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ANNUAL REPORT 2012
The Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. Founded in 1947 in Lund, Sweden, the LWF now has 145 member churches in 79 countries all over the world, representing 70 million Christians.

The LWF acts on behalf of its member churches along common interests such as ecumenical and inter-religious relations, theology, humanitarian aid, international affairs and human rights, communication, and mission and development work.

The LWF General Secretariat is located at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Department for World Service (DWS) is a cooperation branch of the LWF for humanitarian relief and development. The DWS is rooted in Christian values of love, reconciliation and justice, and it responds to human needs in countries where the LWF programs are located. The DWS works together with local and international partners to alleviate suffering, combat injustice and poverty, and lay the foundation for a life with dignity for all. The DWS works in regions and countries with high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters and a high concentration of poverty. The work of the DWS is spread across 34 countries through 15 programs with thematic objectives for: disaster response and risk reduction; creating sustainable communities; combating HIV and AIDS; promoting peace, reconciliation and human rights; transforming gender relations; and protecting the environment.

The LWF is a founding member of the ACT Alliance, which is a global coalition of 125 churches and agencies throughout the world, dedicated to development, humanitarian aid, and advocacy. Its members work in 140 countries. ACT Alliance regional and national level forums exist in the Central American region.
Central America Program

The LWF/DWS “Sustainable Development and Advocacy Program” in Central America aims to contribute to the reduction of the root causes of vulnerability in Central America, taking innovative steps through a rights-based approach and a framework of holistic action for sustainable development.

The program’s regional office is located in El Salvador, where it coordinates work for emergency and humanitarian response and rehabilitation activities. The program is also implemented through national offices in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Additionally, regional activities are conducted to ensure social coordination across all levels.

Children at a school in Ciudad Quetzal, Guatemala, where the Central America Program works with the partner organization Caja Lúdica. July, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.

The LWF/DWS Central America Program responds to the objectives laid out in the 2008-2013 Strategy:

General Objective: Contribute to the reduction of the causes of vulnerability in Central America, with innovative actions based on rights in the framework of integrated sustainable development.

Strategic Objective 1: Build capacity of families and production groups in the communities on food sovereignty and security, and advocacy in decision-making on the appropriate use of natural resources.

Strategic Objective 2: Help community and social organizations to promote dynamics to establish inclusive public policies.

Strategic Objective 3: Build capacity for joint action for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response.

Strategic Objective 4: Improve the coherence, effectiveness, visibility, and quality of the regional program strategy.

Children at a school in Coban, Quiché, Guatemala, where the Central America Program works with the partner organization Caja Lúdica. July, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.
The social, economic, environmental, and political conditions in Central America make it one of the most vulnerable regions in the world. In terms of the political and democratic situation in the year 2012, El Salvador underwent an inter-institutional crisis among the three branches of the State, as a result of non-compliance with the election criteria for the selection of Justices to the Supreme Court in 2006 and 2012. In December, United Nations Special Rapporteur Gabriela Knaul urged the Salvadoran government to work to resolve the challenges to judicial independence. At the end of that same year Honduras underwent a crisis of its own, as the National Congress removed four Justices of the Constitutional Court from their posts, leading to a crisis between new and old Justices. Municipal elections were held in Nicaragua in 2012. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party won in 75.69% of the municipalities. According to the NGO Transparency International, Honduras and Nicaragua are among the least transparent countries in terms of governmental performance. In Honduras, the causes and effects of the 2009 coup still persist; historic state institutions have lost credibility and are unable to resolve the issues of poverty, exclusion, and obstacles to sound governance. In the year 2012, the political situation in Honduras was delineated by internal and primary elections. Following these elections results, there are now nine parties legally registering candidates for the general elections to be held in November, 2013. Several public opinion studies reveal that between 65% and 70% of the population of Honduras disapproves of the President Lobo administration. Some 52% of those surveyed report mistrust of political parties, 50% are mistrustful of the National Congress, and 45% mistrust the police. With respect to the economy and vulnerable sectors, the Multi-Purpose Household Survey (EHPM by its Spanish acronym) revealed persistent inequality between men and women in El Salvador in areas such as access to education, healthcare, employment, and the quality of these services. National illiteracy rates are at 12.8%, but this overall figure hides a 15% rate for women, while men come in at 10.2%. Honduras is considered to be the third least equitable country in Latin America, after Haiti and Colombia, to the extreme that just 203 millionaires ($1,014,108 dollars) The unemployment rates further complicate this situation, with 835 thousand young people unable to find job opportunities, 337 thousand children and minors working at high risk and with low salaries, and 700 thousand adults over the age of 60 without pensions, supported only by their families. The treaty to institute the Unified System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE) was passed in 2012, the Government of Honduras endured an economic crisis of such magnitude that by December of that year they could no longer pay wages and benefits for many public workers in the healthcare or education sectors. The government is facing a fiscal deficit of 20 million lempiras ($1,014,208 dollars). The unemployment rates further complicate this situation, with 835 thousand young people unable to find job opportunities, 337 thousand children and minors working at high risk and with low salaries, and 700 thousand adults over the age of 60 without pensions, supported only by their families. The treaty to institute the Unified System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE) was passed in 2012.
In terms of natural resources, the Global Climate Risk Index presents Honduras as the country with the greatest climate risk in the world for a 20-year period. Nicaragua ranks third, El Salvador fourth, and Guatemala ninth. Climate change is a growing challenge for middle-income countries such as the ones that make up the Central American region. This region faces high environmental vulnerability, which is exacerbated by a lack of political will to treat the traditional problems.

