

Lutheran World Information

1307

In this issue

- “That they may all be one”..... 3
- Tribute to Eugene Ries: A Life for LWF World Service..... 6
- FEATURE: In Namibia, It Hasn’t Been This Tough for Decades 8
- Influx of Thousands Puts Pressure on Newly Established Refugee Camp in Uganda..... 11



LWF worker Leah Odongo speaks with women in Dadaab refugee camp. Photo: LWF/Jonathan Ernst

LWF General Secretary: “The world needs more people like you” World Humanitarian Day Celebrates Dedicated Staff

GENEVA (LWI) – On World Humanitarian Day 2013, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) celebrates the vocation of its many humanitarian workers serving the neighbor. In a letter to LWF Department for World Service (DWS) staff, General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed appreciation for the impressive work each of them is doing on behalf of the Lutheran communion.

UN World Humanitarian Day, observed each year on 19 August, celebrates the ongoing commitment of humanitarian workers and commemorates those who have lost their lives in service. Each day, 2,000 LWF humanitarian workers help to alleviate the suffering

of people facing war, displacement, natural disasters, poverty, or injustice.

The 2013 World Humanitarian Day theme is, “The world needs more...”. In his letter to field staff, Junge commended the ongoing dedication of DWS employees throughout the world.

“Your work is highly appreciated by the LWF member churches and by the LWF governing bodies because of your commitment and quality of the programs and services you offer,” Junge said. “The world needs more: more people like you, with heart for justice



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A Communion
of Churches

Continues on page 3

Contents

Communio

- 1 LWF General Secretary: “The world needs more people like you”
- 3 [“That they may all be one”](#)
- 4 A Growing Church Committed to Holistic Mission
- 5 [LWF General Secretary Junge Lauds Joint Witness of Canada’s Lutherans and Anglicans](#)
- 6 Tribute to Eugene Ries: A Life for LWF World Service

Features & Themes

- 7 LWF Calls on Member Churches to Support Namibia and Angola Response to Drought
- 8 [FEATURE: In Namibia, It Hasn’t Been This Tough for Decades](#)
- 11 Influx of Thousands Puts Pressure on Newly Established Refugee Camp in Uganda

News in Brief

- 2 A Commitment to Work Together for Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East
- 10 [Shining Light on the Role of Women in Latin America’s Lutheran Churches](#)

A Commitment to Work Together for Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) welcomed the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby to Jerusalem during the Archbishop’s recent visit to the Holy Land.

The June visit was Welby’s first official visit to the region since his installation earlier this year as the Primate of All England and spiritual leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

“The Archbishop and I discussed at great length our commitment to justice, peace and security for both Palestine and Israel, and the necessity of a two-state solution along 1967 borders,” said Younan of their 28 June meeting at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem.

“I welcome Archbishop Welby to the Holy Land and look forward to working together to continue improving Lutheran and Anglican relationships regionally.”

Bishop Younan also serves as President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which has been in dialogue with the Anglican Communion since 1972. In 2012, the Anglican-Lutheran Inter-

national Commission (ALIC III) published the report “To Love and Serve the Lord,” which explores diakonia as an essential part of Christian identity and discipleship and as an expression of the unity of the church.

During the meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the LWF president discussed the joint work between the two Christian World Communions. Lutheran and Anglican relations continue to be strengthened by the formation of a new coordinating body, the Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee (ALICC). The committee’s first meeting will take place this September.

“As Lutherans we are committed to working together with our Anglican brothers and sisters for the unity of the church and to be a living witness of peace and reconciliation in the contexts in which we serve, be it in the Middle East or in other regions in our world today,” Younan concluded.

(Danae Hudson, ELCJHL communications coordinator, contributed to this article)

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Lutheran World Information (LWI)

is the information service
of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

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Continued from p. 1

and a commitment to do something about it.”

DWS provides humanitarian and development assistance in 33 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The LWF is the largest faith-based partner of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and each year LWF staff assists over 1.3 million refugees with education, basic food and non-food items, and psycho-social support.

DWS programs have received several distinctions, awards and certifications in the past year, and Junge con-

gratulated staff on their achievements. “[These awards] are a confirmation and acknowledgement of all staff,” he said.

