated the values of the LWF. The joint visit was an expression of the holistic mission of the church to show compassion to the affected people, while assessing humanitarian needs.

Through an ACT Alliance appeal, the LWF responded. Funding in December meant a new office in Kananga could be opened and laid the ground for psychosocial counseling and nutrition programs focusing on children, lactating and pregnant women, elderly, and people with special needs.

PROJET GNC
ACTIVITE RECREATIVE
SECTEUR PSYCHOSOCIAL



MYANMAR

Promoting peaceful coexistence in Myanmar

In 2017, new clashes between Rakhine Buddhist and Rohingya Muslim communities broke out in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state, and an estimated 655,000 to 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. Thanks to its long term presence in Myanmar, LWF was able to respond to the needs of both groups. The LWF is a key provider of assistance to both Buddhists and Muslims and has promoted peaceful coexistence between the two ethnic groups.

Although primarily humanitarian, LWF intervention in 2017 looked at long-term needs. In Rakhine, LWF Myanmar continued strengthening education for formal and informal schools, including those in camps in Rakhine and Muslim communities.

In 2017, the education program in Rakhine provided primary education to 23,400 children, of whom nearly half were girls, from both communities. The program supported 20 child-friendly spaces, 48 temporary learning spaces, 16 informal schools and 24 government schools for the host community. A total of 1,370 teachers were trained in 2017 and almost all students moved up to the next grade level.

LWF Myanmar also carried out camp coordination and management, providing

shelter to both camp residents and host communities. In 2017, the LWF provided funds to build a 500m road leading to an IDP camp. The focus on both displaced people and host Rakhine communities not only provided assistance where needed, regardless of circumstances, but also encouraged peaceful coexistence.

In 2017, the LWF worked with villages in Myanmar's poorest state, Chin, to promote human rights. In Kayin state, a post-conflict area with some regions controlled by the government and others by non-state actors, LWF community workers faced the challenge of navigating between these political bodies.

As part of ACT Alliance, LWF Myanmar continued to support survivors of the 2008 Cyclone Nargis. A key achievement of 2017 was handing over programs in the Delta State to the local community, as part of the LWF's exit strategy. Fifty villages in the Ayeyarwady Delta acquired funding for projects from the British Government. Some women's savings groups registered under the Ministry of Cooperatives and are likewise pursuing funds.

A resident of Ohn Taw Gyi camp for displaced Muslims in Rakhine state speaks during a workshop.
Photo: Phyo Aung Hein



“The LWF is a key provider of assistance to both Buddhists and Muslims and has promoted peaceful coexistence between the two ethnic groups.”

Creating resilience and hope for the future

Work in the Middle East continued to focus on expanding the reach of the LWF, while promoting efficient and creative ways of supporting communities. Most notably, a second LWF office was inaugurated in Amman, Jordan, in November, hosting the regional LWF hub for emergency response, the ACT Middle East and North Africa office and the Dutch Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation.

Early in 2017, the LWF expanded its Iraq activities to the Nineveh Plains after its liberation from ISIS to support residents who survived the occupation, internally displaced who returned home, and people recently displaced from Mosul. Throughout 2017, programs focused on building resilience through mental health and psychosocial support, a business rehabilitation program and vocational training. The LWF also opened access to drinkable water and provided hygiene goods. The work of the LWF in Iraq is multi-cultural and multi-religious, led by the community and designed to contribute to social cohesion.

Of the nearly 657,000 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan, more than 80 percent live below the poverty line. The LWF worked in coordination with the Jordanian govern-

ment, local authorities, businesses and community organizations to improve the lives of Syrian and Iraqi refugees and vulnerable Jordanians through education, psychosocial support and livelihoods support.

The year 2017 saw the launch of a European Union-financed livelihoods project, the first of its kind in Jordan and one particularly suited to this middle-income country. It enabled Jordanian farmers to build water catchment and irrigation systems to increase their yield. In return, farmers committed to hiring Syrian refugees to work on their farms, thereby providing refugees with valuable experience, steady income and a basis to obtain a work permit. In all, 40 Syrian farm workers were provided work permits.

Self-help groups and small business start-ups for women were other components. Small groups of women were assisted in setting up businesses in sewing, handicraft, catering, and dairy and other food production. As well as receiving equipment and start-up grants, the LWF helped them write business plans and marketing strategies. While obstacles to registering home-based businesses remain – for Syrian refugees in particular – this type of work is considered practical and appropriate.



In Jerusalem, the LWF's Augusta Victoria Hospital finished renovating its outpatient oncology department. With equipment upgrades and better workflow, the hospital could receive more patients. A new outpatient center for adult dialysis added 16 new dialysis stations.

In addition to noting that the long-standing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians remains unresolved, the Twelfth Assembly resolution on Israel-Palestine expressed ap-

preciation for the life-saving work of LWF ministries, including the AVH. It called upon member churches, governments and inter-governmental bodies to continue supporting these ministries in their humanitarian service to the Palestinian people.

