

# ***Trusting in the future***

## **A summary of the second Referents Meeting Sustainability program – Lutheran World Federation Santiago de Chile, march 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

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### **1. The Objectives for the Second Referents Meeting.**

The objectives set for the Second Referents Meeting of the sustainability program, scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 2008 in the city of Santiago, Chile, were as follows:

- 1) Referents collectively acknowledge the achievements obtained and obstacles found during the execution of the tasks performed by the referents and the moderating group since the Meeting in Managua until the Meeting in Santiago.
- 2) Referents collectively analyze the PSP projects drafted and/or developed by the referents.
- 3) Referents and moderators deepen the biblical, theological and spiritual basis for the planning and sustainability of all the levels of the church.
- 4) Referents expand the methodological knowledge for PSP.
- 5) Referents and moderators develop the agreements for the next implementation phase of the program “Trusting in the future”

The same referents who had already attended the first meeting in Managua were present in the second meeting. In one case, one church had to replace its referent. Fortunately, the church made arrangements so that the replacement person received materials and information, which facilitated the rapid insertion of this person into the meeting process.

One church requested a second seat to assure a better articulation in the local environment. This request was approved and granted by the LWF.

The process in Santiago was accompanied by the same team working together in Managua. In every sense, then, there was a significant continuity in the program, which should be kept in the future.

### **2. From Managua to Santiago: commissioned tasks and performed works.**

The first meeting of the sustainability program of the LWF that took place in Managua concluded with a set of jointly-identified tasks to be performed during the months between the meeting in Managua and the meeting planned in Santiago de Chile (see previous summary). By stating these tasks and mutually committing to perform them, the ever-complicated step of going from an *event* into a *process* was assured.

Actors	Tasks
FLM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elaborate the meeting proceedings up to December, 2007.</li> <li>- Write a letter to the COP, before November 23rd, 2007: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reporting on the first meeting;</li> <li>- requesting the accompaniment of the churches;</li> <li>- requesting aperture;</li> <li>- sharing the proceedings (executive summary);</li> <li>- requesting to keep the same referent person.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Timely share the information regarding the Second Meeting of March, 2008.</li> <li>- Open a space in the COP/COL to broach the subject, reach agreements and obtain endorsements.</li> <li>- Provide a more permanent link (communication) with referents (follow-up), assuring continuity.</li> </ul>
Moderating Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare the next meeting taking into account the evaluation of the meeting (Santiago, March, 2008)</li> <li>- Send narrative</li> <li>- Prepare guidelines for supporting the work of the referents in their first steps.</li> </ul>
Referents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain active mutual communication (reply to email and take the initiative to inform)</li> <li>- As far as possible, share reports about the tasks performed</li> <li>- Study the materials received in Managua, especially the PDF document on Participatory Strategic Planning of the IELU.</li> </ul>
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Send the PDF document: "Participatory Strategic Planning of the IELU".</li> </ul>

One of the first activities in the Second Meeting was the review of the commissioned tasks and the follow-up they received. The balance was positive: all tasks were properly implemented. With that, the program does not only overcome the pitfall separating an *event* from a *process*, but also generates mutual confidence regarding the reliable performance of the agreed tasks.

In addition to what was agreed in Managua, a noteworthy aspect was the creation of the internet blog <http://sustentabilidad.wordpress.com> gathering the key materials of the process and making them readily accessible to all the referents, the churches, and public in general. The statistic of 1,750 visits in only three months gives proof of the interest in the information, largely transcending the amount of people directly involved in the program.

### **3. Tabulation of the contacts and work performed locally by the referents.**

The work performed locally by the referents was analyzed in detail during the Second Referents Meeting. For this effect, the information provided by the referents in response to the two guidelines they received in January and February, 2008 was tabulated. The analysis was uplifting:

Guideline 1: Contacts for informative and deliberating purposes with church authorities and leaders:

Participating churches:	12
Responses:	11
Managua results presented to Presidents / Bishops:	4
Managua results presented to pastoral bodies:	3
Managua results presented to technical teams:	2
Managua results presented to Boards of Directors:	6

Ideally, a report of the program should be presented to all of the 12 national authorities (ideally including their directive bodies) and the pastoral bodies.