[Find out more about the LWF's humanitarian work and read testimonies from DWS staff online:](#)

www.lutheranworld.org/content/world-humanitarian-day-2013

“That they may all be one”

Tanzania's Lutheran Church Celebrates 50 Years

ARUSHA, Tanzania/GENEVA (LWI) – From 22 to 23 June 2013, an estimated 1,500 people attended celebrations at the Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA) in Arusha, Tanzania, marking 50 years since the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) was established.

On 19 June 1963, seven Lutheran churches in the country merged to become the Evangelical Lutheran Church in then Tanganyika, later renamed Tanzania.

“That they may all be one” (John 17:21) was the theme of the 50th anniversary celebrations which began with an exhibition on 21 June inaugurated by ELCT Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, who also serves as LWF Vice-President for the Africa region. Speakers at an academic day on 22 June gave perspectives on the current challenges and opportunities for the church.

The jubilee festivities culminated in an elaborate celebration service on 23 June attended by ELCT members including current and retired bishops and pastors from all over the country, international guests from churches and partner organizations, and representatives of other faiths as well as government officials. Seven choirs and a brass band added to the vivacity of the Sunday service at which a publication was launched on Lutheran identity in the ELCT.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge joined the celebrations and offered greetings in which he expressed deep gratitude to the ELCT



Pastors from the ELCT prepare for the procession preceding the worship service to mark the 50th anniversary of the church. © LWF/H. Martinussen

for its meaningful participation in the LWF. He cited some of the many gifts received from the Tanzanian Lutheran church, including the hosting of the 1977 LWF Assembly in Dar es Salaam; the leadership of Bukoba Bishop Josiah Kibira as LWF President from 1977 to 1984, and that of Presiding Bishop Malasusa as vice-president.

Junge also acknowledged with gratitude ELCT's remarkable witness through its “support in mission to neighboring churches, as well as your patient accompaniment to churches facing trial and struggle.”

The general secretary emphasized the relationships of mutuality and reciprocity to which churches in the Lutheran communion are called. Recalling the late Bishop Kibira's vision

for the LWF, he noted that, “There is no church, so big in numbers, so wealthy in resources, and with such a long history that it would not be able to receive gifts from others. [And] there is no church so small in numbers, so challenged by resources and so young in history that it wouldn't be able to share the gifts that God has endowed her with,” Junge noted.

As a member of the global Lutheran communion, the Tanzanian church is committed to a holistic approach to mission, including proclamation, service and advocacy. During the celebrations, Malasusa underlined the importance for the ELCT “to continue preaching the gospel to all people in and out of the country and to raise its prophetic voice.”

Lutheran missionaries started mission work in current Tanzania almost 150 years ago. The unified ELCT joined the LWF in 1964, with Bishop Stefano R. Moshi as the first bishop of the 450,000-member church. By the end

of May 2013, the ELCT had 22 dioceses encompassing 6 million Lutherans.

LWF's presence in Tanzania includes humanitarian and community development work by the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS), the

LWF Department for World Service associate program, which was started in 1964.

[See pictures from the celebration weekend on \[www.lutheranworld.org\]\(http://www.lutheranworld.org\)](#)

A Growing Church Committed to Holistic Mission

ARUSHA, Tanzania/GENEVA (LWI) – Students, teachers, pastors and guests filled the white chairs in the new assembly hall of Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA) near Arusha to participate in an academic day which was part of celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

Speakers at the 22 June event at the ELCT university offered reflections on themes such as being in a global communion, globalization, ethics and morals and mission.

In his address on the impacts of globalization, Prof. Wilfred Mlay of the Great Lakes Initiative Leadership Institute on peace and reconciliation said that one of the positive results was that “churches in Africa as elsewhere in the South have become more assertive and are using their influence through global networks.” But globalization had also led to environmental degradation and the destruction of the natural environment, he noted. “The quest for raw materials is destroying our natural heritage for the benefit of the rich.”

Faced with the challenges of globalization, Mlay called upon the church to faithfully live out the gospel with reference to the example of the early Church and through this witness make the church a place of hope.

Other speakers included LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge who offered perspectives on the global communion of Lutheran churches; Rev. Alphaus Shayo from the ELCT Northern Diocese speaking on the role of African evangelists in the Western



The LWF delegation meets with KCMC staff in Moshi. © LWF/H. Martinussen

hemisphere; and Bishop Dr Benson Bagonza, Karagwe Diocese, on new areas of mission in the next 50 years.

