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"I am sorry I infected you and did not tell you," Innocent Niwsi murmured as he lay dying on his bed. He had summoned the courage to admit to Beatrice, his young, second wife that he was HIV positive and dying...



Ukrainian doctors and nurses learn about HIV transmission risk factors during an in-service training supported by the Lutheran World Federation. © Karin Desmarowitz/agenda

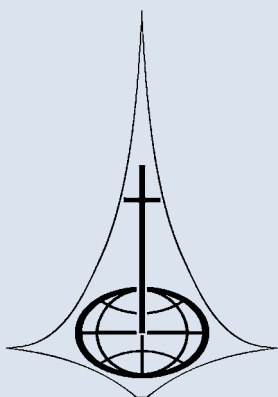
Ukrainian Lutheran Church Initiatives Help Break Taboos and Perceptions

ODESSA, Ukraine/GENEVA (LWI) – The mid-day heat hangs heavily in the seminar room of the Bavarian House Odessa (BHO) in Ukraine, but Vitali Gorbunow grips the attention of his audience—25 men and women. As he strides across the room, the psychologist trainer gestures with his hands and feet, looks directly at each participant sitting in the circle, and wipes the perspiration from his brow. "If your immune system were a baking ware, how would you feel at the moment?" asks the agile man in jeans and a sports shirt. The answers are hesitant at first, then they come faster, more spontaneously and finally the whole group bursts out laughing. "Like an almond cake," says a doctor, "a meringue I

ate as a child," says another, "a few dry biscuits," calls an assistant doctor. "I feel like a Kiev cream-cake," adds a gynecologist.

"This kind of interactive training is little known in Ukraine but it is a most effective way of cracking open rigid opinions," explains Gorbunow, who has many years' experience. "I have had doctors and gynecologists who recommended that pregnant women with HIV have an abortion, yet the chances of having a healthy baby stand at over 90 percent!" This is the kind of fixed mentality that the former Ukrainian army officer wants to change.

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Hyden Is New DWS Program Officer for Eastern Africa

In October 2009, **Mr Michael Hyden**, a Swedish and Tanzanian national assumed the position of DWS program officer for Eastern Africa at the LWF Geneva Secretariat. He becomes the department's focus person for emergency response.

Hyden, 43, has previously worked for eight years with DWS in its country program work in Africa. He joins DWS Geneva from Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, where he had served as program officer for Africa since 2004. From 2002 to 2004, Hyden worked with World Vision as program adviser for European Union funding.

From 2000 to 2002, he was program coordinator for the DWS country program in Mozambique. Between 1997 and 2000 he worked with DWS Rwanda as senior rehabilitation



Mr Michael Hyden © Private

coordinator for the reintegration of returning refugees and as commodities' manager. In 1996, he was a settlement officer for DWS Uganda in the northern part of the country. From 1994 to 1995, he was project coordinator for Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service, in the northwestern region of Kagera.

In 1994, Hyden worked as sector coordinator for camp management with the global humanitarian agency, CARE International in Kagera, Tanzania. Between 1992 and 1993 he was the CARE camp manager for the Liboi and Dadaab refugee camps

in northeastern Kenya.

Hyden holds a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA. He succeeds Swedish national Tore Samuelsson, who held this post for nearly two years.

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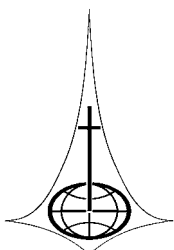
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Includes Assembly Update No. 5



WOMEN'S PRE-ASSEMBLY

Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland, 27-31 October 2009

Women Challenged to Insist on Gender Justice for a Sustainable Community

First LWF Pre-Assembly in Anticipation of Stuttgart in 2010

GENEVA (LWI) – An international gathering of women at Bogis-Bossey, near Geneva, Switzerland, kicked off the first Pre-Assembly of the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to be held in Stuttgart, Germany.

Referring to the Assembly theme, “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,” guiding deliberations at the Women’s Pre-Assembly (WPA), Mr Jacob Schep, acting director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD), called upon women to prepare a strong contribution on gender perspectives to issues that are on the assembly agenda.

Schep expressed his hope that the pre-assembly participants “will not be overwhelmed by the many negative trends in global food production.” He urged them to create a strong call for this world to become “a sustainable community that must necessarily have gender justice.”

Participants in the 27-31 October pre-assembly included 34 women representatives from LWF member churches in the Federation’s seven regions.

“Is it not for the same reason that some 2 billion women around the world wake up much earlier than anyone else to prepare for the necessities of the day?” Schep asked participants, linking women’s role to provide bread and the WPA as the first pre-assembly.

The acting DMD director urged the WPA participants to use the opportunity of getting together to make



Rev. Sigrun Óskarsdóttir (Iceland) lights candles at the opening worship of the LWF Women’s Pre-Assembly in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland. © LWF/T. Rakoto

a strong contribution to the process of “preparing yourselves for the Assembly of our communion.”

“The prevailing gender inequality is also clearly present in the context of our daily read,” said Schep citing what he witnessed during DMD-related visits to projects of LWF member churches. “I see in many regions women working on preparation of the daily food ... and men usually talking with other men ... I have seen food being distributed unequally. ... And I have seen women, especially mothers taking the least [portions],” he said.

During the opening worship women, were invited to speak out their names, and to share bread and bowls from their region, as well as ideas that were inscribed on a patch work cloth. The women also

remembered fellow delegates from Cameroon, India and Nigeria who had been invited to take part in the meeting, but did not receive visas.

Deliberations at the four-day international meeting include issues of women and power, women’s participation in decision making and women and justice. The participants will also have the opportunity to get acquainted with the LWF Assembly rules and procedures.

