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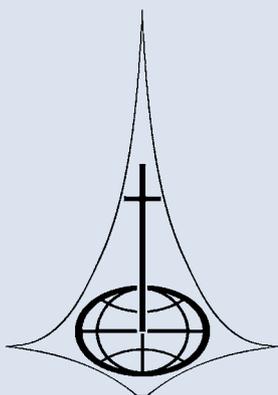
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*A women's empowerment seminar in India. © Lutheran World Service India Trust*

## Junge's Open Letter Emphasizes Need to Break Silence over Violence against Women

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said the brutal assault and rape that led to the death of a young woman in New Delhi, India, stands out as a painful reminder that “the achievement of gender justice is a matter of life and death.”

In a 14 January open letter to the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELICI), Junge offered the LWF's prayers for strength and courage upon the bereaved family and all who mourn the loss of life through such ruthless violence.

According to media reports, the woman and her male companion were attacked on a bus in New Delhi on 16 December 2012. She died of her injuries at a Singapore hospital about two weeks later.

The general secretary noted that this concrete case had revealed again that the implicit violence enshrined in unjust gender relationships finds explicit expression in actions of violence, experienced by many women around the world today and for which “sometimes they have to pay with their very lives.”

The case prompted protests in India calling for tougher laws against crimes related to violence against women. For the LWF general secretary, this remarkable reaction “stands in stark contrast to the attitude of denial and silence” that is common in similar cases. It is an expression of the

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### LWF Offers Deepest Sympathy to Families of Brazil Fire Victims

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, offered the communion’s deepest sympathy to the families of the more than 230 young people who died in a “dreadful” nightclub fire on 27 January in Brazil.

“Words fail us before the death of so many young people. Their desires and hopes, their joys and ambitions have been tragically cut short,” Junge said in a letter to the President of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), Rev. Dr Nestor P. Friedrich.

The fire took place after a band lit fireworks at a crowded nightclub in Santa Maria, a university city in the Rio Grande

do Sul region. The victims, most under the age of 20, had inhaled toxic fumes or were crushed in the panic.

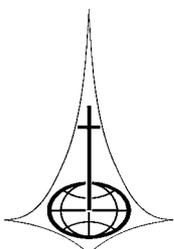
Junge offered prayers for the injured and for IECLB congregations coping with the pastoral challenges caused by the tragedy.

“It is promised that it is precisely in such times of deep pain and weakness that God takes us by the hand and inspires the ministry of love, care and acceptance to which the congregations and communities of the IECLB are today being called,” Junge said.

The general secretary assured the Brazilian church of the Lutheran communion’s support, solidarity and accompaniment.

## More LWI News at [www.lutheranworld.org/lwf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf)

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# “SEEKING CONVIVIALITY” WORKSHOP ON COMMUNITY DIAKONIA IN EUROPE

16–19 January, Odessa, Ukraine

## Church Serving Community in Ukrainian Context

Second LWF Workshop on Community Diakonia in Europe

ODESSA, Ukraine/GENEVA (LWI) – A group of Lutheran pastors, educators and diaconal workers (working in church social services) met in the Black Sea port city of Odessa for an ongoing initiative of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) European region on reforming community diakonia on the continent.

The 16–19 January workshop was the second meeting of the group, coordinated by the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) Europe Desk under the theme “Seeking Conviviality.” The meetings explore relevant responses to the economic and financial crisis that has affected most of Europe since 2008. The inaugural meeting in Järvenpää, Finland in December 2011 mapped out the growing vulnerability and marginalization of people and discussed emerging holistic approaches to community diakonia in Europe.

The workshops are organized in collaboration with the International Academy for Diakonia and Social Action (interdiac) based in Český Těšín, Czech Republic. Interdiac, a non-profit educational organiza-



DELKU Bishop Uland Spahlinger at the workshop's opening worship service at St Paul's Lutheran Church in Odessa. © LWF/Anli Serfontein

tion promotes learning, networking, research and development for social action in countries within Central and Eastern Europe.

Convening in Odessa was an opportunity for participants to also learn about the social and economic contexts of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (DELKU), which hosted the event. DELKU is one of the regional churches of the

Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS).

