

For Hope and a Future

The Lutheran World Federation
World Service Strategy
2025-2031



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COVER IMAGE

Women in Sohal Tole, a community of Santhal and Dalit (Musahar) people on the margins of society in Nepal, are involved in an LWF-supported project on disaster preparedness and improving livelihoods.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

THIS IMAGE

A group of Kuku women from South Sudan form a circle in Palorinya settlement, Uganda, where refugees and host communities receive support from LWF World Service.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

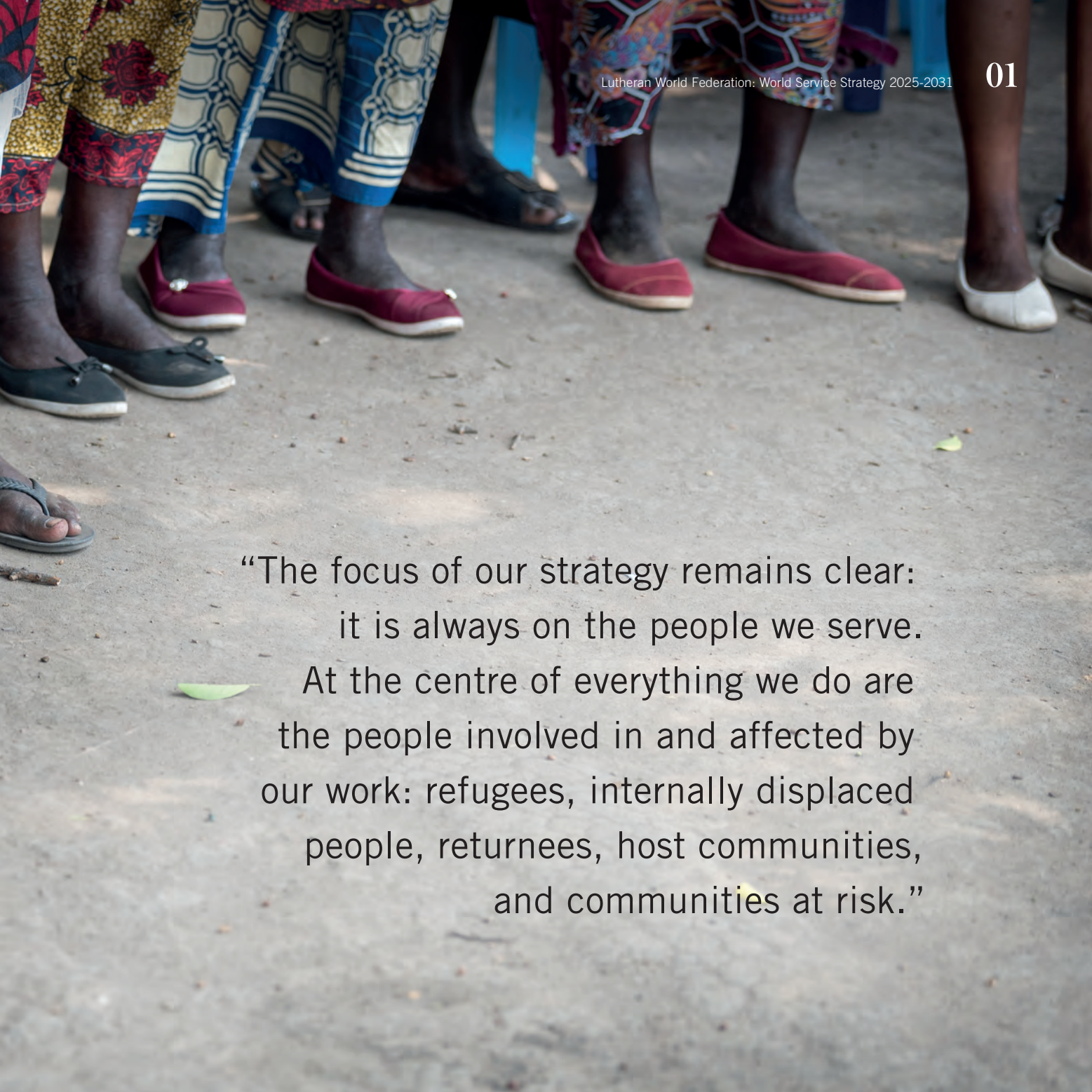
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Published by: The Lutheran World Federation

Chemin de Pavillon 2, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Design: Weaver Creative www.weavercreative.co.nz

ISBN: 978-2-940642-87-8



“The focus of our strategy remains clear:
it is always on the people we serve.
At the centre of everything we do are
the people involved in and affected by
our work: refugees, internally displaced
people, returnees, host communities,
and communities at risk.”

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IMAGE

A group of Turkana people walk home from a World Service-supported farm in Kenya. The traditional pastoralists are learning to grow crops better suited to climate change.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



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FOREWORD

*This 2025–2031 Global Strategy reaffirms the commitment of the Lutheran World Federation World Service (LWF World Service) to **advancing human rights worldwide**. It outlines a decisive path for a robust, inclusive, and responsive approach in an increasingly complex and fractured global landscape.*

In line with our commitment, the focus of our strategy remains clear: it is always on a **people-centred approach**, prioritizing people and their rights. Recognizing the inherent dignity and entitlements of every individual as fundamental, our methodologies are deeply rooted in **human rights principles, guiding our actions** at all levels.

The work we do centres on the rights and well-being of individuals, particularly **on the most vulnerable** – refugees, internally displaced people, returnees, host communities, and other

populations at risk in environments affected by rapid and often disruptive changes.

We will **intensify our attention on vulnerable, poor and marginalised groups**. We will also prioritise women and girls, as well as youth, and people with disabilities.

Our aim is to empower them, ensuring they can exercise their rights as active citizens and dignified individuals.

By embracing a **rights-based approach (RBA) in our programming**, we reaffirm our commitment to upholding the global consensus and framework on human rights, currently under siege.

We steadfastly believe in safeguarding and advancing these values, recognizing their pivotal importance in our global community.

Furthermore, as an international non-governmental organization (NGO), we work to strengthen civil society at multiple levels: fostering local networks, facilitating their collaboration at national level, and enabling participation in global human rights mechanisms and forums. This embodies our **'local to global to local' (L2G2L)** approach. Faith-based actors are particularly important to World Service in this work.

We structure the work we do around **three interrelated programmatic areas**:

- Fostering protection and social cohesion,
- Climate and resilient livelihoods, and
- Enhancing access to quality services.

Drawing upon decades of expertise in these realms, LWF World Service will seize this strategic period to innovate and develop new ways of working within them, particularly in addressing the multifaceted and interconnected challenges they present.

Crucially, each thematic area extends beyond service provision alone to encompass a **broader commitment to safeguarding and advancing livelihoods**.