The DMD desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) organized the WPA. Four regional pre-assemblies will take place in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, and an international Youth conference, organized by the respective DMD desks.

5 November 2009

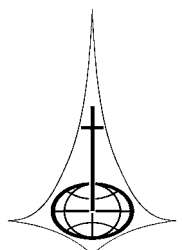
Call for Increased Strategic Effort to Ensure Gender Equity in LWF Leadership

Women attending the first preparatory conference for the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly called for more strategic effort to ensure gender equity in the

organization’s leadership and sensitivity to issues that affect women.

LWF member church representatives at the Women’s Pre-Assembly

(WPA) commended the LWF for providing different forums where women and men could share experiences and learn from the diverse contexts of the



Lutheran communion. They noted, however, that this was not sufficient.

LWF Executive Committee member Rev. Dr Barbara Rossing expressed appreciation for important insights that she had gained from her participation in LWF governing body meetings and in international and regional consultations on theological issues and diakonia, among other areas of LWF's work. "My experience in the LWF has changed my own work and ministry," said Rossing, who is chairperson of the Program Committee for Theology and Studies. The ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Americas (ELCA) teaches New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Illinois, USA.

However, "we have gone backwards in the LWF," said Rossing, explaining further gender related issues with respect to LWF delegations, which did not respect the organization's prescribed gender representation guidelines. She cited visits or assessment teams that excluded not only women but also ordained women, yet the communion was endowed with women resources in all areas of work.

Seven women LWF Council members are attending the WPA, and sharing their experiences as women in LWF governing bodies. The Council, which meets every 12-18 months held its 22 to 27 October meeting at Chavannes-de-Bogis, with the theme "Upholding Human Dignity: Confronting Human Trafficking."

To emphasize sensitivity to issues that affect women during crises, Rossing spoke of another woman's experience as the only female participant in an LWF field visit after the December 2004 tsunami, when women turned to her about their need for underwear and sanitary towels, not daring to speak to men in the delegation.

Networking

The WPA is also focusing on issues of gender and power, and women's

participation in decision making in the LWF. Hamburg (Germany) Bishop Maria Jepsen, North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, challenged Assembly delegates to elect a woman as the next LWF president at the forthcoming Assembly.

The President is the Federation's chief official representative and spokesperson, and presides at meetings of the Council, Executive Committee and

ported Jepsen's call for the election of a female LWF president at the Stuttgart Assembly. She emphasized the need for the LWF to "keep providing" the many spaces for sharing in the organization, as they helped to link lay and ordained women and men, and the grassroots and leadership in the global communion. Akpan teaches journalism at the University of Calabar in Nigeria.



During worship at the WPA: (Left) Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas Vargas, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, distributes Holy Communion to LWF Executive Committee member Ms Diadem Depayso (Philippines). © LWF/T. Rakoto

Assembly. The person is nominated by the LWF regions during the Assembly meeting. The current president, ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, was elected at the July 2003 Assembly as the eleventh person to hold the position since the Federation was founded in 1947. To date, no woman has held this position.

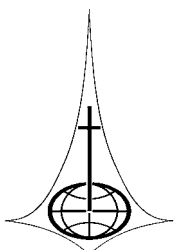
"We need a very good network of women and men who are open to women's issues," Jepsen told the WPA participants, drawing from her own experience. Women also need to be good in networking in churches as well as in society, she said. Jepsen was elected bishop in 1992, becoming the first Lutheran female bishop worldwide.

LWF Executive Committee member and chairperson of the Program Committee for World Service, Ms Brenda Akpan from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, sup-

"I have learned a lot in the Council," said Ms Diadem Depayso, also LWF Executive Committee member as chairperson of the Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights. "I have talked a lot to the grassroots women about what I have heard and learned as a Council member," said Depayso, a nurse by profession, who was elected to the Council in 2003 as a lay person. The representative of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines urged outgoing women Council members to support fellow women who will be elected to the next LWF Council at the next Assembly.

More information on the LWF Pre-Assemblies is available under the "Journey" section of the LWF Assembly Web site at: www.lwf-assembly.org

29 October 2009



High Statistics on Lutheran Women's Ordination Hide Reality of Marginalization

Statistics about increasing women's ordination in the LWF member churches are encouraging. However, "the shining exterior of inclusion and equality masks a reality of denial, marginalization and despair," representatives from LWF member churches heard at the October 2009 Women's Pre-Assembly.

"More women are being ordained, the percentage of women studying theology has increased and women are usually represented 'up front' on important occasions and on committees," said Indian biblical scholar, Dr Monica Melanchthon in her presentation at the WPA.

According to statistics compiled by DMD/WICAS, around two thirds of the current 140 LWF member churches ordain women.

In her presentation titled "Women in a Renewed LWF: Theological and Practical Issues," Melanchthon focused especially on the Report of the LWF Renewal Committee, which was presented at the 22-27 October Council meeting. She noted that the "document ... does not specifically address the issue of gender although it does in its intent and definition strive for the recognition and inclusion of women in the life of the communion."

Melanchthon, who is a member of the Renewal Committee responsible

for this report, proposed the preparation of a document that would address women's concerns within a renewed LWF, setting out priorities and strategies. The Indian theologian is a professor at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College in Chennai, India.

Gender Disparity

Dr Fulata L. Moyo, program executive for Women in Church and Society at the World Council of Churches, reminded the WPA participants of "gender disparity and desperation that denies women their right to food and dignity." In her presentation, she linked the LWF Eleventh Assembly theme "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," to issues related to the exploitation of women in various sectors of society. Women's concern about bringing food at the table and feeding their children makes them turn to prostitution. "Women are trafficked and commoditized," she said, explaining that this desperation



Dr Fulata L. Moyo, WCC program executive for Women in Church and Society
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

"dis-members [tears into pieces] women for mere survival."

