

# Leave no one behind

Annual Report 2020



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

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Liberated by God's grace,  
a communion in Christ  
living and working together  
for a just, peaceful, and  
reconciled world.

*LWF Vision*

At Minawao refugee camp, northern Cameroon, the LWF collaborates with other partners to support people who have fled northeastern Nigeria. LWF project coordinator Guilaine Tshatieu (right) and refugees' committee chairperson Luka Isaac. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



LWF President Archbishop Dr Pantil  
Filibus Musa. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

## Leave no one behind

During unprecedented times, we are reminded of our calling to live and work together, and offer hope.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) began 2020 as it does most years: country and emergency programs continued to support people in need, churches continued to witness vibrantly, and Communion Office staff planned activities in line with LWF's strategy.

There were reports of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19), but no sense of alarm yet. The situation changed as COVID-19 spread across the globe. Physical distancing, hygiene measures, and lockdowns were introduced widely; wearing masks around others became normal. Worldwide, people followed rising numbers with increasing worry, seeing how the virus spread at an alarming rate.

We saw the devastating impact on health and economies. Disparity, the gap between rich and poor, increased. Some nations could maintain a strong economy, had robust healthcare systems, and they secured vaccines. Others struggled. But the virus respected no borders. No nation could solve this alone. Only by coming together in global solidarity could

we address COVID-19. Only together can we ensure no one is left behind.

LWF embodies this kind of multilateral engagement by bringing churches from around the world, to live and work together to make a difference.

LWF responded quickly to the new realities of COVID-19: strengthening communion relations, continuing programmatic work with member churches, empowering and supporting church response in local communities, supporting displaced people and host communities, and advocating for justice and peace.


In 2020 the LWF's vision to be a communion working for "a just, peaceful, and reconciled world," guided us. We invite you to read this report and learn about LWF's work during that unique year.

*Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa,  
President*

*Rev. Dr Martin Junge,  
General Secretary*



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



## Communion as a gift that unites

Faced with uncertainty, churches found unique ways to be united in holistic mission to proclaim God's word, serve the suffering neighbor and advocate for justice, peace and reconciliation.

As COVID-19 isolation mandates became the standard, churches found ways to unite in times of transformation. The European Church Leadership Consultation convened online for the first time in September with about 100 participants from LWF's member churches in Europe to discuss the theme, "Being church in times of transformation."

Member churches in Africa also moved their annual leadership meeting to an online format. Themed "Being church in challenging times," several

delegates expressed gratitude for the gift of unity, for using technology and the ability to be in solidarity "in the midst" of a global health pandemic.

The Latin America and the Caribbean region established protocols on being open to alternative ways of staying connected to congregations. Under the theme, "Sensitize churches on regulations related to the pandemic and issues against violence," 15 church leaders shared ongoing challenges and lessons learned during the pandemic.

"The role of the church is to bring people together."

– Presiding Bishop Chemist Faindi,  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe,  
during February 2020 LWF solidarity visit.

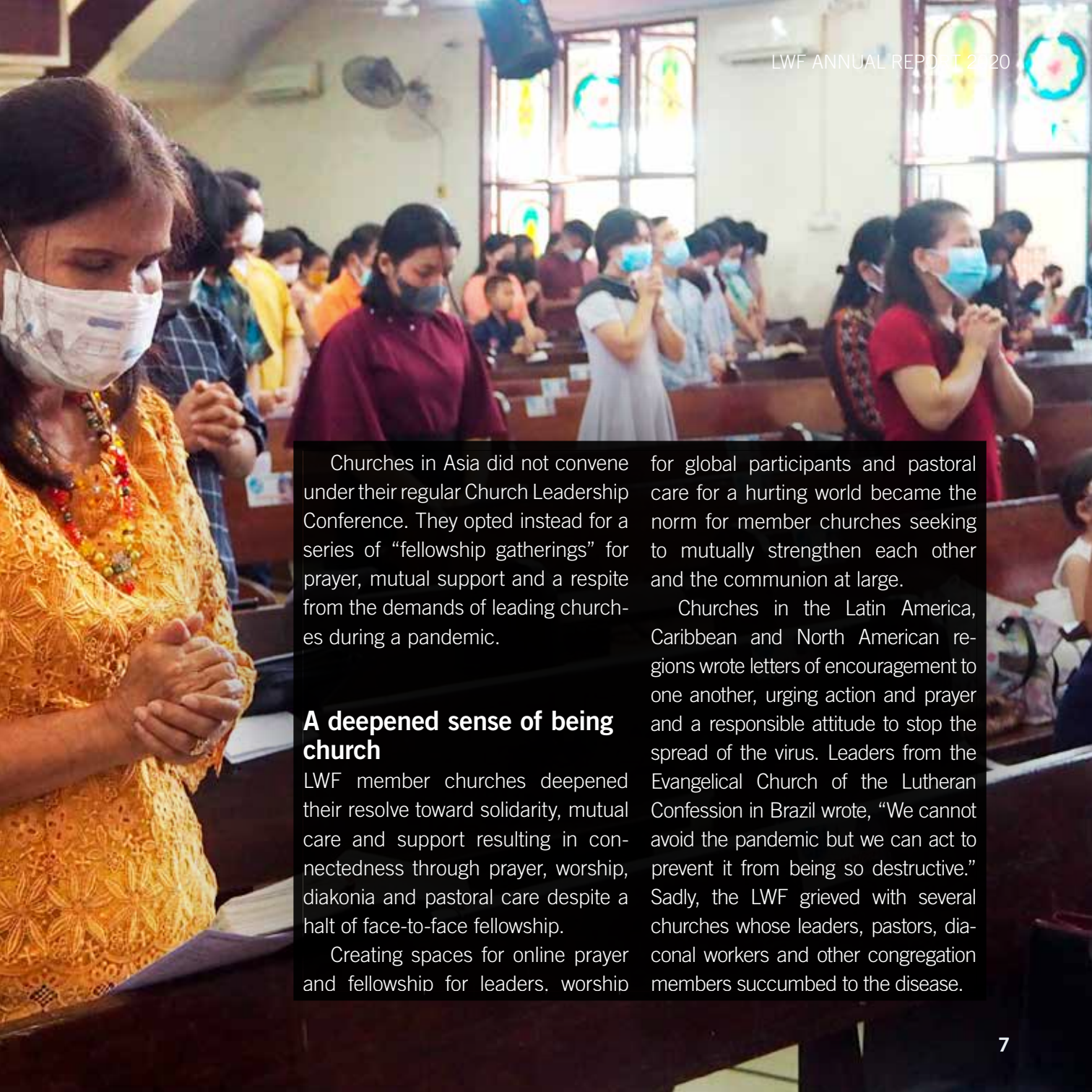


A member of the Bulawayo congregation, Zimbabwe, receives Holy Communion during Sunday service. Photo: LWF/A. Danielsson



Many churches have adapted their worship life to COVID-19 restrictions. Congregants during a Sunday service at the GKPI Resort Padang Bulan congregation in Medan, Indonesia. Photo: LWF/Tetty Aritonang





Churches in Asia did not convene under their regular Church Leadership Conference. They opted instead for a series of “fellowship gatherings” for prayer, mutual support and a respite from the demands of leading churches during a pandemic.

