Editorial

The second and third quarters of the year have offered opportunity for FECCLAHA to pursue its vision of creating communities that are inclusive, harmonious and living abundant lives in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. Guided by her core values: human dignity, compassion, justice and peace, FECCLAHA has continued in her pursuit of peace building in this region through advocacy, capacity building, theological reflections, and accompaniment of her members and networking activities.

FECCLAHA appreciates the efforts of those partners actively involved in our work, as well as those who play a supportive role. Ultimately, we thank God for the grace that keeps us going. It is our pleasure, therefore, to share with you some of the key initiatives undertaken by FECCLAHA in the last six months.

1. Gender desk/Tamar Campaign

Contextual Bible Study with focus on Sexual Violence

Monica Njoroge, the FECCLAHA Coordinator of the Tamar Campaign participated in a week training organized by the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland, in conjunction with the World Council of Churches. The training covered Contextual Bible Studies in relation to Sexual Violence. The participants were mainly church workers, leaders and theologians from different parts of the world.

According to Ms. Njoroge, the participants were taken through different Bible passages, like the Tamar story (II Samuel 13:1-22); the story of Esther (Esther 2:1-18), Jairus daughter (Mark 5:21-43-Mark 6:1), to name a few. In addition to Contextual Bible study, the participants were also trained on pastoral counseling and care for survivors of sexual abuse.

The seminar not only equipped the facilitators on sexual violence and the Bible but also other social issues affecting the society today and how to pick up and address these issues from different Bible passages. This training is of great relevance to FECCLAHA given the geographical areas where we work and the communities that we serve. Sexual violence especially in armed conflicts has taken proportions never known before. The Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases of Eastern DRC, Rwanda and Burundi are still very alive in our memories and this poses a challenge to the whole region.

¹ The Working Group members include Africa Peace Forum, Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), FECCLAHA, Norwegian Church Aid and Pax Christi Netherlands
Contextual Bible Study Manual Progress

Since February, FECCLAHA has been in the process of developing a Contextual Bible Study manual for the Tamar Campaign to be used at the local church level. By using a contextual Bible study method for the further development of the Tamar Campaign throughout FECCLAHA’s region, it is our hope to filter the message of healing, restoration and hope to survivors of gender-based violence at the local level of the Church. The practice of contextual Bible study is one of active and equal participation, where all group members are engaged in bringing the scripture to life through their own story. Therefore, the leadership style of such a Bible study is facilitation. It is important for pastors and church leaders to actively engage their members in dialogue surrounding gender-based violence, both that which is present in the Bible and alive in our communities today. Through guiding group members in interpreting the text, for it’s historical, literary, and reader/reception resources, facilitators can guide the group in further understanding both the positives and the negatives of specific Bible stories and the hope and love of God shown in each. Also known as ‘behind the text,’ ‘on the text’ and ‘in front of the text,’ this method allows members to apply the message of each story to their own cultural, religious, economic and social context.

To date, all studies have been collected and are currently in the process of being technically edited, designed and published. It is FECCLAHA’s hope to launch the contextual bible study manual during the 16 Days of Activism against Violence on women, 2007.

The first international conference on child sexual abuse in Africa, organized by ANPPCAN

FECLAHIA, through its Executive Director had an opportunity to present a paper on child sexual abuse from the faith-based perspective. One of FECCLAHA mandates is to ensure that women and children are protected from the vice of sexual abuse especially in war torn areas of in post-conflict societies. This was therefore an excellent forum for FECCLAHA to let the whole world know about Tamar Campaign and the contextual Bible study that accompanies it.

The Tamar Campaign response to sexual abuse against children focuses mainly of prevention. The tool used is Contextual Bible Study, which aims at creating community awareness with critical consciousness: that is picking a text in the Bible and allowing people within a certain context to discuss that text and allow it to speak anew to their realities.

With this tool, and taking into consideration the ability of the children to tell their own story in very creative ways, Tamar Campaign seeks to hold brainstorming meetings with different Church workers and Sunday School Teachers to find out ways, methods, and resource people who can help in stirring the process forward. The focus of these meetings is to come up with a tool that will not only raise awareness to the parents and church workers; but also a channel through which the church can play a preventive role especially in empowering the children and the other authorities: parents and children church workers.
2. Programs updates

Repatriation of Refugees and Armed Groups, from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

FECLLAHA, through the Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum (GLEF) is accompanying the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) - South Kivu in a project seeking to work towards the disarmament and repatriation of all foreign armed groups in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as well as the repatriation of all refugees in Eastern DRC. The objective of the Project is to encourage repatriation of the armed groups and the refugees in the region, with the aim of minimizing the persistent conflict and insecurity situation in Eastern DRC and the neighboring countries.

Since the inception of the project, ECC - South Kivu has held a series of meetings with various stakeholders, which culminated in a regional Conference of Religious Leaders and Organizations on Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region in Bukavu, DRC on 4-6 June 2007. Participants were drawn from member councils and churches of: Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda. It also had good accompaniment from the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), ecumenical partners and inter-governmental bodies, such as the Conference Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), and UN agencies and mission in DRC including, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUC) and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA).