Moyo challenged women to work on questions such as: "What prophetic roles do we need to carry out so that the desperation that leads to women's bodies being dis-membered is dealt with? What clear policy, theological reflections including that of marriage

and general practice do we want to suggest to the churches as well as to the process of theological education?"

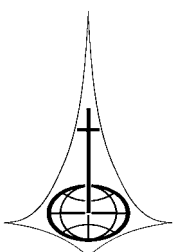
"'Give us this day our daily bread' is a petition repeated by millions of Christians around the world every day as they pray the Lord's Prayer. However, for many the words of the Lord's Prayer may have little meaning when the daily necessities of life seem so abundant," said Ms Angeline Munzara, the food campaign coordinator at the Geneva-based Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA). She emphasized that abundance co-existed with want today, as "over 1 billion people live with constant hunger." She cited underlying causes such as climate change and environmental degradation, whose impact affects women and children the most.

"How we produce food, how we distribute it and how we ensure that all people have access to culturally-appropriate nourishment is a fundamental matter of justice toward people, the creation and God. As women we have a role to play to change this world order and influence decisions to ensure food justice and the realization of the right to food for all people," said Munzara.

Elaborating the role of women in food production, the EAA representative pointed highlighted women's role in food security: She described women as "food producers, keepers



Dr Monica Melanchthon (India) acknowledges a gift from the Latin American region representatives at the women's pre-assembly. © LWF/T. Rakoto



of traditional knowledge and preservers of biodiversity, food processors and preparers and food providers for their families.” According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) women are the main producers of the world’s staple foods: maize, wheat and rice.



Ms Angeline Munzara, EAA food campaign coordinator © EAA/Nicole Benz

Advocacy

In this context “the daily bread that women require is to be able to participate in all decision-making processes regarding food production

and distribution at all levels—community level; within peasant, farmer and fisher folk and indigenous organizations; and at the tables of government and development agencies at all levels,” Munzara emphasized with regard to advocacy strategies.

She invited women to join in advocacy by writing letters to their national governments urging respect for the right to food and asking them what actions they had taken on the right to food. The women were also encouraged to learn about government commitments on the right to food

and how they could join with like-minded civil society actors.

Munzara further suggested participation in planning actions in church, community and at national level for the EAA Churches Week of Action on Food, joining the development agencies’ Countdown to Copenhagen campaign on climate change or participating in a worship service with the ringing of bells on Sunday 13 December which marks the height of the UN climate change talks in Copenhagen.

One could also chose fasting on Ash Wednesday, on World Food Day celebrated around 16 October to mark FAO’s founding, or any other key events relating to food, using special resources, prayers, Bible studies, and considering individual eating habits, Munzara concluded.

FEATURE: Hungry for the Bread of Justice

“Less Than a Full Communion” When Women Are Barred from Leadership

A woman living on the street with her eight-month-old child secured with a blue cord to a trolley with paper cartons: “This is the face of human trafficking in Africa,” remarked Ms Colleen Cunningham, Southern African coordinator for the Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk of the LWF Department for Mission and Development.

The street woman comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, explained Cunningham. She was trafficked to South Africa, where she became pregnant, and was sold to Namibia to work as a street vendor in the capital, Windhoek. Her stall is located between a church and the parliament buildings.

The WICAS coordinator cited this example in her contribution on regional perspectives at the LWF Women’s Pre-Assembly. Cunningham, a member of the Moravian Church in South Africa, shared insights on human trafficking from her WICAS work in the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa



Bread is a justice issue for women in both the Lutheran communion and in society. Ms Margaret F. Sadler, a delegate from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, kneads dough for baking bread at the October 2009 WPA. © LWF/T. Rakoto

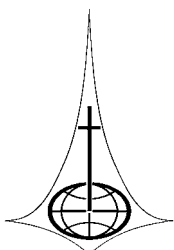
(LUCSA), one of three LWF sub-regional bodies in Africa.

Dignity and Identity

She listed several other contextual issues that have a negative impact on the identity and dignity of women in the

Africa region, including gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, women’s access to land and food security.

“But there are also success stories,” Cunningham said. She spoke of the Female Theologians Forum of ordained and lay women, which seeks to empower female theologians and





LWF/DMD WICAS executive secretary Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt addresses a WPA plenary session.
© LWF/T. Rakoto

Their message underlines “hunger for justice and the bread of life” not only in society but also in the Lutheran communion. They express their yearning for cultural transformation especially in the LWF communion, which they see as “as less than a full communion when women are barred from leadership,” among other manifestations of exclusion.

The October gathering joined the LWF Council in decrying human trafficking for the purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, armed conflict or organ harvesting, which delegates said, turned “human beings into commodities.”

Opportunities

The pre-assembly called upon LWF member churches to pave the way for women to take positions of leadership. The participants affirmed the communion commitments to women’s ordination and urged the Federation to create opportunities for women to be highlighted in their leadership roles as a witness throughout the global communion.

One of the strategies that the WPA recommended is organizing theological discussions and identifying the requisite gender justice principles to enable LWF member churches contextualize and promote gender policies.

In addition, the Women’s Pre-Assembly affirmed the right of all persons to safe nutritious food and clean water, lamenting the fact that while women remain the main food producers, they are often the last to receive their daily bread. “Food justice demands just production, distribution and consumption,” the meeting concluded.