In Nicaragua, the increase in large-scale industrial activities, or “megaprojects” such as textiles, mining, the construction of a dry canal, and microhydro crops such as African palm, plastic, and agroindustries, and the imminent return of cotton production; combined with a weak and corrupt regulatory structure and framework, puts natural resources at tremendous risk.

In Honduras, natural resources continue to be transferred to the foreign control of the national and business sector. The Garifuna communities of the Bay and Tola are being displaced from their lands to make way for tourism projects.

In terms of emergency response and risk management, an earthquake registering 7.2 degrees on the Richter scale struck in Guatemala in November. The earthquake affected 1.2 million people in all, killing 49 and leaving 13,000 in temporary shelters.

As a result of the rains in Nicaragua in 2012, damages were compounded by seismic activity and the eruption of the San Cristóbal Volcano.

According to Germanwatch, Honduras is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, despite the fact that it boasts a National Risk Management System (SINAGER by its Spanish acronym), which lays out a general framework for the actions of the state, civil society organizations, and international cooperation agencies in risk prevention and management. Nevertheless, effective coordination and engagement mechanisms have yet to be instated.

In the year 2012, the work within the International Community (IIA) of Funes-Lobo (Nicaragua-El Salvador-Honduras) has been a consistent ally of Honduras. As a result, the President of the Republic of Honduras has expressed interest in opening formal and diplomatic trade relations with Continental China, which has elicited immediate reactions from Taiwan, which has been a consistent ally of Honduras. As a result, the Government of the United States has not looked kindly on this new openness.

In Honduras, 32% of children in the rural areas suffer from malnutrition, compared to 14% of urban children.

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In Guatemala, weapons are in circulation in the country. An estimated 850,000 were in circulation in the country. In 2012, the United Nations identified Honduras as one of the most dangerous countries in the world. In the last seven years, the country has reported 25,617 deaths from firearms, which represent 41% of the total number of deaths registered in the country. An estimated 850,000 weapons are in circulation in the country.

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Individuals fear to lose family members who disappeared during the Civil War. In El Salvador, January 2012. Photo by Mario Arace.

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The Central America program now includes a new planning cycle for the Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service (LWF/DWS) for improving preparedness and accountability. This HUB was created in keeping with the new strategy of the LWF/DWS for improving preparedness and accountability and evaluation. This conference has established an important role for the LWF in Central America.

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The offices were fortified with new specialists in the Region, for the year 2013, assessments after the earthquake in San Marcos, Guatemala, and Hurricane Sandy, in Cuba.

