



COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund for LWF Member Churches

Call for Applications

I. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic poses an unprecedented challenge to the world community. Many of the 148 LWF member churches live in contexts that are particularly vulnerable for such emergencies. They are oftentimes front-line responders based on their deep connection with communities, and the weight of their witness. During this exceptional time churches are called to continue offering their vibrant witness while participating in God's holistic mission by sharing messages of hope and solidarity, by providing diaconal services, and by advocating for adequate response to the pandemic and support to the population.

Churches offer pastoral care and counselling to people in fear and to those being sick or dying from the disease. They also provide practical support and social services to the wider communities affected by the novel coronavirus, be it through medical care, livelihoods support, or similar diaconal action. Finally, churches can play an important role in countering stigma resulting from the pandemic, and in advocating towards duty bearers to deliver adequate social services to affected communities. In doing so, church staff are particularly vulnerable to the virus themselves by serving people in need through holistic mission.

II. The role and added value of the LWF Communion Office

As a Communion of Churches, the LWF members stand in solidarity with one another. In this time of severe challenges they seek to equip each other so that they are able to offer their ministry to the people they serve.

The LWF Communion Office has created a space for showing solidarity by setting up a COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund (RRF). The purpose is to support member churches with short-term grants coming from this dedicated fund for implementation of specific COVID-19 prevention and response work. Any RRF project presented by churches following this call for applications has to address unforeseen and urgent needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a global communion of 148 churches, the LWF is in the right position to coordinate support to its member churches as they respond to the new challenges the novel coronavirus poses for them and the wider communities. Through deep knowledge of and close connectedness with churches in the different regions, the LWF Communion Office in Geneva is able to identify most urgent needs and prioritize support accordingly so that no one is left behind, including churches without rich partner networks. In implementing the funding, the LWF Communion Office is able to build upon previous experience and existing systems relating to the Member Church Projects (i.e. mid- and long-term projects initiated and implemented by churches with support from the Communion Office in Geneva).

III. Application and approval criteria of RRF grants

The following **eligibility criteria** apply to churches aiming to access COVID-19 RRF grants:

- **Eligibility of project holder:** Any LWF member church or related diaconal institution, which does not receive funding through the ACT Alliance's RRF, is eligible to apply. A church endorsement must be attached to any application. Only one application per church may be submitted. Churches or diaconal institutions with ongoing fraud or corruption investigations are excluded.
- **Eligibility of project concept:** The project concept has to address unforeseen and urgent needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in one or more of the following possible areas of intervention:
 1. COVID-19 related church activities: Broadcasting of worship services, production of worship materials for distribution among church members, remote counselling to church members, leadership roles in communities etc.
 2. COVID-19 related diaconal action: Health services and awareness raising activities, WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene), the provision of other basic needs of COVID-19 affected communities (e.g. food support), etc.
 3. COVID-19 related advocacy efforts vis-à-vis duty bearers such as governments or local authorities.
- **Maximum amount requested to LWF:** EUR 5,000 per church or related diaconal institution
- **Project duration:** Up to 6 months

The following **screening and approval criteria** apply to eligible applications received from churches:

- The application must:
 - Be fully completed including budget;
 - Identify and analyze clearly the COVID-19 related need to which the project is responding;
 - Demonstrate convincingly the relevance of the project's objectives and activities in relation to the expressed needs;
 - Justify clearly the reason why the need requires a rapid response;
 - Outline a coherent approach and reflect meaningful stakeholders' involvement;
 - Show that the scope of the project's objectives and activities in relation to the budget and the capacities of the applicant is realistic.
- Regional balance in allocation of grants will be observed, depending on most urgent needs and churches' own available resources to respond.

IV. Application, screening and approval procedures

The LWF Communion Office will manage the application, screening and approval process of the COVID-19 RRF grants. Churches will be able to submit applications starting from 17 April, initially until 30 June. Any application must be submitted in the simplified COVID-19 RRF application format provided for this purpose. The applicant must send the application including required attachments (church endorsement and budget) to the following email address: rffprojects@lutheranworld.org.

The screening and approval of incoming applications will take place on an ongoing basis. Relevant LWF staff will be involved in the screening guided by the criteria mentioned under point III. Based on

their recommendations, the Director of the Department for Theology, Mission and Justice (DTMJ) will take final decisions on approval of grants and inform the LWF General Secretary accordingly.

Each applicant will receive information on whether the project was approved within two weeks time from the application's submission date. Once the application is approved and the project agreement is signed, implementation may start immediately. The specific rules and regulations for implementation and reporting will be outlined in the project agreement.

More information about the COVID-19 RRF can be found on the LWF website. Any further questions relating to the COVID-19 RRF grants may be directed to the following email address:

rrfprojects@lutheranworld.org.