The final message from the women’s pre-assembly is available on the LWF Assembly Web site at:

[www.lwf-assembly.org/
fileadmin/user_upload/
Assembly_Docs_PDF/Womens_
Pre-Assembly_Message.pdf](http://www.lwf-assembly.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Assembly_Docs_PDF/Womens_Pre-Assembly_Message.pdf)

to promote ordination of women in the sub-region.

“LUCSA has over the years been seriously concerned about gender inequalities in church and society,” said Cunningham. “Regretfully, almost all member churches within LUCSA have to date not restructured themselves in a manner that promotes gender equality.” She noted that “no serious effort” had been made to achieve the agreed 40 percent female representation that would eventually lead to equal status. “Dioceses and local parishes in Southern Africa lag behind most of their local governments who have established gender commissions or ministries to address issues of gender inequalities,” she explained.

Sexual Violence

“We are hungry. We are hungry for shifts in our social system and in our theology that give us the bread of justice, justice for women and girls,” affirmed Dr Mary J. Streufert of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Justice for Women program. “Sexual violence is high in the United States: 78 rapes an hour or 1.3 rapes per minute occur in the US. In the US, only six percent of rapists will ever spend a day in jail. And one in three girls is sexually abused before she turns 18,” said Streufert.

“The ways in which sexual violence reveals the socially enforced assumption of male privilege over our bodies seems to me to be connected to the socially enforced assumption of male privilege over our leadership and actions in the church,” she noted.

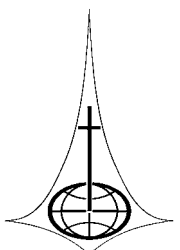
Streufert cited examples of sexual assault, voyeuristic ownership of women’s bodies, and verbal degradation, as some of the ways in which “we women and girls are silenced into this social norm of male privilege,” she added.

According to Streufert two central themes in Luther’s theology create the space for the ELCA program “to focus on sexism as a problem and empower me personally as a leader [...] These two themes are justification by grace through faith and being a feminist theologian of the cross.”

She said the objectives of the ELCA Justice for Women program are to educate for justice, advocate for change and lead into the future, making justice for women a reality.

Cultural Transformation

The WPA participants summarized the outcome of the international LWF gathering in a final message that singles out human trafficking, women in leadership and food justice as core issues for the Lutheran communion, especially in preparation for the Eleventh Assembly.



Act Together to Tackle Water Crisis, Faith Groups Urged

African Leaders Warned of Climate Change Impact

GABORONE, Botswana/GENEVA (LWI) – Africa’s growing water crisis demands leadership and common action among faith groups, says Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

In his keynote address to religious leaders and other participants attending the Third Summit of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Noko emphasized that clean water was available to few Africans.

“Envisioning a Peaceful Africa: Water for All,” is the theme of the 17-21 November summit in Botswana’s capital, Gaborone. The first of its kind to include participation from government and business leaders, the meeting is expected to harness future collaboration among stakeholders on peace and development in Africa and address climate change.

“There is an urgent need for the public sector to play an active role in the creation of awareness and education on the correct use of water. Water is a paramount issue. Conflict and peace both hang on this issue. None of the three categories of stakeholders convened in this summit – religious communities, governments and the private sector – can undertake their responsibilities without this essential commodity,” said Noko who is IFAPA’s president.

Established in October 2002, the pan-African body focuses on active engagement of religious leaders in conflict resolution and peace building on the continent.

Building Block

Noko reminded the 70 delegates from various faiths and sectors of society about the central place of water in religious practice and belief. “Water is, first and foremost, a primary building block of life, which all religious traditions hold sacred.”

He pointed out that “despite the growing water crisis in many parts of Africa, religious leaders and communities [...] appeared to lack awareness of the challenges associated with water resource management and ownership.

“Water certainly qualifies as a common problem in the African context, given the process of desertification in many areas, and the general lack of adequate water source infrastructure and management facilities throughout the continent,” he said.

The LWF leader cautioned that the water crisis in Africa was worsening with growing population, increasing industrialization and particularly climate change, which experts predict will hit Africa hardest of all, exposing up to 250 million people to increased water stress and reducing rain-fed farm yields by up to 50 percent by 2020.

community (SADC) “Mothers’ Cry for a Healthy Africa Campaign,” following a similar move in East Africa, to affirm women’s critical role in issues that deal with peace and security. “In launching this campaign in this region, we are not simply re-stating the facts that make Africa unwell, but we want to do something to change the situation. And this campaign is not only by and for women, but by and for all daughters and sons of Africa,” noted Noko.

While reminding delegates that conflicts remained a challenge to the continent’s stability and development, the IFAPA president emphasized that Africa’s future lies in its own hands. “We have always said that poverty in Africa is a contradiction because this continent is rich, very rich. The problem lies in realizing that we Africans have to take the lead in the management and distribution of this wealth



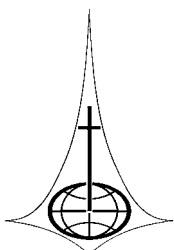
Women participants in the Third IFAPA Summit join in a procession during the launch of the SADC region “Mothers’ Cry for a Healthy Africa Campaign.” © LWF/IFAPA Monirul Bhuiyan

