

EMS INSIGHTS

2/2023

Share your bread with the hungry.
Poverty and justice.

MAIN FEATURE: POVERTY CONCERNS US ALL

Mission deals with the person as a whole

INDIA: SCHOOL INSTEAD OF CHILD LABOUR

The EMS Future Fund supports disadvantaged girls

A SOBERING APPRAISAL

Current state of UN Sustainable Development Goals



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

A few years ago, I organised a conference on the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. At the beginning of the conference, all 17 Sustainable Development Goals were hung up at various places in the conference room and the participants were asked to stand next to the goal they considered to be of particular importance. Many participants went to stand next to the goal of “Climate action”, others stood next to the goal of “Peace, justice and strong institutions” and others next to the goal of “Gender equality”. Only one young man was standing next to the goal of “Zero hunger”. It turned out that he came from Syria and had fled to Germany to escape the civil war. “When you’re hungry, everything else is secondary,” he said. “Then all that matters is finding something to eat.”

The words “Give us this day our daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer reminds us just how important our daily bread is. There are many people in the EMS member churches who do not know in the morning whether they will have eaten enough by the end of the day. There are many who have no access to clean water. For many, the month is longer than the money they have to live on. This is why the EMS Fellowship campaigns worldwide for the rights of people who are vulnerable, poor and marginalised.

Jesus says of himself: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35). The churches and mission societies in the EMS firmly believe that mission, justice, faith and the fight against poverty are all interlinked. This is why we are a “Mission in Solidarity”.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dieter Heidtmann". The script is cursive and fluid.

Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary of the EMS

Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)

The 25 member churches and 5 mission societies in the EMS form an international association with equal rights. Together they connect about 25 million believers in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

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SHARE YOUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY. POVERTY AND JUSTICE.

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) sees the fight against poverty as an important part of its mission. Poverty and justice are major themes in the bible. Not only was Jesus quite clear and explicit on this topic, the prophets of the Old Testament were as well. Our God is a God who sees people's needs and who cares for the oppressed.

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POVERTY CONCERNS US ALL.

**MISSION DEALS WITH THE PERSON
AS A WHOLE.**

Nelson Mandela once said: “Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.”
Poverty is a complex issue and affects people all over the world either directly or indirectly – not only the poor themselves, but also those living in affluence.

Poverty is not the result of laziness or a weakness of character since it is often the poor who work hard from dawn to dusk. Nor is poverty caused by a lack of natural resources or human labour as there are many poor countries in the world that are rich in raw materials and people.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.” Nelson Mandela

Nor is poverty caused by a lack of creativity or innovation because every culture has its own traditional knowledge at its disposal to be able to solve its problems. Every culture possesses the experience to overcome challenges at local level. Poverty does not arise because there is no potential but because there is unequal access to resources, technology and markets. It is caused by a system that is based on the dominance of power and the politics of capitalism. This system makes the rich

even richer and the poor even poorer. It forces people to accept exploitative, degrading or unhealthy work – not only adults but also children. It is estimated that 160 million girls and boys worldwide have to work to support their families. Poor people tend to have little access to adequate education, healthy food or medical care. Studies have shown that people with a low income have a significantly shorter life expectancy. Poverty increases the risks for women and girls of falling victim to sexual violence and human trafficking. Poor people suffer the most from the impacts of climate change. The list of the consequences of poverty could be continued ad infinitum.

Studies have shown that poor people have a significantly shorter life expectancy.

Can poor people escape poverty if they live in such conditions? There is no patent remedy or a single universal theory for overcoming poverty, only the constant and unwavering call for all people to stop exploiting their fellow human beings and nature. Poverty can only be surmounted if we renounce oppression and join forces to build an alternative system that is more just. To quote Nelson Mandela again: “Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.”



Poverty has many faces: Street vendor in Kerala (India).



Child labor is one of the most serious consequences of poverty.



Around 700 million people worldwide currently live in extreme poverty.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

It is hard to imagine a world without poverty and wealth. We also encounter this kind of realism in biblical texts. At the same time, the bible offers perspectives that go beyond such a fatalistic view. Even if the final elimination of the gap between rich and poor is only expected in the kingdom of God, God's solidarity and intercession for the poor and communion with the poor as practised by Jesus calls for a conscious, active approach to poverty.