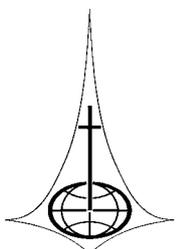
Speaking at the opening worship service at St Paul's Lutheran Church in Odessa, DELKU Bishop Uland Spahlinger told delegates that before 1914, the Odessa congregation counted 10,000 Lutherans, today it has hardly 250 members. He noted that church life has only returned to the city in the last two decades after nearly 70 years under Communism rule. The Lutheran church itself was only recently renovated after destruction by a fire in 1976.

### A Post-Soviet Situation

Spahlinger told *Lutheran World Information* (LWI) that the situation of the church in Ukraine is different from that in other Eastern European countries such as Poland or the Czech Republic. Ukraine is essentially “a post-Soviet situation, meaning that there is no interaction and virtually no co-operation between the Government and our church,” he said.



St Paul's Lutheran Church was renovated recently. © LWF/Anli Serfontein



“I think it is important for people from Western Europe and Scandinavia to have seen and better understand what our situation is like in the far Eastern part of Europe,” the DELKU bishop said, referring to delegates’ visits to church-run diakonia projects in the greater Odessa area.

The Odessa workshop looked at approaches and methodologies that can help effectively link up local, political and structural levels of social and economic change to build strong partnerships across Europe.

“We are churches in transformation in ever-changing societies. Therefore we are responding to the challenges in which the church also has the resources and know-how to be a key and significant player,” Rev. Dr Eva Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, LWF area secretary for Europe told delegates.

Rev. Tony Addy, head of education at interdiac told participants, “We are at the half-way point of the diaconal process in this consultation. We are here to get to know the Ukrainian context and diakonia through the realities of the Odessa region and to use that as a mirror in our own work.”

## Strategies for Change

Speaking on the socio-political situation in Ukraine, Dr Mykhaylo Pustovoyt, head of the Institute of Psychology and Psychotherapy in Odessa, told delegates that the instability of the political and judicial system in the country had meant that after the Orange Revolution—the civil society protests after the 2004 presidential election—people yearned for strong leaders. “In such an unstable system

people do not learn to cooperate and work together.” This, he said, affects the work of the church in communities and within society.

Delegates discussed four themes: vocation, conviviality, justice and dignity, which will be part of the content for a document on strategies for change and the next steps in the process.

The core-group of participants in the “Seeking Conviviality” workshops comes from 14 countries in the three LWF regions of Central Eastern and Central Western Europe and the Nordic region. At the Odessa meeting, they assessed the first practical steps in advocating a new perspective on community diakonia, and deliberated ways of sharing the European experiences with the global LWF communion.

## Lutheran Diaconal Workers Define a Holistic Framework for Diakonia in Europe

A broad framework for an action plan on reforming community diakonia in the aftermath of the financial crisis affecting most of Europe since 2008 was agreed by a core group of Lutherans working in this field.

The outline adopted by the “solidarity group” of diaconal workers and educators from all three European regions of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) incorporates practical actions with a combined strategy to achieve a more holistic approach to diakonia (church social service) for diaconal workers and decision-makers in churches in Europe.

The workshop participants emphasized “conviviality” as a key concept for diakonia in Europe. The term implies that the foundation of communities is based on reciprocal relationships between people, while undergirding respect for both people and communities that are “different.” Diakonia, they noted, “is rooted in congregational life and congregational life is community life.”

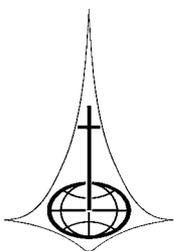
They underlined that while the LWF represents one church communion, the context of Lutheran



Participants included Ms Marjut Lukkarinen from Finland (left) and Rev. Daniela Schwimbersky from Austria. © LWF/Anli Serfontein

churches is diverse and includes many different realities. They affirmed the group’s working process as a participatory approach that helps to build trust between the respective individuals and commitment to the overall process. It also enhances a deeper understanding of the issues faced in each context, while providing space for mutual learning and critical review.

In Odessa, participants prepared individual action plans and established partnerships to help them implement findings in the ongoing process. They suggested that the final report and action plan take into account the different situations in Europe and incorporate individual and common project plans that link social justice issues to a just economy.





Learning about diaconal work in Odessa included sharing a meal with children at the Living Hope day-care center. © LWF/Anli Serfontein

## Learning among Participants

Interdiac's head of education Rev. Tony Addy emphasized that the main outcome of the Odessa workshop was not only the preparation of action plans by each participant and mapping out the general concepts and methodologies. "We deepen the relationship and learning between the participants and we get the real learning from Eastern Europe, not as a marginal note but as a central part of the process. Eastern Europe has a much more equal voice," he said.