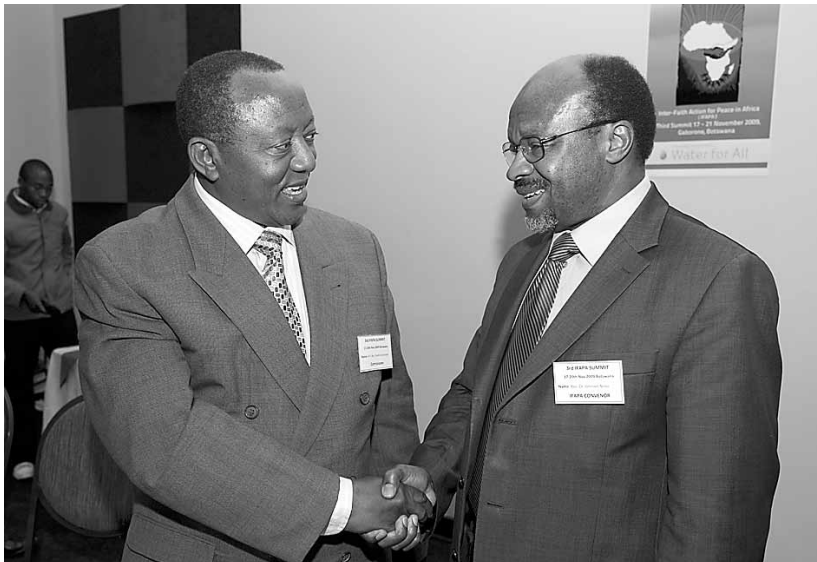
“The impact of climate change can also be seen already in the death of rivers in many places in Africa, with once important sources of water for communities and nations having vanished,” said Noko.

The IFAPA summit will launch the Southern African Development Com-

mission for the good of our children and future generations,” he added.

Botswana’s Minister for Labor and Home Affairs Mr Peter Siele said his government continues to cooperate with faith-based organizations to find solutions to social problems facing the Southern African country.





(Left) Former Tanzanian Prime Minister Frederick T. Sumaye greets LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko during the IFAPA summit in Gaborone, Botswana. © LWF/IFAPA Monirul Bhuiyan

“Through structures such as the interfaith dialogue in Botswana, religious and faith-based organizations can now speak with one voice and this will greatly facilitate cooperation and dialogue between the government and religious communities,” he said.

(A contribution from Daisy Dube of the Africa Lutheran Communication and Information Network, with additional reporting from Ecumenical News International)

The Gaborone Declaration, the final statement from the Third IFAPA summit is available at:

<http://ifapa-africa.org>

18 November 2009

African Interfaith Summit Hears How Scramble for Water Can Lead to Conflicts

Religious leaders meeting in Botswana’s capital for the Third IFAPA Summit heard how the selfish use of water resources throughout the continent is threatening regional peace.

Speakers at the summit narrated stories about how countries had come close to waging war against each other in the struggle for control of the water resources.

The Nile, the world’s longest river at 6,650 km, is perhaps one of the most contested water sources in Africa, according to speakers at the November summit. Former Tanzania Prime Minister Frederick T. Sumaye told delegates how tension over the rights of the Nile continue to threaten peace in Eastern and Northern African states.

Sumaye explained that the creation of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) in 1999 was meant to address the problem. However, it was clear that the proclamations signed to this effect rendered the NBI less effective as countries like Egypt and Sudan still continue to hold more advantageous rights to the Nile waters than other countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic

Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda where the river runs through on its way north, said Sumaye.

The Nile empties into the Mediterranean Sea

The former Tanzanian premier noted that although an agreement had been reached throughout the Nile basin, it had not effectively dealt with the question of who had more rights to the water. He urged religious leaders at the IFAPA summit to help in finding a permanent solution to the problem.

He noted that although the agreement was meant to ensure that all the nine countries shared the waters equally, it was still not fair that both Egypt and Sudan still hold more than 46 percent of the rights.

Sumaye explained that the situation could be worsened by the fact that the water level at Lake Victoria in East Africa—the world’s third largest freshwater lake—had declined by two meters. “That is a big drop for such an enormous water source. This is because it is one of the sources feeding into the River

Nile, and automatically there is a poor flow in the Nile. The main source of the River Nile water is the Blue Nile which originates in Ethiopia. It accounts for 75 percent of the water and you can understand why these other countries are not happy with two countries having more rights,” he explained.

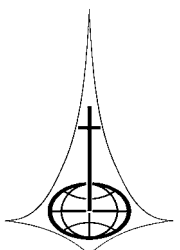
There was fear that conflict could erupt if the water flowing into the Nile was not sufficient. The former Tanzanian premier noted that in the past, Egypt had threatened to go to war if any of the other countries tried to block its Nile water quota.

Sheik Hamid Byamugenzi from Uganda, representing IFAPA’s youth desk, told delegates of a standoff between Kenya and Uganda over Migingo, a small island situated within Lake Victoria—shared by Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

Byamugenzi also cited the tension between the DRC and Uganda over oil rich Lake Albert shared by both countries, each claiming ownership of the water source.

(By Botswana-based journalist Chipipa Legodimo)

More LWI News at
www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html



LWF General Secretary Calls for Legally-binding Agreement at UN Climate Conference

Communion Invited to Join in 13 December Bell-Ringing

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko urged states participating in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, to reach a fair, equitable and legally-binding agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, in order to achieve the target of a 40 percent reduction of developed country CO₂ emissions by 2020.

Delegations from 192 countries at the 7-18 December conference in the Danish capital have the task of elaborating a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires at the end of 2012. An official LWF delegation attending the meeting is composed of members of LWF governing bodies and member churches, and staff from the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) programs in India, Mauritania and Tanzania, and the Geneva Secretariat.

In a letter to the Prime Minister of Denmark Lars Løkke Rasmussen and the Danish minister of climate and energy Connie Hedegaard, Noko wrote, “We look to the international community meeting in Copenhagen, and to your leadership of this gather-



Demonstrators at the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, display on posters calls for urgent action to deal with the challenge of climate change. © LWF/P. Prove

ing, to produce an agreement that will ensure that global greenhouse gas emissions peak no later than 2015 and then decline rapidly towards a target of atmospheric CO₂ concentrations of less than 350 ppm as soon as possible.”