### **A deepened sense of being church**

LWF member churches deepened their resolve toward solidarity, mutual care and support resulting in connectedness through prayer, worship, diakonia and pastoral care despite a halt of face-to-face fellowship.

Creating spaces for online prayer and fellowship for leaders, worship

for global participants and pastoral care for a hurting world became the norm for member churches seeking to mutually strengthen each other and the communion at large.

Churches in the Latin America, Caribbean and North American regions wrote letters of encouragement to one another, urging action and prayer and a responsible attitude to stop the spread of the virus. Leaders from the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil wrote, “We cannot avoid the pandemic but we can act to prevent it from being so destructive.” Sadly, the LWF grieved with several churches whose leaders, pastors, diaconal workers and other congregation members succumbed to the disease.

# Communion wide response to COVID-19

When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March 2020, the LWF acted swiftly, taking on shared responsibility to serve people in need.

LWF member churches and their related organizations provided additional funds so that churches could offer protection and basic daily needs to congregation and community members. World Service adapted its operational work to respond to the first stages of the crisis and protect front-line staff and the people the emergency and country programs support.

In April, the LWF established the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund (RRF), which became an instrument to express solidarity in tangible ways. Numerous churches, related agencies and private donors contributed to assist those in more severely affected countries. Through the RRF, 75 churches in 48 countries in Africa, Asia, Central Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean supported thousands of vulnerable people in their congregations and isolated communities through 108 RRF-supported projects. By the end of 2020 the RRF had received more than EUR 550,000.

Thanks to this solidarity, congregation and community members had access to food and medical assistance, safe working and living conditions for seniors and care providers in nursing homes, and hygiene and sanitation kits to prevent the spread of the virus. Other churches received communication tools for online services and pastoral care. Many churches also addressed increased cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

Through a separate COVID-19 Response Fund for World Service, the LWF supported almost 450,000 people in 22 countries. The fund was used to train staff and teachers, raise awareness in communities, improve water and sanitation infrastructure, distribute soap, masks and other protective equipment and establish home-based livelihood activities.

The images that follow offer some insights.



Face masks made in Indonesia became the face of the LWF “Wear it, Share it” campaign. They were created by a church training center that assists low-income and at-risk women.

Photo: BLK HKI/Rumah Eco-Theology

Staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, wearing LWF-branded face masks. Photo: ELCIC



Churches involved in RRF



RRF projects



In Cheboksary, western Russia, Rev. Konstantin Subbotin (left) and fellow youth from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCI), provided free personal protective equipment to institutions such as orphanages, old people's homes and hospitals. Photo: ELCI



Euros received

Through its network of 12 congregations and 108 preaching stations, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (ELCG) focused on its most vulnerable members: the elderly and widowed families. Photo: ELCG/Prosper Atiiga



Countries with RRF projects

The LWF adapted its country and emergency program work to protect frontline staff and the people they serve.

The Central America program supported scholarship students of the Salvadoran Lutheran University with food and hygiene kits, to keep them in school. LWF/Z. Urbina



people assisted by  
World Service



The LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem which cares for vulnerable patients, set up tents outside the building to check people seeking treatment and visitors for COVID-19. Photo: LWF/S. Weinbrenner

## Lutheran identity process enters second phase

The LWF accompanied member churches in reflecting on being church in these times.

During 2020, the Lutheran Identity study process moved into its second phase. This program answers LWF's strategic objective to nurture biblical reflection that articulates understanding of the Lutheran communion's theological identity, and what it means to belong to this global body of churches that witness in diverse contexts. The LWF hosted monthly webinars on "Being Lutheran" that engaged hundreds of participants in trans-contextual theological reflection about what it means to be Lutheran today. Each webinar explored different topics that have been identified—youth, women and Indigenous voices—and offered trans-contextual reflection on theological education and formation, spirituality, diakonia, liturgy, and more.

Theological education is central to LWF's identity and heritage. The Steering Committee of the Theological Education and Formation network supported small-scale projects in countries in eastern and southern Africa, and in India, and facilitated dialogue among theological educators, institutes and member churches engaged in theological education across the communion.

Lutheran tradition is also expressed in worship and affirmation of the well-being of creation. As a member of the ecumenical steering committee of the global network that connects Christians around the world for prayer and joint action, the LWF published the *Season of Creation Celebration Guide*, and hosted two webinars and online prayer services.



“To be part of the Lutheran church is an exciting road for our people [...]. As native people, we are Old Testament people, because we know we have a direct relationship with our God and Creator.”

– LWF webinar speaker, Rev. Joann Conroy, President,  
American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association.

VIBRANT WITNESS

## Joint work on reception of ecumenical dialogues

LWF's ecumenical relations continued to make inroads. Work was centered on implementing *The Lutheran World Federation's Commitments on the Ecumenical Way to Ecclesial Communion*.

LWF's commitment to being an ecclesial communion recognizes the global reality and various forms of ecumenism. The call for renewal of dialogues continues with a special focus on the challenges of reception, implementation and pastoral responsibility.

In the multilateral arena, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) Consultation Steering Committee, composed of ecumenical officers from the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, and Reformed communions, worked together to expand and implement that

landmark agreement, especially its reception. New translations of the JDDJ, its accompanying documents, and the Notre Dame Consultation Statement were published in French, Spanish, and Italian, in addition to the original German and English text. A study guide is being developed for the reception process.