The human rights framework spans the phases of humanitarian assistance, recovery, and long-term development, where **situations may change rapidly**, or exist simultaneously in certain country contexts or regions. Our approach thus emphasises **flexible ways of working**, whether directly with local individuals and communities, or by collaborating with local NGOs or other partners, as may suit the context.

This commitment to flexibility also underpins our strategic commitment to localisation – working with local communities directly, or through local partnerships, as and where appropriate, while upholding international humanitarian standards.

Additionally, as a faith-based organization, we are committed to engage purposefully with our own **LWF member churches and other ecumenical partners**, as well as with interfaith organizations, secular, governmental, regional, and global bodies.

IMAGE LEFT

The KK Stars, from Kakuma camp, are the first female refugee team in the Kenyan football league.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

We bring the insights from our people-centred work to forums and high-level meetings in the countries where we work, and internationally, to promote the interests of those we serve and hold others to account for respecting, protecting and fulfilling their rights.

This strategy highlights our increased commitment to addressing climate change-induced humanitarian crises, encompassing both on-the-ground humanitarian and developmental work, as well as active engagement in relevant policy dialogues at national, regional, and global levels.

Moreover, the increasing emphasis on the **opportunities and challenges of digitalization** in our sector opens avenues for innovative collaboration with communities, partners, and staff, and for leveraging the potential of artificial intelligence (AI).

We maintain our motto for this strategy: **“For hope and a future”** (Jeremiah 29:11). The LWF has, since its foundation and through its constitution, been committed to “the alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, social and economic justice, care for God’s creation, and sharing of resources”.

The work of LWF World Service is its expression and tool for solidarity and service to those most in need – with a vision of hope and a future.

The results we have achieved and the improvements we have made in the lives of marginalised people give us a firm foundation for this strategy and encourage us to go further.

Building on our previous strategy, we strengthen our commitment to prioritizing the people we serve and their rights. Furthermore, we pledge to deepen our engagement in advocacy within the human rights-based approach, aiming for substantial and more durable change.



Maria Immonen
Director, World Service

IMAGE RIGHT

LWF World Service Director Maria Immonen and LWF President Henrik Stubkjær.

Photo: LWF/M. Renaux



1.

WHO WE ARE

From LWF's inception in 1947, its member churches have mandated LWF World Service to be their key actor in international diakonia (service to others) to assist all those in need without discrimination of any kind. Over the past seven and a half decades, the Department for World Service has spearheaded the LWF's distinctive efforts in humanitarian and development work.

Today, we have a **global presence** as a widely recognised, international, faith-based organization working in 28 countries. We engage proactively with local governmental and community structures to **ensure the rights of the most vulnerable are upheld, respected and fulfilled.**

We are particularly known for our **timely, compassionate, and professional humanitarian work**, and for our field presence in hard-to-reach areas.

A defining feature of World Service is **local rootedness and global connectivity** – linking community voices with international dialogue, advocacy, and peace work.

We are also distinguished by intentional collaboration with LWF member churches, including to develop their capacities as humanitarian actors. Additionally, we extend our relations and networking more widely to ecumenical and interfaith partners.

World Service forms part of the wider humanitarian sector, including UN agencies. We are a founding member of the Action by Churches Together Alliance (ACT), an international network of Protestant and Orthodox churches and organizations engaged in development, humanitarian response, and advocacy.

LWF World Service programs contribute to transforming the lives of women, men, girls and boys and creating a more just society, inspired and **guided by the following vision, mission, values and principles.**



Complaints boxes, such as at the LWF field office in Ngueli Bridge, Chad, offer a way to report problems and ensure accountability in relief operations.

Photo: LWF/M. Renaux

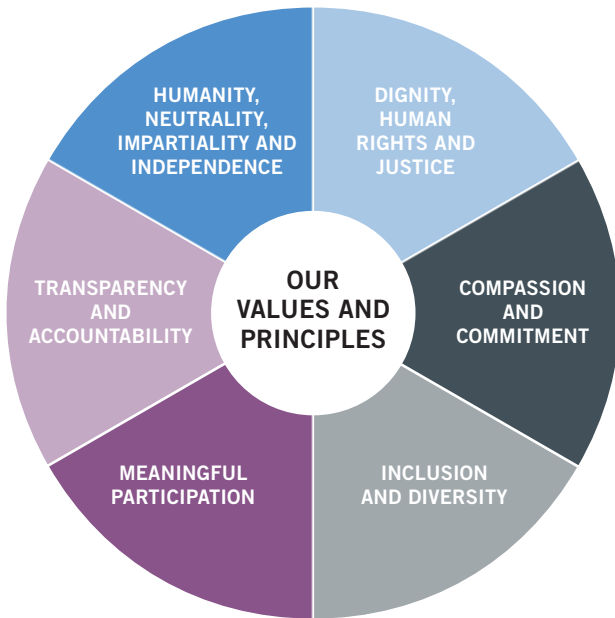
1.1 Vision and Mission

Vision

People of the world, living in just societies in peace and dignity, united in diversity, are able to meet their basic needs, achieve their full potential, and claim their universal rights.

Mission

Inspired by God's love for all of humanity, World Service is dedicated to challenging and addressing the causes and effects of human suffering and poverty, linking local responses to national and international advocacy.



1.2 Values and Principles

Our values and principles are fundamental to who we are and how we work as LWF World Service, and as the Lutheran World Federation.

These are crucial to our identity and codes of practice, and they inform the work that we do and the change that we work towards in the world in which we live.

Underlying these values and principles is the rights-based approach (RBA) that LWF World Service embraces in the work we do. This approach is also fundamental to the Theory of Change (ToC) we set out in this document.

1.3 What we mean by a human rights-based approach (RBA)

LWF World Service has always taken a **rights-based approach (RBA) in the work we do – putting people at the centre**. The emphasis on the dignity of each person, inherent in a rights-based approach, plays a crucial role in finding **common ground between RBA and our rooted faith tradition, which affirms that each individual is precious**.

Working for human rights draws on the prophetic call to justice found in our own and in other faith communities.

In responding, **we stand with and work in solidarity with the people we serve**. The positive changes we seek are inherent rights to which people should have access, to meet their needs and live in dignity. We pay particular attention to the rights of women and girls, people with disabilities, youth, and other key groups.

Key elements of our rights-based approach include:

- Participation,
- Accountability,
- A focus on the rights of those who are vulnerable or discriminated against, and
- Empowerment.

This is fundamental to how we work. In our strategy, we commit to reinforcing this as an essential feature of all our programming and our humanitarian response.

Alongside grassroots, rights-based programming to secure concrete improvements, we also seek change by addressing structures of power, aiming to ensure that those who should deliver on the rights of communities ('duty bearers') do so. This involves rights-based action and advocacy at an institutional and structural level.

Advocacy is thus central to our rights-based work and forms an integral part of LWF World Service programming, in addition to being part and parcel of LWF's holistic mission.