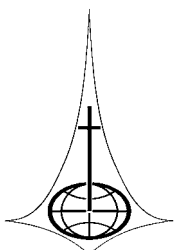
This gathering of the international community “carries the hopes of the inhabitants of our entire global village, all of whom increasingly perceive

the reality and challenge of climate change,” Noko further stated. “Most especially does this conference carry the hopes of the people at the leading edge of the climate change crisis—the poor and vulnerable whose livelihoods and lives are most immediately threatened by changing environmental conditions exacerbated by greenhouse gas emissions,” the LWF general secretary emphasized.

The LWF, which represents 140 member churches in 79 countries, recognized the gravity and imminence of this threat to our planet, Noko stressed. During its meeting in June 2008 in Arusha, Tanzania—under the melting snows of Mount Kilimanjaro—the LWF Council acknowledged the “critical urgency and unprecedented magnitude of the challenge of climate change and the threat that it poses to humanity and all living beings on Earth.” The LWF Council therefore called for “strong political commitments to achieving a 40 percent reduction compared to 1990 levels of CO₂ emissions by 2020.” LWF member churches had been asked to take ur-



The most vulnerable people are the most severely affected by recurring calamities such as flooding and drought. The LWF provided relief assistance to residents of the low-lying areas of Amuria and Kataki in northern Uganda after heavy rains in July 2007 wreaked havoc in the region. © LWF/DWS Uganda/ACT International



gent and effective action in relation to reducing emissions.

In October 2009 the LWF Council at its meeting in Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva called on member churches “to observe 13 December 2009 as a day for prayer, confession and action on the issue of climate change.” Churches around the world were invited to join churches throughout Denmark on that day in ringing bells or taking other symbolic actions in solidarity for climate justice, Noko added.

According to Noko, the LWF “has committed itself to raising up the voices of the vulnerable and the

poor, highlighting especially the impacts of climate change on food insecurity and increasing human vulnerability.”

Noting the unjust distribution of cause and consequence, the LWF called for just and adequate means of financing climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing world countries, though Noko emphasized that these funds must not be drawn from existing development cooperation budgets. The LWF supported calls for reparations for the disastrous consequences of climate change in the global South, which disproportionately bears the consequences of

the greenhouse gas emissions generated predominantly by the global North.

The full text of LWF General Secretary Noko’s letter is available on the LWF Web site:

www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF_letter_Rasmussen-Hedegaard-2009.pdf

The June 2008 and October 2009 LWF Council resolutions on climate change are available on the LWF Web site.

9 December 2009

Gebreyes Takes Up Latin America and Caribbean Region Position at DWS Geneva

Ms Sophia Gebreyes, a Canadian of Ethiopian origin has joined the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) as program officer for Latin America and the Caribbean. She took up her new position in October 2009, which also includes responsibility for human rights, rights-based approach, and peace and reconciliation.

Gebreyes, 43, has several years of experience in humanitarian development work in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. Prior to joining DWS Geneva, she worked for two years as program coordinator for the DWS country program in Rwanda.

She worked for 17 years with Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), the service delivery arm for overseas development aid for Canadian Lutheran churches. From 2004 to 2007, she was CLWR program director for Latin America and the Caribbean with responsibilities also for gender equality and HIV and AIDS. As assistant program director between 2000 and



Ms. Sophie Gebreyes © Private

2003, one of her major tasks was coordination of relief assistance after the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India, in close collaboration with the DWS India country program and Action by Churches Together (ACT) International. As administrative assistant to program directors and coordinator for the Alternative Trade Organization, 1993 to 1997, Gebreyes was involved the promotion of fairly priced products from developing countries. She first joined CLWR in 1990, and worked for three years as an administrative assistant.

Gebreyes holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (2001) with a major in international development studies and French literature from the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba. Before moving to Canada, she studied law for three years at the University of Addis Ababa.

Gebreyes takes over responsibility for Latin America and Caribbean functions previously held by Ms Elsa Moreno from Colombia, who worked with DWS from 2006 until mid-2009.

Roland Schlott Joins World Service as Asia Program Officer

Since October 2009, **Mr Roland Kilian Schlott** from Germany is the new DWS program officer for Asia.

Before joining the LWF, Schlott, 41, had been working in Nairobi, Kenya, since 2003, as regional director for the German disaster relief agency, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH), with responsibility for the Southern, Eastern and Central sub-regions, and the Horn of Africa.

From 2000 to 2003, Schlott was the DKH country director for Azerbaijan. As a seconded officer for the German Development Service (DED), he worked from 1995 to 1997 as a research staff and adviser to a farmers’ federation in Fouta Djallon in Guinea (Conakry).

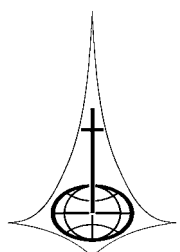


Mr. Roland K. Schlott © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Between 1990 and 1993, he held various positions—researcher in land and water management at the University of Nairobi; internship with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in Morocco; and worked for a farmers’ social security service in Germany.

Schlott holds a master of philosophy in development studies from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom (1999) and a bachelor’s degree in agriculture from the University of Kassel (1994), Germany.

In his new LWF position, he takes over responsibility for Asia previously held by Ms Elsa Moreno from Colombia.