A first-ever virtual Lutheran-Orthodox meeting took place on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. As a further sign of deepening Lutheran-Catholic relations, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Martin Junge wrote a preface to Pope Francis' book titled *Il cielo sulla*



Photo: LWF/S. Galla





“It is exciting to explore other models of ecumenical discourse that take into account the global reality of the church and a variety of pastoral and social challenges.”

*Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, LWF  
Assistant General Secretary  
for Ecumenical Relations.*

*terra: Amare e servire per trasformare il mondo* (Heaven on Earth: Loving and Serving in order to Transform the World). The preface recalls significant milestones on the journey ‘From Conflict to Communion,’ reflecting on “the liberating grace of baptism” as a “prophetic announcement of healing and unity in the midst of our wounded world.”

A new Anglican Lutheran International Commission on Unity and Mission (ALICUM) also began work, pinpointing regions of the world where cooperation and shared witness can be stepped up.

A report on the recently concluded trilateral dialogue with Catholics and Mennonites on Baptism was also published, with each partner pledging to reconsider historically assumed positions and reflect on “convictions held, gifts received and challenges accepted.”

## Proclaiming truth in the public space


Doing theology publicly involves listening to the cry of the wounded and speaking truth amid falsehood.

In times when identity politics is increasingly creating division in many places around the world, religious teachings and constituencies are in constant danger of being manipulated for political purposes.

New connections and collaborative potentials emerged from mutual learning throughout the year. The LWF organized several public webinars on constructive approaches of being Christian and people of faith in a world often dominated by rising regressive voices, such as religious nationalism and populism. In 2020 over 800 participants from LWF's member churches, theological institutions, ecumenical, and interfaith networks contributed their questions and concerns, as well as good practices, lessons and vision. The variety



Photo: Jon Tyson/Unsplash



of speakers at each webinar, offered insights that help to deepen theological reflection and timely response to issues that touch on people's well-being in different settings.

One of the topics featured was how digitalization, numerous online sources of information and the changing media landscape affect the way people relate and communicate. Feedback from participants affirmed the critical role of churches in truth-telling to counter fake news.

Seminaries and universities are using the webinars' output and other LWF resources to supplement their curriculum. Churches too, refer to these discussions in deliberations on interfaith relations. Pastors, lay leaders, women, and youth are

doing theology publicly through new and innovative ways. Above all, a public webinar invites views and opinions that could serve as inspiration for church leaders and other Christians engaged in the witness of the church in the public space.

Member churches could draw from the publication *Loving Your Neighbor*, an interfaith reader exploring some of the key issues at the heart of Christians' encounter with believers from other faith communities.

Together with partners such as the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, the LWF also highlighted how the lived experience of youth contributes to peace building and interfaith solidarity.

“The church has a responsibility to speak truth that empowers for life.”

*Bishop Gilbert Filter, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church)*

## Providing stability during sudden shocks

The local rootedness of churches facilitates sustained response and stability in rapidly changing circumstances.

As member churches addressed the pandemic's impact on the most vulnerable people, the LWF continued to equip them and strengthen capacity for their holistic mission. Thanks to a new LWF Policy on Member Church Projects, it was possible to swiftly support emerging needs through rapid response projects. Within weeks of its establishment, the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund (RRF) became an instrument for churches to express solidarity in tangible ways. At the same time, a diverse range of LWF-supported member church projects—emergency preparedness and response, care for creation, livelihood initiatives, women's and youth empowerment, and more—continued to provide hands-on

solutions to pressing needs in congregations and the wider community.

Preliminary findings from a survey on the reception and use of LWF's Gender Justice Policy revealed that most churches have taken full ownership of its implementation by setting up internal structures and allocating requisite human and financial resources.

Lutheran diaconal actors in Europe concluded a three-year cycle of workshops, with plans to offer training materials on the characteristics of “a

“They are looking to the church with great hope to start a new way of living and coping with the pandemic.”

— *Rev. Joseph Soren, President, Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church*





Through its Lutheran Community Welfare Society, the Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church distributed food items to casual laborers who were stranded due to the lockdown. Photo: LCWS/ Roshan Soren

convivial church” to the wider communion.

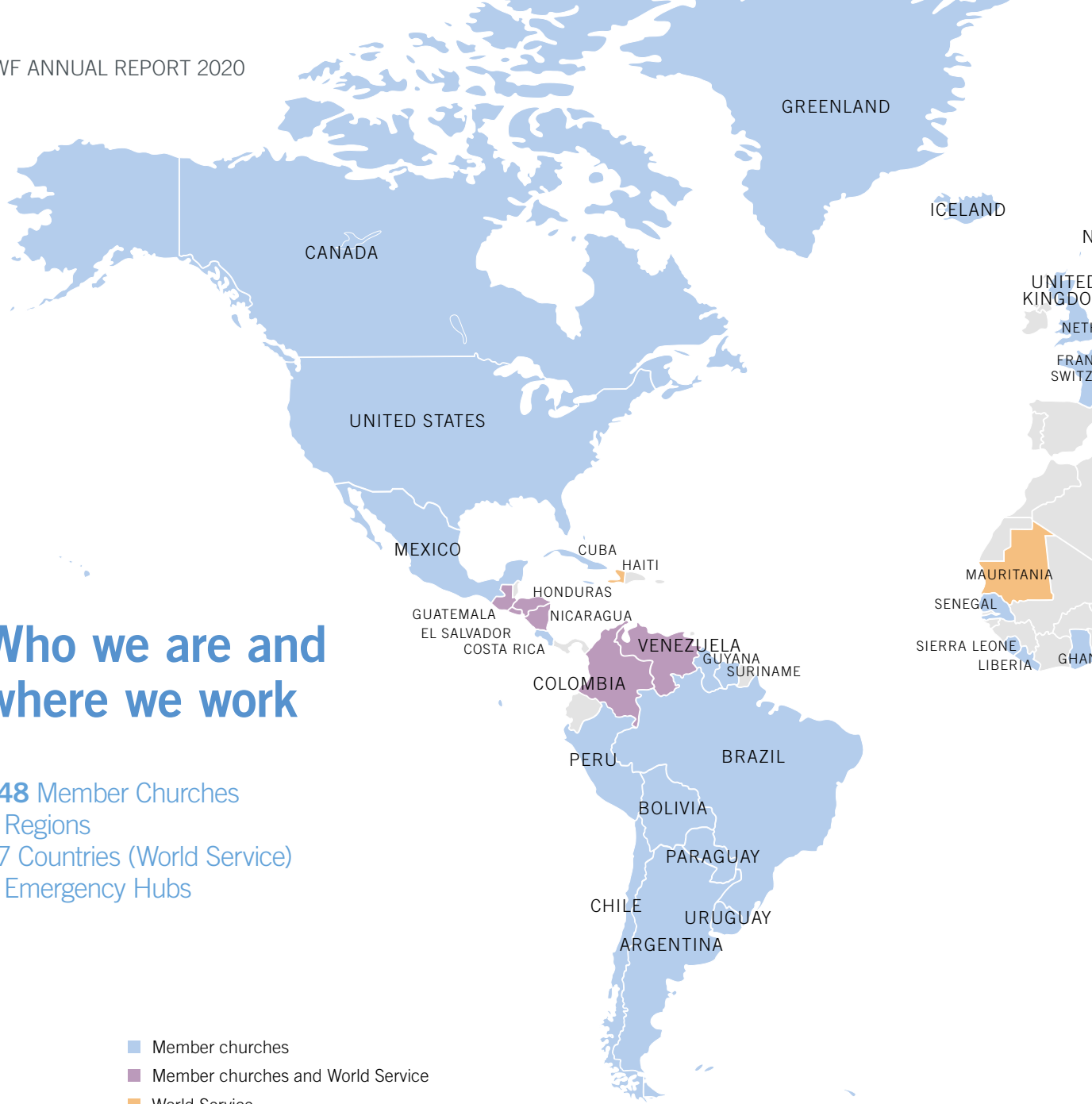
In 2020, the LWF granted a total of 70 scholarships—38 for diakonia and 32 for theology—with the goal to strengthen church identity and sustainability, empower individuals and promote equality and peace in society.