“That they may all be one,” was the theme of the ELCT jubilee celebrations that started with an exhibition on 21 June, followed by the academic day, concluding with Sunday worship on 23 June.

In his address at the academic day, the LWF general secretary spoke of the gifts of the global communion. “You have brothers and sisters in Chile, in Canada, in Italy, in Hungary [...] where the bonds of communion connect you closely to others, who like you, worship the Lord and serve the neighbor,” Junge said.

“It is not because of who we are or because of what we do, but because of who God is and what God does that we are saved and redeemed into new life,” he noted. “This is the core of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this is the core of Scriptures, inviting us to trust less in our own capacities and efforts, and more in God's work and merits through Jesus Christ when it comes to finding life in abundance.”

Junge stressed that as a global communion of churches, the LWF shares the conviction that “the freedom that is acquired for us through Jesus Christ is a freedom that calls us into service and love to the neighbor and to God's creation. Never will it be a freedom that pushes us to individualism, but to relationships, to responsiveness, responsibility and mutuality,” he added.

Holistic Mission in ELCT's Life and Work

The ELCT has been an LWF member church since 1964, and as part of the

global communion is committed to holistic mission in preaching the gospel, serving people in need and advocating for peace and justice.

Following the celebration weekend the LWF general secretary visited several institutions of the church that express its holistic mission approach. He was accompanied by ELCT Secretary General Mr Brighton B. Killewa, and LWF area secretary for Africa, Rev. Dr Elieshi Mungure.

In Moshi, where the ELCT runs the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC), a referral hospital for Northern Tanzania, executive director Dr Moshi Ntabaye explained the principles of healing, teaching and research that guide the work of the institution, where the LWF also sponsors a clinical pastoral care education (CPE) program.

Each year the hospital offers services to 8 million people regardless of faith, and currently has 1,600 student trainees undertaking medical health practice within the hospital. While doctors heal in body, we heal in spirit,”

Rev. Daniel Lyatuu, who has served for 27 years as CPE program director, said about his job. We are “offering hope and assurance in the context of disease and death,” he added.

In a country where only 6 million of the 44 million inhabitants have access to Internet, radio has a stronghold. The daily Radio Voice of the Gospel (Radio Sauti ya Injili – in Kiswahili), supported by the LWF for many years, broadcasts news, music and sermons from its studio in Moshi at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Receiving the LWF general secretary, Radio Voice of the Gospel director Mr Philemon Mark Fihavango explained that listeners to the Kiswahili station that went on air in 1963 include Christians and Muslims. Fihavango noted that the government aims to digitalize all broadcasting in the country by 2015. For Radio Voice of the Gospel, this development presents a potential to “reach all of East Africa with the good news,” he added.

Inspiration from the Global South

The ELCT came into existence from a merger of seven Lutheran churches in 1963 in then Tanganyika. In June 2013, the church could look back at 50 years together and celebrate the unity, growth and active mission of a church which is committed to proclaiming the gospel, serving people in need and advocating for peace and justice.

“One of the major gifts that churches of the so-called South have offered to the entire communion is their holistic approach to mission,” the LWF general secretary said during his participation in the 50th anniversary. “As early as the 1970s, our member church in Ethiopia invited the LWF to reflect on the notion of the ‘whole Gospel to the whole person.’”

Junge also called for more awareness to include the concept of holistic mission into the curriculum of theological education and formation. “In many parts of the world the dimensions of diakonia and advocacy are still underdeveloped and underrepresented in curricula and programs of theological institutions,” he added.

LWF General Secretary Junge Lauds Joint Witness of Canada’s Lutherans and Anglicans

A Great Encouragement for Cooperation Globally

OTTAWA, Canada/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has lauded the full communion of Canada’s Lutheran and Anglican churches, marked in an unprecedented Joint Assembly highlighting the connection between Christian unity and service.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) held their first fully integrated national gathering in Ottawa, Canada’s capital, 3-7 July.

The churches entered into a relationship of full communion, called the Waterloo Declaration, in 2001, which means they work closely together in all respects, exchanging clergy and

establishing joint congregations, while remaining separate church bodies.

An LWF member church since 1986, the ELCIC has 145,000 members in 600 congregations in Canada. The ACC has 545,000 members in nearly 2,800 congregations across the country.

“What we see happening here in Canada between your two churches is also a great encouragement regarding one of our major commitments as a global Christian World Communion: the unity of the body of Christ,” LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge told the Joint Assembly.