For your prayers and your support, we thank you. We are at your service.

Eva Ekelund
Regional Representative
Central America Program
LWF/DWS
Giving Thanks in 2012, and Great Jubilee in 2013: The 30th Anniversary of the Presence of The Lutheran World Federation

Message from Bishop Medardo Gómez

Just as we say in the liturgy of our worship, “it is a right, good, and joyful thing” to write to give thanks to God, for all that we have been able to do in the Year of our Lord 2012. We cannot deny that we have been accompanied by the Hand of God, as He has sent His sons and daughters to perform the work of His Kingdom.

It is this divine delegation that accounts for the presence of the Lutheran Communion and The Lutheran World Federation in Central America, and the history that they have made. This coming year, 2013, will mark 50 years of a Lutheran presence in El Salvador and Central America.

The diaconal support of The Lutheran World Federation has allowed the Churches to say to our brothers and sisters in Communion, and to everyone in Central America: “The deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk, and the gospel of hope is preached for the poor.”

This has been the glorious ministry of the Lutherans in Central America and El Salvador, a service performed in the name of God, where He manifests his love for the needy. As a Church here in El Salvador, we have seen first-hand the important role that The Lutheran World Federation has played, and how it has contributed to the processes of peace-building and committed to ongoing collaboration with the local Church.

For this upcoming year we hope to celebrate and give thanks for this important landmark, recognizing the valuable work of the Lutheran Communion as it has given love, life, faith, solidarity, and salvation for our beloved El Salvador and our Central America.

Fraternally,

Medardo E. Gómez
Bishop, Salvadoran Lutheran Church
President, CILCA

Our Actions in 2012
Regional component

1. Food sovereignty and advocacy for the conservation of natural resources

Together with Red Latindadd and networks across Central America and Europe, the Central America Program Team at the LWF/DWS discussed food sovereignty and advocacy for the conservation of natural resources. In the year 2012, the Bartolomé de las Casas Center (CBC by its Spanish acronym) led a process to promote the conservation of natural resources that generated on environmental issues.

Additionally, specializations were defined by type of emergency response. Guatemala will focus on food security and temporary shelters; Nicaragua will focus on water and sanitation; and, El Salvador will focus on shelters and gender. The ongoing social conflict in Honduras made it impossible to hold a discussion on potential areas of specialty.

2. Promotion of Inclusive Public Policies

In the year 2012, the Bartolomé de las Casas Center (CBC by its Spanish acronym) led a process of masculinity trainings for gender equity. Eight hundred men participated in these trainings and capacity assessments following extreme events should be incorporated into DRR projects.

3. Risk Management and Disaster Response

In this year, representatives from nine partner organizations attended seminars conducted to improve knowledge in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction. A total of 124 people were trained, including 36 women, on Strategic Risk Management topics. Partners and the Central America Program Team at the LWF/DWS discussed the complexity of processes for vulnerability reduction, and reviewed how damage and capacity assessments following extreme events should be incorporated into DRR projects.

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4. Program Visibility, Quality, and Effectiveness

Work continued in this year to unify the institutional image and message, and to strengthen the identity of the regional program. In Honduras, funds were collected to carry out a consultancy to draft a submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur; identifying extra-judicial killings and casting a special focus on emblematic cases from the Bajo Aguán region.

Different human rights and international organizations in the Association of International Cooperation (ACI) coordinated in this effort. At the close of this report, work to draft the submission was ongoing.

In the framework of the international session to present the Universal Periodic Review on human rights practices in Guatemala, held in Geneva, Switzerland, a side event entitled “Transitional Justice in Guatemala” was held with participation of representatives from the LWF/DWS, RELAGS, the ACT Alliance Secretariat, representatives of the European Commission on Human Rights, international and Guatemalan human rights organizations, and representatives from European governments.

On a regional level the video “Green Flesh, Death Land” was created for advocacy actions surrounding Rio+20. The video continues to be shared through the webpage and facebook. This film has been used in different regional and international events, as it describes the human rights violations committed by multi-national corporations who take advantage of institutional and political vulnerabilities in certain nations, especially Guatemala and Honduras.