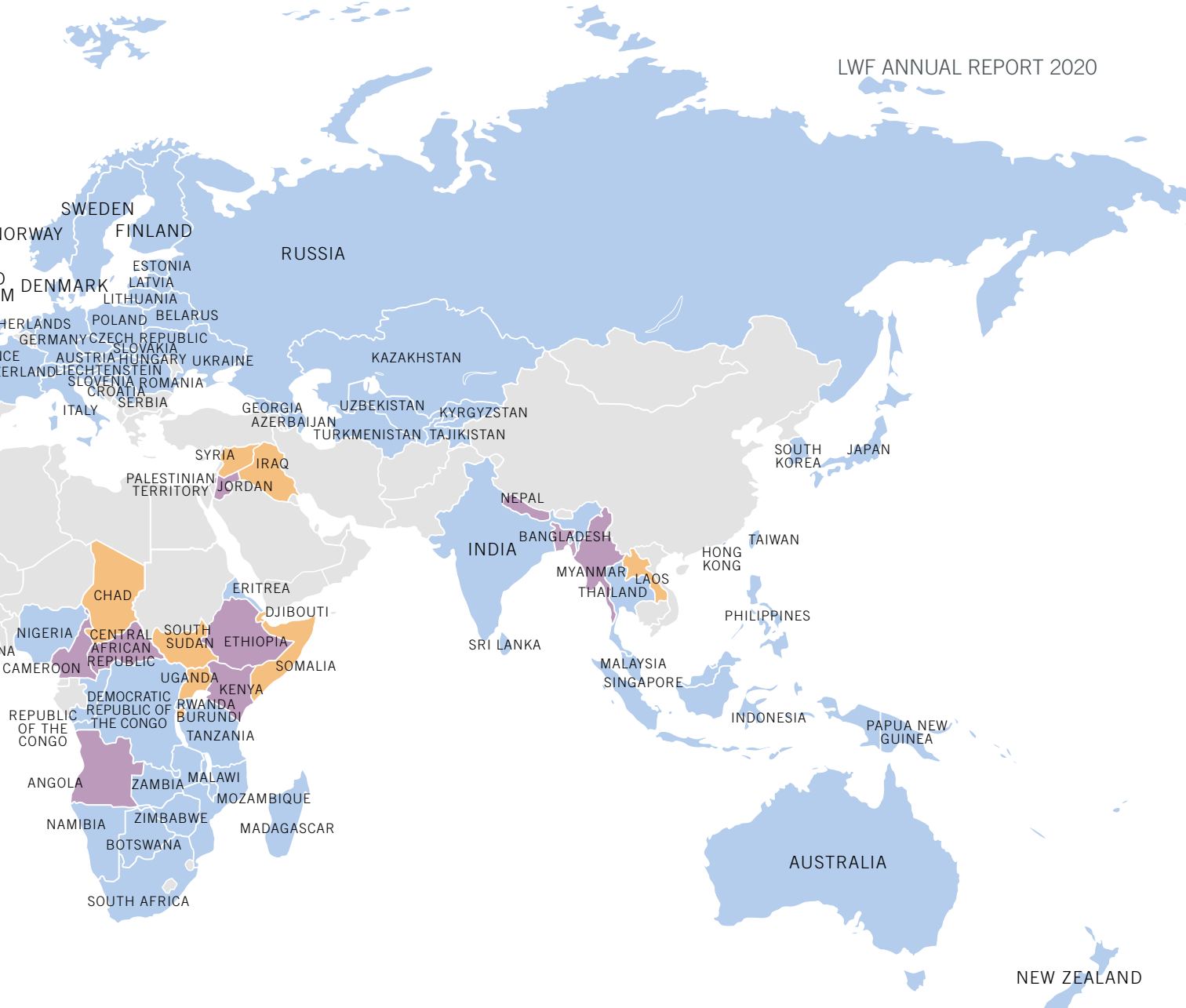
Regional online meetings bringing together more than 120 members of the Global Young Reformers Network in Asia, Europe and Africa, emphasized recognition of young people’s gifts should not be limited to youth activities and their leadership roles should be integrated in the church.

# Who we are and where we work

**148** Member Churches  
7 Regions  
27 Countries (World Service)  
5 Emergency Hubs

- Member churches
- Member churches and World Service
- World Service





A large blue banner is suspended from a metal truss structure. The banner features the text "#TimeForAction" in a white sans-serif font, with "IS NOW" below it in a larger, bold, light blue sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a faint, stylized logo consisting of three overlapping leaf-like shapes. In the foreground, the backs of two women's heads and the profile of a man's head are visible, suggesting an event or conference setting.