Addy noted that the group started its work from a position where it had to integrate different approaches. He cited concepts in countries such as Germany, with a continuous 150-year tradition of organized diakonia, compared to Eastern Europe, where this tradition was interrupted during

the communist era when church social service existed primarily through informal congregational and personal involvement. In these countries, organized diakonia could only begin to redevelop after the fall of the Iron Curtain that had divided Europe for over four decades, he said.

For Janka Adameova, interdiac manager, the workshop had brought a deeper understanding between the three regions—Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe and the Nordic countries. Until now, there was only one general understanding of diakonia which was introduced mainly by partners in Western Europe. "Eastern European countries used to be under represented," she said.

Adameova also called for a broader definition of what Europe entails beyond the European Union. This

regional perspective should also include the Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia as well as parts of Russia, she added.

## Action Plans

The action plans include an overall strategy to bring the findings of the process so far into the LWF structures at the European level, and to countries that are not represented in the solidarity group.

Gunnel Claesson from the Church of Sweden echoed the views of many participants when she said "We do not want this document to sit on a shelf; it should be used in the field."

Rev. Dr Eva Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, LWF area secretary for Europe said the next phase in the process is crucial as it involves applying the methodologies identified for the respective action plans. "Participants will now bring back to their local, political and structural church levels the approaches and methodologies to diakonia identified in the process. At our next meeting, we will look at what has worked, what could not be achieved as planned and why, and build strategies that will help bring about meaningful change to marginalized people and communities," she added.

The group will hold its next workshop in January 2014.

*(Written for LWI by Berlin-based journalist Anli Serfontein)*

## LWF Reaction to Pope Benedict's Announced Resignation

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) received "with surprise" the news that Pope Benedict XVI would resign as head of the Roman Catholic Church on 28 February 2013.

A statement by *Vatican Radio* said the pope had announced his intended resignation as his "strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry."

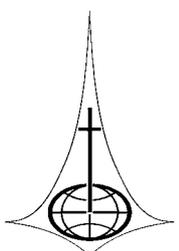
Speaking to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said they offered their prayers for the pope and the Catholic Church during this time. They expressed their deep appreciation for Benedict's commitment

to the search for the unity of the church and his support to ongoing ecumenical dialogues.

Younan and Junge underlined the 50 years of dialogue between the LWF and the Vatican as an enriching mutual journey which Pope Benedict has strongly supported.

They recalled the pontiff's discussions with LWF leaders during a private audience at the Vatican in December 2010, at which Benedict expressed gratitude for "the many significant fruits produced" by decades of bilateral discussions between Lutherans and Roman Catholics.

Benedict, 85, became pope in 2005 following the death of Pope John Paul II.



## LWF Support to Households in Myanmar Strengthens Community Participation

Committee for World Service Visits Projects, Approves Global Strategy

**YANGON, Myanmar/GENEVA (LWI)** – The bi-annual meeting of the Committee for World Service held in Yangon, Myanmar, 14-17 January, was an occasion for members of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) governance body to learn how the LWF works with local communities to promote sustainable livelihoods.



Members of the LWF Committee for World Service and a local staff person observe a fuel-efficient stove made from local materials at Ab Si Ka Lay village, southern Myanmar. © LWF Myanmar/Wyne Sandy Myint

Committee members travelled 93 kilometers by boat through canals and rivers to four villages in the Ayeyarwaddy delta in the south, where the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) supports community members in building capacity to meet basic needs.

At That Htay Gone village, a 45 year old mother shared her experience of being a partner household of LWF Myanmar. “Before I did not have a proper latrine and did not know how important hygiene was. My children and I frequently suffered from diarrhea and other diseases related to poor hygiene.”

In 2011 an LWF-trained village health volunteer explained the importance of proper sanitation and how to build and use a latrine properly, she said. “We built a fly-proof latrine, supported by LWF Myanmar. Since then, our health is better. That means we can work more and earn more. LWF helped me plan

for a better future. Now I have chickens and a piglet. I am aware of these changes in my family because I record them on the partner household assessment form.”

The chairpersons of the respective village development committees—including youth, women, farmers’ and manual laborers’ groups—explained how the members actively

Service (ALWS) said, “The community seems to be confident. They actively participated in the process of construction of a community hall and bridges by taking and sharing responsibility among the villagers in an organized manner. This was an uplifting sign of the unity within the community.”