Football training for girls at the Za'atri camp in Jordan where the LWF runs services. Photo: Christian Jepsen



FEDERACIÓN

Standing up for human rights defenders

The signing of the peace agreement at the end of 2016 brought hope of an end to the conflict in Colombia, but the situation remains fragile. Attacks on human rights defenders are on the rise. Civilians defending their land from the operations of extractive industries face some of the greatest risks.

The LWF in Colombia is represented by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia and the LWF country program. They work together but have distinct roles promoting peace within the country.

As a respected humanitarian and human rights organization, the LWF brings its international profile and credibility to support Colombian human rights defenders and community organizations. At the same time, it brings a global presence as a humanitarian organization recognized by the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the European Union. The presence of the LWF helps ensure international attention continues to focus on the critical situation in Colombia.

The humanitarian presence of the LWF gives a credible entrée to carry out human rights work. One area of engagement is with community organizations representing

indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The focus of this work is often on land or territorial rights, such as access to land, natural resources, the environment but also identity and culture. Recognition of identity as an indigenous Colombian is as much a human right as disputes over land.

In 2017, the LWF was involved in reconciliation between ex-combatants and communities that suffered the effects of the war. At times, the LWF can take a role as an international organization but at other times it is more effective for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia to give voice to these concerns as a national actor.

The LWF fights impunity offered to offenders who commit violence against human rights defenders. With support from the LWF, Colombian civil society organizations are raising their voices to ensure human rights violations do not go unnoticed. A report to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process by civil society organizations, with support of the LWF, speaks of killings of human rights defenders, corruption and a failure to guarantee human rights to ethnic communities.

The Chicué River, in northwestern Colombia's Chocó district, along which the LWF provides humanitarian assistance. Photo: Church of Sweden/Thérèse Naomi Jonsson

Promoting human rights for all

In 2017, the LWF continued to promote human rights for all, primarily through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This unique mechanism aims to improve the human rights situation of UN member states by reviewing their human rights situation every four years.

The LWF supported Indonesian NGOs to submit a UPR report focusing on freedom of religion or belief. The LWF continued to encourage coalitions in Nepal and Myanmar to develop strategies to ensure their governments swiftly implemented UPR recommendations.

The LWF further supported stakeholders in Angola and Mozambique to ensure land rights recommendations, as part of the UPR process, were implemented.

South Sudan and Uganda, the LWF organized in-country workshops on the UPR for civil society organizations, UN agencies and government ministries. In order to promote regional experience sharing and to replicate best practice by member states, the LWF brought civil society organizations together in Kampala, Uganda. Some leading members of South Sudan's civil society UPR coalition participated. "The Uganda UPR process provides a real learning opportunity for South Sudan," James David Kolok, a South Sudanese civil society lead-

er, said. "We thank the LWF for this opportunity and look forward to doing things differently in South Sudan after this experience."

The LWF also enabled human rights defenders from different countries to join lobby platforms and to meet stakeholders in European capitals.

The LWF expanded its global humanitarian advocacy work by engaging in global initiatives such as the Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration. For the first time, country program representatives, in this case from Kenya and Ethiopia, took part in the consultation between the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR and NGOs.

The LWF in the past year supported the participation of program representatives from Angola and Mozambique in the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights. The participants also spoke at a side-event organized with ecumenical partners ACT Alliance, DanChurchAid, Church of Sweden and Bread for the World.

Theatre is used to highlight the threat of land-grabbing in Samaria village, Angola. The LWF helps Angolans understand their land rights by holding workshops on land rights, women's empowerment, schools and literacy classes for adults.
Photo: LWF/ C. Kästner

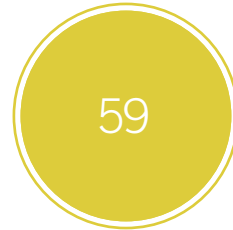


“ We thank the LWF for this opportunity and look forward to doing things differently in South Sudan after this experience.”





Geneva staff



International staff



National staff



Refugee staff and
volunteers

Faithful stewardship of resources

The LWF Assembly elected a new Council as its governing body between Assemblies. In total, 48 new Council members were elected, as well as a new President, Rev. Dr Panti Filibus Musa, Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. Seven new vice-presidents and the chair of the finance committee were also elected. The new Council held its first meeting in Windhoek, before leaving Namibia.

LWF Finances

This summary of income and expenditure provides the financial highlights for the year ended 31 December 2017.

Income and expenditure

In 2017, the LWF raised 166 million EUR to support the work of the LWF. This income was derived from member churches, related organizations, the United Nations, the European Union, government funding sources, individual donors, and other partners.