Northern Uganda Peace Process.

On 29th June 2007, the Government of Uganda and the LRA reached an agreement on the principles for handling accountability and reconciliation for crimes committed during the protracted Northern Uganda conflict. Prior to this, FECLLAHA and Pax Christi Netherlands sought to build the capacity of the LRA delegation that initially was incoherent and in need of technical assistance. In May 2007, FECLLAHA facilitated the ‘Juba Workshop on National Reconciliation and Peace’ for the LRA delegation to prepare them for the third agenda item ‘Accountability and Reconciliation’. In addition, FECLLAHA has continued to accompany the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) in their consultations in Uganda on the ongoing peace process and in developing a framework for the alternative justice system.

However, while the act was noble, there are still many areas where Pax Christi and FECLLAHA are expected to rise up to the challenge. Among them, is the preparation of the entire Church in the sub-region for peace.

During the facilitation, it was obvious that the talks are focusing more on “political” reconciliation. The greater task is preparing the communities for peace through healing, generating alternatives livelihoods and offering spaces and skills for community based reconciliation that would concretely help break the cycle of violence. People-to-People approaches could be strengthened and/or adopted as early as now to ensure the peace process holds whichever way the talks go.

The Peace process also poses deep theological questions for the church. For example, the delegation asked: Is accountability and reconciliation incompatible? Is formal justice compatible with reconciliation? And, whereas we must seek justice, what kind of justice are we really seeking (the adversarial judicial)? The Church is well poised to address the cultural violence that is hardly talked about in Uganda but which seems to be the basis of the successive resistance movements. Perhaps it is time to also consider whether Christianity can be “adventurous” (as expressed by Bishop Desmond Tutu) to meaningfully encounter “African Religion” (as used by Fr. Laurent Magesa) with regard to values of peace, justice and reconciliation as witnessed in the peace process?

Consolidation of Peace Building in Post Peace settlement Burundi project

FECLLAHA has concluded the development of a three-year pilot project that will work towards the operationalisation of the two International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) Protocols on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls and the Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Persons as a bid to consolidate peace building in post-peace settlement Burundi through strengthening legal protection mechanisms for exposed groups, particularly women and children. Implementation is scheduled to start in 2008.
General Assembly and Regional Ecumenical Forum

FECCCLAHA held its General Assembly and Regional Ecumenical Forum (REF) from 13 to 17 August, 2007 in Nairobi KENYA. The REF provides a platform for our member councils/churches and partners to share perspectives on issues of common concern with regard to peace, justice and reconciliation in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Region. The theme of this year’s forum was, “Transformative leadership and Governance in the reconstruction of the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa”

Great Lakes Regional Ecumenical Forum (GLEF)

FECCCLAHA held its Great Lakes Region Ecumenical Forum (GLEF) Second Core Group Meeting on 13 August 2007. GLEF is FECCCLAHA and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)’s platform to address issues in the Great Lakes Region (GLR). The meeting, amongst other issues, called attention to the political tension in Burundi and requested for an urgent Eminent Ecumenical Persons visit to mitigate the situation. To this end, a small team of three visited Burundi on 20-22 September 2007 to prepare for the Eminent Ecumenical Persons Visit, which is scheduled to take place in November 2007. Various parties in Burundi, from some of the church leaders to former Presidents and political actors were visited and pertinent insight gained on the situation in the country and possible interventions that can be taken to mitigate the tension and consolidate peace building, explored.

Burundi Intervention

FECCCLAHA and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) plan to facilitate an ecumenical eminent persons solidarity visit to Burundi in the last quarter of 2007 pursuant to the call of the core group of the Great Lakes Region Ecumenical Forum (GLEF) and the resolve of the FECCCLAHA General Assembly held in August 2007 and the AACC Executive Committee Meeting held in September 2007. The main objective of the planned visit is to intervene in the deteriorating political climate in Burundi.

It is in this light that FECCCLAHA was part of a preparatory mission to Burundi on September 20th – 22nd, 2007. The visit included meetings with the Church Leaders, two former presidents of Burundi, Ecumenical Partners and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) Secretariat. The Key Issues discussed were: institutional stalemate in Burundi, the withdrawal of Palipehutu- FNLF from the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, increasing insecurity in Burundi, governance and economic issues, fragmentation within the political parties, the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Burundi, humanitarian Refugee Crisis.

The potential and the role of the church to bringing peace in Burundi and the need for an Eminent Ecumenical Persons Solidarity Visit to Burundi was reaffirmed by all the stakeholders in this preliminary visit.
Follow-up to the Bukavu Meeting.