Early on in the bible, God reveals himself as the God of the oppressed and slaves. He frees the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt and leads them to the promised land. Many of the passages of law interspersed in this narrative should also be understood against this background. The second book of Moses (Ex 23:6) commands that the rights of the poor should not be interfered with.

The prophets of the Old Testament are extremely zealous and eloquent in their criticism of unjust structures that oppress the poor and enrich the strong. For example, the prophet Micah criticises corrupt justice and greedy rulers who contribute to the exploitation of the poor (Micah 2:1-11).

Jesus is always positive when he encounters people in poverty. He sees their social discrimination and condemns the mechanisms of marginalisation. This becomes clear, for example, in the parable of the great dinner to which the poor, the blind and the lame are invited (Luke 14:15-21). Or in the parable of the rich man and a poor man named Lazarus where Jesus envisages that conditions will be reversed in the kingdom of God (Luke 16:19-31).

However, the writings of the New Testament do not present an ascetic ideal of poverty. It is not only those who renounce everything and live without possessions who can follow Jesus. In the end, there are many passages that are especially critical of wealth. For example, wealth is condemned if it blocks the view of God and prevents successful coexistence between people. Possessions are to be seen as a gift from God and the individual is therefore indebted to God when handling them. This is also linked to the realization that wealth alone does not promise a fulfilled life: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

Felix Weise



Mission today means improving the overall living conditions of people.

POVERTY ON THE RISE AGAIN

It is no easy task to estimate the actual number of people living in poverty. It may be more widespread than the official figures from some states suggest. Countries often hide the fact that their poverty rate is still high despite their best efforts; or the figures are embellished for the sake of political power to avoid making it look like the people in power have not overcome poverty among their people.

Since 2022, the poverty line defined by the World Bank is a minimum income equivalent to \$2.15 per person per day. This is not an absolute figure but it gives an idea of the extent of global and national poverty. National poverty rates are highly dependent on a country's inflation. Inflation is higher for food than for other goods in 80% of countries that have data available. This puts poor people at a particular disadvantage since they already have to spend an above-average part of their income on food.

According to figures calculated by the World Bank in Washington DC (USA), there are currently about 700 million people worldwide living in extreme poverty. Since the 1990s, this number had been constantly on the decline. However, the number of poor people has recently increased again by 75 to 90 million, mainly due to the Covid pandemic and the consequences of the Ukraine war. This dramatic trend not only sets

humanity back many years in the fight against poverty, but also shows how much everything is interconnected in our globalised world.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Overcoming poverty is at the top of the list of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) also sees the fight against poverty as an important part of its mission. As a vibrant fellowship in solidarity, we are committed to righteous and humane living conditions all over the world. Since our foundation 51 years ago, relationships within the EMS Fellowship have undergone a continuous development and have gradually become based more on partnership, equality and fraternity. Over the course of this time, a transformation has taken place in the understanding of mission. Theologian Armin Sukri, pastor of the Christian Church in South Sulawesi (GKSS), sums it up in these words: "Mission today is no longer just about changing people's faith, but changing their whole lives."

The New Testament is very rich in passages that can be used to justify this holistic understanding of mission. For instance, the story of the feeding of the five thousand provides a

MAIN FEATURE

particularly powerful testimony (Mark 6:37). Here Jesus commands his disciples: “You give them something to eat.” These words mean nothing other than: For Jesus, the physical dimension of being human is just as important as the spiritual. He not only satisfies the hunger of the soul but also that of the body. His message is intended for the person as a whole. A piece of God’s kingdom can already be experienced in the here and now by following Jesus’ example, by showing solidarity in communion with the poor and obtaining justice for them.

Dr Djoko Wibowo



Dr Djoko Wibowo is Head of the Indonesia Unit at the EMS.

INDONESIA: WAYS TO ESCAPE POVERTY



SECURING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH PIG BREEDING

A pig breeding project organised by the Luwu Church (GPIL) helps needy families to become and remain independent of outside help. They can earn a regular income by raising and selling pigs. The church provides the families with the know-how and supplies the piglets, feed, medicine and building materials for pig pens.



IMPROVED FARMING METHODS

The Christian Church of South Sulawesi (GKSS) trains farmers in the Malino community to increase crop yields by using advanced cultivation methods. The fruit and vegetables produced in this way are not only for their own consumption but can also be sold to local restaurants and supermarkets.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

Vocational training is the best safeguard against poverty. Young people are trained in car and industrial mechanics, IT and operating heavy construction machinery at the VTC Tagari vocational training centre of the Toraja Church (GT). Young women who want to learn a profession in these traditionally male domains are given special support.

