

Faith Based Actors and Preventing Violence Against Children: a Global Perspective from LWF

Together to #ENDviolence Affiliate Event

Global Partnerships to End Violence Against Children & The Lutheran World Federation

Event Concept Note

Overview

When: 9.00-10.30am (ET), 3.00-4:30pm (CET), 16 September, 2021

Co-hosted by the Together to #ENDViolence Partnership and The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

What: 90 minutes of interactive dialogue, children testimonies, and presentations of LWF child violence prevention country initiatives from eight country programs and LWF member churches: Colombia, Guatemala, Cameroon, CAR, South Sudan, Uganda, Jordan, Myanmar, Argentina and Sweden; two small videos; pre-recorded messages of effected children; statements from key politicians from concerned countries; and presentations from a global perspective of the LWF Global Child Protection lead, , two LWF Country Representatives and two Lutheran Church leaders; Launch of the initiative “Mainstreaming Child Violence Prevention Systematically in LWF Global Humanitarian-Development Operations”.

This high-level dialogue will bring together a global field perspective with global leaders, field operation leaders, concerned children, faith-based perspectives from churches and their leaders, specifically shedding light on the issue of violence against children from displacement and host society perspectives in specific country and operational contexts. It will highlight the important impact initiatives on ending violence against children have on children forced to flee, for their life in the host society, and the future of returning to their state and community of origin. The event will also highlight how much impact global faith based organizations such as LWF can have on the issue, and the higher-level work member churches do for an enabling environment for children, violence free. Concrete outcome of the event will be three commitments:

1. LWF will mainstream preventing violence against children in its revised Global Child Protection Guidelines.
2. Launch of the initiative “Mainstreaming Child Violence Prevention in LWF Global Humanitarian-Development Operations.
3. Commitment to design and launch a regional initiative on preventing violence against children in partnership with #ENDViolence in Latin and Central America.

High-level summary for save the dates and webpage publication:

The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of 148 Lutheran Churches in 99 countries, representing over 77 million Christians. Prevention of child violence is an important priority for member churches around the world, with multiple initiatives and policies in place at a local level.

Since its inception in 1947, LWF member churches have set up a structure to jointly serve all those in need without discrimination of any kind. Today, LWF World Service is a widely recognized, international, faith-based organization present in 25 countries, with a great variety of programs addressing violence against

children. Safeguarding policies to protect children have been put in place and are constantly upgraded in the places the LWF works. This event will shine light on the various activities around the globe, and how they all come together as contribution in the Together to #ENDviolence movement.

Theme:

Faith Based Actors and Preventing Violence Against Children: a Global Perspective from LWF

During the event, LWF will deliver insights on how a global faith based player integrates child violence prevention in multiple humanitarian-development contexts and global activities as a crosscutting theme. Member churches and LWF as their federation will present on child violence prevention as a theme core to much of their work with families, parents, and children – around the globe. With a selection of LWF member churches, World Service country programs in Latin and Central America, West, Central and East Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia, LWF Senior Representatives and child protection experts from headquarters in Geneva will exemplify approaches to deal with violence against children in displacement and host situations. A short film will highlight one country program, and concerned children will report on the impact LWF work in the field has on their lives. Lutheran church leaders will give expression to the role of Churches in fighting against violence against children, and two churches in concerned countries will present on their work (Sweden, Colombia). Another short movie shall highlight related every day social work of churches when supporting families and children to grow up healthy and secure.

The affiliated event will concluded with a Launch of the initiative “Mainstreaming Child Violence Prevention in LWF Global Humanitarian-Development Operations”, which LWF will implement in its global operation throughout 2021 and 2022. From that LWF will digest a short compilation of what works and what not, to be used as a reference point for other humanitarian-development and faith based actors.

Background

Humanitarian crisis, developments settings and related forced displacement is a major source for violence against children. Internal displacement or displacement across boarder cause a high degree of vulnerability and exposure of children to violence. Sexual violence, physical abuse, forms of household violence or other forms of violence are predominant threats for children in these situations, and LWF as a global faith based organization and federation of churches is confronted with these issues every day, across the globe.