The Advocacy and Communications Department published the Report on Human Rights and Conflict in Central America, 2011-2012, distributed via email and the LWF social networks. Complementary to the human rights report, a statement was published in national-circulation newspapers in El Salvador and Nicaragua regarding International Human Rights Day. These statements referred to and highlighted the findings and recommendations calling upon Central American states to guarantee respect for human rights.

Additionally, as an initiative of the LWF/DWS and FECLAI, the “Eccumenical Workshop on Structural Violence: Debt in Central America” was held. This workshop opened a space for dialogue among diverse sectors to promote an audit in El Salvador, beginning with areas of crisis response and rehabilitation and promoting human rights. The outcome from the workshop was the creation of a reference group for an initial investigation.

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1. Food Sovereignty and Advocacy for the Conservation of Natural Resources

In 2012, the Coordinator of Farmers’ Associations in Petén, Guatemala (COACAP by its Spanish acronym), along with community representatives, built technical and agricultural capacities for the recovery and use of native seeds. As a result, 60 demonstration plots have been planned, including production of eight different crops and distribution of agricultural input products for the farmers in the communities. At the same time, the Regional Strategy for Fire Management in Petén was completed and shared.

2. Promotion of Inclusive Public Policies

As the “Citizens Observatory” project continues, the Friends of Development and Peace Association (ADP by its Spanish acronym) established two observatories in the Municipalities of San Pedro Carcha and Tactic, in the Department of Alta Verapaz. Additionally, Caja Lúdica, together with the Center for Legal Action for Human Rights (CALDH by its Spanish acronym) and the Guatemalan Network for Community Arts, built capacity through a training process on advocacy and the arts as tools for local and national work.

3. Risk Management and Disaster Response

Over the course of this year, the LWF/DWS national team and partner organizations built capacity in this area; Caja Lúdica, ASEDE, ProPetén, and national office personnel participated together in a regional workshop in El Salvador. As a result of this training, an emergency response plan was drafted for the Guatemala national office.

On a local level, Early Warning Systems (EWS by their Spanish acronym) were monitored and the operation of the inter-community networks was verified.

4. Program Visibility, Quality, and Effectiveness

In terms of participation and networking with cooperation agencies, meetings were held with different organizations working on human rights and justice issues, such as the Association for the Study and Promotion of Democratic Security (SEDEH by its Spanish acronym) and the Association of Family Members of the Detained or Disappeared in Guatemala (FAMDEGUA by its Spanish acronym); project proposals were drafted to present to different funders.

In the framework of the project for participation and citizen policing, meetings were held with the Forum of International Non-Governmental Organizations (FONGI by its Spanish acronym) to follow up on the UPR, as well as bi-lateral meetings with FAMDEGUA, Diakonia, Trocaire, the Dutch Platform, the Embassy of Norway, the Embassy of Sweden, CALDH, the Attorney General, and the Director of the Public Prosecution Service of Guatemala. A conference was also held with the Director of the Transitional Justice Program, New York. These meetings helped to raise the program’s visibility and coordinate with other actors to conduct joint activities on a national, regional, and international level.

With the support of the Central America Program of the LWF/DWS, the Regional Human Rights Monitoring and Analysis Team in Central America conducted a study and published the seventh Report on Human Rights and Conflicts in Central America, 2011-2012. The report focuses on three trends that were identified in the region during this period:

- Criminalization and persecution of human rights defenders: Severe violations to the physical and psychological health of human rights defenders have been verified in the region; up to this point, these violations have occurred with total impunity.
- Re-militarization and application of security policies in response to drug trafficking, organized crime, gangs, and migration: The pattern among the governments of this region has been to justify the deployment of military forces under the argument that the combination of high crime rates and few police resources demands army intervention.
- Territorial and social conflicts as a result of government-sponsored investment and cooperation models in the context of the global crisis: models for investment and cooperation have changed; capital is re-accumulating in the hands of multi-nationals, and this concentration has led to forced displacements, disputes, and conflicts over territory.
1. Food Sovereignty and Advocacy for the Conservation of Natural Resources

A total of 44 micro-irrigation systems were established by farmers in the National Agriculture University (UNA) Field Schools (ECAs by their Spanish acronym) in the Municipality of Silca, Olancho. To take full advantage of these systems, the families will work on a certified bean seed project to supply seeds to meet regional market demands. The sale of these seeds can help these families gain needed economic resources.