FEATURE: HIV and AIDS Training with Convincing Results

Continued from p. 1

HIV and AIDS are taboo topics in Ukraine's southern city of Odessa, where the virus is spreading like an epidemic. For years now, the rate of new infections has been among the highest in Europe. According to official data from the Ukraine government, at the end of 2007 over 122,000 people were officially recorded as having HIV and AIDS. UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) and the government estimate, however, that the real figure could be up to 440,000, or around 1.63 percent of the population aged between 15 and 49 years. In 2006 there was a nearly 17 percent increase in new infections, while 2007 recorded an additional ten percent.

Gorbunow will not stand by and do nothing. For eight years he has been dealing with the HIV and AIDS issue in the Black Sea city. Since completing a training course run by German specialists in 2005 he has been working as an instructor at the BHO, which has taken action to counter the rapid spread of HIV and the huge increase in the number of AIDS patients.

The Bavarian state ministry for work, social order, family affairs, women and health in cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (Germany) founded the BHO in mid-1993 as a contact center for German culture. In 2001 the social work center was established in BHO with support from the German government's organization for technical cooperation (GTZ), the German state of Saxony, the Rotary Club "Porta Praetoria" from Regensburg and the diaconal services of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. Besides HIV prevention activities, it carries out numerous social and medical support projects for the needy.

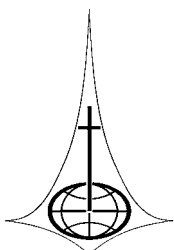


A medical staff draws blood for an HIV test at the Odessa City Center for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control. © Karin Desmarowitz/agenda

In cooperation with BHO, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (GELCU) in Odessa developed an extensive HIV and AIDS program for prevention and therapy. The aim was to stem the epidemic by training school students and mentors, along with multipliers such as doctors or teachers. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been supporting these successful training courses for the last four years.

Sexuality and Sex Education

"The topics of sexuality and sex education are still taboo in our society, although far more infections are transmitted in Odessa by unprotected sexual intercourse than through injecting drug use," says Irina Swetaschowa. The GELCU training program coordinator cites four factors for the HIV epidemic in her country. "People here are terribly afraid of AIDS. While very few un-





Challenging fixed mentalities: Psychologist Vitali Gorbunov leads a “train-the-doctors” seminar in Odessa, Ukraine. © Karin Desmarowitz/agenda

30 percent knew anything about the dangers, transmission methods and protective measures, but at the end it was 98 percent!” The figures also persuaded public officials and politicians: AIDS prevention is now included in health education in the whole Odessa region. The teachers involved receive a bonus from the school authorities. In a press statement in February 2009 the chairperson of the territorial education administration in the region, Dmitri Demtschenko, especially thanked GELCU and the LWF for their commitment. “Together we have created a basis for successful instruction,” he stated.

derstand the modes of transmission most of them still act irresponsibly and say: ‘That does not concern me.’ In addition, the state does virtually nothing to raise awareness, merely concentrating on handing out free medication.” Those who are HIV positive in Ukraine soon feel the social consequences—doctors often refuse to treat such patients, their families turn away, teachers throw infected students out of school and children are placed in care homes.

AIDS education is urgently needed but is left to non-state institutions such as BHO or open-minded churches like GELCU. Bishop Uland Spahlinger, whose 250-strong Lutheran congregation in Odessa is one of the biggest in the country, speaks of a “cold shoulder mentality” toward those in need. “The church is challenged to be the advocate of human dignity and reliability precisely in this context of state disregard for social distress. The church must get involved,” the bishop asserts. He adds, “Its mission is, first, to focus on compassion for the needy. Second, it must arouse understanding for the ethical and practical responsibility of individual members in daily life. This means raising awareness in the broadest sense.”

Convincing Results

The church’s diaconal center offers a mobile psychosocial service for

people affected by HIV and AIDS. The BHO has also launched a hotline and mobile medical assistance. In order to break the taboo on the issue as fast as possible, Odessa’s Lutheran church first organized training for trainers such as Gorbunov and Swetaschowa, who have in turn trained over 4,000 teachers to offer classes on AIDS prevention. From November 2005 to September 2007, with the financial support from the LWF, these specialist teachers held classes for all students between the age of 13 and 17 in the city of Odessa, totaling 22,000.

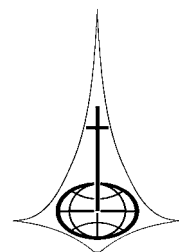
“The results were impressive,” reports Swetaschowa. “At first only

In-Service Training for Doctors and Nurses

Members of the next group have taken their seats in the BHO seminar room. Since April 2009 Gorbunov and his colleagues have been training doctors and nurses, with 500 of them expected to complete the program each year. The participants stand up, each displaying a sign. “Talking together,” one says, “living together” or “gynecological examination without protective gloves.” Gorbunow asks them to stand in line “according to the degree of infection risk.” The medical personnel discuss the matter, move back and forth and finally form a semi-circle.



Medical workers grapple with AIDS realities at a “train-the-doctors” workshop at the Bavarian House Odessa, Ukraine. © Karin Desmarowitz/agenda



The first, easy situations are put in the correct order and remain without comments. However the “repeated use of medical instruments” is placed in the middle, something the trainer cannot comprehend. “That is impossible!” Gorbunow protests, running his fingers through

his hair. “I’ve given you so much information over the last two days and you still think that is an acceptable risk! Move to the back!” The doctor obediently takes her sign and lines up next to “unprotected anal intercourse” and “a syringe picked up in the park”.



An HIV positive mother cradles her healthy baby while talking to the director of the Odessa Lutheran church mobile psychosocial service for people with HIV and AIDS. © Karin Desmarowitz/agenda

“The seminar is timely and extremely interesting,” remarks Elena Yatmanowa during coffee break. The 37-year-old heads the general medicine ward at the public hospital in the Primorski district. “We often have HIV patients,” she says, and is surprised that some colleagues at the seminar know little about the virus. “The problem is everywhere and there is enough information around if you are interested,” she remarks. Yatmanowa definitely wants to recommend the course. “I will send all the staff on my ward here by December,” she says. Next door, two of her nurses are already participating in the seminar for nursing staff.