“What you are doing here in Ottawa ... won’t only go back to Calgary,

Montreal and Vancouver. It will travel across the oceans and do something in Geneva, London, Dar es Salaam, Jerusalem, Hong Kong and Buenos Aires.”

The Joint Assembly drew hundreds of Lutherans and Anglicans under the theme “Together for the love of the world.”

Delegates from the two churches tackled issues such as responsible resource extraction, homelessness and how to engage in mission amid declining church membership.

Junge said the theme of the Joint Assembly illustrated that Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada share a commitment to joint witness.



Archbishop Hiltz and National Bishop Johnson (right) at Parliament Hill, Ottawa. © Joint Assembly Co

“In a world wounded as it is, and in a context in which God’s creation bleeds and suffers as it does, I am grateful for the direction that the commitment for unity is taking,” said Junge.

ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson said that “the whole point of full communion is to assist us and strengthen us in mission and ministry so

that we can reach out in love and service to the world that God so dearly loves.”

For ACC Primate Archbishop Fred Hiltz, the joint assembly was “a meeting quite unlike any other meeting that has happened in the past. [...] It’s an exciting and historic moment for our churches.”

In a youth organized service on 6 July that included traditional aboriginal

drums, hundreds of Lutherans and Anglicans gathered on Parliament Hill to worship and raise awareness about protecting Canada’s water supply.

“It’s a strong sign to our church and our country that we are being led by the strong voice of the youth, who are crying out for justice,” said Johnson, who helped lead the service with Hiltz.

The ACC archbishop emphasized the value of raising issues such as the lack of clean drinking water in Canada’s First Nations communities together: “One voice alone is kind of ragged, but together we’re a much stronger sound.”

Globally Lutherans and Anglicans continue their cooperation and dialogue, Junge said, indicating that the new Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee meets for the first time in September to reflect together on possible areas of cooperation. “There will be conversations about this Joint Assembly,” he added.

(With contribution from ELCIC Information)

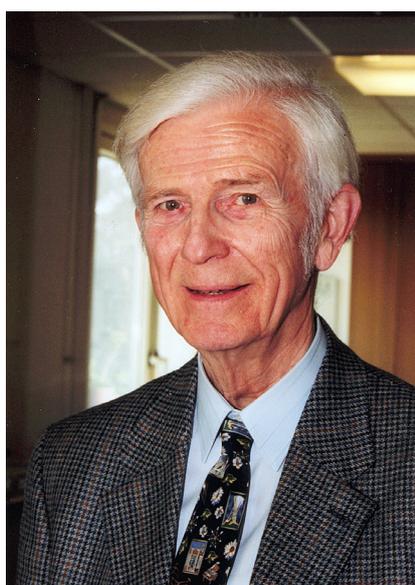
Tribute to Eugene Ries: A Life for LWF World Service

Remembering a Leader Who Helped Bring “New Hope and New Life”

GENEVA (LWI) –The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has paid tribute to the life and service of Rev. Dr Eugene Ries, former director of the LWF Department for World Service, who died on 19 July, aged 86.

“It is not an exaggeration to say that he helped bring new hope and new life to hundreds of thousands of people,” LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said in his tribute to Ries, who devoted his entire ministry and professional life in LWF’s service.

Junge recalled the manifold service Ries provided to the LWF including his work with displaced persons in Austria and Germany following World War II, support to the Southeast Asian boat people, those fleeing colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa, victims of drought



Dr Eugene Ries (1926-2013).
Photo: LWF/C. Rothenbühler

and oppression in Ethiopia, and people caught in violence in Central America.

“He never lost sight of the mission. His life and work personified diakonia,” Junge added.

An American Lutheran pastor, Ries joined the LWF in 1949 as director for resettlement in Austria. He moved to Geneva in 1961, where he served in various LWF World Service positions until his retirement at the end of 1990.

Ries lived in retirement in Switzerland, and is survived by his wife Barbro and their son Thomas.

The full text of the LWF’s obituary for Rev. Dr Eugene Ries is available online: www.lutheranworld.org/content/tribute-eugene-ries-life-lwf-world-service

LWF Calls on Member Churches to Support Namibia and Angola Response to Drought

Worst Drought in 30 Years: General Secretary Junge Underlines Urgency for Early Intervention

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has called on its member churches worldwide to support Lutheran churches in Namibia and Angola as they reach out to vulnerable communities affected by the worst drought to hit the region in three decades.