#TimeForAction  
**IS NOW**



PROMOTING HUMAN DIGNITY, JUSTICE AND PEACE

## A more effective local to global advocacy

Faith-based organizations are increasingly recognized as vital partners in building sustainable societies and working for justice and peace.

In 2020, the LWF established Action for Justice as its new advocacy hub. The goal is to facilitate a more coordinated approach of bringing the experience of LWF's member churches and country programs to inform and influence policies, legislation and decisions at local, national, regional and global levels, especially the United Nations (UN).

The four priority areas are:

**Climate justice:** Care for creation is a core LWF calling, and climate change is a matter of justice and human rights. Emphasis is on protecting the most vulnerable from the impacts of climate change, holding governments accountable to their commitments, promoting intergenerational justice and interfaith collaboration.

LWF successfully encouraged young people in the member church-

es to climate action and supported 18 small-scale climate projects in all the seven regions. Churches received assistance to develop advocacy plans for areas that were most impacted by climate change.

Together with its partners under the Geneva Interfaith Forum and the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the LWF co-hosted webinars to build capacity and increase advocacy of faith-based actors toward the 2021 climate conference, COP26, in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Joint statements to the UN Human Rights Council called for establishment of the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change and recognition of the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all.

**Human rights' protection:** LWF's advocacy work involves holding governments accountable for their human rights obligations.

Proximity to local communities through churches and country programs, and to the UN in Geneva and New York, brings seldom heard voices to a global level. Using its local to global rights-based approach, the LWF engaged with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which examines the situation of human rights in member countries. Churches and country programs collected information from local communities, which was submitted as statements to the UN Human Rights Council sessions on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Israel/Palestine and South Sudan, among other countries. In addition, LWF engaged directly with other UN bodies including the Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Special Rapporteurs on Eritrea, Internally Displaced Persons and Freedom of Religion or Belief.

As a result of its work in human rights and humanitarian response, the LWF was named co-chair of the Global Protection Cluster's task team, alongside the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Soka Gakkai International.

**Gender justice and women's empowerment:** Promoting greater gender justice in the church and within wider society took on new urgency in 2020 amid increased pushback on women's rights, escalating gender-based inequality, and surging domestic violence during the lockdowns.

Following cancellation of the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the LWF issued a statement highlighting the urgency of gender justice advocacy.

The annual Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training in partnership with five faith-based organizations, brought together over 70 women and men from around the world. It featured practical ways of engaging with international gender justice mechanisms such as CEDAW, UPR and in-country processes to demand government accountability.



CIA LA TERRITORIZACIÓN  
 LA PAZ DESDE EL CUERPO CON  
 JOZ Y LA PALABRA DE LAS MUJERES  
 FACE... VEREDA: LA YUCA...

Through webinars and a practical campaign pack during the 16 Days of activism to end gender-based violence, the LWF encouraged churches and country programs to deepen prayer and worship, education and fund-raising initiatives to increase awareness, prevention and support for survivors.

**Peacebuilding and interfaith engagement:** LWF's advocacy serves as a catalyst for peace through stronger collaboration with faith-based organizations and human rights advocates.

The economic and financial impact of COVID-19 was discussed during several webinars. In addition, the LWF and partner ecumenical organizations under the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), called on the G20 forum to provide urgently needed debt relief for countries struggling to cope with the pandemic. Throughout 2020, the LWF worked closely with the UNHCR and later UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to emphasize multi-stakeholder collaboration in complex political contexts when it comes to protecting refugees including children.

An LWF project in Arauca, Colombia, combines human rights' education and livelihoods' support to empower women. Photo: LWF Colombia

## Protecting people in need and frontline workers

In 2020, LWF's international humanitarian and development arm adjusted most of its work to essential services for people in need, and protecting frontline staff.

The World Service COVID-19 Response Fund supported almost half a million people in 22 countries. This assistance was used to train staff and teachers, raise awareness in communities, improve water and sanitation infrastructure, distribute soap, face masks and other protective equipment.

As lockdowns left more and more people without income, World Service also distributed food parcels and supported home-based livelihood activities. Funds were used to make study material available as schools were closed, and to keep the students engaged.

At the same time, LWF World Service raised awareness about the long-term effects of the pandemic. World Refugee Day became an opportunity to highlight the effects of lockdowns on those who lost their homes. International Day of the Girl Child focused on the alarming rise of early marriages, teen pregnancies and gender-based violence, while also featuring girls' determination to continue education. Mental health was a key subject On World Humanitarian Day, and a task force was established to address immediate and long-term effects of the virus.





The COVID-19 movement restrictions and other government measures significantly impacted the livelihoods of many vulnerable families. In northern Iraq, the LWF team distributed food aid. Photo: LWF Iraq



Education was one of the topics for International Day of the Girl Child. At the LWF-run temporary learning space in Myanmar, head teacher Daw Ma Saw Myint tries to keep adolescent girls in school. Photo: LWF/S. Thandar

## Combining skills and relief assistance

LWF's humanitarian work follows an integrated approach, combining short-term relief with long-term development work.

As many conflicts lead to protracted crises, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities, and people at risk need quality services, protection, and opportunities to rebuild their livelihoods.

At the onset of an acute crisis, public services are often the first to break down. LWF provides quality services, and integrates the host communities in finding sustainable solutions. The work in Nepal included water and sanitation, whereas food distribution was the main focus in Northern Iraq. In Djibouti, Kenya, Myanmar and South Sudan, more than 200,000 refugee and IDP students gained access to education.

The COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted livelihoods in the countries where LWF works. Border closures, restrictions of movement and access

to markets hit vulnerable families the hardest. Some of the livelihoods' work was shifted to emergency interventions, such as cash grants and vouchers, and distribution of food parcels. Effort was increased to make communities more resilient and able to adapt to new circumstances, and recover on their own.

Emphasis on protection focused on strengthening community-based structures such as women's groups and village development committees, girls and boy's mentorship programs and peace community groups.

In Kenya and Somalia, the LWF conducted a gender impact assessment among refugees that was used to improve the working environment. The study revealed alarming results including increased workload for women, more violence against women and children, and neglect of people living with disabilities.



## Humanitarian emergencies – beyond COVID-19

While COVID-19 prevention added a new layer of work, LWF's assistance continued for emergencies that risked being eclipsed by the pandemic.

The year was marked by a rising number of natural and human-made disasters. The LWF served nearly 2.5 million people comprising refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups in 27 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East.

