Felm[1859]

Felm Annual Report 2024

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”"

Matthew 28:18–20

Right now, it is important to know why we exist

The world is turbulent in a strange way. Confrontations and disputes have become a picture of our times. At the same time, rapidly progressing climate change and biodiversity loss are threatening people and creation. There are more wars and conflicts than ever since the Second World War. To survive, many have had to leave their home region. The sustainability of well-being also needs to be re-thought in the north.

It is important for every community to understand why it exists, what it aims for in the world and what makes it what it is. When values and goals are also challenged from the outside, it is important to crystallise one's own essence so that you know who you are and how to stay on course, even if the world around you is in turmoil.

During the past year, here at Felm we have thought about the core of our identity together with our international partners, parishes and other member communities, personnel and decision-makers. Based on this dialogue, we have clarified our strategy and agreed on our common goals. Listening to each other has done us good and strengthened the Felm community. Our community can only grow if we dare to look in the mirror, listen even to critical feedback and investigate the impact of our work.

Felm's mission is to strengthen faith, hope and love in the world. We testify to God's love in words and deeds. Through our work, we participate in the mission of God in the world. We proclaim the Gospel in words and deeds and act for justice.

Churches and fragile and vulnerable communities are at the heart of our operations. We empower churches to operate and support communities to grow and be sustainable and prosperous. We do this work together with our partners, as the parishes' own organisation.

Our work is human rights-based, inclusive and locally managed. We promote human rights and equality and combat discrimination in many ways. We work on the terms of the people and partners involved in the work and based on their needs. Neighbourly love, justice, responsibility and working together are our values.

Our times are plagued by a lack of vision and hopelessness in many ways. Many are looking for sustainable lasting values. At the heart of Christian hope lies the salvatory Gospel. We can rely on God's love, care and justice, and the promise of eternal life.

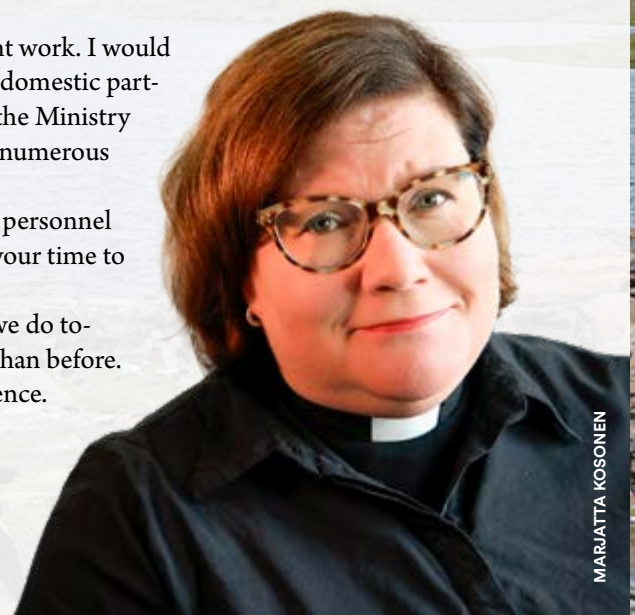
We have been called upon to work for justice so that the kingdom of God can break through among us. Instead of pursuing our own interests, we must promote the good of our neighbours. Instead of continuous growth, we must commit to fairness and strive for sustainability.

Thank you very much for praying for our joint work. I would like to warmly thank all of our international and domestic partners, parishes and other member communities, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that supported our work and numerous others who financially supported our work.

A warm thank you to the Board of Directors, personnel and volunteers of Felm and all of you who gave your time to develop our joint work.

We are facing a time when we and the work we do together with our partners are needed even more than before. We can face this future with courage and confidence.

Pauliina Parhiala
Executive Director



MARJATTA KOSONEN

Felm[1859]

Board members elected at the AGM on 24 August 2024

Bishop **Mari Parkkinen**
Chair
Mikkeli Diocese

Administrative Director
Sari Anetjärvi
Deputy Chair
Espoo Diocese

Vicar
Leena Kairavuo
Archdiocese of Turku

Vicar
Pia Kummel-Myrskog
Porvoo Diocese

Financial Management Expert
Juha Nivala
Oulu Diocese

Dean
Jussi Peräaho
Lapua Diocese

Master of Theology and Master of Health Sciences, teacher, deaconess
Terttu Pohjolainen
Mikkeli Diocese

Vicar
Tiina Wiberg
Kuopio Diocese

Bachelor of Social Sciences, association coordinator
Sampo Untamala
Helsinki Diocese