“I urge the LWF member churches to support the people in Namibia and Angola with prayers and financial resources,” LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said in a 9 July letter to LWF churches and National Committees, reiterating one of the actions by the LWF Council at its June meeting in Geneva. In other Council actions, the LWF accepted an invitation by its member churches in Namibia to host the Twelfth LWF Assembly in the capital Windhoek, in 2017.

The current drought is described as the worst prolonged dry spell in more than 30 years for which the Namibian government has declared a national emergency. The crisis puts at risk the lives of more than 330,000 people across the country, representing 14 percent of the population of 2.1 million. In Angola’s southern provinces of Cunene and Namib, over 600,000 people are severely affected.

Junge underlined the urgency for early attention and intervention, saying the serious situation in both countries risks to be overshadowed by larger crises globally. “People are showing signs of malnutrition because they lack access to food and water,” he wrote to LWF churches, adding that “a worsening situation” was predicted as “no harvest is foreseen until March 2014.”

The general secretary said LWF member churches in Namibia requested the LWF’s assistance to enhance their capacity to “address this

emergency situation by reaching out to the most vulnerable communities with no access to the government’s food distribution points.”

This is the first time that the Namibian Lutheran churches have requested the LWF’s support towards drought response in the country through the United Church Council of Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches (UCC-NELC). UCC comprises the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN-GELC)—representing over 50 percent of the country’s population.

Cash for Basic Needs, Diversifying Livelihoods

A rapid needs’ assessment by the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) and UCC-NELC and a memorandum of understanding establishes the framework for emergency response in areas where the ELCRN and ELCIN

have congregations. The overall goal is to make available cash to meet basic needs, diversify livelihoods and improve income for youth and women, and provide psychosocial care for families. LWF/UCC also plans to provide communities with support to strengthen resilience for disaster response and build capacity for advocacy.

ELCRN response in southern Namibia will target 340 households affected by job loss on commercial farms or as livestock owners. In the north along the border with Angola, where ELCIN is predominantly located, the target population of nearly 780 households will include families that have not harvested any crops, and are without employment or any source of income.

The current crisis exacerbates poverty across rural areas of the country—some with unemployment rates as high as 90 percent—and diminishes communities’ resilience to cope with disasters. From the LWF assessment it was found that coping mechanisms include alcohol consumption to reduce hunger and mitigate stress, which the



*A field of dead millet crop in Omusati region, northern Namibia.
© LWF/M. Retief*

churches suggest has led to high levels of gender-based violence at household level, and abuse and neglect of children.

Lessons Learned from the Past

“We often fail to see the possible extent and magnitude of threat to people’s lives in slow disasters such as drought. And as LWF, we have taken the lessons from the past, according to which early attention and intervention in crisis situations like the current one makes a big difference,” Junge stressed in his letter.

He affirmed the important role of the LWF’s presence through member churches and DWS program work. “These are indeed strong links and connections to hear the story, to sense the danger of this drought and to feel the pain it is producing today,” he added.



A hungry child with an empty bowl close to Ncaute village in the Kavango region. Photo: Dirk Haarmann

Preliminary appeals for the drought in Angola and Namibia have been issued through the global church network, ACT Alliance, of which the LWF

is a founding member. In Angola, the LWF’s presence includes the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola and the DWS country program.

FEATURE: In Namibia, It Hasn’t Been This Tough for Decades

LWF Reaches Out to Rural Communities in Namibia’s Worst Drought

WINDHOEK, Namibia/GENEVA (LWI) – Makala sits under one of the family’s pawpaw trees in the hot sun, her baby on her lap, and her other children scattered around as she extracts seeds from a pumpkin. Her husband is nowhere to be seen, and when asked, Makala says he is at the local shebeen (bar), one of many in Omusati region, northern Namibia.

Last year the family planted their millet seeds in December, but very little rain came and the seeds did not grow. The only income they get for food is from the pawpaw trees that are still bearing fruit and the pumpkins as they need very little water to grow. However, this is not sufficient to cover the cost of feeding the family members, who would usually eat the millet they had harvested through the hunger months until the next rains.

Makala does not know how she will feed her family for the coming months before the next rainy season comes in December— if at all.