Latin America and the Caribbean experienced an unusually high number of devastating tropical storms. In Venezuela and Colombia, civil unrest and displacement put a strain on vulnerable communities. In these countries, the close collaboration with LWF member churches facilitated better coordination of emergency relief assistance and pastoral care to affected families.

In the Central African Republic and Uganda, post-election violence put severe challenges on LWF's work. In Cameroon, internal conflict in the

country's western region, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the north led to an increased number of refugees and IDPs. In Ethiopia, where communities hard-hit by climate change effects were battling a plague of desert locusts, conflict escalated in the Tigray region.

In the Middle East, support continued for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians through community centers, camps and host communities. In Jerusalem, the Augusta Victoria Hospital responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by protecting its highly vulnerable patients and developing treatment and testing capacity. In Iraq, LWF provided protection services and livelihood opportunities for the internally displaced and returnees, with a strong emphasis on gender justice and social cohesion.







Human rights violations against the Rohingya community in Asia remains one of the biggest emergencies. LWF's support continued for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh, and in IDP camps in Myanmar's Rakhine and Chin states.

More than 90 percent of the 7,615 LWF humanitarian staff come

from the countries and communities where they work, which is an advantage for service delivery. When the pandemic forced border closures, the bulk of staff could still provide urgently needed assistance.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

## A solid basis for strategic management

The LWF Strategy responds to how Lutheran churches see and understand their shared participation as a global communion in God's ongoing mission in this world.

The current LWF Strategy 2019–2024 is entering its mid-term review. General Secretary Martin Junge and Department for Planning and Coordination outgoing director Maryssa Camaddo reflect on the strategy's role for the communion's work.

### What does it change for the Communion Office to work on the basis of a strategy?

**Martin:** Communion relations among Lutheran churches, as expressed by the LWF, have their context in God's ongoing mission in this world. The strategy responds to how Lutheran churches in the LWF see and understand their participation in this mission as a global communion. Based on LWF's journey, its theological self-understanding, deliberations and discernment at the last Assembly, the strategy articulates the vision, priorities and the areas in which member

churches will work together to offer a global witness in the world.

**Maryssa.** Articulating the organization's vision and direction is important in order to inform stakeholders of the direction we are taking. The wide participation in the strategy's planning process fosters collegiality and creates an opportunity for discussion. Staff involvement in the process ensures a shared understanding when moving into implementation. When choices have to be made, such as how to better align the resources with the plans, there are better decisions in the interest of the objectives and plans set together.

### What makes it an effective tool?

**Martin:** The LWF Strategy was developed in a participatory way, involving gover-

Rev. Dr Martin Junge.  
Photo: LWF/S. Gallay





Ms Maryssa Camaddo.  
Photo: LWF/Maximilian Haas

nance but also LWF regional structures. As such, it has provided a solid basis for the work member churches undertake jointly as a global communion of churches.

**Maryssa:** It outlines the long-term strategic priorities to fulfil LWF’s vision. The Communion Office develops operation plans that define annual activities to achieve the set objectives. These plans are shared with the LWF Council and partner organizations so that they are informed about how the Communion Office will implement the strategy.

A strategy is effective if it uses the resources allocated according to plan and delivers the expected results.

### Please cite some examples?

**Maryssa:** When we needed to take stock of our plans during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we affirmed the strategy’s relevance. However, different options on implementation methodologies were discussed and certain choices were made. Having

a strategy makes it easier to choose what to do and not to do, especially in a fast-changing context.

### How does the LWF strategy relate to the strategies of member churches?

**Martin:** Many LWF member churches have their own strategies, which define their priorities and resources—both human and financial. The LWF strategy does not override local strategies. Rather, it articulates what LWF member churches have understood as their common calling as a communion of churches. Next to what they do locally, they are also engaged in a global witness, a ministry of mutual support and service, and theological reflection for a more just, peaceful and reconciled world.

Indeed, I believe that a global and a local strategy cannot run in parallel, as if there was no correspondence between what a church does locally, and what it does together with others globally. It requires ongoing discernment and work to continuously seek alignment and mutual enrichment between these two levels.

## Thirteenth Assembly theme: 'One Body, One Spirit, One Hope'

An expression of solidarity, mutuality and cooperation to highlight unity in diversity.

“One Body, One Spirit, One Hope” is the theme of the Thirteenth Assembly of the LWF. The assembly will be held, 13-19 September 2023, in Krakow, hosted by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland.

The LWF Executive Committee decided on the theme at its online meeting in June, after receiving the report of the Assembly Planning Committee (APC). The theme refers to Ephesians 4:4: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling.”

It embodies the concepts of solidarity, mutuality, and cooperation, highlighting unity in diversity. It carries a message of hope grounded in Christ, which is important for today's world. The reference to the Holy Spirit has clear connections to ongoing theological processes on Lutheran





St Martin's Church in Krakow, Poland. Photo: Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland

identity and ecumenical dialogues that pay particular attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.

Later in the year, the Assembly visual identity was presented to the APC. The visual elements bring together the Assembly theme, LWF's values and the local context. Three symbols, representing body, spirit and hope, show connectedness as one body in Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and called to share the transformative hope and love of God with the world.

The colors connect LWF's visual identity with the nature and geography of Poland. The logo form is a modern representation of traditional paper cut designs, drawing further inspiration from the local context and cultural heritage.

## Executive Committee

The Executive Committee oversees the proper functioning of the LWF between Council meetings. It convenes twice a year. Elected at the 2017 LWF Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, members of the com-

mittee serve a six-year term. It is made up of the President, seven Vice-Presidents, chairpersons of the Finance Committee, Committee for World Service and the specified Committees respectively.



### President

Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa. Head, Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria since 2017, former diocesan bishop, past LWF department director.



### Vice-Presidents

**Africa** - Rev. Dr Jeannette Ada Epse Maina. Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon, and women's executive secretary, Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon.



**Asia** - Ms Desri Maria Sumbayak. Advisor for women's fellowship, Indonesian Christian Church (HKI), and English lecturer, Pekanbaru State University.



### Central Eastern Europe

- Archbishop Urmas Viilma. Head of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church since 2015, former school chaplain and teacher.



### Central Western Europe

- Pröpstin Astrid Kleist. Provost, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany Hamburg district since 2013, chair of city forum on social issues.



### Nordic Countries -

Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén. Head of Church of Sweden since 2014, former Bishop of Lund, past professor, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, USA.