Other committee members commended the positive community participation and the significant improvement of the village in just three years through the empowerment process.

Mr Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, DWS global program coordinator expressed appreciation to LWF Myanmar for the inclusion of school-age children in the village projects. “In the children’s club, the youth group members facilitate children to get involved in village development activities such as plastic management and waste control campaign. I believe that this process encourages children’s participation, and teaches them to take responsibility in development activities to improve their lives in the village. In the future, these children will gradually be empowered to take over village development management.”

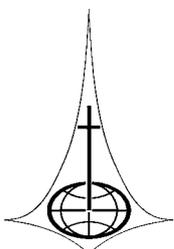
In a country that is prone to flooding, the World Service program works

participate in different activities.

Sharing his impressions after the visits, Mr Peter Schirmer, executive secretary, Australian Lutheran World



Left to right: Committee members Mr Peter Schirmer, ALWS executive secretary; Ms Birgitte Qvist-Sorensen, DanChurchAid international director; and Dr Petra Feil, DWS program officer for Quality Assurance and Accountability. © LWF Myanmar/Wyne Sandy Myint



in 50 villages in four districts. LWF's intervention began in 2008, following the cyclone Nargis, which killed nearly 140,000 people and destroyed housing, infrastructure and livelihoods. The current focus includes support to communities in initiatives for disaster reduction and management through trained teams, awareness-raising, and prevention and mitigation interventions.

In his official address to the committee, DWS director Rev. Eberhard Hitzler noted that the likelihood of more countries and people being ad-

versely affected by cyclones and other natural disasters remains an additional challenge for World Service's work in the coming years. He said the global environment and events which affect LWF's humanitarian response include the negative impact of climate change; increased violent conflicts; the global financial crisis; and the need to pay more attention to the role of religion in humanitarian and development work.

In addition to input from the Myanmar program, the Committee for World Service discussed updates from other

country and associate programs, and approved the World Service Global Strategy 2013-2018. The committee is chaired by Rev. Dr A.G. Augustine Jeyakumar (United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India) and includes 18 representatives from LWF member churches and related partner organizations.

This year's meeting was the first to be held in Myanmar, where the LWF has four member churches. The committee reports to the LWF Council.

*(By Wyne Sandy Myint, LWF Myanmar communications officer)*

## LWF DMD Director Musa Filibus Accepts Call as Diocesan Bishop in Nigeria

### General Secretary Junge Grateful for Outstanding Leadership with Passion for the Church

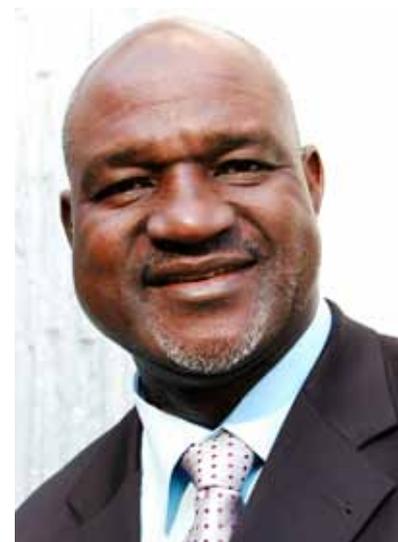
**GENEVA (LWI)** – Rev. Dr Musa Panti Filibus, director of the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) at The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has accepted a calling by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) to serve as bishop of the Mayo Belwa Diocese.

"I received this news with both joy and sadness," LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge wrote in a 30 January letter to the LWF Council, informing the governing body of the DMD director's response to the LCCN.

The general secretary said he was filled with joy knowing that the Mayo Belwa Diocese ministry of oversight and unity will be served by "an outstanding leader." He expressed gratitude for the committed leadership and vitality Filibus provided at DMD, "his love for the church and his passion to see the church succeeding" in its call to participate in God's mission.

"I am convinced that these gifts will be of great blessing for the church into which he is now called to serve as a bishop," Junge added. He invited prayers as Filibus continues his duties in the LWF Communion Office until July, while preparing for his new role.

DMD accompanies and assists LWF member churches in devel-



*Rev. Dr. Musa Panti Filibus, DMD director*  
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

oping holistic ministries in their respective contexts and in deepening relations with each other.