FASTING AS IT PLEASES GOD

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.” Isaiah 58:6-8

Chapters 40 to 55 in the Book of Isaiah deal with the end of the Babylonian exile (597 - 539 BC) and the new beginning. The people of Israel are freed from slavery and can breathe again. Jerusalem is once again populated with people and they could celebrate religious services again. Everything seems perfect.

But soon the mood swings again. At least with some people. The prophet Isaiah takes a critical look at the illusory façade of perfection: social tensions and cold-heartedness have again become the everyday norm. The problem is not that people have forgotten to worship God. They fast and celebrate services. But only for themselves. For their religious feeling, not looking upwards. Not with their eyes on their neighbour.

“Share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house.”

Isaiah questions this religious practice. He shows what the real meaning of fasting is for God. At the same time, the prophet makes a promise: those who find their way back to real fasting will experience the nearness of God like never before. Isaiah’s message is that God cannot be found where people expect to find him – in religious services, in fasting or in prayer. The greatest nearness to God that Isaiah can imagine is by practising justice. Wherever there is a community without injustice. God is there where people look after the needy, where they provide shelter for the homeless and justice for the disenfranchised. That is where God will be and that is where there will be light.

How could we not understand these words as a questioning of the way we practice our faith? If we take this passage from Isaiah seriously, the greatest challenge to the way we practice our faith at the moment must be to ask how we can celebrate worship services while other people are starving. While people have no access to medicine. While people end up in prison because they expressed their opinions.

When people stand up for justice, that’s when they will experience God’s nearness.

For Isaiah, the nearness to God lies in acting on behalf of one’s neighbour. Justice comes first, then come religious rituals and worship. Can we say the same about our churches? I honestly don’t know what a church of justice modelled on Isaiah would look like. I don’t want to do without church services. I need people to join me in thinking about what a church of justice would look like. What needs to be changed so we can move nearer to Isaiah’s vision. Nearer to God.

Isaiah describes where the path of justice leads. Those who allow themselves to be led by justice will find more than they need. When people stand up for justice, that’s when they themselves will not want for anything. Isaiah is convinced of this. And so am I.

Felix Weise



Rev. Felix Weise is pastor and works in the press office and the department for radio and television ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg.

STRONG NETWORKS



JURISDICTION DISADVANTAGES WOMEN WORLDWIDE

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the International Women's Network of the EMS has been addressing the problem of increasing violence against women. One aspect to be considered in future is the question of the legal foundations. They are often a contributory factor to the discrimination and oppression of women.

In many countries around the world, family law falls under the jurisdiction of laws and courts established by religious communities; in Lebanon, for example, there are more than ten religious courts. Their laws and regulations on marriage and divorce or, for example, the religious affiliation of children in the case of an interfaith marriage, are generally marked by prejudice against women and are clearly more biased towards the interests of men.

In India, the problem is a different one. Although a couple can choose between marrying under religious and secular marriage laws, the secular marriage law gives more consideration to women. However, secular marriage law is frowned upon by religious communities. The fact that it also regulates and thus legit-

imises marriages between partners of different religions or castes makes conservative-minded people shy away from marrying under this law.

Workshops organised by women of the EMS network are proving to be a very good way of informing, raising awareness and networking. For example, at a workshop at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut (see EMS Insights 1/2023) women representatives of Jewish and Muslim religious communities were invited to a panel discussion. The question of women's rights in the family and society quickly developed into a discussion about the legal basis for these rights.

Dr Kerstin Neumann

PODCAST "TIME FOR MISSION"

"Time for mission" is the name of a podcast by the "Evangelische Mission Weltweit" (EMW). The idea behind it all is this: People talk about big and little things over tea or coffee, about encounters, and they reflect on topics related to the sometimes cumbersome term of "mission" (only in German).

They are mostly people who have embarked on the adventure of faith. They talk about exciting personal experiences and, together with the host, shed light on interesting issues. The core question is always the same: "What does being a Christian on a global scale mean to you?" Since the podcast began in January 2021, Freddy Dutz has been the host and has spoken to podcast guests including Bishop Kirsten Fehrs, singer-songwriter Fritz Baltruweit and Rev. Dr

Kerstin Neumann from the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS). Freddy Dutz will host her last broadcast in December 2023. Starting in January 2024, Tanja Stünckel will then invite exciting guests for half an hour of "Time for Mission" once a month.