In late 2012, additional funds provided by Finn Church Aid (FCA) were invested to buy input products and irrigation equipment, and expand the coverage of this initiative.

2. Promotion of Inclusive Public Policies

In 2012, community leaders were trained on topics of leadership, democracy, human rights, and development. These leaders then participated in drafting proposals on youth issues, environmental campaigns, election observation processes, and the upcoming 2013 general elections.

Additionally, 34 young people (50% of whom are women) graduated from the Youth Leadership School. These graduates studied topics including social movements, the coup d'état, context analysis, democracy, and citizen participation.

With growing citizen participation, mobilizations were held in the Southern region of the country to stop the entrance of mining companies and defend the right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

3. Risk Management and Disaster Response

Further capacity on risk management and the reduction of environmental vulnerability was built with young people from schools in Salamá, Silca, and Manto. This capacity-building was done with collaboration and support from SINAGER and COPECO, who drafted contingency mechanisms and responses for community, sector-based, and territorial plans.

Equipment was installed for four solid waste collection systems. This equipment was installed in the context of a mini-project on recycling that included awareness-raising campaigns using radio broadcasts, signs, and banners.

4. Program Visibility, Quality, and Effectiveness

The Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit was held this year in Catacamas, Olancho. A public hearing and international seminar on human rights was also held in Tocoa, Colón.

In addition to these events, the public prosecution service of the country took on four cases of human rights violations that occurred in the Bajo Aguán region; COFADEH (with support from the LWF) assisted in the investigations. A visit from a delegation of international journalists was also organized to raise visibility around the human rights issues in the area.

Udelia works to reduce community risk

When it rains hard in the community of Tierra Blanca, in the Municipality of Chisec, Department of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, the home where Udelia Tiuxlal and her children live by the river is one of the first ones to flood.

To help her family and her community, Udelia participates in the Community Aid Commission organized by the National Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction (CONRED). She joined in thanks to the work that the Association for Education and Development, a Central America Program partner organization, has been doing in the community.

"Now that I’m on the commission, I’ve really changed my mentality. Now I speak up and participate in the community. I know that as a woman I have the same rights as men do. When there was a flood I used to wait for someone to come help me... now I’m the one who helps to evacuate families from their homes," Udelia commented.

Udelia Tiuxlal and one of her daughters at their home in the community of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. June, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.

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Udelia Tiuxlal and one of her daughters at their home in the community of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. June, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.

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1. Food Sovereignty and Advocacy for the Conservation of Natural Resources

Eighty families improved their technical capacity by participating in agro-ecology workshops. As a result of these trainings, families were able to produce and sell the harvest from their garden plots in the communities and local markets; this diversification and the sale of these products helped to improve the household economy.

In continued work with the Youth Promoters Network, an Environmental Agenda was drafted for the Municipality of Somotillo. This agenda included political advocacy actions for the preservation of natural resources. A project outreach plan was implemented, which included disseminating information through broadcasts on two radios: Radio Joven and Radio Católica.

2. Promotion of Inclusive Public Policies

Education in community organizing for prevention and reduction of family violence, especially violence against women, was fortified and continued in 2012.

3. Risk Management and Disaster Response

Local Disaster Prevention Committees (COLOPRED by their Spanish acronym) in 10 participating communities were officially recognized by municipal authorities and the Municipal Disaster Prevention Committees (COMUPRED by their Spanish acronym). These communities now have emergency plans, risk maps, work tools, and first aid kits.

Additionally, a rescue brigade was formed in the community of Las Mariitas, which also provided humanitarian assistance to the communities of Palo de Ruedas and El Roble.