Guideline 2: Preparation of a preliminary sketch to implement the practice of participatory planning in the local scope:

Participating churches:	12
Responses:	11
Project proposals formulated and expressed in guidelines:	8
Project proposals in abeyance / consultation:	3
<u>Nature of the projects:</u>	
4 (new) urban communities	4
Youth groups	2
Other specific groups	2

During the Second Meeting, all the projects were presented and analyzed collectively. As a result, it is foreseeable that some of the projects initially designed may end up being replaced by other projects. Generally, the referents group emphasized that the projects should be implemented: ***a) where there is openness and willingness to face a planning process, and b) where no vital conflicts exist.***

#### **4. The identity of the sustainability program**

The Second Referents Meeting firmly upheld the vision that had surfaced during the Managua Meeting regarding the identity of the program, particularly in regard to its three fundamental columns:

- **“Thinking and building the church” (models, ecclesiology, mission, ministries, spirituality, stewardship)**
- **Participatory Strategic Planning as a tool (PSP).**
- **Identifying and mobilization resources.**

Only the incorporation of these three pillars and the securing of their permanent interaction will ensure the discourse and practice of sustainability consistently with the nature of the church.

In addition to the necessity and permanent interaction of these three basic pillars, the Second Meeting also reached a few important consensuses regarding some of the “brands” of the regional program, partially stated already in the First Meeting in Managua:

- The program **is implemented where so requested**;
- The program follows a strategy “**from micro to macro**”. It does not have the ambition (nor the capacity) to address, at the national level, the sustainability matters of the churches or their structures.
- On the other hand, the program strives to **open local spaces and generate local processes and initiatives** with the potential of becoming significant processes and initiatives within the context of the church itself;
- The program seeks to **articulate, add and create convergences**: generate spaces and processes that join wills, collective searches, capacities and resources in favor of the sustainability of the churches (see general objectives stated in the previous summary).
- The program emphasizes the **participatory** aspect: the differentiating brand of strategic planning in the church scope is *participation*. Without participation, every planning effort in the ecclesial scope loses all sense, particularly in the churches of the Reformation.
- The program **does not seek to maintain, but project**: the program does not intend to make sustainable what can no longer be sustained, but to offer perspectives, visions and proposals for the churches to participate in the mission of God.
- The program proposes to **offer impulse and tools to the churches**. The appropriation will definitely depend on the churches themselves.-

The referents group agreed to request the moderating group to create a logical framework matrix (LFM) for the program, with clear indicators and results. This will be very useful in obtaining a precise and strategic view of what the program is intended for and the results expected in the future. The LFM will be shared with the churches when it is ready.

## **5. The “herringbone” – finding the converging point for initiatives, projects, actors and processes.**

A very important exercise during the Second Meeting was the construction of a “herringbone”: each referent placed around a “spine” previously drawn on the wall the different local initiatives, projects, actors and processes of which he/she is knowledgeable.

This exercise led to the discovery of several important issues:

- There is currently a number of efforts and initiatives existing in the local, national and regional scopes;
- The sustainability program, and the actions proposed by the referents, must seek by all means possible to add up to and be mutually enriched by these existing efforts and initiatives.
- It is of the utmost importance that the leaders and church directorates play a fundamental role in fostering this cooperation and interaction, thus supporting the steps taken by the referents.