**Latin America and the Caribbean** - Rev. Dr Nestor Paulo Friedrich. Former president, Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, theology professor at EST/Sao Leopoldo.



**Committee Chairpersons**  
**Finance** - Oberkirchenrat Olaf Johannes Mirgeler. Member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, treasurer, LWF German National Committee.



**Communion Relations** - Rev. Karla M. Steilmann Franco. Assistant pastor, Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Misiones, Argentina, and school chaplain.



**Ecumenical Relations** - Rev. Dr Robin Steinke. Member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, President, Luther Seminary, St Paul Minnesota.



**World Service** - Bishop Henrik Stubkjaer. Head of Viborg Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark since 2014, and chairperson, National Council of Churches in Denmark.

**Advocacy and Public Voice** - Rev. Dr Jeannette Ada Epse Maina (see Vice-Presidents)



**North America** - Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton. Head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (USA) since 2013, former bishop, Northeastern Ohio Synod.



**Communications** - Ms Vera Tkach. Regional church youth coordinator, Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Russia and Other States, and English teacher.



**&** Mr Johanan Celine Valeriano. Former youth leader and communications' coordinator, Lutheran Church in the Philippines.



**Theology, Mission and Justice** - Rev. Yonas Yigezu Dibisa. President, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus since 2017, former mission and theology director.



**Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership** - Ms Ranjita Christi Borgoary, women's secretary, United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India.

Photos: LWF/Albin Hillert

## Leadership Team

The Communion Office Leadership Team supports the General Secretary in leading and managing the LWF Communion Office.



Rev. Dr Martin Junge  
– General Secretary of  
The Lutheran World Federation



Ms Eva Christina Nilsson  
– Director, Department for  
Theology, Mission and Justice



Ms Maria Immonen –  
Director, Department  
for World Service



Mr Szabolcs Lőrincz –  
Director, Department for  
Planning and Coordination



Rev. Árni Svanur Daniélsson  
– Head of Communication

Photos: LWF/S. Gallay





## Staff

LWF Staff during the Days of Meetings 2019.  
Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

The LWF has a polycentric Communion Office. While overall coordination is facilitated by staff located in Geneva and a few others who are home-based, there are many other colleagues in countries where the work is implemented.

As working from home became the norm in light of lockdowns, LWF enhanced its online IT platforms to support more effective staff engagement and program implementation.

The achievements highlighted in this report would not have been possible without the competent and dedicated commitment of staff in the Communion Office, World Service country and emergency programs and regional offices.