Guidance and development specialist
Sakari Vanhanen
Tampere Diocese

Entrepreneur and consultant
Aleksi Murtojärvi
Lapua Diocese

Sales support person and IT specialist
Ami Lainela
Helsinki Diocese

80
Employees in Finland

55
Employees abroad

837
Local employees

426,000
people benefited directly from Felm's work, of whom 173,000 were within the scope of development cooperation

2,987,000
people in total were within the scope of the work, of whom 2,049,000 within the scope of development cooperation *

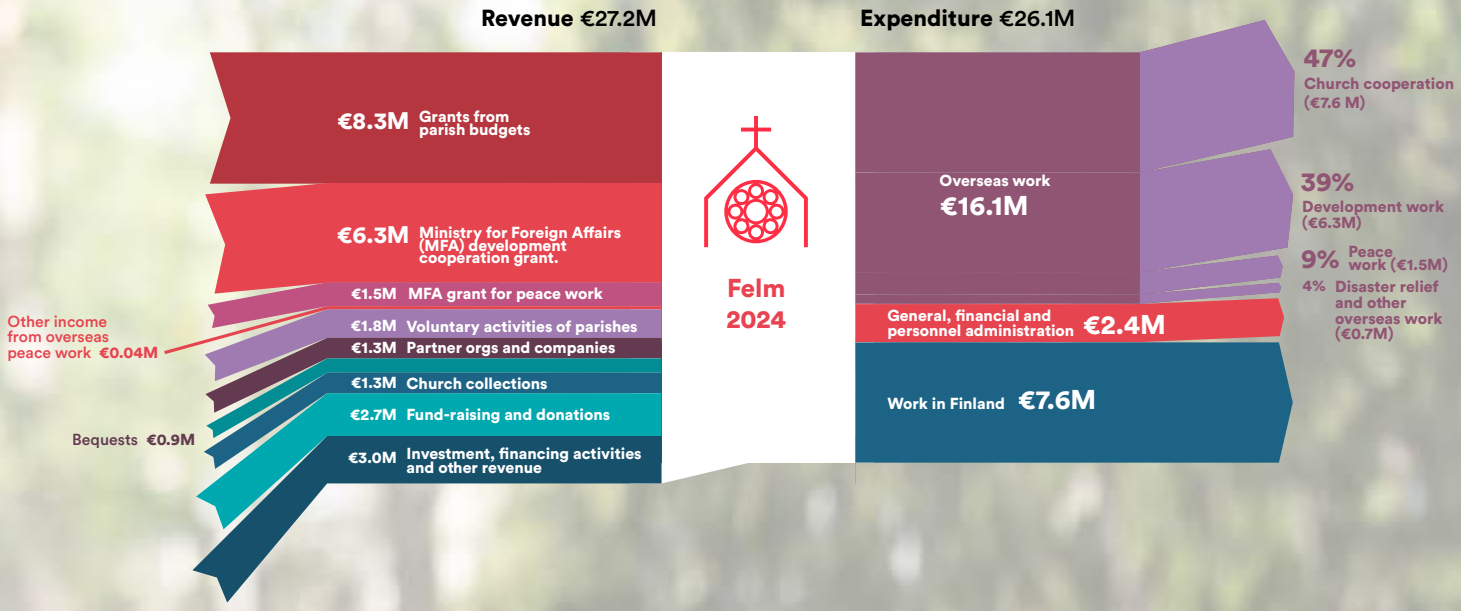
* People within the scope of the work refer to both people who directly benefit from the project as well as people, groups or organisations with no direct connection to the project, but who are affected by it, such as family members of beneficiaries, members of the community, school staff and students.

As a bishop, I have learned that Felm has a big heart. We work side by side and everyone helps us. Thanks to this support, I don't feel like I'm working alone, but I feel cared for. Cooperation motivates."

Touch Sreyleak, bishop,
Cambodian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Felm's partner