The EMW, based in Hamburg, is an umbrella organisation of Protestant churches, organisations and associations in mission and ecumenism. In addition to the EMS, eight other mission organisations as well as five free churches, five associations and the Evangelical Church in Germany belong to it.

Corinna Waltz

mission-weltweit.de/de/podcast



WHEN ALL THAT REMAINS ARE RUINS

COMMENT ON THE GAZA-ISRAEL CONFLICT

How will we ever be able to talk to one another after this cataclysm ends? Once the present maelstrom of terror, war, violence and hatred in the Middle East has come to a stop; once our ideological proxy wars on Europe's streets have abated; once all that is left are ruins – ruins of destroyed homes, destroyed lives and destroyed souls – how can we ever look one another in the eye again?

For one of our EMS member churches, this war, which began with Hamas' inconceivable terrorist attack on Israeli children, parents and grandparents on 7 October, is not a remote fantasy. The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem runs the Anglican Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. By the end of October, this facility had been hit twice by rockets. On Saturday 14 October, it was an Israeli missile that severely damaged the brand new cancer diagnosis department, wounding four staff members. And on Tuesday 17 October, it is fairly certain that it was a misfired Islamic Jihad rocket that exploded over the hospital's inner courtyard, killing many people who had sought refuge there. The director of the only Christian hospital in Gaza, Dr Souhaila Tarazi, has survived five wars here. This one is by far the worst.

The EMS Fellowship is also affected by the current catastrophe in other ways. Many young volunteers who were forced to leave Israel and Palestine had to travel through Jordan and the Theodor Schneller School there. Due to the economic and political crisis, the boarding home of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon is already full to capacity with children and young people from very poor backgrounds – now missiles are striking not too far away; Lebanon is being gradually drawn into the war. Our theology students, who were sent to the Near East School of Theology in Beirut (NEST) by the EMS, had to interrupt their academic year due to government travel advisories.

After this war, will our Palestinian partners still be able to speak with any impartiality to leaders of German churches who have publicly announced their exclusive commitment in their statements "We stand with Israel!"? And vice versa: Will Jewish Israelis still want to continue a dialogue with Christian partners who have played down Hamas' terror and fantasies of annihilation against the Jewish state as a consequence of Israeli occupation? Centuries of murderous anti-Semitism do not need an occupation to justify its hatred – it will always blame "the Jews" or the Jewish state for all misfortune. Just as the fight against anti-Semitism is a constant challenge, the other challenge is to finally find more intelligent solutions to Israel's security problems after this war than locking up an entire population. The deeply traumatised people of Gaza need opportunities to development, respect for their human rights and well-defined prospects that have been denied them for far too long.

As an international EMS organisation, we stand together in such situations of crisis. We pray for peace in Israel and Palestine, for our brothers and sisters on the ground and especially for those at the Ahli Arab Hospital. A particularly impressive sign of solidarity came from the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) at the end of October. They donated a sum of €20,000 which has been channelled through the EMS to the hospital in Gaza. At the same time, our Korean brothers and sisters are calling for people to pray for Israel and Palestine. Perhaps we will succeed in maintaining good relations with all sides in this conflict and making a contribution to peace, at least within the EMS Fellowship.

Dr Uwe Gräbe

Rev. Dr Uwe Gräbe is Head of the Middle East/EVS Unit at the EMS.

Note: This comment refers to the situation in the Middle East at the end of November 2023.



INDIA: SCHOOL INSTEAD OF CHILD LABOUR

A good education is the most reliable guarantee against poverty. This is why the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) uses its EMS Future Fund to provide specific support to projects that give children and young people the prospect of a better life through education. One current focus is on supporting girls in India.

Officially, India has announced a ban on child labour. The country has passed laws to protect girls and boys from exploitation. It has also decreed compulsory education and has issued a ban on child labour up to the age of 14. However, things often work out quite differently in reality. Around ten million girls and boys still have to work to help their families to survive. They still work hard for a pittance in quarries, fireworks factories or cotton fields, often in conditions that harm their health. They hardly have any breaks or days off.