She is not alone.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is supporting Namibia’s Lutheran churches to help rural communities cope with the country’s worst drought in 30 years. Out of the more than 700,000 people affected in the population of 2.1 million, over 42 percent of them are categorized as food insecure, according to government estimates.

The President of Namibia has declared a national drought emergency, allocating 20.7 million Namibian dollars to the crisis, and urging help from the international community.

Namibia has one of the highest levels of wealth inequalities in the world. The poverty in rural areas where 1.6 million people reside means that the already vulnerable households relying on livestock and crop production have a difficult time coping with the food and water crisis.

The Namibian government response includes maize distribution and

drilling of boreholes but more support is needed. The maize meal does not provide a nutritious diet and there is a high risk of malnourishment among children, 34 percent of who are already living below the poverty line.

On 19 July LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge urged LWF member churches to support those affected by drought in Namibia and Angola with prayers and financial assistance, noting that early signs of malnutrition due to the lack of food and water pointed to a worsening situation.

With assistance from the LWF Department for World Service and the United Church Council of Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches (UCCNELC), an emergency response program has been established to provide rural communities with cash to meet the most basic needs in areas where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN)

and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) have congregations. The humanitarian response incorporates capacity building for emergency preparedness and advocacy.

The UCC also includes the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELC-ELCIN), which is assisting with the drought response.

Eating Less, Relying on Neighbors and Pensioners

An LWF/UCC rapid assessment mid-June on which the emergency response is based, included visits with local pastors, community and church leaders, the elderly, youth, the unemployed and people with disabilities.

The assessment team found that families are turning to negative coping mechanisms as a means for survival. This includes reducing meals to one a day, relying more on neighbors, sending children to relatives who are able to feed them, and living off pensions received by elderly relatives.

Grazing lands have been severely affected by the drought in six regions of the country, where the majority of households rely on livestock production including cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys and poultry.

Up to 80 per cent of households across the country own livestock and



Children in Maltahohe, southern Namibia. © LWF/M. Retief

4,000 livestock deaths have been reported.

About 85 percent of farming households say the reason they didn't plant their crops or planted them late is related to the lack of rainfall. Farming households achieved only 30 percent of their normal harvests. Food stocks dropped drastically with nearly two-thirds of families reporting no food stocks.

Some families, such as Makala's, plant pumpkins because they require less water, and the seeds can be roasted and eaten along with the pumpkin skin and flesh.

Lack of access to clean water and toilet facilities is at a crisis point. Families pay up to 100 Namibian dollars a

month for water, and when they run out of money or go into debt and have their water turned off they resort to borrowing from neighbors or relatives.

One family in the north reported it collects five jerry cans of water a day, two for bathing and cooking, and three for the animals. The only way they can afford to continue is that one elderly member of the family receives a government pension.

The LWF assessment noted that with unemployment levels reaching 90 percent in some areas, there is a danger that elderly pensioners, who are willingly helping family members, may be exploited.



Makala's family sells paw paws to buy food after drought killed their millet crop. © LWF/M. Retief

Increased Alcohol Consumption

Mairo Retief, LWF/DWS regional emergency coordinator for East and Central Africa, underlined some of the long-term implications of the food shortages, and therefore the need for holistic intervention, which includes psychosocial support.

She cited a group discussion the assessment team had with women in a church in northern Namibia, during which the women explained why alcohol is becoming an alternative in filling their hunger pangs. "Would you rather drink a liter of local brew which costs one Namibian dollar or buy a loaf of

bread which costs 7.5 dollars to fill your hunger? By drinking the alcohol it also means we have more food to feed our children,” Retief said, citing one parent.

The reality is that more and more parents are turning to alcohol both from hunger but also as a result of poverty which leads to stress. There are higher levels of gender-based violence in households as well as neglect and abuse of children, Retief added.

She emphasized the need to strengthen the local response mechanisms which currently includes only the government, churches and the Namibian Red Cross.

Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, DWS director, says he is encouraged by the Lutheran communion’s ongoing response to the recent ACT Appeal for the “slowly unfolding disaster in Namibia.” He notes that while only a relatively small number of malnutrition-related deaths

have been registered, “it is certain that in the next 12 months there will not be enough food or water for hundreds of thousands of people in several parts of Namibia and Angola.”

At the same time, Hitzler says he is worried that “while larger crises are going on globally, this crisis might be overlooked and largely neglected, yet fast and decisive help is needed to avoid a large-scale disaster.”