HEIDI TIRRI

Regions where Felm Works

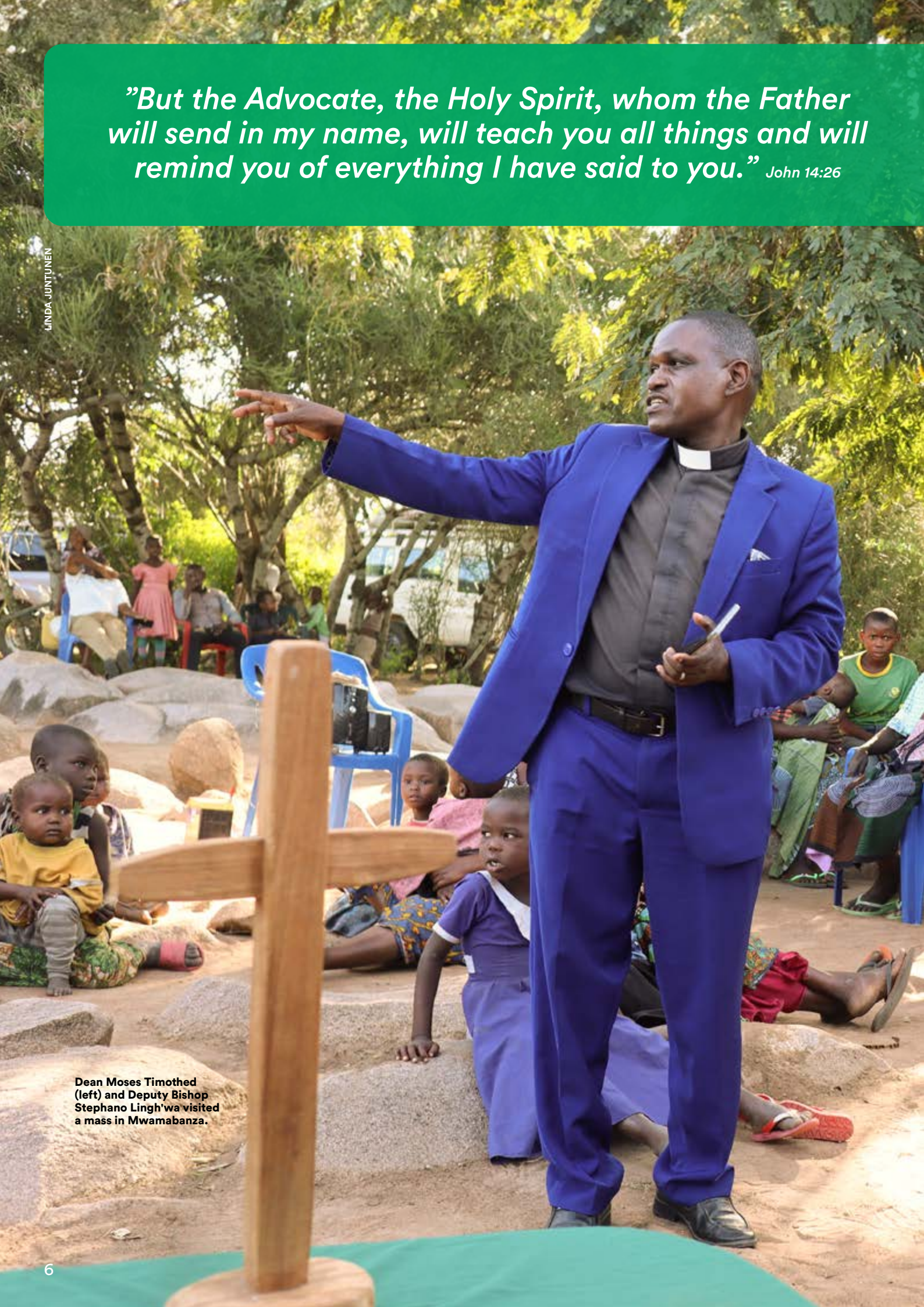


Faith. Hope. Love.