This particularly affects children who belong to the oppressed “Dalit” minority, a group of the population that is regarded as outside the Indian caste system. They were formerly known as the “Untouchables”. Even though the Hindu caste system was officially abolished in 1949, India’s society still remains strongly governed by it.

The main reasons for this are the low level of education among large sections of the population as well as deeply

rooted social and cultural traditions and practices. This also includes the discrimination of girls. Many families invest much more in the education, training, upbringing and health of their sons than their daughters. At the same time, girls are often reduced to their future role as wives and mothers. If a family’s economic situation deteriorates, it is the girls who are then no longer allowed to go to school.

CREATING NEW PROSPECTS

Schooling has only been compulsory for children aged 6 to 14 in India since 2009. Attendance at a state primary school is free of charge. More than 90% of children, mainly boys, now attend school. However, the teaching conditions at state schools leave a lot to be desired, especially in rural areas. It is not uncommon to find up to 80 students in a class and there is a lack of proper equipment and qualified teachers – all this is a consequence of the low budget the Indian government spends on education. Those who can afford it therefore send their children to public schools. This only widens the gap between rich and poor all the more.

With over four million members, the Church of South India (CSI) is not only the largest Protestant church in India, but also the largest EMS member church. The EMS supports several CSI children’s homes from the EMS Future Fund. Many of the girls and boys housed there are orphans or

INDIA IN A NUTSHELL

With over 1.41 billion inhabitants, India has the second largest population in the world after China. Almost 17% of the population live below the poverty line. At the same time, India has a very wealthy upper class and is one of the ten largest economies in the world. With around 10 million children affected, India is still one of the countries with the highest rates of child labour. In India's male-dominated society, women and girls are often regarded as second-class citizens. There are 31 million orphans.

About 80% of Indians are of the Hindu faith, about 14% are Muslims. Christians are only a minority of 2%. In addition, there are other smaller religious groups. Dalits make up half the Indian Christians.



street children; others come from poor families. They find a temporary home in CSI homes where they receive schooling, medical care and psychological counselling.

13-year-old Amar Nethra is a girl from a village in the state of Kerala. Like most people in this very rural region, her family lives from fishing. But the little that lands in the nets every day is barely enough to support them. That's why Amar had to drop out of primary school to help her parents with their work. In spring 2022, Amar was admitted to the CSI girls' home in Chombala and is finally able to continue her education. "We get very good food here," she says, beaming with joy. "When I started school, I got a school bag, books, an umbrella and new clothes. I'm so happy about that."



Amar Nethra (13)

Donate now and give girls like Amar the chance of a better future. Every donation counts:

- €30 provides medical care for one year.
- €100 provides food and accommodation for one month.
- €400 pays the monthly salary of a teacher.

Thank you so much for your help!

EMS Fundraising Team

Donation account: EMS

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*Find out more about the EMS Future Fund here:
<https://ems-online.org/en/support/future-fund-for-education>*



EMS ADVOCACY SEMINAR: ADVOCACY FOR GOD'S CREATION

Whenever the EMS gathers for meetings, delegates always share what particularly moves them at the time. This "Sharing of Life Concerns" is one of the essential elements of the EMS Fellowship. Delegates are increasingly talking about the effects of destruction to the environment and climate change in their churches.

Since September 2023, the EMS has therefore been offering an online training course lasting several months on the subject of "Advocacy in environmental issues". "Advocacy" means "lobbying for the support of an idea or plan". The 20 participants regard themselves as advocates for an endangered creation. During the training sessions, they learn who is responsible for the destruction of the environment. They learn how to influence decision-makers. Above all, they learn how to recognise and leverage the resources in their own community. "Advocacy" means empowering congregations in the EMS to be aware of their responsibility for God's creation. The seminar is offered by the EMS together with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Japan and the Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA) (see also interview on pp. 18-19). At the end of the training programme, which is free of charge for members of the EMS churches, a certificate is issued to each participant attesting to their successful participation.

In the closing message of the EMS Jubilee Conference in Ghana in September 2021, the delegates, young adults from all EMS member churches, called on the churches to take

action: "We call on our churches to work towards a different spiritual attitude with regards to creation, as it is the lack of understanding of the integrity of creation that endangers it. We call on the churches with all urgency to act as advocates for the preservation of the environment. We call on the churches to take all possible measures to protect the environment and slow down climate change. We do not have much time left. Now is the time to act!" The advocacy seminars are a small contribution in this direction.