Our distinctive RBA '**local to global to local**' (**L2G2L**) **approach** has leveraged our role as an international actor, ensuring that local voices are heard at national and global level, and that commitments and promises made at these levels result in concrete changes for the women, men, boys and girls in the places where we work.

The RBA underlines and complements our broad approach to humanitarian response, which is also aligned with International Humanitarian Law. This alignment reinforces our commitment to uphold and advocate for rights and legal protections, particularly in situations of war and conflict. While this may have echoes of the humanitarian 'nexus' approach, we have our own distinctive understanding:

Our response is not short-term, but rather comprehensive and long-term, closely linked to enabling recovery, as well as building resilience, sustainable livelihoods, peace, and social cohesion. In this way, it will enable longer-term change.



A vendor winnows beans as refugees and host communities alike gather to trade on market day in Cameroon's Minawao refugee camp, which hosts tens of thousands of refugees from Northeast Nigeria.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

2.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

The pace of change in the world we live and work in is accelerating. Challenging shifts in political, environmental, economic and legal frameworks and contexts have an impact on all areas of the globe.

Nowhere are these challenges greater than in the countries where we work – an **operational environment for World Service that presents more complexity and difficulty than before**. The outlook in global discussions has also shifted, characterised by a **tone both bleaker and more pessimistic than in past decades**. In this context, voices of hope, a steadfast belief in a future for all, and action are more vital than ever. The mandate and need for World Service are unquestioned.

What we need to consider in our work

As a humanitarian organization, we witness first-hand the rise in conflict and displacement across the globe. War, civil strife and terrorism make our operations ever more challenging.

Political agendas have become more focused on military spending, national interests and geopolitical shifts in power. There is **less attention and funding devoted to peace building and diplomacy, multilateral commitment and global action on the issues of our time, including urgently needed practical climate action**.

Protracted conflicts and mass movements of people – both within countries and across international borders – have reached unprecedented numbers and continue to increase year on year as **people search for safety and protection**.

Challenges to universally accepted frameworks, such as International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, are not only escalating, but becoming commonplace, and states act with increasing impunity. **Humanitarian actors face heightened threats and targeted attacks**, necessitating additional investment in the safety and security of our staff. The space for civil society to operate continues to shrink in many places, severely **restricting access to populations in acute need**. Accountability mechanisms are defied, multilateral approaches to many crisis hot spots are challenged, and **overall humanitarian funding is decreasing**. The global community largely ignores many severe humanitarian crises, providing minimal attention and leaving them unfunded.

Global discussions have become muted on development, human rights and long-term sustainable improvements in the conditions of all. An era of development optimism has given way to a situation where it is a **much greater challenge to convince established donors to invest in human development**, particularly within the polarised political landscapes in many historical donor countries. Political **polarisation divides nations, communities, and families. The divide between rich and poor continues to grow.**

Moreover, the climate crisis is steadily accelerating, marked by 2023 being the hottest year on record. **Extreme weather events and overlapping man-made crises and conflicts are on the rise**, with impacts on millions of people. Decision makers are unable at all levels to make effective, practical resolutions that can keep pace with the rapidly deteriorating conditions. **Adaptation and mitigation measures are urgently needed**, particularly in countries most severely impacted by these environmental upheavals.

Advances in many areas are at risk of being reversed. **Women's rights** must be consistently upheld, everywhere. Furthermore, attention and proactive measures are necessary to **increase protection for children, people with disabilities, and ethnic and other minorities**. Inequalities in power dynamics impact all areas of life, including access to vital resources such as food, clean water, education and other essential services. In many areas where we work, the **youth lack opportunities and perspective**, increasing the risks of radicalisation and negative coping mechanisms.

Rapid, uneven advances in **digitalisation**, including the rise of artificial intelligence, **offer unprecedented opportunities** for positive, transformative change for the poor and marginalised globally. It is imperative that these technological advances are balanced with the safeguarding of human rights in all circumstances.

An LWF-supported municipal kitchen in Kharkiv provided thousands of hot meals to vulnerable people in Ukraine.

Photo: LWF/Anatoliy Nazarenko.



A mother and child are among internally displaced people from Amhara Region in Ethiopia who benefit from a cash distribution scheme in Maichew, Tigray.

Photo: LWF/S. Gebreyes



3.

WHO WE WORK WITH AND WHERE

LWF World Service works primarily in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, with headquarters in Geneva. This provides us with a **wide and diverse global presence**, in some of the most insecure parts of the world and in varied and often rapidly changing contexts.

We are mandated to work with LWF member churches where possible, and where these have a role in serving affected communities.

Our representation in Geneva and in New York offers us **direct access to other international humanitarian actors and networks**, and we have accredited NGO consultative status at the United Nations. This opens avenues for us to leverage LWF's added value as an international organization, to share our practical experiences, and to advocate for and influence policies and practice at regional and global levels.

Our operations are managed at country or regional levels. They vary in focus and areas of intervention according to needs, situation, context, local capacity, geography, and the availability of resources.

A focus on the most vulnerable

We work with communities at risk, specifically those vulnerable to natural disasters or who lose large numbers of community members due to migration. We seek to prevent the effects of poverty and injustice by **building long-term resilience**.