Geneva  
Communion Office



International  
staff



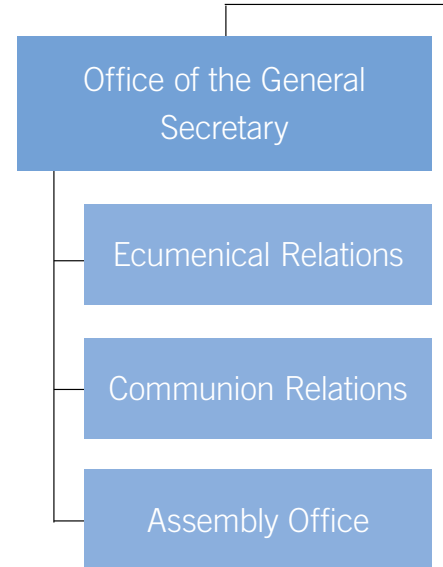
National staff

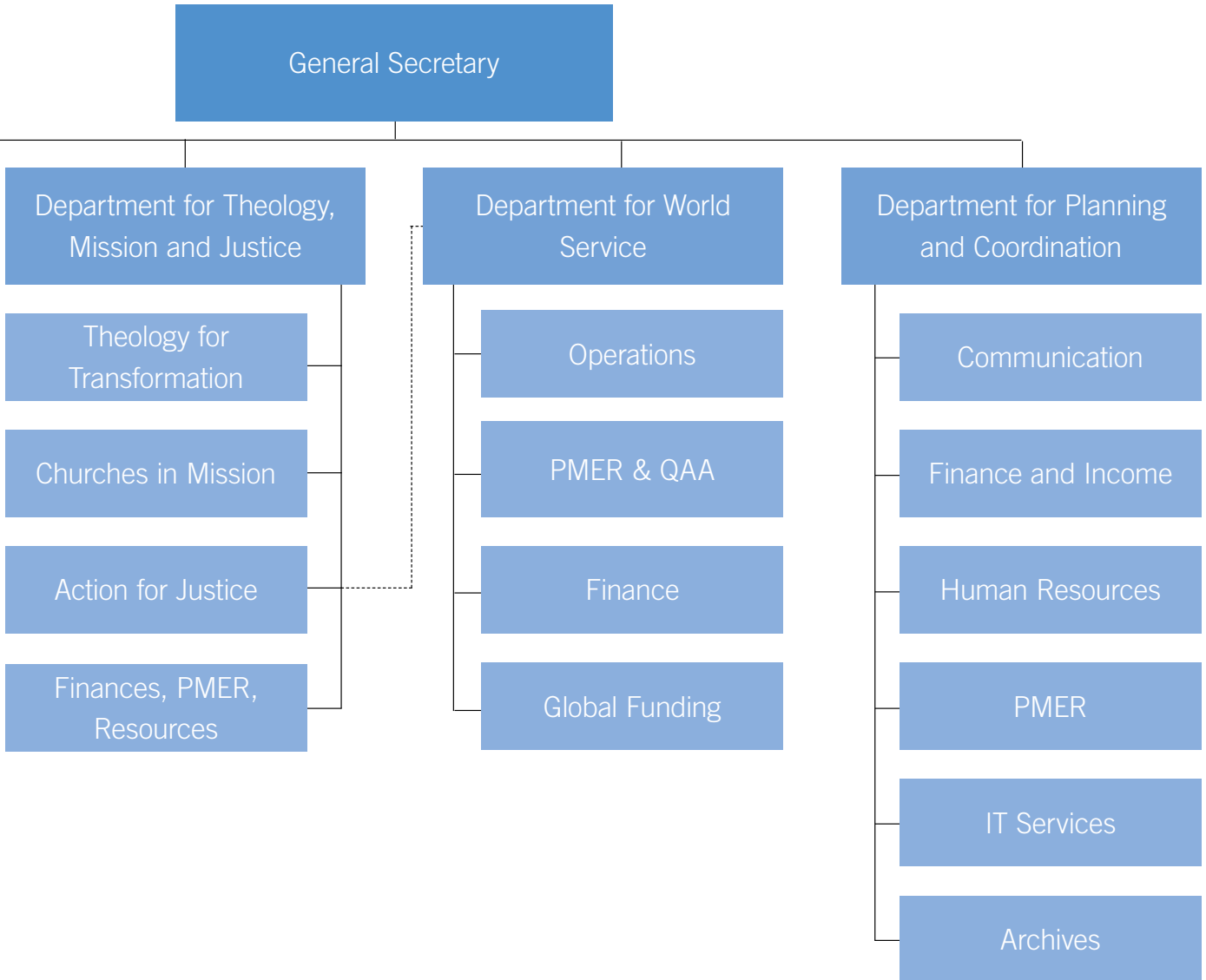


Incentive and  
volunteers

# Communion Office Organogram

The Communion Office carries out LWF's work as mandated by the Assembly and the Council. It serves and works together with the member churches, as well as related agencies, theological institutions and ecumenical partners.





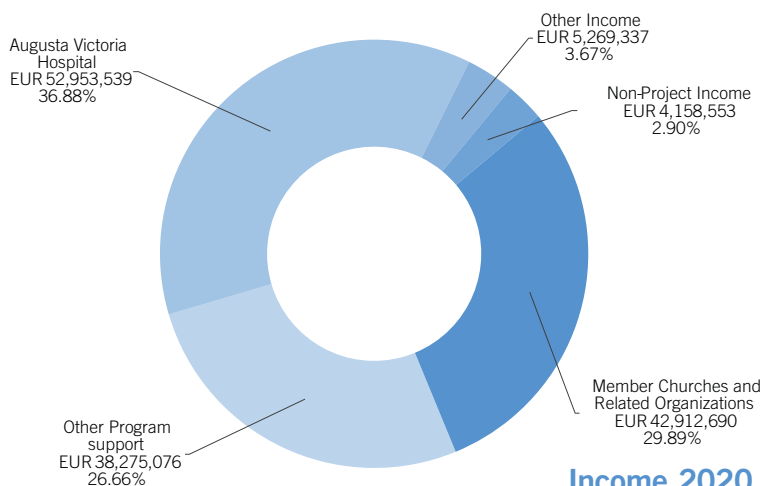
## Robust financial management

LWF's financial stability hinges on robust principles and policies built up over the years. During crises, ongoing activities are adjusted and new ones are incorporated to respond to emerging needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic measures slowed down implementation of approved and funded program and project activities throughout 2020. This negatively affected LWF's financial performance by 15 percent against the approved budget.

Nonetheless, the LWF managed the impact through various actions by the Executive Committee and Communion Office leadership, with the highly valued support of member churches and funding partners. This included the following:

- Applying for Canton of Geneva payroll support upon reduction of staff working time, amounting to CHF 409,354.40 (EUR 383,147.16) for Geneva-based staff
- Staff adapting to working mainly from home via remote connections, while maintaining efficient finance and treasury functions.
- Successful discussion with governance, funding partners, agencies and back-donor governments to carry forward delayed activities and funds to 2021
- Liquidating part of the investments and increasing the cash balance as a precaution in case of delayed remittances by key donors

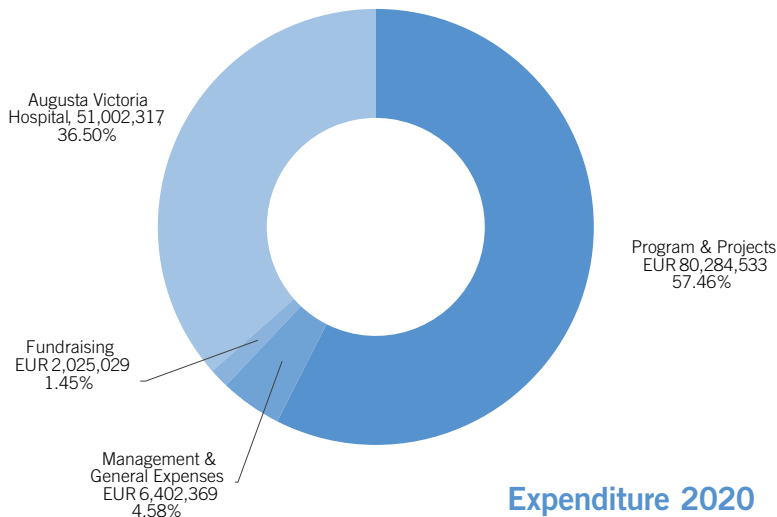


**Income 2020**

As in past years, LWF's consolidated financial reports were prepared in compliance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), International Accounting Standards (IAS) and the Swiss regulatory standards.

The financial statements for the year ending 31 December correspond to the new Communion Office structure.

In 2020, the LWF put 88 percent of its total operating expenses in activities that benefited people confronted with varying humanitarian need, and in strengthening the churches' capacity for holistic mission.



## Income

In spite of the difficulties that many member churches and other partners faced during the year, they contributed generously to LWF's work, resulting in a total income of EUR 143 million.

In 2020, the income declined by 15 percent compared to 2019.

## Expenditures

In 2020, the LWF spent EUR 139 million to implement its programs and projects around the world. The overall annual expenditure declined—from EUR 152 million in 2019—due to the pandemic restrictions, which represents a 9 percent decrease.

There was more designated funding to LWF's humanitarian response, and reduced revenue from patient services provided by the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem.




## The LWF Endowment Fund

The LWF Endowment Fund (LWB Stiftung) was established in 1999 in order to provide financial stability for LWF's work, with the goal to raise CHF 20 million by 2019. Investment income from the fund is allocated annually to LWF's program and project activities.

The Endowment Fund board approved a distribution of CHF 892,562 for the 2021 LWF budget, the largest amount approved, and it was able to maintain continuous distribution

to LWF programs. This helped the LWF to present a budget without huge funding gaps for key strategic programs where donor support is no longer available.

LWF Endowment Fund  
P.O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland  
Email: [info@lutheranworld.org](mailto:info@lutheranworld.org)  
Telephone: +41-22 7916455



Established in 1947, The Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of 148 member churches with over 77 million members in 99 countries. We share a common Lutheran heritage, shaped by the diverse contexts in which we experience and witness to God's liberating grace.

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

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