4. Program Visibility, Quality, and Effectiveness

Further visits were conducted to enhance visibility and coordination with the Faith and Hope Lutheran Church, Solidaridad Internacional, the Humboldt Center Communications Department, the Nicaragua Scouts Group, the Central American Institute for Social Integration (ISI by its Spanish acronym), and the Human Rights Center of Nicaragua, to discuss topics of women, peace building and citizenship, youth, HIV-AIDS, and the environment.

A letter of understanding was signed with the Humboldt Center Communications Department for a “Media Plan” designed to disseminate information and raise the visibility of the country program.

Nicaragua

Youth graduating in the PACOS program.

At age 16, Delmer Ávila is already the coordinator of the Community Environmental Promoters Project (PACOS) by its Spanish acronym. Delmer has participated since the project began in April 2011, and he is proud of the work that has been done so far and the knowledge he has gained.

The PACOS course is conducted by the Lutheran World Federation at its partner organization, the Social Ministry of Justice, in the Municipality of Managua in the Department of Chinandega, Nicaragua. “This project has helped me to gain greater knowledge to solve environmental problems. As we have more awareness, we have a greater responsibility to work on the problems in our municipality,” Ávila explained.

During this course, young people conduct field visits and participate in workshops, simulations, mobilizations, and experience exchanges; in addition to learning a lot, I’ve made friends through these activities, and shifted my studies as well. I love what I am doing now, I feel quite content”, he commented.

Additionally, a rescue brigade was formed in the community of Las Mariitas, which also provided humanitarian assistance to the communities of Palo de Ruedas and El Roble.

PACOS for environmental improvement
Oliven and her family have participated in workshops, exchanges, and fairs to learn how to grow fruit trees and vegetables, make organic fertilizers, raise chickens, and set up household-scale irrigation systems to be successful fruit and vegetable farmers. All of this work comes as part of the “Fostering Food Security and Sovereignty in 15 Villages of Villanueva and Somotillo” project, led by the LWF/DWS Central America Program, with the partner organization Association for Eco-Sustainable Development (ADEES by its Spanish acronym).

“The food for our family has changed since we got involved in this project. We will sell extra crops, and use that money to buy rice, beef, or other goods. The girls are eating better now,” reported Oliven Gonzalez, an inhabitant of the community of Los Laureles II in the Municipality of Villanueva, Department of Chinandega, Nicaragua.

“We used to buy it at the market, now I can grow it myself,” stated Oliven González shows the fruits and vegetables she grows at her home in Chinandega, Nicaragua. October, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.

The food for our family has changed since we got involved in this project. We will sell extra crops, and use that money to buy rice, beef, or other goods. The girls are eating better now,” reported Oliven Gonzalez, an inhabitant of the community of Los Laureles II in the Municipality of Villanueva, Department of Chinandega, Nicaragua.

“Oliven shared that the entire family is involved in this food production: “what’s great about it is that we can grow it myself. We have enough for ourselves, and then some to sell at the market, too” noted Oliven González shows the fruits and vegetables she grows at her home in Chinandega, Nicaragua. October, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.

“we use to only grow corn, but now we’ve diversified. What I used to buy at the market, now I can grow it myself. We have enough for ourselves, and then some to sell at the market, too,” said Oliven González shows the fruits and vegetables she grows at her home in Chinandega, Nicaragua. October, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.

The application of a rights-based and citizen approach demands not only capacity-building for the subjects of change, but accompaniment as well. To help these groups build public opinion, propose public policy, and gain rights-based legislation, Youth work such as the Report on Human Rights and Conflict have helped different communities and sectors in the region to perform local advocacy. The Mexicanosmexicanos Campaign for Climate Justice promotes a rights-based approach through sustainability. This proposal argues that for governments to guarantee fundamental rights, they must appropriately protect and manage natural resources.

Part of the work in building active citizenship, especially in countries who have undergone armed conflicts, is to clarify and resolve human rights violations and provide dignity for the victims and their families. This requires accompaniment efforts to file complaints and gain dissemination information on local and national levels. The LWF supports program accompanied organizations such as FAREDEUGA and CALDH to perform this work in Guatemala.

