

## **LWF Youth Strategic Plan 2008-2012**

LWF-Youth, former Youth in Church and Society (YICAS), is the Youth Desk of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) lodged in the Department for Mission and Development (DMD). The Desk was established in 1981 to serve and work with young people aged 18-30 in the LWF member churches. LWF-Youth will continue the work of YICAS towards inclusive communion in line with Assembly resolutions.

The First LWF Assembly in Lund in 1947 adopted the following resolution concerning youth: “...we call upon our Lutheran Churches everywhere to give continued and increasing attention to their youth programs...” In 60 years, the approach of the LWF and its member churches to youth concerns has changed substantially. From being an object of the churches’ concern, young people have become active participants in shaping the work and life of the LWF. Participation of youth in LWF Assemblies originates in the decision of the Second LWF Assembly in Hanover in 1952, where it was decided to give youth the opportunity to participate fully in the next and following assemblies. The next step towards stronger participation of youth was taken at the Seventh LWF Assembly in Budapest in 1984, which decided that at least 20% of the delegates at the next Assembly should be youth.

The LWF Youth Strategic plan for the period 2008-2012 is inspired by the visions of young people. It builds on work done previously, while responding to current challenges. There is a slight shift in the strategic approaches from implementing several separate programs to assuming the roles of facilitator, advocator and communicator. LWF Youth will support and facilitate mainstreaming and integration of youth within the LWF Communion. This will be done by working with existing networks, including member churches, youth organizations and other LWF departments, desks and units in collaboration with other global, ecumenical organizations, as well as with local and regional organizations which have the same values and aims. Special attention shall be given to a sustained process.

### **VISION :**

Active, meaningful and equal participation of youth in the life of the LWF Communion and its member churches, and through this, in the holistic mission of God.

### **MISSION:**

To work with and for youth, as well as with and for LWF member churches, to promote the full inclusion of youth and youth concerns in the life and decision-making of church and society in close cooperation with other relevant networks.

### **LINK TO THE PROPOSED LWF VISION, MISSION, PRIORITY AREAS AND VALUES<sup>1</sup>**

LWF Youth shares common values with LWF as a whole. These values are dignity, justice, inclusiveness and accountability, all based on God’s grace received by faith. LWF Youth seeks intentionally to strengthen an active participation and contribution of youth in achieving the overall LWF Vision. LWF Youth, as part of the Department for Mission and Development (DMD), is well placed to work for proposed LWF Priority Areas.

LWF Youth Vision, Mission and Goals are derived from proposed DMD goals on building communion and furthering inclusiveness.

### **GOALS :**

To ensure

- 1) that youth are recognized as significant and valuable resource people integrated within their local church structures and decision-making bodies;
- 2) Youth representation through integration in all LWF (sub-regional, regional, global) activities and youth participation is strengthened
- 3) Youth concerns, perspectives and issues are acted upon within the LWF Communion
- 4) that LWF-Youth provides a visible expression of communion in the world.

### **STRATEGIC APPROACHES**

The following paragraphs refer to the four goals of LWF Youth.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to an ongoing LWF Strategic Planning Process.

Goal 1. LWF Youth acknowledge an important role of church leaders in achieving active, meaningful and equal participation of youth and strengthened youth leadership in the life of the LWF Communion and its member churches. Advocacy, information sharing and networking will be the most important tools to achieve this end. LWF Youth will use existing opportunities to promote youth participation and adequate youth structures when meeting church leaders. In this strategic plan, youth structures do not necessarily mean an additional paid position in the church, but rather a possibility and a mechanism for youth to become organized and to make plans and democratic decisions on issues concerning and affecting youth. These structures may enhance greatly communication and collaboration between youth in churches, as well as constructive interaction and mutual accountability between local youth and local church.