Filibus joined the LWF in September 2002 as LWF area secretary for Africa, and was appointed DMD director in December 2010. Following restructuring in the LWF, the Council in 2012 appointed him to serve also as LWF Deputy General Secretary.

Speaking to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, Filibus said the decision to serve as a diocesan bishop came after lengthy and prayerful deliberation, as there are important

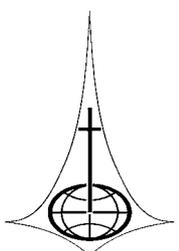
changes both in the LWF Communion Office and in the LCCN.

"I feel blessed and honored to serve in a communion so abundantly endowed with many gifts and talents among its staff and churches. At the same time, I feel greatly humbled and deeply moved to participate in the LCCN's ministry during challenging times in Nigeria and in the African region."

The LCCN has more than 2 million members and is one of the two LWF member churches in Nigeria. It is organized in eight dioceses, each headed by a bishop, one mission area headed by a pastor, and led at national level by Archbishop Nemuel A. Babba.

Located in Adamawa State, northeastern Nigeria, the Mayo Belwa Diocese was created in 2011 and includes 300 congregations served by about 60 pastors and other church workers. Filibus will be installed as the first bishop in October 2013, which coincides with the LCCN's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Filibus, 53, was ordained as pastor of the LCCN in 1994. He studied theology in Nigeria and in the United States, where he obtained a PhD in pastoral theology. He and his wife Rev. Ruth Filibus have three adult children.



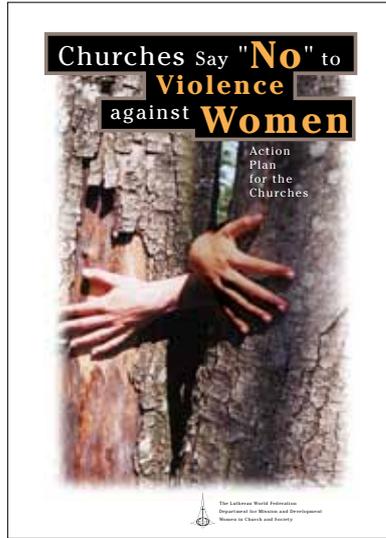
## LWF Encourages Churches in India to Support Calls for Gender Justice

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resolve by Indian civil society to show “that things definitely have to change.”

In his letter to the UELCI, which groups LWF member churches in India, Junge encouraged the churches to support civil society in the evolving “courageous step” towards the deep transformation that needs to happen so that situations such as the one experienced by the young woman “are eradicated forever.”

The general secretary expressed gratitude to the Lutheran churches in India for their ongoing work with a strong gender perspective, and encouraged them to deepen their commitment to such programs as one of their contributions to the current public discussion. He also commended to them resources developed in the Lutheran communion including the LWF document, *Churches*



© LWF

*Say "No" to Violence against Women*, which has been translated into four Indian languages, and the publication “*It shall not be so among you!*” *A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power*.

Junge noted that LWF member churches in other parts of the world are learning from equally painful situations that the vision of moving to just relations between men and women requires deep and prayerful self-examination within the church.

In the LWF “we are coming to understand that this is best done through the establishment of clear policies that state a zero-tolerance to sexual violence and establish procedures to report abuse.”

His open letter called upon all LWF churches to move beyond horror and the resulting paralysis over unspeakable violence by deepening their commitment to gender justice. “Silence around violence needs to be broken, awareness needs to be raised, leadership needs to be educated and policies need to be developed,” Junge added.

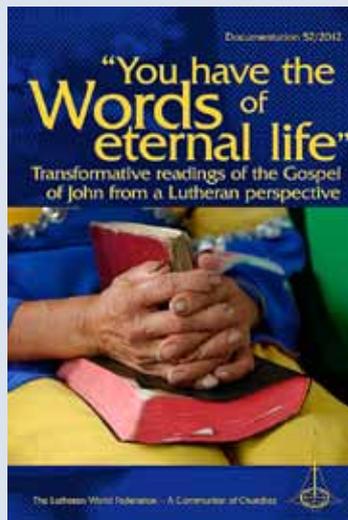
### New Publication Explores the Bible’s Potential in Transforming Society

“*You have the Words of eternal life*” - Transformative Readings of the Gospel of John from a Lutheran Perspective” is the title of a new publication by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

Produced in the *LWF Documentation* series (No. 57/2012), the book is one of the resources devoted to strengthening interpretive practices that seek to critically engage Bible readers in their various contexts. It is part of the ongoing Lutheran communion learning and sharing of biblical interpretations (hermeneutics) begun in 2011 by the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW).