Internally, the LWF/DWS is reviewing the application of the rights-based approach in DWS programs. This practical application will require manuals and/or policies that allow the program to measure impacts, perform a qualitative assessment of the interventions, and accompany political advocacy.

Gender and Youth Approach

Over the course of this year, a dual approach on gender and youth was effectively applied as a cross-cutting axis within all of the processes performed. With support from a budget with specific allocations for activities under the approach, qualitative advocacy actions for youth and women were undertaken. The Bartolomé de las Casas Center has been a strategic partner for the LWF for incorporating a comprehensive approach to masculinities. This approach has been applied with partners and other allies, as well as within the institution directly. Sixty percent of the staff have been trained under this approach, and this critical mass has helped to bring about a new style of working relationships within the team, as well as changes in the practice and approach of the staff working in different program areas. An exchange event among youth organizations working in the Central America and Colombia programs would help to strengthen linkages and efforts among these groups, as well as build innovative proposals for work done by and with young people on broader issues undertaken by the LWF. Progress has been made along these lines in the last year, including the use of recreational elements as a new way to incorporate young people, especially encouraging youth at-risk situations to participate actively.

Progress has been made in Guatemala as well on the implementation of the project entitled “Promotion of Youth Rights through Arts and Culture to Prevent Violence”, which seeks to promote violence prevention within the 12 strategies outlined in INTERPEACE-POLJUVE, 2011. In Nicaragua, special attention has been paid to youth through the project “Eco-Logic for my Community” implemented by Asociación Mirem.

The Mesoamerican Campaign for Climate Justice offers an innovative proposal for work done by and with youth in at-risk situations. Through its Regional Program, the LWF has built mechanisms in place to measure impacts, perform a qualitative assessment of the interventions, and accompany political advocacy.

Our Approaches

Rights-Based and Citizens Approach

Through its Regional Program, the LWF has built a distinct vision for development, starting from a conception of the people themselves as the subjects that provoke change in their realities. Diverse local processes have fed into the region-wide work over the course of the year, and the promotion and exercise of human rights is gradually growing stronger.

The application of a rights-based and citizens approach demands not only capacity-building for the subjects of change, but accompaniment as well. To help these groups build public opinion, propose public policy, and gain rights-based legislation, Youth work such as the Report on Human Rights and Conflict have helped different communities and sectors in the region to perform local advocacy. The Mexicanosmexicanos Campaign for Climate Justice promotes a rights-based approach through sustainability. This proposal argues that for governments to guarantee fundamental rights, they must appropriately protect and manage natural resources.

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Risk Management Approach

The LWF/DWS supports in the countries of this region incorporate a Risk Management Approach as they seek to transform the causes that lead to vulnerability for the population. Emergency response plans have been drafted and established based on a regional-level plan. These tools were created through participation of local organizations and other actors in the region. This is an important step in transforming the causes that lead to vulnerability for the population.

Do-No-Harm Approach

As part of the LWF/DWS commitment to HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership), a joint reflection on the LWF/DWS practices for development cooperation and emergency response have been established with partners and target groups. The active inclusion of local communities, organizations, and authorities has also been promoted in project design and execution.

Holistic Approach

This approach encompasses all of the aspects in the scope of the LWF/DWS work. Over the course of the year, each of the projects built links and coordinated with efforts on other themes (gender, masculinity, risk management, environment, food security and sovereignty); this exchange among the partners enhanced the work and allowed its outcomes to reach people and territories on a broad scale.

Program personnel linked to accountability processes (administration, human resources, etc.) were trained at a HAP workshop held in Colombia. The workshop included different analyses and reflection exercises on transparency, participation, and the importance of making knowledge and institutional complaint mechanisms available for the target population in order to prevent and/or correct acts of corruption or sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment.

Program actions are conducted with community groups and families who participate in the projects implemented in the different territories; these actors work in efforts complementary to the LWF/DWS work. Over the course of the year, each of the projects built links and coordinated with efforts on other themes (gender, masculinity, risk management, environment, food security and sovereignty); this exchange among the partners enhanced the work and allowed its outcomes to reach people and territories on a broad scale.