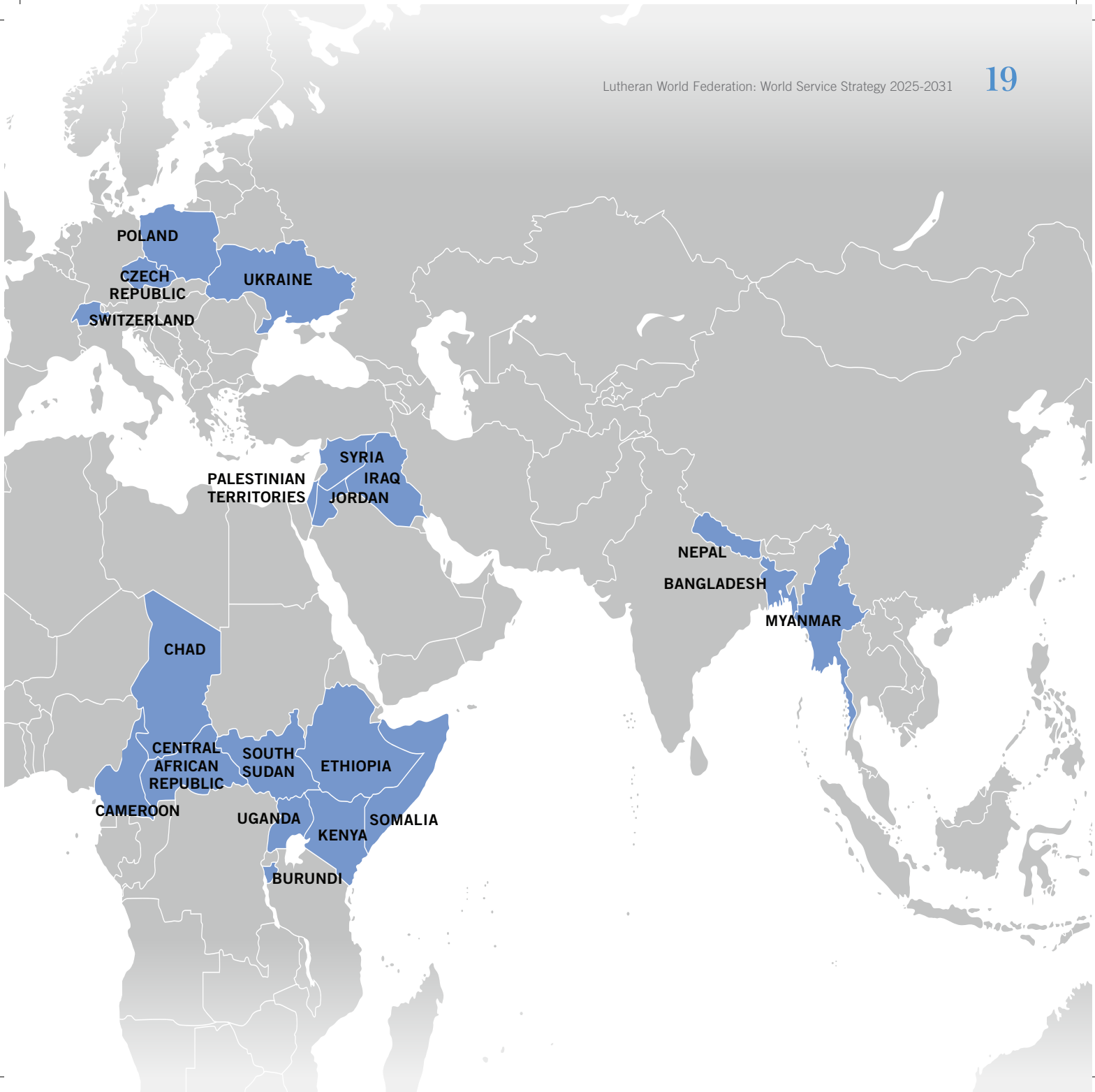
LWF World Service supports refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), who for a shorter or longer period are unable to return to their homes. We work with returnees, helping them settle back into their original contexts, or support displaced people to integrate with host communities with the assistance of local governments.

We also undertake to focus more on the most disadvantaged – those with little access to making a livelihood, people with disabilities and those with special education needs. Such inclusion of key vulnerable groups and those in need of social protection is an essential and increasingly important element of the work we do.

WHERE WE WORK

*LWF main offices in our country programs
and emergency operations*





4.

HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

We are convinced that only by joining hands with others can we succeed in responding to the challenges of today. We thus collaborate widely through strategic partnerships, networks and consortia, to ensure impactful, inclusive, and effective programs that reach the most vulnerable.

4.1 Networking and Partnerships

World Service works closely with others. This includes **local communities** to ensure our programs are appropriate; **civil society** to ensure effective change extends to more people; **LWF member churches** to reach out and show compassion to those in need; **governments, intergovernmental bodies and other duty bearers** as key instruments of change; **ecumenical and interfaith communities** to work through and learn from; **related organizations and philanthropists** to provide valuable funding and/or technical expertise; **international institutions**

and UN agencies to enable us to have a deeper and broader impact; **regional and global networks** to ensure the voice of the local communities are heard at the highest levels; and **consortia** to reach the most vulnerable more effectively, in a holistic manner.

4.2 Localisation

In all the work we do, we are **committed to the principle of localisation**. This is expressed in diverse forms, given the range of places and contexts in which LWF World Service works.

NETWORKING AND PARTNERSHIPS



As an international NGO which is locally rooted and with a broad constituency of member churches in 99 countries, we believe we have a vital role in making localisation work in practice.

The key actors we seek to support and engage are **local people and communities**, and in some places the best way is for LWF World Service staff to work directly with them.

Elsewhere, we work almost exclusively through **local NGOs or partners**, providing an enabling framework, enhancing their capacities and strengthening civil society. In other places, we work alongside **local organizations in consortia**, with them sometimes taking the lead.

As **an international NGO which is locally rooted and with a broad constituency of member churches in 99 countries**, we believe we have a vital role in making localisation work in practice.

We offer our expertise to ensure that whilst **local people and actors are in the driving seat**, we can accompany them to ensure that **standards of quality, accountability and delivery** required by the international humanitarian community are met.

Our approach is described in more detail in other documents.



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi visits a shelter reconstruction project being implemented in by LWF for UNHCR in Kharkiv, Ukraine, where he also met families affected by the war.

Photo: LWF/Anatoliy Nazarenko

A young Honduran carries garden tools provided by a project in El Guante, Cedros, supporting societal reintegration of young, returned migrants.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



5.

WORKING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Our Theory of Change is firmly based on a human rights-based approach (RBA), and the affirmation of the global human rights framework and International Humanitarian Law.

Context: We seek change for the better in the context of:

- **An ever-increasing level of humanitarian crises, and**
- **An erosion of the global human rights framework**

These are taking place in a climate of disruption, leading to extreme unpredictability and turbulence, and a loss of hope for humanity.

Change – for whom: We focus our efforts on **local people and communities** in contexts of conflict, crisis, suffering, vulnerability, fragility and risk. By addressing their hopes for a better future, we believe we are also contributing to a better future for humanity.

People-centred change: We acknowledge that in today's world there are multiple powerful actors driving change.

Nevertheless, we insist that the kind of change we seek will come by engaging and supporting women, men, girls and boys in the communities we serve as the **key agents of their own future**, promoting their dignity, rights, creativity and resilience.

Change must also recognise all that it is to be human: physical, emotional and spiritual. Our roots in a faith tradition mean we understand and respect the **holistic nature** of human experience, and welcome positive change in all these dimensions.

Our role: To secure change in the face of an unjust and unequal world, people and communities need others who will **stand and act alongside them as allies, in solidarity**, to secure their rights: people who continue to believe and hope. We choose to do so, and steadfastly maintain our vision of how change can come about.

Our contribution

As LWF World Service we see **our contribution** to this change in the following ways:

Local solutions, local actors: In a global climate of disruption, and in the face of hugely diverse contexts, we believe that our response needs to be resilient and flexible. The only consistently dependable approach is to accompany local people, communities and organizations in responding to their challenges and needs, securing their rights, and achieving their aspirations. Therefore, we maintain a broad sectoral approach, capable of adjusting to changing circumstances, built around local solutions and local actors.