Dr Dieter Heidtmann

FIRST EMS SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Last year, the EMS began introducing the EMASplus management system to organise its work with a greater focus on sustainability and environmental protection. The draft of the first sustainability report is now available.

The draft report was prepared by the EMS in line with EMASplus requirements and the EMS is scheduled for certification by an external auditor in February 2024. The report will then be made publicly available. The certification is valid for four years. After that, a reassessment will take place at regular intervals. EMAS is the abbreviation for "Eco-Management and Auditing Scheme". The special feature of EMASplus is that social and economic factors are also included in the certification process besides ecological aspects – this is what the "plus" stands for.

"The EMS is committed to social justice, peace and the preservation of the Creation. A standardised sustainability report plays a key role in the transparency and credibility of our



“Every life is precious” – this is the principle Elim Home has been following since 1963.

commitment. We opted for EMASplus because it has proven its worth for many church organisations over the years,” says EMS General Manager Rudolf Bausch.

The draft sustainability report not only describes the current performance level of the EMS in terms of its resource consumption, but also the sustainability of its financial investments and the quality of its organisation as an employer. Much of the data collected relates to the location of the EMS Secretariat in Stuttgart. However, it also takes into account, for example, the carbon emissions of flights made by international organisation members.

The report does not stop at the current situation but also highlights prospects and specific measures that need to be introduced in the future. This includes “gender-sensitive budgeting”, an issue that belongs to the field of social sustainability. The aim here is to make room for more gender equality in the Secretariat’s budget planning. Project work also promotes this approach among member churches and leads to greater awareness of the issue there.

Joscha Quade

ELIM HOME CELEBRATES 60 YEARS

The “Elim Home” in Elim, South Africa, celebrated its 60th birthday in October. Since 1963, the church-run facility has been caring for children and young people with severe mental and physical disabilities.

Elim Home is part of the diaconal programme of the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA), one of the two African member churches of the EMS. The home was founded on the initiative of the local church congregation. Its decision to create special support services for black and coloured children was not only a courageous step during the time of racial segregation in South Africa, but also an absolute novelty. Up to then, it was only whites that had similar facilities.

Today, the Elim Home has capacity for 50 children and young people. They receive intensive support through therapeutic programmes such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy and develop a great deal of independence depending on their capabilities. Besides all-round care 24/7 at the Elim Home there are two outside day care centres where children are looked after during the day but live with their families.

The South African Department of Health bears only 40% of the costs. Many MCSA church congregations have therefore taken on sponsorships for individual children at the Elim Home and make collections for them during church services. The EMS also provides funds for the home’s work. Moreover, young people regularly spend a ten-month voluntary service there through the EMS international volunteer exchange programme (EYVP).

Stefan Schaal



BMDZ

INDIA: SINGING CONNECTS

30 chorists from the Esslingen Youth Choir went on a choir trip to India in August 2023. The 15 to 31 year olds travelled for two weeks accompanied by Rev. Dieter Bullard-Werner, Executive Secretary of the BMDZ, and Rev. Solomon Benjamin, Head of the India/ East Asia Unit at the EMS.

The organisers took great pains to ensure that the young people had the chance to see as much as possible of everyday life in India in parallel to the music programme. The tour first went to the cities of Bangalore and Mangalore in southern India before ending with a visit to Delhi. The group was hosted by congregations of the Church of South India (CSI) and the Church of North India (CNI). Both churches are members of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity. The Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ) is also a member of the worldwide EMS Fellowship.

The youth choir performed several times at concerts during the trip and was welcomed with musical and dance performances by the hosts. The cultural exchange took place on many levels, including music, food, church services,

lectures, sightseeing and many encounters with the hosting Indian congregations. There were unforgettable highlights for everyone:

“As we had the opportunity to travel through India with the youth choir and not as ordinary tourists, we had a close-up view of the culture and what life is truly like in this country,” says Adriana. “Not only did we get the chance to visit sights like the Taj Mahal, loads of different temples or go on a train ride through the rain forest, we also really got into contact with the people who live there and discovered what lies behind public opinion in India.”