Contributors to the publication include Lutheran theologians who participated in the inaugural hermeneutics meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2011. Participants used the Gospel of John to explore various contextual challenges taking into consideration the rich ecumenical perspectives and the Lutheran and Reformed traditions.

In the book’s preface, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge underlines the need to develop comprehensive tools

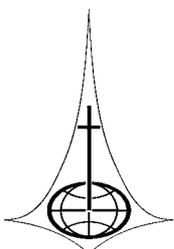


for interpreting Holy Scriptures so that the “Bible becomes a source of renewal for both the church and society.”

While the resource is intended for use in academic contexts such as the training of pastors and seminarians, the essays can also be used by individuals “to deepen their own understanding of biblical interpretation,” notes the editor, Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice at DTPW. Mtata coordinates the hermeneutics program, which is aimed at highlighting the significance of the Bible in light of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

“*You have the Words of eternal life*” is published by Lutheran University Press (Minneapolis, USA). The translated German edition will be published by Evangelische Gemeindepresse (Stuttgart, Germany).

To place orders, please contact Mercedes Restrepo  
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## Building a Foster Network in South Sudan Refugee Camps

LWF Helps Displaced Families Care for Unaccompanied Minors

MABAN, South Sudan/GENEVA (LWI)

– Savid misses his mother. Last December, the nine year-old was still living at the Yusuf Batil refugee camp with his brother, Mohamed, his grandparents and his uncle’s family. They had arrived about one month earlier in the camp in Maban county, South Sudan, alongside thousands of other refugees fleeing conflict in their village in Sudan’s Blue Nile state.

Savid and Mohamed are the first two children among five siblings. An artillery attack on their village forced the boys and their father to flee home, and in the process became separated from their mother, two brothers and a sister who were at a wedding in other area. Although they have heard that their mother and siblings are safe, no one in the family has spoken to her since they fled.

The boys’ father works in a nearby town as a cart puller, so they live with their grandparents at the refugee camp. Their story is one that is all too common in disasters, where parents caught in the midst of calamity often become separated from their children. Like Mohamed and Savid,



Separated from their parents by conflict, Savid (right) and Mohamed live with their grandparents at the Yusuf Batil refugee camp, South Sudan. © LWF/Melany Markham

they are either cared for by relatives or other community members, or they are forced to seek other alternatives.

Since September 2012, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been working at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps in Maban including at Yusuf Batil, registering children who, like Savid and Mohamed, are separated from their parents. During instability, such children are vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse, forced labor or early marriage for girls.

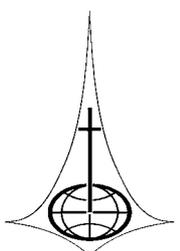
When a child has been orphaned or is separated from their parents, often, the first people they come into contact with are their relatives. If the extended family cannot provide support, then the wider community will step in to help. It is thus not uncommon for widows to arrive in a refugee camp with several children, none of whom are their own, says Tracy Arach, coordinator of the LWF child protection work in Maban, under the Department for World Service (DWS) South Sudan program.

Arach, a Ugandan, has been a child protection worker for over six years. She says that “in African culture, the child belongs to the family” and that the practice of fostering children is a widespread tradition in many African cultures. “Within the family, the child is considered a future leader ... and within [the] clan, everyone plays a role in protecting children, not just the immediate family.”

But modern life and conflict are weakening this tradition. “The extended family is a bit weaker now, because people see themselves as individuals,” she says, adding that poverty also forces parents to look after their own children first. At



Girls sing and clap at the camp where the LWF runs two schools. © LWF/Melany Markham



Yusuf Batil, LWF is helping to fill the gaps left by the traditional structures.

So far, 27 unaccompanied children (12 boys and 15 girls) have been identified at the camp. Like Mohamed and Savid, they are currently being taken care of by relatives, but it is more than likely that there are many more unaccompanied children in the camp, some who have no home at all. LWF child protection workers therefore visit public places such as schools, clinics and food distribu-

tion centers to find any children who are on their own. They also identify potential foster parents or visit the families who are already caring for foster children to ensure that they receive the assistance they need.

In the coming weeks and months, community workers will visit Savid and Mohamed to interview the grandparents and the children separately in order to ensure that the children are well cared for.