Thus, across all 27 country programs of LWF child violence prevention has become a cross cutting theme, in humanitarian-development country operation, together with Lutheran churches and faith communities. For example, alone in the ongoing crisis in the Central African Republic more than 370.000 children are internally displaced, according to UNICEF (April 2021). Covid 19 has led to increased issues for children across the regions and countries, and widely recognized increased children exposure to violence. A recent report of UNICEF on the situation of children in Venezuela and those displaced to Colombia is equally shocking (May 2021), with over 3.5 million children in need for humanitarian assistance alone in Venezuela. Eight countries are focus of this event, all faced with extreme situations for children exposing them to high degree of all forms of violence.

Lutheran Churches LWF has the ability to draw on work done in the global North, South, East and West. All churches in effect are deeply engaged in the child violence prevention work, directly or indirectly, based on their Lutheran protestant Christian faith, taking approaches to strengthen families, children, and taking care of the most needed, protecting them from harm. Well-known, churches play key roles in many societies when it comes to construct healthy environments, and thus this event will have one Northern church leader

present towards that (tbd., hope is for Archbishop of the Church of Sweden) and one Southern Church leader, from Colombia (tbd).

From a humanitarian-development perspective, some numbers can highlight issues to be looked at:

Starting in Africa, in **Cameroon**, 3.2 million children are currently in need for humanitarian assistance, violence is widespread, and children are pouring in from neighboring CAR, Nigeria and Chad. LWF is supporting families, children and communities with a variety of programs to build resilience and healthy communities, with specific intervention on protecting children from violence. In neighboring **Central African Republic (CAR)** UNICEF concludes it “is one of the worst places in the world to be a child, and the situation is deteriorating“. LWF deals with the issue by providing psychological and trauma support, and enhancing community’s resilience to violence – and additionally through ongoing programs related to livelihoods and education. In **Uganda**, one of LWFs largest country programs, more than 900,000 refugee are children, the great majority are traumatized and experienced violence in one form or the over. Including the children of the host communities, 2.3 million children are in need of protection from violence. LWF runs child protection projects all across the north, and has already collaborated with End Violence in 2018 to battle child violence. Safe spaces, save schools, trauma work and work with communities are long standing interventions concerning thousands of children. However, most refugee children in Uganda are from **South Sudan**, where a shocking number of 4.1 million Children are in need of humanitarian assistant and exposed to exponential threats of violence. LWF provides support to children and helps prevent and recover from violence through various interventions. Trauma care, working with parents and children are key interventions, and the country operation is increasing work and projects as we speak. Multiple partners from across the world have joined the effort, but much more work is needed. Recently LWF called for attention to situation of children in South Sudan with a statement at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Taking a turn to the Middle East, in **Jordan** 65% of all refugees are children (according to UNHCR), more than 80% live below the poverty line. LWF works in nearly all camps, with children from Syria, Palestinian and Iraq. Parents counselling, safe spaces, support to create safe learning environment at home and in schools – all activities the country team implements, in cooperation and in many cases financed by the Lutheran church network. As a concrete example, LWF developed the Peace Oasis and Smurf Centre in Za’atari camp, which operates for over nine years up to today, focusing on a holistic approach to support youth and families to ensure that every home in the camp will be a safe and healthy place for children.

In Asia, **Myanmar** stands out with more than one-third of the 54 million population being children. Most recently, more than 43 children have been killed by armed forces after the military coup. In 2019, 460,000 children were affected by conflict or natural disaster and required humanitarian assistance. Generally, 55% of all children live under the poverty line. LWF fights all forms of discrimination and violence against children in a number of programs as a crosscutting theme, and focuses additionally on children being able to claim their rights. The current situation is particularly difficult, and the Affiliated Event will also help to shed light on these very difficult situations for children.