“The trip to India wasn’t just a journey to another country,” says Moritz. “It was more like travelling to another world, which we were able to explore as a choir for two weeks. We won’t forget all the experiences we had there any time soon. The whole time, we were accompanied by our music and the never-ending Indian hospitality that greeted us everywhere we went. Thank you!”

Sabine Eigel

More experiences about the trip in the blog: <https://jukainindien.wordpress.com>



DOAM

DOAM GENERAL MEETING

In June 2023, the DOAM General Meeting which is held every three years convened in Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, Germany. It preceded this year’s study conference on the topic of “Feminism in Dispute – Contentious Concepts in East Asia”.

In her opening address, chair Carola Hoffmann-Richter recalled the 70th anniversary of the German East Asia Mission (DOAM) on 10 December 2022 and read out greetings from the Swiss East Asia Mission. Honorary Chairman Lutz Drescher sent a greeting and prayer by video. The first part of the agenda included the financial reports, the activity report and ratification of the Executive Board. The focus then turned to the implementation of the new constitution which provides for a reduction in the size of the Board to three elected members and two members yet to be appointed. Following the election of Carola Hoffmann-Richter as chairperson the previous year, it was now time to elect the two deputy chairs. Rev. Carsten Rostalsky was re-elected and Rev. Miriam Hechler was newly elected. Two members are still to be appointed.

The new constitution stipulates that content-related work is to be bundled into working groups, split among the countries of China, Japan and South Korea. At the time of the meeting, the Korea working group had already been established and reported on its first video meetings. Since then, the China working group has also met online to identify topics and the Japan working group is planning a meeting. Inspired by the themes of this year's study conference, a feminism working group has been meeting by video conference since August, focusing on the facets of women's lives in East Asia. (If you are interested in participating in a working group, you will find the dates and contact persons in the calendar on the DOAM website at www.doam.org). Kai Lüke reported on the work of the new media working group, which is already active and writes posts for the website, the new Instagram account (@deutsche_ostasienmission), newsletters and articles for print media.

The DOAM General Meeting 2023 closed with a prayer and words of blessing and a preview of the planned DOAM conference in Bad Boll in 2024 on the topic of "Minorities from Japan, India and Germany in the fight against discrimination and for equal participation".
Sabine Marschner



JORDAN: AN ORGAN FOR THE SCHNELLER SCHOOL

The Theodor Schneller School in Amman, Jordan, now has its own church organ thanks to a donation made by the Evangelical congregation in Wendlingen (Baden-Württemberg). The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) funded the costly shipment and re-assembly of the valuable instrument.

Sharing – that is one of the fundamental values of the international EMS Fellowship. But sometimes sharing can take on some rather unusual guises. In Germany, congregations are dwindling in size. Whole church buildings have to close or they are re-purposed or even demolished. What often remains are the precious organs. This was the case for the Evangelical congregation in Wendlingen in Württemberg. However, nobody in the region really knew what to do with the Bornefeld-Weigle organ from the former Johanneskirche (St John's Church).

On the other hand, there was a great demand for one in Jordan. The Anglican Christ Church at the Theodor Schneller school was supposed to have been equipped with this type of instrument right from the very beginning. But so far

there had been no money to purchase one. The pastors of the two congregations, Rev. Paul-Bernhard Elwert and Rev. Khaled Freij were sitting next to one another at the EMS General Meeting. This meant it was quite easy to make the first contact. The congregation in Wendlingen decided to donate the almost nine-metre-high organ to Amman. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) collected money for shipment and re-assembly. The project was carried out by Walcker, the well-known organ builders based in Kleinblittersdorf in Saarland and Klaus Schulten, a leading expert on church organs in the Middle East, supervised the project's conception.

The organ was dismantled into its component parts and transported by truck to Bremerhaven. From there it was shipped to Jordan. Finally, at the end of August, the church echoed with the full splendour of the instrument for the first time at its new site. Master organ builder Gerhard Walcker-Meyer and his son Alexander had done a fantastic job despite the heat of the Jordanian summer.

The organ was officially inaugurated on 12 November with a simultaneous service in Wendlingen and Jordan. Although the two locations are very distant from one another, they linked up by video conference. Despite minor technical problems, everyone was able to hear the beautiful instrument once again resound God's praise.

Dr. Uwe Gräbe



17 GOALS FOR A BETTER WORLD

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL STARCK (EKIBA)

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted a catalogue of 17 goals that are intended to achieve sustainable global development regarding economic, environmental and social goals by 2030. What has been achieved so far? Rev. Michael Starck, advisor to the Church Development Service of the Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA), assesses the current situation.