Shining Light on the Role of Women in Latin America’s Lutheran Churches

The contribution of women to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and their role in building up Lutheran churches in the Latin American region were the main topics discussed by a group of women theologians gathered in the southern Brazilian city of São Leopoldo.

Meeting under The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Women and Gender Justice Network, the 25 women theologians from nine LWF member churches in LAC underlined the importance of including women’s stories—“herstories”—and experiences in the history of churches in the region.

Bringing together women theologians and making their reflections visible is part of the work plan of the LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) coordination in the region. Like the woman in the Gospel of Luke, who shone a light to search for a lost coin, the 24-27 June WICAS gathering illuminated the stories of the many women who played a role in the life of Latin American churches.

Ivoni Richter Reimer, a Brazilian biblical scholar, helped the theologians to visualize the forgotten women in the Bible by sharing tools to discover their work and importance. They deliberated on women’s participation in the 16th century Reformation of the church and on the LAC network’s potential plans to work with the recently approved LWF Gender Justice Policy.

The Council approved the Gender Justice Policy of the LWF at its June meeting. The final document will be made available this September.

Elizabeth Arciniegas Sanchez, WICAS regional coordinator for the Andean region and a member of the LWF Committee for World Service, expressed her hope that the LWF policy will serve as a critical tool for the church’s mission and ministry.

“Knowing that the communion of LWF member churches approved this policy offers evidence of the importance of gender justice, and motivates us to include the issue in the work we develop in different ministries in our churches.”

She emphasized the need to nurture a common understanding of the LWF policy document, taking into account the various contexts within the worldwide Lutheran communion.

Referring to the LWF publication *It will not be so among you! A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power* (2010), Arciniegas described the methodology used to discuss this publication in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) as “a wonderful experience” that offered space for both men and women from

the congregations and other grassroots groups to reflect together on gender relations.

“As the word ‘gender’ still provokes some confusion and sometimes is not well used, [...] in IELCO we discussed the theme ‘relationships among men and women,’” she explained. The approach helped participants to express and reflect upon concrete experiences of inequalities in power relations. “This brought life and flesh, and daily experience to the issues discussed in the document,” she added.

Arciniegas said she hoped the LAC gathering of women theologians would remain a space to reflect on gender justice and create common strategies for using LWF documents in churches in the region.

“These spaces are helpful in building mutual confidence and motivation in our journey as well as strategies for common advocacies on gender justice,” she emphasized.

Rev. Rosangela Stange, who works at the gender coordination office of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), said the meeting offered an opportunity for the LAC Women and Gender Justice Network to be more visible in the region’s churches.

“The process we made in remembering the principles of the feminist hermeneutic using gender justice tools was crucial in building common methodological instruments to discover and tell the stories of women in our churches,” Stange said. “The group went through a process that increased our understanding of what it means to be in and live in a communion of churches.”

The meeting agreed on a number of common themes to be worked on in the region while allowing strategies that fit the various contexts. The initiatives will help bring to light women’s stories and experiences in the churches, and draw attention to “herstories” in marking 500 years of the Reformation journey.

LWF secretary for WICAS Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt underlined that an organized and strong women theologians’ group within the LAC gender justice network is a privileged space to build on strategies to implement the LWF Gender Justice Policy in the region and to publicize the work of women theologians.

Neuenfeldt noted the group’s observation that the number of women theologians with masters or doctorate degrees in theology was decreasing in Latin America. “There is a clear need to strategize and unite efforts to motivate more women to access higher theological studies and to include gender and feminist theology in the curricula of theological education,” she added.

Influx of Thousands Puts Pressure on Newly Established Refugee Camp in Uganda

LWF Provides Life-Saving Supplies to Fleeing Congolese Families

BUNDIBUGYO, Uganda/GENEVA (LWI) – More than 66,000 refugees entered Uganda in just two days after the Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacked their hometown in Kamango in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo.

By 25 July, the overwhelming refugee influx had overstretched the capacity of the newly established Bubukwanga refugee camp in western Uganda. In response The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a member of the ACT Alliance, stepped up efforts to provide life-saving water, sanitation and hygiene to the refugees.

The large influx of refugees found Uganda unprepared, but within a week, the Bubukwanga camp had been established in Bundibugyo and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) ensured coordination of partners to respond to the emergency.