(A feature by LWI correspondent Constanze Bandowski)

LWI correspondent Constanze Bandowski also interviewed Dr Vitali Nowoswitnij, director of the Odessa City Center for HIV and AIDS prevention and control, on the spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Odessa and ways of tackling it. Read the whole interview at:

www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/2446.EN.html

A summary of the situation in Odessa and GELCU projects in Odessa is available at this link:

www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/2445.EN.html

For more information about World AIDS day reflections and resources, please visit the LWF Web site at:

www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/HIV-AIDS/LWF-HIV_AIDS-WAD09.html

1 December 2009

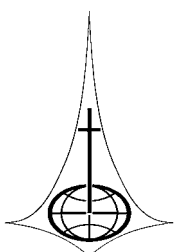
FEATURE: It Is Not a Death Sentence

LWF Rwanda Supports Local Groups to Fight AIDS Stigma

KIGALI, Rwanda/GENEVA (LWI) – “I am sorry I infected you and did not tell you,” Innocent Niwsi murmured as he lay dying on his bed. He had summoned the

courage to admit to Beatrice, his young second wife that he was HIV positive and dying. His first wife had also died from an AIDS-related illness.

That was in 2000, when the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS was very high. Niwsi was being treated by a traditional medicine



man, which may have accelerated his demise. When Beatrice was finally able to convince her husband to come back home and get proper treatment, provided free at hospitals and health centers across Rwanda, he was already paralyzed, and he passed away shortly afterwards.

Today, 35-year-old Beatrice is a person living with HIV. She married Niwsi when she was just 22 and they had two children, Nadine and Yves. When she was expecting her second child, she started having severe abdominal pains and went to a family planning clinic in the capital, Kigali for a check-up. While there, the doctors encouraged her to go for counseling and further testing. She was diagnosed as HIV positive, news that hit her so hard that she at first contemplated suicide. But the thought of the impact this would have on her family made her change her mind.



For Beatrice Niwsi, HIV is not a death sentence. © LWF/DWS Rwanda/S. Gebreyes

Income Generation

After her husband's death, the mother of two decided to move to Nyamata in Bugesera district, just half an hour's drive from Kigali, where she settled in with her mother. Thinking that death was imminent, she preferred to be buried close to her.

Beatrice recalls her first few years in Nyamata, saying she felt like she

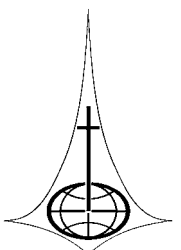
was "wearing a scarlet letter 'T' for 'infected,'" as everyone knew her status and avoided her. She was unemployed and living off her mother's small plot that they cultivated together to feed the family.

In 2007 she heard of a local association called Kotwibu, which helps people living with HIV access treatment and other forms of assistance. Upon becoming a member, she received a goat to help her earn some income. The goat was a welcomed gift and it soon reproduced. The sale of the baby goat generated a small income that Beatrice stretched to make ends meet for a while.

Rwanda has an HIV prevalence rate of an estimated three percent in a population of around 9 million people. Kotwibu, remarks Beatrice, is a sign that the AIDS stigma is decreasing in the country, and that



DWS Rwanda helps community members to attain food security through initiatives such as this vegetable garden in the eastern district of Kayanza. © LWF/DWS Rwanda/S. Gebreyes



there is hope. As an association member, she benefits from resources and benefits such as training programs on HIV prevention, trauma counseling and savings and credit operations, supported by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Rwanda. She also benefits from medical insurance coverage, learns how to weave baskets, manage a small business, and is encouraged to revitalize her livelihood by selling artifacts produced by the association. She has managed to save some money and plans to increase her savings in order to access credit. In the meantime, she has found a job as a cleaning lady.

Hope

Nine years after diagnosis and despite the difficult and painful experiences, Beatrice is a living testimony that being HIV positive is not a death sentence, and that one can receive treatment and lead a healthy and productive life. She socializes with friends and relatives without feeling like an outcast, and is ready to build a future for herself and her family.

Her children have tested negative for HIV. Beatrice never breast-fed her second child on doctors' orders so as to avoid mother-to-child-transmission. But she has no rational explanation as to why her 13-year-old firstborn, Nadine, is HIV negative and simply says: "It is a miracle."

Beatrice actively participates in local and national sensitization campaigns on HIV and AIDS, teaching people how to live with the



A beneficiary of a DWS-supported beifer project in Kayonza district © LWF/DWS Rwanda/S. Gebreyes

disease and how to avoid infection in the first place. She is grateful to DWS Rwanda for the training and awareness raising, all of which have enabled her to renew her life and given her hope.

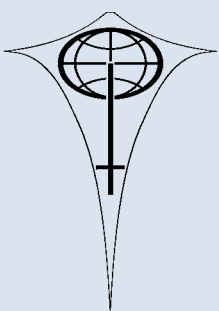
(Sophie Gebreyes provided this feature article while working as program coordinator for DWS Rwanda)

(Beatrice Nirwsi granted permission for the use of family names and photo for this feature.)

For more information about World AIDS reflections and resources, please visit the LWF Web site at www.lutheranworld.org

30 November 2009

***The article is in the continuing LWF features' series focusing on the topic "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," the theme of the LWF Eleventh Assembly, which will take place 20–27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany.**



Published and distributed by:
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