We carry out **people-centred, community-based and rights-based humanitarian response**, drawing on **relationships of trust and engagement**. It is not short-term, but closely linked to enabling recovery, building resilience, sustainable livelihoods, peace and social cohesion. In this way, it will **enable longer-term change**.

True change requires more, however. Through rights-based approaches, we **address the very structures of power and injustice which perpetuate crises and undermine the people we serve** and whose needs we prioritise. **People, as the agents of their own future**, gain the skills and confidence to voice their concerns and to work for their rights.

Local authorities, as duty bearers, are crucial to implementing change. We engage with them and support capacity building, so they can take responsibility for upholding the rights of the people they serve. In providing support for this, we also work with communities to develop their capacity to monitor and hold the duty bearers accountable for fulfilling their obligations. This can bring change to them and their communities and society as a whole. This approach requires collaboration at the level of **individuals, communities and institutions**. Because we live in a globalised world, it requires **intentional engagement for change at all levels**, from **local to national to global**, affirming and reinforcing the global human rights framework. We are well-placed to engage in this work.

Change will come by efficiently **focusing our efforts on some of the major challenges** that women and men, girls and boys face and addressing the interconnections between them. For this reason, we focus our efforts for change thematically on three major areas:

- **protection and social cohesion,**
- **climate and resilient livelihoods, and**
- **quality services.**

These areas focus on **sectors where we have proven added value, whilst allowing sufficient breadth** for the people-centred, locally led, contextually appropriate responses to which we are committed. We recognise that these areas are interdependent, and we work at the creative edge of where they interact and overlap.

Change for the better

In this way, in solidarity, despite the challenges, we have seen change happen for the better. We hold on to our vision as we advocate and as we undertake our programmatic work as LWF World Service.

We continue to believe that more can be done and that there is hope for the future.

OVERALL IMPACT

CHANGE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES & HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

OUR CONTRIBUTION

Local solutions, local actors

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE:

- People-centred
- Community-based
- Drawing on trust & engagement

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES:

- Addressing structures of power & injustice
- Intentional engagement, from local to national to global levels

PROGRAMMATIC AREAS:

- Protection & Social Cohesion
- Climate & Resilient Livelihoods
- Quality Services

OUR ROLE

To stand alongside and act in solidarity with those we serve

TRUE CHANGE

FOR WHOM:

Local people & communities, in contexts of war, conflict, crisis, suffering, vulnerability & risk

BY WHOM:

People-centred
People as agents of their own future

HOLISTIC:

Positive change in physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions

FOUNDATION

Human rights-based approach (RBA) & International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

CONTEXT

Humanitarian and climate crises, erosion of human rights, disruptive and unpredictable conditions



6.

OUR PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK

The LWF World Service programmatic framework aims to protect and fulfil the rights of people in contexts of conflict, suffering, crisis, vulnerability, fragility and risk. This focuses our efforts on the three thematic areas highlighted in our Theory of Change – protection and social cohesion, climate and resilient livelihoods, and quality services.

These are areas of expertise in which LWF World Service has a **wealth of experience and a proven track record.**

These three areas overlap, as depicted in the diagram left. Protection and social cohesion, for example, are preconditions for building climate-resilient livelihoods; and quality services are needed in an environment that will foster successful livelihoods.

Recognizing the overlaps allows World Service Country Programs to identify outcomes related to programmatic areas in each specific intervention or project, driving

comprehensive humanitarian programming dedicated to achieving **momentum for longer-term change.**

Our action in all three areas is grounded in the international human rights framework and the RBA as well as the IHL in zones of conflicts and war.

We work in each programmatic area at the individual, community, and institutional level – where possible through the L2G2L advocacy approach – **amplifying the voice of local communities at the global level and bringing back results** to the ground.



A gardener in Danamadja village, Chad, waters her crops grown through an LWF-supported project aimed at enhancing the livelihoods of refugees and host communities.

Photo: LWF/M. Renaux

All the programmatic work we undertake includes gender-responsiveness and inclusion, with a focus on the most vulnerable, poor and marginalised people. We prioritise key groups such as women and girls, youth and people with disabilities.

Additionally, **advances in digitalization and artificial intelligence present opportunities** to enhance not only our operations, but also programmatic work. LWF World Service will increasingly integrate these developments where appropriate. We can harness their potential, both in **the way we and our partners operate and collaborate**, as well as to **improve the lives of the people and communities** where we work. In the use of such technology and tools, it is vital to ensure the **safeguarding of people's rights and dignity**.

"The establishment of the refugee camps has actually helped our communities, through improved living conditions, and the types of food and seeds that are now available."

Community elder Lokarach Lomongin, whose traditionally pastoralist Turkana people in Kenya form the host community for refugees living in the nearby Kakuma camp.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert





6.1 PROGRAMMATIC AREA: PROTECTION AND SOCIAL COHESION

The goal of LWF World Service's programmatic work in protection and social cohesion is to work for the upholding, protection and fulfilment of people's rights. This means individuals and communities enjoy increased capacities and stronger cohesion, facing lower risks to their well-being and livelihoods, free from all forms of discrimination, abuse, and exploitation.

We continue to implement our **guidelines on faith-sensitive psychosocial programming** and advocate for its uptake more broadly within the humanitarian sector.

We interpret the term 'protection' more broadly than is common in humanitarian response, to include **protection of the human rights and dignity of people and communities** more generally. This inclusive understanding emphasises World Service's commitment to protection as established in International Humanitarian Law and informs our advocacy and communication relating to situations of war and conflict.

The goal of social cohesion expresses our distinctive approach to building peace – based on a holistic understanding that goes **beyond the absence of war or conflict. Social cohesion is an expression of peace mainly at community level**, where fair, just, harmonious and healthy relationships provide the conditions for people and communities to flourish. This is a key building block in wider peace processes at national and international level, in which we also engage in certain places, primarily through our advocacy efforts.

We believe **the people we work with are the principal actors** in their own protection and social cohesion. Our role as an external actor is primarily to identify and enhance existing capacities and efforts for self-help, protection, social cohesion and access to fundamental rights.

Rights-based participation, accountability, inclusion, justice, advocacy and empowerment-related activities are integrated in a cross-cutting way throughout the work we do. They are included in this programmatic area, which ensures they are consistently addressed, **with rigorous planning, monitoring and reporting.**

IMAGE LEFT

A former guerrilla participates in a social reintegration project in Colombia aimed at overcoming trauma and insecurity.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



Upholding basic human rights of individuals and families to protection

We will conduct **protection risk assessments** in planning specific protection assistance and integrate overall protection in all our programs. We will also partner with rights holders, civil society, the authorities, and UN agencies to protect and fulfil the fundamental human rights priorities of the communities where we work. This approach directly connects protection efforts with initiatives aimed at securing quality services and livelihoods.

Our protection assistance prioritises the rights of the most vulnerable individuals, families, and communities. This entails supporting them to secure their rights to humanitarian assistance and services, to freedom from discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence and other gender injustices.