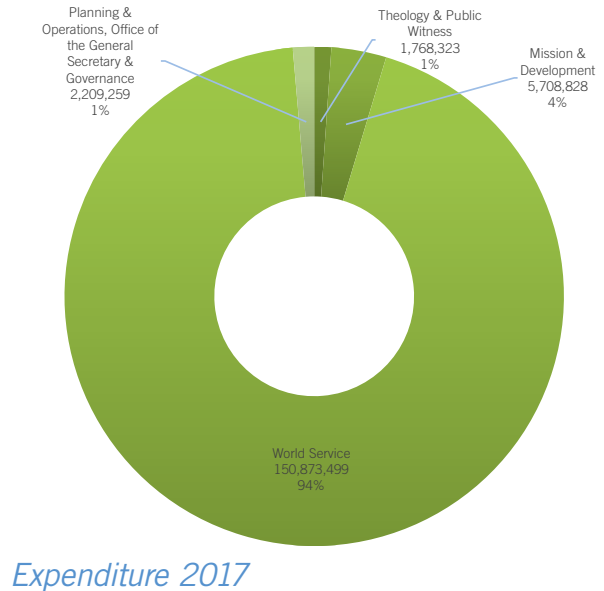
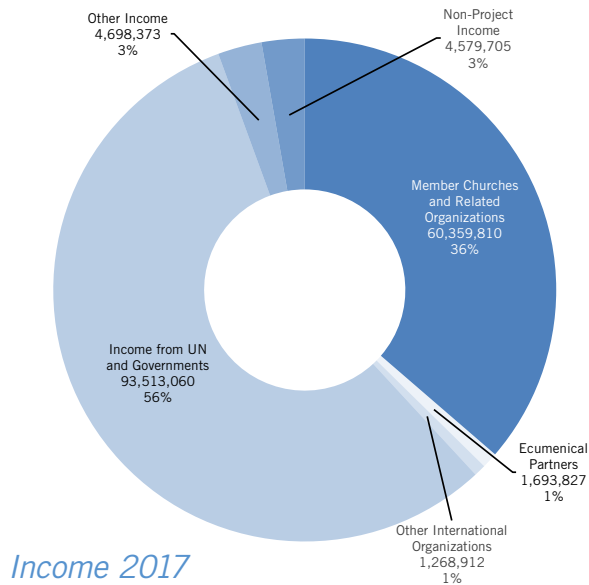
In 2017, membership income increased again to EUR 2.92 million. A total

of EUR 2.73 million was also received to cover the cost of the LWF Twelfth Assembly. Churches and other partners are to be congratulated for rising to this additional financial challenge.

In 2017, the LWF spent EUR 163 million to implement its strategic priorities. Overall annual expenditure grew from EUR 142 million in 2016 to EUR 163 million in 2017, representing a 15 percent increase in program expenditure.

This increase was driven mainly by increased funding designated for LWF humanitarian response, revenue from expanded patient services provided by the Augusta Victoria Hospital, in Jerusalem, and additional funding for mission and Assembly work.

The 2017 financial statements are issued in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards and Swiss Code of Obligations without any audit qualifications.



LWF Endowment Fund

The LWF Endowment Fund was established in 1999 to help secure a financially sustainable future for the LWF. Earned interest from the Fund is used to secure the continuity of the work of the LWF.

The value of the fund at the end of 2017 was CHF 16.5 million. The ambition remains to reach our target of CHF 20 million. In 2017 the fund distributed CHF 364,926 to support LWF programs. An independent Board of Trustees oversees the

endowment fund. Trustees are appointed from LWF member churches from each region.

Gifts and legacies from individual, churches and organizations are welcomed with much gratitude.

LWF Endowment Fund
 P.O. Box 2100
 CH-1211 Geneva 2
 Switzerland
 Email: info@lutheranworld.org
 Telephone: +41-22 7916 455

On his visit to eastern Chad LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge visited the Seeds for Solutions initiative where refugees from the Djabal refugee camp and villagers from Koutoufou work together and grow peanuts, sorghum grain, garlic and onions.



Working with partners

One of the fundamental values of the LWF is that of working with others, in mutual support and accompaniment.

In practice, this means working in harmony with member churches, donors, ecumenical partners, consortia, government, non-government and other local, national, regional and international bodies. This underlying principle remains a fundamental part of our way of working.

Both new and renewed memoranda of understanding were signed in 2017 with different partners as a shared commitment to working together on our shared agenda.

We value the strength that different partners bring to our shared mission. We are grateful for the strength of these partnerships that enable us to deliver our humanitarian and emergency relief work, advocacy on human rights, work with member churches, programs on theological understanding, ecumenical and inter-faith relationships.

Our partnership working is achieved through trust and collaboration, in some cases developed over many years. The LWF welcomes new partnership opportunities.

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Route de Ferney 150
P. O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

info@lutheranworld.org

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a communion in Christ living and working
together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled
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