The participation of Sister Mary Campbell was a valuable contribution to the Second Meeting. As Associate Directress of Education for the Relations of Synods and Advocacy of the Global Mission of ELCA, Sister Campbell shared information about the process for promoting sustainability currently undertaken by ELCA and its partner churches. This being also a regional effort, it was vital to immediately define the interaction between the process of ELCA and that of the LWF, seeking to strengthen the joint effort. The collective analysis clearly indicated that both efforts are complementary to each other. The commitment to continue ensuring the interaction between both efforts was made.

A pending assignment of the program is to complete the “map” of the initiatives, processes, actions and projects. It is probable that a detailed map, well-known by the churches in the region, will generate interesting dynamics for cooperation and mutual support even between the churches in the region. The work performed on this subject demonstrated that there are installed capacities and experiences, and that it could be very useful if these could be shared in a more deliberate fashion.

## **6. The theological dimension: the LWF mission document**

In consistence with the premise that the program must seek to permanently articulate its three axis and assure a solid theological reflection that feeds the search for identity and projection of the work of the church, the Second Referents Meeting had set aside a notable amount of time for missiological reflection.

At first, the mission document of the LWF and its contributions to a local discernment about mission were analyzed. Some of the outstanding issues mentioned were:

- The hermeneutical matrix of the “accompaniment” to define the mission.
- The biblical paradigm of the disciples from Emmaus (Lk.24): the encounter, the dialogue, the walk together, the interpretation of the “facts of life”.
- Mission as participation in the mission of God.
- The church as a subject and an object of the mission of God (=a transformer, but also requiring transformation).
- Mission contextuality.

Secondly, group work was done on those definitions of mission prevailing within the churches themselves.

The referents group requested to carry on with the work initially started by the Escola Superior de Teología /EST of the IECLB, of preparing a work guide about the mission document of the LWF to support the reflection and discernment in the local scope (congregations and communities).

## **7. “The toolbox starts to fill up” – further methodological support for the Participatory Strategic Planning.**

Early during the Second Meeting, the referents made clear note of their need to receive further support in carrying out their task of implementing participatory planning processes in the local scope. The method still seemed too complex, and the magnitude of the task, too large. During the meeting, a complete process of participatory strategic planning in the local scope was exhaustively reviewed again, but this time providing formats and materials used and proven in practice. This review of the PSP method, but based on the practical experience of planning, helped to clear up some doubts and generate more confidence. Additionally, a few specific techniques were deeply delved into, such as the “problem tree” and the logical framework matrix. All the tools and formats were posted in the program blog, where they can be easily accessed.

All in all, it was made clear to the referents that they must endeavor, as far as possible, to establish local teams based on complementariness, engaging, as far as possible, people knowledgeable and experienced in planning, but who are also willing to open up to a participatory experience (SP is normally an exercise performed by the directive instances!) that is also consistent with the particularity of the church.

## **8. Spirituality – a source of inspiration and transformation**

The Second Referents Meeting was marked by a strongly spiritual community experience. Using diverse methods of contemplative, praying and communitarian reading, and recovering methods devised by Martin Luther himself, the referents shared different approaches to the same biblical scripture: Mark 2:1-12 – the healing of the paralytic.

Of only one paralytic? Or was there more than one paralytic in that scene in Capernaum? And how is it that they had to enter through the roof to gain access to Jesus?

The strength of joint reading, of prayer and of song, heavily influenced all the reflections and imposed subjects and debates that would not have had such prominence and importance without the experience of a communitarian devotional life.

In the opinion of all the participants in the Second Meeting, it was established that the challenge of sustainably projecting the work of the churches in the region can only be properly faced by ensuring a close articulation between spirituality, reflection and the methodological tools.