Participation in the ACT Alliance Forums

International-level actions planned around issues of human rights and the environment are discussed and undertaken through the ACT Alliance, thus granting greater force and a stronger voice to the proposals made. The inclusion of APREDEH into the Alliance will open the door to broader efforts around these issues.

The program has participated in three advisory working groups within the ACT Secretariat: Development Policies and Practices; Quality and Accountability, and Advocacy. These groups have held initial planning meetings to define priority work areas. It should be mentioned that the people participating in these working groups represent important channels to communicate the needs and efforts of the forums, and to facilitate exchange and discussion between country or regional forum representatives and the secretariat.

Enhancing these channels for exchange and growth should help to improve the quality of the work performed through the ACT Alliance.

In one example of these measures, the LWF collaborated directly in the construction of the peer evaluation process for member and forums on a global level within the Alliance. Support was also provided for the HAP certification process for the ACT Secretariat, along with follow-up support for the work of the forums in Central America.

The LWF coordinates the ACT Alliance Forum in Honduras, through which advocacy actions were performed on topics of sustainable development. The forum also helped to organize the III Regional Conference on Climate Change, along with other Central American networks.

In Nicaragua, the LWF helped to organize the Regional Consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the regional workshop on new emergency systems and a seminar on safety standards. The LWF also contributed to efforts for advocacy, development, and emergency response in the region.

A meeting of the Advisory Working Group on Advocacy for the ACT Alliance in Antigua, Guatemala, with participants from the Central America Program. May, 2012. Photo by Rosalía Soley.
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The LWF Gains HAP Certification

Staff from the LWF/DWS Central America and Colombia programs participate in the HAP Workshop in Colombia. Photo by the LWF/DWS Communications Team.

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) is a global quality control system. HAP certification guarantees the quality and responsibility of the actions of humanitarian groups with respect to communities affected by disasters, including organizing, readiness, and emergency response activities.

In February, 2012, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) gained HAP certification following a global audit process. This certification was awarded as a result of work to establish accountability and quality control systems for all programs of the LWF, based on a rights-based approach and best practices.

The Central America Program conducted a specific action plan in the year 2012 to build capacity among staff in order to improve transparency in accountability and quality management.

HAP certification was discussed at each of the regional coordination roundtables in the Central America Program. There is now a working complaints mechanism, and the regional Action Plan has been updated to include concrete actions for 2013, such as a code of conduct reviews, opening other channels to receive complaints, repeat trainings from the accountability workshop, and other activities.
Acknowledgements

The Lutheran World Federation Department for World Service Central America Program is grateful for the support it has received from many agencies and organizations over the course of this year 2012.

We thank the communities, our reason for being, for opening their doors to us and believing that together we can build a life that is more just.

We would like to thank our partners in the region: the local, national, regional, and international organizations and platforms with whom we work in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and who day by day continue to allow us to accompany them in their efforts to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable people.

Our thanks to the Global, Regional, and National ACT Alliance Forums, the Lutheran Churches of Central America, the LWF Secretariat in Geneva, and all of our teams working with great dedication and energy in Central America.

We would thank the local and national governments who have opened their doors to dialogue and debate proposals that seek to improve the quality of life for the population.

We wish to thank the cooperation agencies with whom we have engaged in this work; our achievements in this year 2012 would not have been possible without their support, contributions, solidarity, and accompaniment.

We hope to continue to work together in the year 2013 to help reduce the vulnerability of the societies of Central America.

Our Team

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Eva Cecilia Ekelund</td>
<td>Regional Representative</td>
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<td>Regional</td>
<td>Francisco Pérez Ramírez</td>
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Credits

Redaction: Natalia Cárcamo y Mario Salinas
Revision: Eva Ekstrom y Giovanni Magaña
Design and Diagramming: Active Comunicación
Translation: Jesse Kates-Chinoy
Print: Talleres Gráficos UCA

Cover photographs
2. A girl in a community of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, where the LWF Central America Program works with the partner organization ASEDE. June, 2012. Photo by Natalia Cárcamo.