It also includes prevention of child exploitation and abuse, and combating prevailing stereotypes and harmful practices that prevent the most vulnerable people from exercising their rights as members of society. As a well-regarded faith-based actor, we provide **psychosocial support to people experiencing trauma**, and refer those needing more specialised care to appropriate service providers. **Compliance with international standards** is a requirement in all programs, for enhanced accountability to the people with whom we work.



Promoting community-based protection and social cohesion

World Service intentionally identifies and **builds upon the capacities and initiatives of people and their communities** for self-protection, cohesion and development based on the conviction that they are best placed to protect themselves. We anchor our programs on increasing **community participation**, strengthening **community management structures and building community protection and cohesion systems**.

Special protection measures focus on the most vulnerable groups and communities. We recognise and encourage the **active involvement of faith communities** in this work to reinforce inclusive social values and actions to protect the most vulnerable.

The bulk of the work we do in this programmatic area is at community level, which promises more protection benefits for individuals collectively. We promote fair, just, harmonious and healthy relationships between actors which help to enable people and communities to flourish. We have also contributed to strengthening social cohesion **through fostering inclusive dialogue and engagement** in areas where we work.

We ensure that initiatives for building social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in the communities that we work with are linked to government plans, as appropriate. To proactively safeguard vulnerable individuals, families, and communities, we assist by establishing community-based structures and networks. The particular focus here is on child protection, the participation of children and young people, gender-responsive approaches such as women's empowerment and gender justice, land rights, civil society strengthening, and disaster preparedness.



Strengthening institutional, legal, and policy-based protection frameworks

Building on the trust, legitimacy, and evidence gained from our work and close relationships with communities, LWF actively **lobbies and advocates for institutional strengthening and enforcement of protection frameworks** at local, national, regional, and global levels.

This is particularly important in emergency situations or conflicts, where commitment to International Humanitarian Law and the human rights framework guides our responses and our interventions. We implement programs, including accompaniment of minors, protection of children, dealing with sexual and gender-based violence, providing medical and psychosocial treatment, providing legal advice and access to justice, that directly protect and assist people affected by war and conflict. We engage with authorities and parties to conflicts to advocate for the rights of the individuals and communities we serve, particularly where they cannot do so for themselves.

LWF **amplifies their voices to be heard** in forums at national, regional and international level, collaborating with them to **secure commitments from duty bearers** for better protection, social cohesion and resilience. The implementation of these commitments is monitored through our engagement at the national level. This work draws on the success of our L2G2L advocacy approach.

Where appropriate, we **participate in peace processes** through advocacy. In some contexts, engaging in any rights-based advocacy work like this may be difficult, and too much visibility may undermine our humanitarian operations.

Nevertheless, because what we say is based clearly on our engagement and credibility at local level, and as a result of our **positive engagement with duty bearers**, we have proved able to speak out at national and international level in sensitive contexts where other international NGOs have not been able to.

Moreover, we facilitate local efforts to enhance inclusive, protective, and non-discriminatory policies, formal and customary laws, structures, and systems, with specific emphasis on gender and inclusion. We also collaborate with others to find and implement **durable solutions for individuals, families and communities**.



Women gather at a psychosocial support session for Syrian refugee mothers and Jordanian host communities in Al-Mazar, Jordan.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



A woman feeds chickens as part of an LWF-supported livelihood development project in Myanmar.

Photo: LWF

6.2 PROGRAMMATIC AREA: CLIMATE AND RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS

LWF World Service aims to engage people and partner with communities to become more resilient and economically self-reliant, by safeguarding and increasing assets, using potentials, developing capacities, and promoting productive activities that meet their basic needs and diversify their income. We also work with rights holders and duty bearers to ensure the institutional environment fosters resilient and sustainable livelihoods.

Our emphasis in this period is to undertake these efforts in the **context of the climate** emergency the world is facing, where the vulnerable people and communities we work with are worst affected.

Working with individuals and communities affected by climate-induced displacement and migration will intensify, particularly as these issues become more commonplace, with wider climate-related impacts on livelihoods and in fuelling and exacerbating conflicts.



A telecommunications student repairs a computer during a class at the Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah, run by LWF Jerusalem.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

The work we do related to livelihoods will be accompanied by more explicit efforts to address climate issues and impacts in our programmes. We will promote climate risk assessments and incorporate climate-proofing measures into our projects. This comprehensive approach is essential not only for addressing the impacts of climate change but is also increasingly becoming a fundamental requirement for accessing climate-related funding sources.

Furthermore, LWF World Service begins any livelihoods programming initiative by analysing gender power relations and vulnerabilities, given prevailing gender gaps and other inequalities. These include traditional, cultural or religious practices, unequal power relations, and unequal access to assets such as land, education, and services.



Supporting individuals and households

We focus on working to improve the situations of people – particularly women – grappling with food insecurity, irregular income, and insecure or inaccessible assets. We support their efforts to find ways to adapt to and mitigate the effects of the climate crisis, by acquiring skills and tools, and building networks to sustain their own lives and recover from shocks and stresses.

The outcomes of LWF World Service work in this area includes **increased agricultural productivity** through sustainable technology and innovation, and **improved food security**. It will increasingly need to take account of climate-related impacts on the livelihoods of individuals and households, particularly resulting from extreme weather events.

We target the **most vulnerable households**, and we have a **specific focus on women and youth**, for skills development and income generation. Increasing incomes and more stable livelihoods have been reflected in increased autonomy and rising self-sufficiency.

We stimulate **individual entrepreneurship** among those eager to adopt specific skills, including vocational skills, and with access to assets or credit. This effort often results in spill-over effects to others. We regularly diversify the livelihoods initiatives work we do, based on local market assessments and analysis, according to the context and changing needs.



Promoting community-level livelihoods and climate initiatives

A community is more than the sum of its individual households. We will focus on **community-based, small-scale initiatives and entrepreneurship** aimed at employing others, improving access to markets, and financial services. Our aim is to enhance **livelihood sustainability**, and thus resilience and self-reliance, particularly through responses to climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. This approach also involves the development and use of adaptation and mitigation solutions.

We are supporting communities in upholding their rights to livelihoods, land, and access to safe and clean water, as well as to a clean and healthy environment. Our efforts in disaster risk reduction focus on **managing the risks and minimizing the impact of disasters** on lives, livelihoods, and health. We also work to increase **safeguards against natural hazards and climate-related loss and damage**.

Increased connectivity, digitalization, and access to stable, preferably sustainable, power supplies stimulate and promote economic development in rural and urban settings, thereby contributing to more **resilient and climate-responsive livelihoods**. Where possible, renewable energy resources and solutions are promoted at community levels, to avoid and reduce negative environmental effects of economic development activities and climate change.