At Yusuf Batil and Gendrassa refugee camps in Maban, the LWF

runs two schools, which had more than 4,300 students by the end of November. The LWF also provides basic learning materials such as exercise and text books, pens and pencils, and currently supports a team of 96 teachers.

There are an estimated 110,000 Sudanese refugees living at the UNHCR camps in Maban. Against a backdrop of instability in Blue Nile and other border states in Sudan, more people are expected to arrive in South Sudan as the dry season sets in.

## Healing Through Play

It is a late January afternoon at the Yusuf Batil refugee camp in Maban county, South Sudan. A group of over 100 children are playing various games in the grounds of a school. Girls jump rope and boys play football. As the sun sinks lower one or two adults join in and lead the children in song and action games. The scene is not spontaneous. It is the result of a deliberately designed 'child-friendly space.'

Child-friendly spaces are created during emergencies to respond to children's needs. According to guidelines published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), they should be established quickly and can help protect, nurture and educate children in an informal way, as well as serving as an entry point to aid for affected communities.

Simply put, they are places where children can play together safely. Af-

ter fleeing violence, enduring diseases like malaria and separation from their families, simple games can help restore a child's happiness and bring them closer to a normal life.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has set up two child-friendly spaces at the camp in South Sudan's Upper Nile state. Like similar spaces created in other camps where the LWF collaborates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), they are located within schools. There are 386 children (186 boys and 200 girls) registered there. After classes have finished for the day, volleyballs, skipping ropes, hula-hoops, badminton sets and other games are distributed and the fun begins.

Children need a broad range of activities to cater for their different needs. While a four-year-old girl might be happy singing songs and dancing,

the same activity might not hold the attention of a 12-year-old boy. One of the most popular games at the camp schools is football. Second to that is jump rope and some of the girls obviously practice regularly if their energy and enthusiasm is any indication.

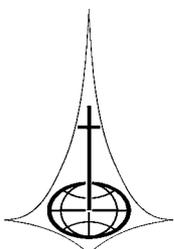
Igga Idraku Pasteur, a child protection officer for the LWF in Yusuf Batil says it is important that children learn to play together. Not only does it help them heal their emotional wounds, but it helps reduce conflict in the long-term as children from different backgrounds learn to get along with one another. For this to happen, Pasteur and his colleagues must have the help of the communities themselves, so LWF engages refugees to supervise the children while they play.

At Yusuf Batil 12 facilitators (five women and seven men) have been appointed. They know what their roles are as well as their responsibilities, the principles of child rights and the concept behind child-friendly spaces. To bolster children's protection in the refugee camp, the LWF has also established child protection committees and each child-friendly space has its own committee with a balanced representation of men and women.

Emergencies can have a hemorrhaging effect on communities, disrupting routines, services and support for children and reducing people's ability to care and protect their own, says Pasteur. Involvement in child-friendly spaces helps them protect and support their children again. This is



*A space to play; girls skipping rope at the camp.*  
© LWF/Melany Markham



why it is critical that the community's own networks, people, and resources are used to maintain the spaces. Parents, grandparents, religious leaders, women's groups and youth groups can

all play a role in keeping children safe and helping them heal, he adds.

As the sun sets, the games at the child-friendly spaces finish for the day and children head home. Tired,

but happy, for a moment at least, their troubles have melted away.

*(By Melany Markham, Nairobi based LWF regional communications consultant.)*

## FEATURE: A New Home She Never Dared to Hope for in Haiti

### LWF 'Model Village' Resettlement Program Fosters Long-Term Recovery

**GRESSIER, Haiti/GENEVA (LWI)** – Three years ago, Marie and her family lived a “decent” life.

But that changed on 12 January 2010 when a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck 25 kilometers west of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince killing an estimated 220,000 people, and displacing around 1.5 million. It caused billions of dollars of physical damage in a country that already had an unstable economy and infrastructure.

Marie's family home was destroyed and together with her three children, they have been living in a small rented room in Gressier, west of the capital. “It's been very stressful,” the 38-year-old school teacher told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*. “My husband died in the earthquake. We could not find his body and could not even give him a decent funeral. The children and I were left without support. It has been difficult to have enough money to send the children to school.”

But soon, Marie, her 14-year-old daughter, eight-year-old and 13-year-old sons will move into their own modest new home at a model resettlement village in the Gressier area. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) program in Haiti has constructed the village with support from its partners.