The LWF was among the first organizations to arrive at Bubukwanga, with some notable accomplishments. So far, the LWF has provided ten water tanks with a capacity for 10,000 liters, six hand-washing facilities, 1,000 jerry cans of soap and saucepans for food

distribution; mobilized two hygiene promoters; and fenced 450 meters of the camp.

However, the capacity in Bubukwanga remains overstretched and urgent support is needed to meet the basic needs of the 15,559 refugees staying there. “There are still many gaps in the camp—shelters, sanitation and hygiene are some of the critical areas,” says Bafaki Charles, OPM senior settlement officer and coordinator for refugees.

More than 290 refugees in Bubukwanga were sharing one latrine, yet the humanitarian standards for emergencies, SPHERE, point to 20 people to one toilet. SPHERE standards for access to water are also far from covered.

UNHCR expected the camp’s population to reach 20,000 people within a short while as convoys continued to arrive with refugees from DRC, and the LWF is preparing for even more arrivals in the coming days.



Mary Maurita and newborn Chance.
Photo: ACT/DCA/Mai Gad

Ran from the Bullets with Newborn Baby

One of the refugees in the Bubukwanga camp is 20-year-old Mary Maurita. She is breastfeeding her four-day-old baby in a shelter made of palm tree stems covered with grey blankets to provide shade.

“I heard the bullets and ran away from the hospital with my newborn son,” Maurita says and looks at her son.

Only four hours after she had given birth, she heard the sound of bullets and ran from the hospital towards her home, where she woke up her husband, 24-year-old Kalikona Bosco, and their two-year-old son Mawombi Richard.

“It was chaotic, I just carried my baby and what I was putting on, we ran as fast as we could to escape the bullets, but I was in pain because of the birth,” Maurita says.



Bubukwanga refugee camp, Bundibugyo, Uganda. Photo: ACT/DCA/Mai Gad

After eight hours on the road together with crowds of people from Kamango, Maurita and her husband were in safety in Uganda.

“We decided to give our son the name Chance. We are happy he survived the war,” she says and her husband agrees.

“I was lucky my wife woke me up and I am happy we are now in safety here in Uganda, where we get food and shelter and I have my family with me,” Bosco says.

Escaped Alone with His Three Sons

Another eyewitness of the ADF attack in DRC is 53-year-old Bhyaruhanga Jululu, who came to Uganda with his three sons.

“My neighbors said they had seen the rebels and when we heard the shootings we all started running. When we came into Uganda my wife did not want to come to the camp but wanted to stay near the border so she could go home again, I came to the camp with three of

our children, my wife has the other two,” Jululu says, adding that the attack came as a shock for everyone in his hometown.

“I heard that far away from Kamango rebels are in the bush, but none of us expected any rebels to reach our home,” he says.

To Jululu’s big disappointment, his wife decided to remain near the DRC border in order to go back home and pick their belongings.

“I tried to convince her to come with me to the camp where we are safe, but she refused,” he says.

According to Ndiji Kwaninitidid, LWF’s counselor on sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) in Bubukwanga, it is a high risk to return to the DRC at this moment.

“On Saturday a big crowd of women went back to DRC to get food and to pick their belongings, but on their way to their homes soldiers raped them and those who refused were killed,” Kwaninitidid explains. She adds that many cases have not yet been

reported to the Uganda police, since women fear that their men will refuse them if they are raped.

In response to sex-based violence among the Congolese refugees, UNHCR has asked the LWF to be in charge of SBGV in Bubukwanga camp. The LWF has mobilized and trained counselors among the refugees to support and ensure that those with such cases know where they can share and report them.

Local Community Overwhelmed

Before the recent influx in Bundibugyo, Uganda was already hosting more than 210,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, 63 percent of who originate from the DRC. The high numbers have overwhelmed the local community.

Before the Bubukwanga camp was established the refugees found shelter in five nearby schools and churches in Bundibugyo town. This resulted in school desks being used as firewood, and schools were closed.

To respond to the urgent need to get the local schools running again, on 22 July the LWF provided 180 desks to support the community schools in Bundibugyo.

“We are grateful to LWF for providing the school desks, this will help a lot. But it is still a drop in the ocean, one school has 100 desks, and even chairs were broken and used as firewood, so more support is needed,” says OPM officer Charles.

(This article was written by Mai Gad, communication officer for DanChurchAid)

Published and distributed by:
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