Recognizing the power and impact of supporting joint **livelihoods initiatives between displaced and host communities** will be an integral feature of our efforts. Such an approach results in increased social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between these communities, with an important element being a clear focus on local leadership and youth.

To build resilience, we support **increased access to information** for the people with whom we work, particularly regarding core services from key institutions and markets. This includes working to build capacity through investments in training institutions, the establishment of productive infrastructure, access to financial services, and stronger community-based organizations, and local business associations. We also support **vocational training schemes** for young people and other vulnerable groups.

This work in the field on resilience also has strong **links to disaster risk reduction efforts**. Examples here include projects to **diversify agricultural production and livelihoods in a sustainable way**, which may also help to stabilise slopes and reduce flood and landslide risks. Similarly, rebuilding after disasters can incorporate elements that help to increase resilience.

Such events will also drive an increasing role for World Service Country Programs and partners in supporting community efforts to advocate for national and community climate adaptation plans.



Promoting policies and institutional interventions on livelihoods and climate

LWF World Service aims to assist in **developing the capacity of local government and other local actors** to take responsibility and ownership for community-based livelihoods initiatives. We will increase rights-based programming to influence favourable policies through advocacy and lobbying on issues of **land rights, food sovereignty, labour regulations, and legal protections**, particularly in the context of climate change.

Additionally, LWF collaborates with partners to secure commitments on climate action, land, and gender equality, to enhance the economic, cultural, and social rights of individuals and communities. We pursue these goals through engagement at institutional levels, and through working actively with civil society coalitions that aim to ensure **transparency and justice in the allocation of resources** that are key to people's livelihoods.

These efforts also entail addressing **gender gaps and other inequalities in access to livelihoods** by analysing the context, raising awareness, and jointly developing approaches to challenge patterns of inequality at the individual, family, and community levels. Specifically, we support **gender-responsive, climate-resilient agricultural policies and interventions**, such as promoting women's

access to land and inheritance, eliminating legal discrimination, and widening access to technology, markets, and credit.

This work will become increasingly important given the climate-related threats to livelihoods.

World Service is increasingly contributing to climate-related adaptation policies and disaster risk reduction strategies, by actively engaging in local and national forums. Our role includes **facilitating dialogue among diverse stakeholders** and engaging with local and national authorities **to ensure community participation in national adaptation plans**.

Additionally, through a **multi-stakeholder advocacy approach** at both regional and global platforms, such as the UN Environment Assembly and climate negotiations, World Service helps to shape policy guidelines and broader frameworks. These efforts draw on **evidence from successful local practices to inform these discussions**. By acting as a bridge between global discussions and regional gatherings, World Service ensures that **global policy frameworks and guidelines are incorporated into regional and national initiatives**.

For our work at institutional levels on climate and resilient livelihoods, collaboration with local communities and LWF member churches remains pivotal.



A woman pumps drinking water from a borehole in Minawao refugee camp, Cameroon.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

6.3 PROGRAMMATIC AREA: QUALITY SERVICES

By 'quality services' we mean the crucial, basic services vital to all people everywhere, such as education, water, sanitation, shelter, food, energy, and health care. We believe that equitable access to these services, not just at a basic level but with an appropriate degree of 'quality', is a right that must be claimed by women and men, girls and boys.

This enables individuals to enjoy a better quality of life, to claim and exercise all their human rights and to fulfil their full potential.

The provision of such services is a fundamental duty of local and national authorities. But, when service provision breaks down or is unavailable, particularly in times of acute crisis, LWF World Service will **step in to provide lifesaving, humanitarian assistance** to people affected by displacement, where we can best add value.

These programs and projects are aligned with the human rights framework, IHL, and standards that guide humanitarian operations in situations of emergency, war and conflict.

In all contexts, we are committed to the principle of **filling service gaps for no longer than necessary**. Even in humanitarian crises, we are conscious that our role as an NGO is not that of a long-term service provider and aim to hand such tasks to appropriate duty bearers as soon as possible.

We will prioritise **bringing rights holders and duty bearers together** so that local communities can claim and gain improved access to quality services, in accordance with fundamental human rights principles. In particular, we will work to improve communities' access to water and sanitation, to adequate education, to affordable energy, and to mobile and internet connectivity. LWF World Service has a **track record of increasing community capacity** to gather evidence and organize advocacy to secure their rights and hold duty bearers to account, including by securing improved facilities and services.

Where needed and possible, we work diligently to link communities with **specialised NGOs and private institutions for joint advocacy** and to pool our **collective technical expertise**, in an effort to improve outcomes in the short, medium, and long term. Alongside this, we **affirm our role in owning and operating the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in Jerusalem**, which is part of our distinctive mission.



Meeting individuals' basic needs in times of crisis

In a crisis or a chronic situation of poor, failing or contested governance, LWF World Service – working with partners as appropriate – **meets basic needs** through timely, effective and dignified emergency response.

This entails distribution of food, water, sanitation, shelter, or core relief items and may be done through **cash transfer, vouchers or in-kind**. We lobby for and provide **welcoming reception services** and support a fair registration process in these circumstances to create a safe environment for people fleeing conflict or other disaster situations.



A cash distribution point operating in Sewha Saesie, Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia.

Photo: LWF/Petros Kahsay

We uphold the right to education through the direct **provision of inclusive basic education services** where people are displaced, and governments are unable to meet this need. A priority with successful outcomes for individuals and communities has also been to address water, sanitation and hygiene situations.

In such conditions, we strive to uphold the right to health until people are able to access regular quality services by offering **health-care interventions** if appropriate, or by linking those in need with specialised health-care NGOs and other private health-care providers. Our role in owning and operating the AVH in Jerusalem complements this.



Promoting and strengthening community-level services

In many of the contexts where we work **people and communities experience suffering, crisis, vulnerability, fragility, and risk**. Many find themselves living ‘on the edge’, facing precarious survival conditions. They are continually confronted with the need to rebuild their lives after disasters, migrate, or flee.

In such complex contexts the people we serve may not be in typical refugee or IDP situations. Where they are, we note that national and international humanitarian responses are increasingly oriented toward the **integration of displaced people within host communities**. We continue to be **very active in camp contexts**. While this remains central to our mission, we are moving away from camp management and **focus on strengthening service provision at community level**.

We support both formal and informal education and have had notable impact with this in a range of different contexts. Where displaced and host communities are taught jointly, we **support local communities and authorities to improve school infrastructure and teaching capacities** to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.



A young girl listens attentively during a lesson at Peace Primary School, which is run by the LWF and supports refugees at Kakuma camp in Kenya.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

We work to **improve equitable access to sufficient safe water and to sanitation**. This includes improving infrastructure and contributing to building community capacity to manage and maintain these installations, in partnership with local authorities. We also work with communities and authorities to **reduce the occurrence of waterborne diseases**, by promoting hygiene and strengthening community access to quality health care.