“It [such a home] is something I had not even dared to hope for,” Demornes said.

#### A Basic Right

It is all part of LWF's contribution to the country's recovery, noted Per-olof Lundkvist, LWF representative



*The LWF model village provides dignified housing and shared facilities for families who lost their homes in the January 2010 earthquake. © LWF Haiti*

in Haiti. “We are working with the people of Gressier to build a model village that others can emulate, because housing and a decent standard of living are basic rights for all Haitians,” he said. Through this project, the LWF hopes to inspire all reconstruction to follow the principle to ‘build back better’. “We want to participate in the common project to build for the future with the people here,” he emphasized.

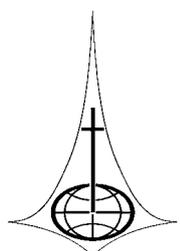
Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, global program coordinator for LWF/DWS in Geneva noted that more than 300,000 people are still displaced three years after the earthquake. “We need to stop focusing on short-term solutions. LWF Haiti is working with local communities and the government to shift from short-term humanitarian aid to long-term recovery and development,” he added.

LWF's work in Haiti started with emergency relief assistance in 1983, and evolved over the years into development initiatives in col-

laboration with local partners. After the earthquake in 2010, the LWF became involved in rapid response support to the affected communities.

Construction of the housing project began in August 2012, and the model resettlement village was inaugurated on 15 February 2013. It provides permanent dignified housing for 150 families who lost their homes in the earthquake. The village is environmentally sustainable with solar panels and a green wastewater treatment plant. The homes are earthquake and cyclone resistant.

LWF partners which contributed to the project include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Church of Sweden (CoS), Lutheran World Relief (LWR), the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Dutch organization for development cooperation ICCO, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Haitian government.





The selection process for potential home owners included interviews with displaced families. © LWF Haiti

## Co-ownership and Joint Responsibility

Built on some 58,000 square meters of land provided by the Haitian government, the project has been developed on a local model of co-ownership. Residents as homeowners take joint responsibility for shared facilities such as the community center and other services that make up the model village.

To be selected, families needed to have been residents of Gressier prior to the earthquake, to have lost their homes in the disaster and not currently own a home. Homeowners contribute a down payment of USD 1,034.00 (around eight percent of the total cost of each house), and pay monthly fees toward community costs for maintaining the common assets such as the piped water supply and waste management systems.

Marie said she was able to come up with the down payment thanks only to a loan from the school where

she teaches. She plans to offer her services as a teacher to support the community education programs.

The Gressier village model will be run on a holistic, community-based approach with continued support to the residents' livelihoods and a focus on democratic governance. There has been strong cooperation with the national and local authorities in the project's development.

The village will house approximately 900 people, many of them in female-headed households, and some with family members with disabilities. There will be 10 micro-savings unions serving 300 people.

Lundkvist noted that while the village model offers hope to one community, there is still a huge challenge in housing people in the poor Caribbean nation. "Reconstruction has to be a prioritized area for our interventions in the country in order to contribute to a normalized life for all the families that still remain in

provisional housing and in camps," he added.

It is estimated that out of the USD 7.5 billion in humanitarian aid that went to Haiti after the earthquake, only USD 215 million has been spent on permanent housing. About USD 1.2 billion has gone into short-term solutions such as tent camps, temporary shelters and cash grants for rent.

## Decent and Affordable

Still, the model village project is a new beginning.

Jean lost his home in the earthquake. For some time he and his wife and two children were living in a tent on their church's property but a storm destroyed it and they had to move out.

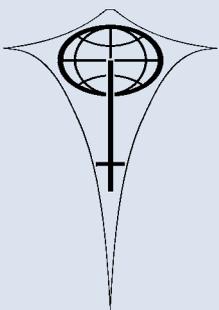
The 39-year-old teacher and legal practitioner said he is very satisfied to be moving into the Gressier village with his family. He has been living alone in a small room in the school where he teaches in Port-au-Prince.

"For the first time in several years, the family can now live together again. I could not have afforded a decent house without the LWF; now I have been able to find a new house through a participant's contribution that I could afford," he explained.

Jimmy lost a number of family members in the earthquake. Since then he has been living with his seven-year-old son in his sister's home. He said he is "very, very happy" to be moving to the model village.

"I would like to become a member of the village management committee to work towards a clean environment," he added.

*(LWF Haiti liaison officer Marlene Grundstrom contributed to this feature article.)*



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