One of the out comes of the Bukavu Meeting was the formation of a Follow-up Committee charged with the responsibility of driving the process to a fruitful conclusion. It is to this end that FECCLAHA, together with ECC organized the First Follow-up Committee Meeting on October 5th, 2007 in Kigali, Rwanda. The meeting which had the presence of high-ranking officials from the Government of Rwanda came up with the following commitments:

- To only focus on the disarmament, repatriation and reintegration of FDLR for the time being.
- To intensify contact and dialogue with the FDLR leaders on the ground
- To organize a meeting in Kinshasa with the FDLR leaders who leave in other countries.
- To intensify contacts and engagement with MONUC, IC/GLR and Regional Governments.
- To aim at repatriating the first small group of refugees in the next three months and the rest within the next two years.
- To offer humanitarian support to the refugees during the repatriation exercise and solicit help from other partners and organizations.
- To enhance collaboration with the policy makers in DRC and Rwanda.
- To advocate and lobby for the ratification of the ICG/LR Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

3. Networking

UNIFEM get-together.

FECCLAHA was invited to attend a UNIFEM meet and greet of Mary Robinson on 12 September 2007. Mary Robinson had just returned from Eastern Chad and Darfur and had requested to brief the women’s organizations on the plight of women, children and men displaced by the conflict in Darfur and Chad, many of whom are survivors of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV).

FEMNET Programming Conference and General Assembly

As a member of the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), FECCLAHA attended the FEMNET Fourth Programming Conference and General Assembly on 26-28 September 2007. Amongst other issues reviewed, members stressed that SGBV is one of the priorities that must be addressed continent-wide due to its prevalence both in situations of peace and conflict.

IFAPA meeting: Inter-faith Collaboration for peace building

On 26th – 29th August the executive Director of FECCLAHA attended the second meeting of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Commission in the Libyan capital Tripoli.

The meeting brought together representatives of seven religions in Africa and other international partners to deliberate on ways in which inter-faith dialogue and intervention can contribute towards resolving conflicts and building peace in the Continent. Its agenda also included planning for the third IFAPA Summit to be held in Sudan in 2008.

During the meeting FECCLAHA had an opportunity to present a paper on the role of Religious Communities in Conflict Management and Peace building. The participants adopted a plan of action to guide follow-up activities by the networks, groups and individuals who attended the meeting.

FECCLAHA was represented by its Executive Director at a meeting organized by the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) in Tripoli, Libya. FECCLAHA had an opportunity to present the gains and challenges of working towards peace and stability in the Great Lakes Region at large and the opportunities for Faith-based organizations to contribute immensely in the process.

The Role of Religious Communities in Conflict Management and Peace building was also an area that was explored and views exchanged at the meeting.

Small Arms and Light Weapons: Gothenburg Meeting

FECCLAHA was represented at a meeting organized by LPI and called the Gothenburg Process. In attendance were Church representatives and other Faith Based Organizations (FBO). This process started in 2003 and was engaging the Ecumenical bodies on the Arms Trade Treaty. Speakers during the meeting included Gen. Lazarus Sumbeiywo, who spoke...
on changing roles of Armed Forces in Africa where he argued that from history, armed forces in Africa don’t really serve the people/civilians; other presenters from all over the world gave their perspective. Among them, Jonathan Felix of WCC spoke on the ethical/faith perspective on violence where he was clear that violence was not sanctioned by the Bible at any one time.

The main focus of the meeting was seeking to decide whether the Church should engage in the Armed Trade Treaty.

### 4. Upcoming Events

**EU Conference on U.N resolution 132**

FECLALAHA will be represented at the upcoming European Union (EU) United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325) Policy Conference that is scheduled for 5-9 November 2007 in Netherlands and Belgium. The main aim of the conference is to meet EU policymakers and influence policy that can help make the implementation of UN SCR 1325 more effective, that is linking the grassroots implementers with the European policymakers.

**UN SCR 1325 Training**

FECLALAHA will be holding a series of trainings, in collaboration with Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), starting at the end of October until next year March 2008. The participants will be the Gender Focal Points from our constituencies. The aim of the training is to equip them on UN SCR 1325 and empower them to develop action plans for the implementation of the same.

**Training on IC/GLR**

FECLALAHA will be holding training on the IC/GLR with all our members from the core country members, namely, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania in Kigali, Rwanda on 19-23 November 2007. This training hopes to raise awareness amongst our members on the IC/GLR process thus far, encourage and equip them to lobby for the ratification of the Pact in their respective countries, as well as help them identify entry points for their involvement in the Implementation Phase of the process.

**16 Days of activism against violence against Women**

This is an international campaign originating from the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute sponsored by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership in 1991. It is held annually between November 25, the International Day against Violence against Women and December 10, the International Human Rights Day. Its main objective is to raise awareness about Gender Based Violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional, and international levels. Each year this campaign is guided by an international theme. The theme for this year is “Demanding Implementation, Challenging Obstacles: End Violence against Women”.

In Kenya, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based violence is observed by various organizations in the health sector, the media, and other civil society organizations that advocate and address various aspects of gender based violence. However the voice of the faith groups has largely been absent. The Tamar Campaign seeks to bridge this gap by adding the voice of the church in Kenya on gender-based violence by working together with other advocates of gender-based violence.
Publication

The EAANSA Report on Small Arms titled “Harmonizing Hardware and Software approaches in Small Arms interventions” was released and is available for distribution. Please send us a request e-mail at info@feccha.org.