Rev. Starck, what is the purpose of the 17 development goals of the United Nations?

The UN Sustainable Development Goals build upon the UN Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000. Whereas the eight goals in 2000 focused unilaterally on supporting the Global South, by 2015 it had become clear that the apparently developed nations would have to be the ones to initiate structural changes in order to achieve the necessary changes. Economic, ecological and social progress can only be achieved if all nations rethink their current way of life.

The development goals are targeted for a period of 15 years. We are now at the half-way mark. How do you see the results?

Unfortunately, very sobering. UN Secretary-General António Guterres put it in a nutshell: of the 140 indicators

that measure progress on the 17 goals, only 12% are moving in the right direction, progress is missing the mark in 50% and 30% are stagnating or even getting worse. We are only making good progress with goals that are based on major economic interests, such as expanding mobile telephone networks or the internet. But when it comes to overcoming hunger in the world, overcoming extreme poverty and inequality, empowering women and reducing discrimination, we are unfortunately losing ground instead of making progress.

How do you explain that?

Of course, the global community has had its hands full with several crises in recent years. The consequences of climate change are now being felt all over the world; there was the Covid pandemic with its disastrous consequences, especially for the poor; and now the war in Ukraine and the war in Israel and Gaza. But on their own, these crises do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the poor half-time results. On the contrary, the main problem lies in the fact that we persist in sticking to unsustainable economies and consumerism that we should have ditched long ago. Just one example: state subsidies for fossil fuels have doubled over the past few years instead of decreasing.

What goals do you think offer the best chance of achieving something?

The chairperson of “Bread for the World,” Dagmar Pruin, never tires of saying in her public appearances that a total of no more than €50 to 60 billion would be needed to ensure that no one in the world dies of hunger. Compared to other sums, that is not a great deal.

What is missing is the political will. Otherwise, we have now come to the realisation that it is impossible to view the 17 goals in isolation, developing 17 single strategies to achieve the individual goals. What is needed is to create synergies in order to put the necessary political changes in place before we can make any progress with the transformation process. But every one of us can also take a critical look at their own consumer behaviour. Our mobility habits are a good example: when do we use public transport, when do we go by bike? We also need pressure from below to actually tackle the transport turnaround that is needed in Germany.

Economic, ecological and social progress can only be achieved if all nations rethink their current way of life.

What role do the UN development goals play for the Protestant Church in Baden?

In 2018, the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) published a discussion paper entitled “Lent to us is the Star on which we live – The Agenda 2030: a Challenge to the Churches”. It calls on the churches to be “admonishers, mediators and drivers” of the necessary transformation. As a church, we are trying to put this into practice by condemning grievances in society,

bringing people together with those who are particularly affected by climate change in the Global South and doing everything in our power as a church to become climate-neutral as soon as possible.

What do you know about the initiatives adopted by other EMS member churches?

Many EMS member churches are striving to take the necessary steps towards an ecologically and socially just transformation. One of the leaders is certainly the Church of South India (CSI), which has been doing pioneering work in this field for many years. But I also see many churches in Indonesia making serious efforts to step towards a more ecologically just world. Now, this autumn, the EMS has organised a seminar as part of the new focus “Integrity of Creation”, which aims to initiate ecological projects in various partner churches to tackle transformation in one place. I’m very much looking forward to seeing the results.

Interview: Stefan Schaal



Rev. Michael Starck is pastor of the Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA), one of the five German member churches of the EMS.

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*They need not be men with wings, the angels.
They walk quietly, they do not have to shout, they are often old and ugly and small, the angels.*

*They have no sword, no white robe, the angels.
Perhaps it is one who lends you a hand, or he lives next door, wall to wall, the angel.*

*He brought bread to the hungry, the angel.
He made the bed for the sick, and listens when you call him in the night, the angel.*

*He stands on the way and says: No, the angel,
Tall as a pillar and hard as a stone – they don't have to be men with wings, the angels.*

Rudolf Otto Wiemer

This is what angels really look like: The South Korean Diakonia Sisters have been looking after the poor and sick for over 40 years, following Jesus and assisting people in need. At present, about 50 senior citizens, many of them suffering from dementia, live at the Sisters' nursing home.