Turning to Latin America and specifically **Colombia** – more than 1.4 million children are displaced here and experience the effects of a violent conflict. The crisis in neighboring Venezuela forces additional hundred thousands of children to flee into Colombia. Sexual exploitation, child marriage, child soldiers and limited excess to education are among the preeminent threats for Colombia’s children – violence against children in general being by far the biggest issue. The LWF country program and Lutheran Church work with local communities to protect children, and recently moved into Venezuela and supports children there, through a variety of programs. LWF works with partners to battle root causes for child violence on the community and household level, prevents recruitment of child soldiers, resocialization, and as nationally accredited for minor

education works toward violence prevention and safe spaces in schools. **Guatemala** faces among persistent poverty natural disasters and transit migration, and is itself a source of people fleeing towards the North, seeking a better life, or often simply survival. Child labor, child trafficking, child marriage and exploitation of children are big issues. Violence against children is an endemic issue in Guatemala. When in early December 2020 two hurricanes struck Guatemala in quick succession, more than 900,000 children were affected and in need of support. LWF has taken on that challenge and for example a project titled “Youth, Recreation, Art, Creativity and Cultural Diversity for Social Transformation”, aims to improve the living conditions of young people, in the project’s areas of intervention, through creative playful methodologies as instruments to demand and promote respect for their rights.

As can be seen from this short overview, LWF programs across all eight countries have child protection as a crosscutting theme, and it takes a variety of forms according to contexts and needs. By bringing leaders of our diverse programs and the Lutheran church to one stage, LWF has the unique ability to exemplify how a faith-based organization responds to child violence in various contexts. Each country program has its unique capacity according to the needs and conditions of the situation, and can bring rich insights of how child protection activities integrated in a global operation can lead to child violence prevention on a huge scale. By connecting the discussion with concerned children, LWF global coordinators and regional program leads, church leaders and national authorities, the event will exemplify child violence prevention taking forward by a global faith-based actor.

For member churches, as mentioned the perspective is different: we look at a society level focus, where the Lutheran churches are a key member working towards healthy communities with a variety of interventions. Lutheran church leaders will highlight that work, with a specific focus on work concerning child violence prevention. The theological roots of this work will also be highlighted, as well as their translation in Churches every day work.

The event will conclude with the Launch of LWF “Mainstreaming Child Violence Prevention Systematically in LWF Global Humanitarian-Development Operations” initiative, for which LWF will start a process of increased activity on global and country level to integrate child violence prevention as a specific theme in all programs. LWF will also pledge to update its Child Protection Guidelines and designate one chapter specifically to the issue of Child Violence Prevention. Lastly, LWF and #ENDViolence will pledge to design a regional program on preventing violence against children in Latin and Central America, to be launched in 2022. Commitment to this regional program of political leaders from these countries participating at the Affiliated Event will also be sought.

Potential Aspects with framing of the event

- A faith based initiative ending violence against children in displacement situations
- Exemplify end violence against children impact on global players such as LWF
- Show work of a faith based actor in child violence prevention
- Lead as an example for other humanitarian-development player engaging with host and refugee communities on how to mainstream child violence prevention in global operations

Format

- 60-90 minutes
- Virtual, live streamed and pre-recorded testimonies
- High Level short 10 minutes presentations from LWF Country Representatives and LWF Global and Regional Coordinators (oral, no PowerPoint, maybe pictures in the background)
- Testimonies of concerned children from some of the six focus countries
- Launch of the LWF pledges

Potential Event Schedule

- Opening remarks by Howard Taylor, on the important role of faith based actors in supporting End Violence goal to end violence against children by 2030
- Opening remarks by LWF General Secretary Dr. Martin Junge
- Opening remarks by #ENDViolence Board Member Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC acting General Secretary
- Voices of children: a video message of children supported by LWF programs from at least 5 of the focus countries
- Dive into 2 country operations presented by country representatives; the other country operations will be presented in a snap shot video jumping from place to place (to be produced)
- Faith leader presentation on Lutheran Churches and child violence prevention
- LWF Global Child Protection Lead on child violence prevention as a cross cutting them and steps to update and enhance the global activities in this respect
- Two political representatives from two countries speaking about the importance of faith based actors in their country to combat child violence
- Audience: Q&A session
- Close: LWF Launch of three concrete pledges as outcome

Total: 60 - 90 mins