The results of these efforts have been reflected in enhanced community health and well-being outcomes.

Community access to **renewable energy sources and internet services** will receive more attention. These services are key to helping people out of poverty and isolation, boosting both livelihood opportunities and social cohesion.



Strengthening service-provision policies and institutions

Access to quality services depends strongly on **influencing relevant policy and legal frameworks and enforcing quality standards**. We will work constructively with governments and other duty bearers, providing support where possible and appropriate, but also holding them accountable for their commitments to their populations, including for education, for water, for health and health care, and for access to affordable energy sources. We will work with private actors and lobby for mobile and internet connectivity, and for people's rights to information, along with adequate data protection measures.

7.

INVESTING IN EXCELLENCE

Our values and principles as LWF World Service, and our rights-based approach, guide our programmatic work, our organizational practices and how we uphold our commitments to our donors, partners and LWF member churches.

We are **committed to using our resources effectively and efficiently**, emphasizing **accountability, quality and responsibility** as essential aspects accompanying **localisation, capacity building, and empowerment**. Awareness of risks and their intentional management are essential to **good governance**. Given these considerations, our strategy embodies a range of initiatives to ensure we fulfil these commitments.

7.1. Robust finance management

LWF World Service continues to strengthen its financial and procurement systems to ensure a **high level of internal controls**, strong monitoring of financial risks and reduced costs in program implementation and administration.

LWF World Service Country Programs will prioritise staff capacity building and aim for the **highest standards of accountability and compliance** – as well as effective cost recovery. As we work to strengthen local partners, we will also contribute to efforts to increase their financial management capacity.

Good stewardship of resources will be reinforced, with higher levels of standardization, faster data processing and more timely financial reporting.

7.2. Funding and partnership management

Diversified funding strategies: We will continue to seek new funding opportunities and donor partners, both in-country and globally, as a core element of our funding diversification strategy. This includes exploring innovative funding mechanisms, such as impact bonds, and tapping into the Swiss funding market. World Service will maintain high-quality programming to inspire donor confidence and effectively manage **strong relationships with our existing network of donors and partners.**

Strategic partner relations: Complementing our funding strategies, World Service is committed to building strong partner relationships – locally and globally – through open communication, active engagement, and intentional management of relevant personal contacts. These partnerships of trust are complemented by providing timely information and data on the use of funds, management of risks, and resolution of challenges.

7.3. Accountability, quality assurance and safeguarding

Setting and maintaining **high quality and accountability standards** is a top priority for LWF World Service. Ensuring accountability to affected populations, and transparency at all levels, means we continue to develop and ensure that the necessary policies, systems, infrastructure, and staff skills and knowledge are in place to meet this commitment. We prioritise the placement of **quality management teams and staffing** in our Country Program operations.

At the same time, we will seek to **support local actors** we are working with, as they build their capacity to meet the highest standards of accountability and quality assurance. We also continue to develop a **robust program monitoring and evaluation** system, with well-defined results and quality indicators that inform programs of their progress. In addition, we ensure that the necessary mechanisms for both **internal as well as external accountability** are resilient and proactively and continually improved, including complying with international standards, effective complaints handling, and investigations.

7.4. Knowledge sharing and learning systems

LWF World Service aims to employ an advanced knowledge management approach and to integrate a **culture of continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration**, within the organization and its day-to-day operations. Through incorporating approaches such as training and mentoring, we aim to encourage skills acquisition and to **manage our organizational experience and knowledge effectively**.

We are also undertaking to strengthen efforts to promote the sharing of knowledge gained through experiences and reviews in **programmatic and thematic areas**. This will ensure the benefits of such learning are shared across the organization as a whole.

It is also important for LWF World Service to become more actively involved in **gathering and sharing such knowledge** with other stakeholders, as well as the wider international community, where we specifically, where we specifically **promote the interests of those we serve, and hold others to account** for respecting, protecting and fulfilling their rights. This also means LWF World Service needs to prepare and encourage staff and local partners to do the same through their networks and partnerships.

7.5. Digitalization

LWF World Service is dedicated to **sustained efforts towards digitalization**, aimed at eliminating the digital divide and achieving consistency in digitalization across our operations. We target efficient communication and data sharing, minimise paper usage, and promote cost-effective infrastructure. LWF World Service aims to **leverage technology for effective management** across diverse geographies and **enhance online collaboration**.

Investments in hardware and internet connectivity will be required to keep World Service competitive. These need to be complemented by **investing in training** to equip staff with essential digital skills, and to enhance digital literacy, not only within LWF World Service, but also with partners and communities in which we work.

We emphasise **data protection**, implement secure data storage and user management practices, and educate staff on the importance of maintaining the **confidentiality and integrity of organizational data**.

An important aspect that needs attention is the rapid growth in use of **artificial intelligence** in all aspects of life and work. We will work to ensure that technological advancement goes hand-in-hand with human rights in harnessing the opportunities to transform the lives of the poor and marginalised.

7.6. Safety and security

LWF World Service is strongly committed to maintaining and improving LWF **security risk management capacity** to ensure the safety and security of staff and others visiting LWF operational areas. This includes elements such as **security risk assessments, incident management and crisis management**. World Service will promote the use of practical, effective and updated LWF security systems, with an emphasis on people's conduct and security-conscious behaviour, and safety and security obligations such as duty of care.

7.7. Investing in people

LWF World Service operations are **people-centred and community-based**. Our strategy embodies the approach that people are at the centre of what we do. In this way, LWF World Service also has a **duty of care** to its own people – its staff. The vast majority of World Service staff are recruited locally, and the organization is **committed to ensuring gender and age equity** at all levels of staffing, including in managerial positions. Our strategy prioritises staff development and capacity building. We recognise that we operate in difficult environments and contexts. While acknowledging this, we seek to **promote staff retention and reduce turnover** through well-coordinated rotation and career planning, and through duty of care to staff.

7.8. Green Horizons

The need to address the effects of climate change and transition to a **more sustainable future** has never been stronger. With rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and the alarming depletion of natural resources, the need to **further strengthen our climate response** and to implement green solutions has become paramount.

World Service has **developed expertise** in specific relevant domains, such as renewable energy with solar panels or solar cooking stoves, protecting farmers through climate microinsurance, adapted agricultural practices, watershed management and other efforts. Pioneering green operations goes beyond compliance, **emphasizing innovation in sustainable solutions**.

LWF World Service will continue to embody a forward-thinking approach towards eco-friendly efforts that **promote locally sustainable practices**, in implementation and ways of working, as well as by directly **contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation** among the most vulnerable.

BACK COVER IMAGE

Children ride a bicycle through Minawao camp, which was set up in northern Cameroon to accommodate refugees who fled violence in Nigeria.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

**The Lutheran World Federation
World Service Strategy
2025-2031**



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