## 9. Dialogue with the Conference of Leadership of the churches in the region.

An important moment during the Second Meeting was the conversation about those issues that, after two referents meetings, had to be informed to the Conference of Leaders; and about those other issues that would be necessary to request from the Conference in order to progress in the implementation of the program and to maximize its impact on the churches in the region:

***“We would like to share that...***

- we are discovering, more and more, that sustainability is a subject about ***the model and the way of being a church***. We must ***reflect on practices***;
- thus far, we feel ***supported by our respective churches*** to carry out our tasks as referents;
- we are already ***starting and/or enlarging planning projects*** in the local scope;
- we are ***receiving important input and support*** from the moderating group and the facilitators; we feel better trained;
- this is a ***mid-term and long-term process***;
- it has been good for us to ***address the program regionally, because seeing other realities questions and produces changes in us***;
- this process is a great ***opportunity for the growth of our churches.***”

***“We would like to request ...***

- that the churches do what is possible to ***keep us as referents***. Continuity will mean deepening the processes;
- further ***support in this new phase, pertaining to logistics, training, spaces, and finances***;
- the churches to ***make this program their own*** and integrate it into their own internal processes;
- the ***support in the formation of local teams*** to promote and give impulse to the search for sustainability, and to provide support to our work as referents;
- the ***churches to internally disseminate this process***;
- the search for ***complementariness with other initiatives, processes***, etc.
- you to visit the ***blog on sustainability***.

The moderating group committed itself to deliver these messages to the COP/COL 2008 in Honduras, and to establish a process of communication in the future.

## 10. What follows? – Identifying the next steps

The Meeting in Santiago established an agenda to continue with the process on sustainability in the region. Among the most outstanding issues are:

- a) The referents return to their respective churches with the task of fine-tuning their participatory strategic planning proposals, or to start their implementation.
- b) The moderating group and the facilitators will assume a more active role in the accompaniment of the local experiences, always based on specific manifestations of need of accompaniment.
- c) For these effects, a closed e-mail group will be formed (“yahoo group”) where the referents will be able to learn from the questions and processes of their peers in other places.
- d) The moderating group takes on the responsibility of articulating the dialogue with the Conference of Leadership of the Lutheran churches members of the LWF in Latin America, reporting on the process taken thus far and establishing the dialogue with the COL.
- e) The LWF assumes, in coordination with the moderating group, the preparation of the Third Referents Meeting scheduled for August of 2008.
- f) The LWF takes on the task of updating the blog as a permanent “toolbox”, and will search for the tools that are lacking or that may be required by the process.

## **11. Final appraisals**

At the conclusion of the Second Referents Meeting of the sustainability program, remarkable progress in the process is recorded. This is noticeable in:

- the enthusiasm of the referents in carrying on with the process;
- the existence of local proposals and projects;
- a greater cohesion and clarity regarding the identity of the program, and the expected results;
- the strengthening of the regional perspective, the collective training, and of a mutual accompaniment in the work;
- the contributions and tools for each of the three areas made available to the referents;
- the review of models, ways and practices of being a church as an emerging central object of interest.

There are also some important challenges ahead:

- generating the accompaniments and coverage during the implementation of the projects by the referents;
- the need to form local teams around the referents remains. It will be very hard for the referents to generate experiences and processes by themselves;
- to integrate the local incipient experiences into the reflections and processes of the national churches.

## **12. Some future perspectives**

The dynamics of the process thus far allow us to visualize a few perspectives regarding what the next tasks and work areas of the program will be:

- 1) It will be of the utmost importance that the program coordination achieve articulation between the sustainability program and the church directorates. The COP/COL space is especially important, because it allows a collective and regional ownership of the process.
- 2) It will be important to create the conditions and methodologies to address the emerging concern over the ways, models and practices of being a church, both from within the sustainability program as well as – hopefully – within the churches themselves.
- 3) It will be important in the future to invest in the ecclesiological reflection, built upon the foundation of the missiological reflection (and not vice-versa!). Within this reflection, the clarification and deepening of the theology of the “universal priesthood” and the “ordained ministry” will be of particular importance.
- 4) In the immediate term, the program moderation is tasked with addressing the subject of the identification and harnessing of the resources needed for the Third Referents Meeting, to be held in August of 2008 (location to be defined).