Goals 2 and 3. Advocacy and youth empowerment will be the tools for working towards meaningful youth integration within LWF and towards the inclusion of youth concerns in the LWF Agenda. LWF Youth will monitor and follow-up consistently to ensure that the Assembly (Budapest, 1984) resolution concerning youth representation is followed in LWF. Youth empowerment will be built on the existing strengths and competence of youth. An inclusive and participatory approach will characterize the work, which will be implemented with and by youth.

Goal 4. Communication will be the most important tool for communion building. LWF Youth will use the opportunities provided by new information technology to connect youth to each other and around common issues. Through Internet and e-mail based communication, LWF Youth can avoid the hierarchical dissemination of information. LWF Youth will look for ways to reach and connect with youth, who have no possibilities to use Internet. Communication will be used to enhance the effectiveness of advocacy and youth empowerment and, thus, to bind together the work of LWF Youth.

#### **OBJECTIVES and ACTIONS to reach the LWF Youth goals**

1. GOAL: Youth are recognized as significant and valuable resource people integrated into their local church structures and decision-making bodies
  - 1.1. Church leadership see youth as a potential and asset and, therefore, seek actively to include youth and youth issues in the life and decision making of LWF member churches at all levels.
    - 1.1.1. Motivate and urge churches to create space for youth within existing local programs, structures and decision-making bodies.
    - 1.2. Youth structures are promoted in LWF member churches to secure and enhance interaction between local church and local youth.
      - 1.2.1. Raise awareness among the member churches about the added value of having adequate youth structures in place.
      - 1.2.2. Offer different ideas and models for organizing youth structures.
      - 1.2.3. Develop the full potential of the global network of Youth Liaisons as links between local youth, local church and LWF Youth
2. GOAL: Youth representation is ensured through integration in all LWF (sub-regional, regional, global) activities and youth participation is strengthened
  - 2.1. At least 20% youth quota achieved at all levels (Assembly, Council, Program and Project Committees, Executive Committee, LWF programs and projects and Secretariat)
    - 2.1.1. Monitor that a gender balanced youth quota is achieved through advocacy, co-operation and early follow-up
    - 2.1.2. Hold church leadership and LWF Secretariat accountable for decisions concerning youth participation
    - 2.1.3. Develop mechanisms to ensure streamlined inclusion of youth in LWF
  - 2.2. Youth are empowered to be active and contributing participants
    - 2.2.1. Prepare youth well in advance of programs
    - 2.2.2. Provide leadership training
3. GOAL: Youth concerns, perspectives and issues are acted upon within the LWF Communion
  - 3.1. Youth issues are given appropriate attention in LWF
    - 3.1.1. Ensure, that youth concerns are included in the Agenda of the LWF Assembly and Council Meetings at an early stage
    - 3.1.2. Organize PreYouth Programs to identify youth perspectives and to prepare a youth message
    - 3.1.3. Further develop systems to monitor how youth issues are acted upon

4. GOAL: LWF-Youth provide a visible expression of communion in the world.
  - 4.1. Communion is strengthened through opportunities for living with and among one another.
    - 4.1.1. Link youth networks with possibilities offered by different member churches and the Communion at large
    - 4.1.2. Provide and inform about internship possibilities within the Communion
  - 4.2. Communion is strengthened and made real through practicing faith together
    - 4.2.1. Share liturgical resources and testimonies from different regions
    - 4.2.2. Promote common prayer and the use of the LWF Sunday prayer calendar among youth networks
  - 4.3. Communion is strengthened through working together on issues of common interest
    - 4.3.1. Identify common concerns
    - 4.3.2. Facilitate a campaign on youth concerns in line with the next Assembly theme
  - 4.4. Communion is built and nurtured through communication and sharing of information
    - 4.4.1. Further develop a relevant and timely updated LWF Youth web site for sharing resources (songs, prayers, educational materials) and information on current youth issues.
    - 4.4.2. Keep youth networks informed and strengthened through e-mail correspondence
    - 4.4.3. Develop ways to reach and connect with youth, who do not have the possibility to use Internet.
    - 4.4.4. Increase the number of youth related articles and features in LWI