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

”But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” John 14:26

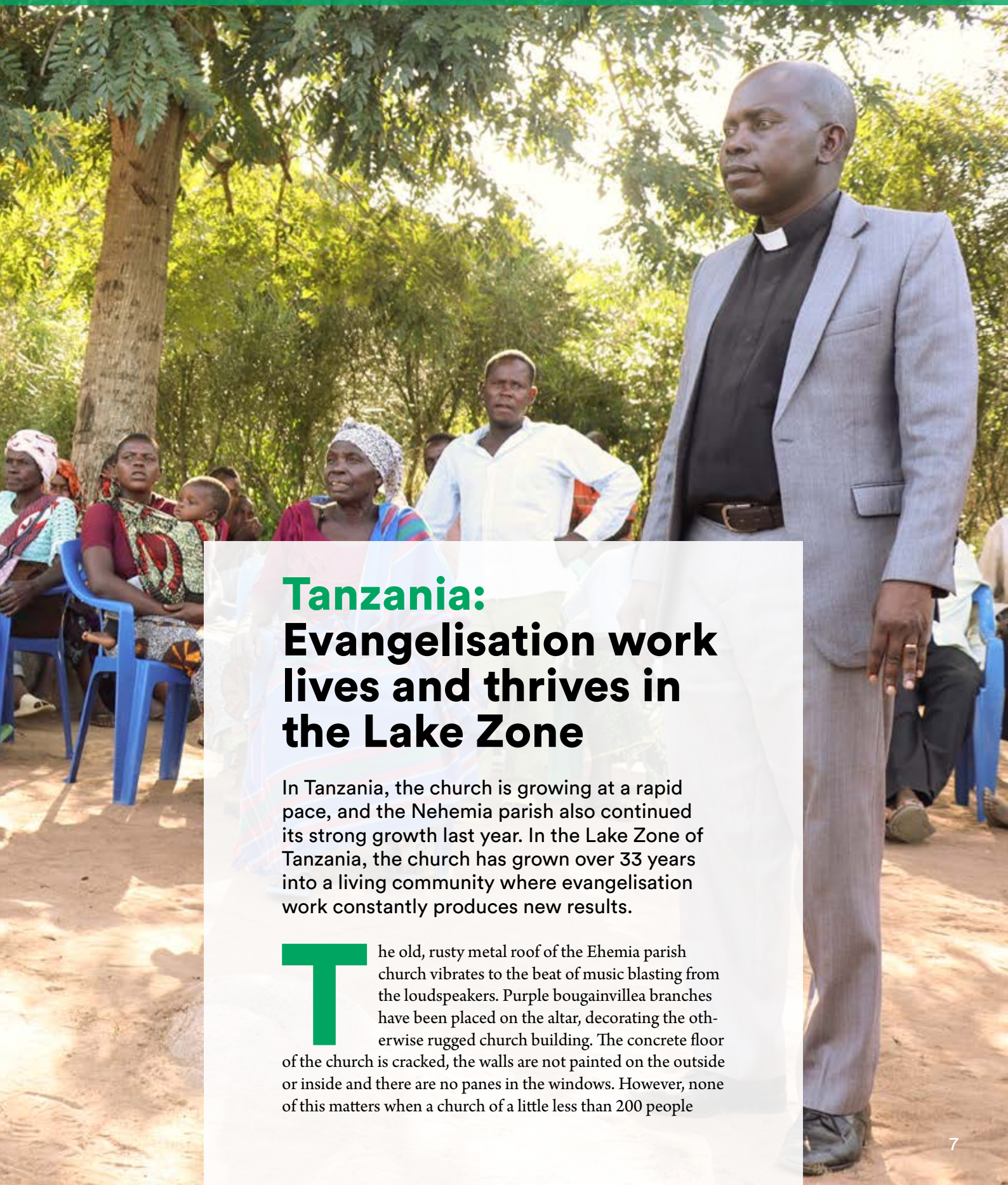
LINDA JUNTUNEN



Dean Moses Timothed (left) and Deputy Bishop Stephano Lingh'wa visited a mass in Mwamabanza.

18,731
children, young people and adults participated in Christian education work with Felm's support

Supporting local churches



Tanzania:
Evangelisation work lives and thrives in the Lake Zone

In Tanzania, the church is growing at a rapid pace, and the Nehemia parish also continued its strong growth last year. In the Lake Zone of Tanzania, the church has grown over 33 years into a living community where evangelisation work constantly produces new results.

The old, rusty metal roof of the Ehemia parish church vibrates to the beat of music blasting from the loudspeakers. Purple bougainvillea branches have been placed on the altar, decorating the otherwise rugged church building. The concrete floor of the church is cracked, the walls are not painted on the outside or inside and there are no panes in the windows. However, none of this matters when a church of a little less than 200 people

gathers for worship.

The Nehemia parish was established in 1992 as the result of evangelisation work. The 33-year-old parish has now grown and established two chapel parishes under its authority: Mwamabanza and Mwaging'h.

Thirty-eight-year-old **Joseph Mayanzani** graduated as an evangelist from the Lutheran Bible School in Nyakato, supported by Felm, in 2021, and immediately started working at the Nehemia parish and the Mwamabanza chapel parish, which is located about ten kilometres away. As the only employee of these two parishes, Mayanzani is dreaming of a bicycle to make the trip between the parishes, which he travels several times a week, quicker.

"The best part of my job is bringing people to Christ. There is a lot of work to do, but it's rewarding. Mwamabanza chapel parish has 74 members and we can't fit in the old church anymore, so the worship and other services take place under a large tree in front of the church that we've outgrown."

Young people are attracted to participate in the activities of both parishes through various games, football matches and choir, for example.

"We organise Bible circles for young people. Many help maintain the farmland owned by the Nehemia parish. Young people and children are important members of the parish, and every person baptised in the church is a new person saved," Mayanzani says.

One of the newly baptised parish members is the 53-year-old **Gomele Shiga**, who lives in the neighbouring village of Nyashana and who participated in Mwanza Diocese mission team Sinema Leo's movie night last night. At the time, 800 adults and 500 children gathered in front of the canvas in front of the church to watch a film about Jesus.

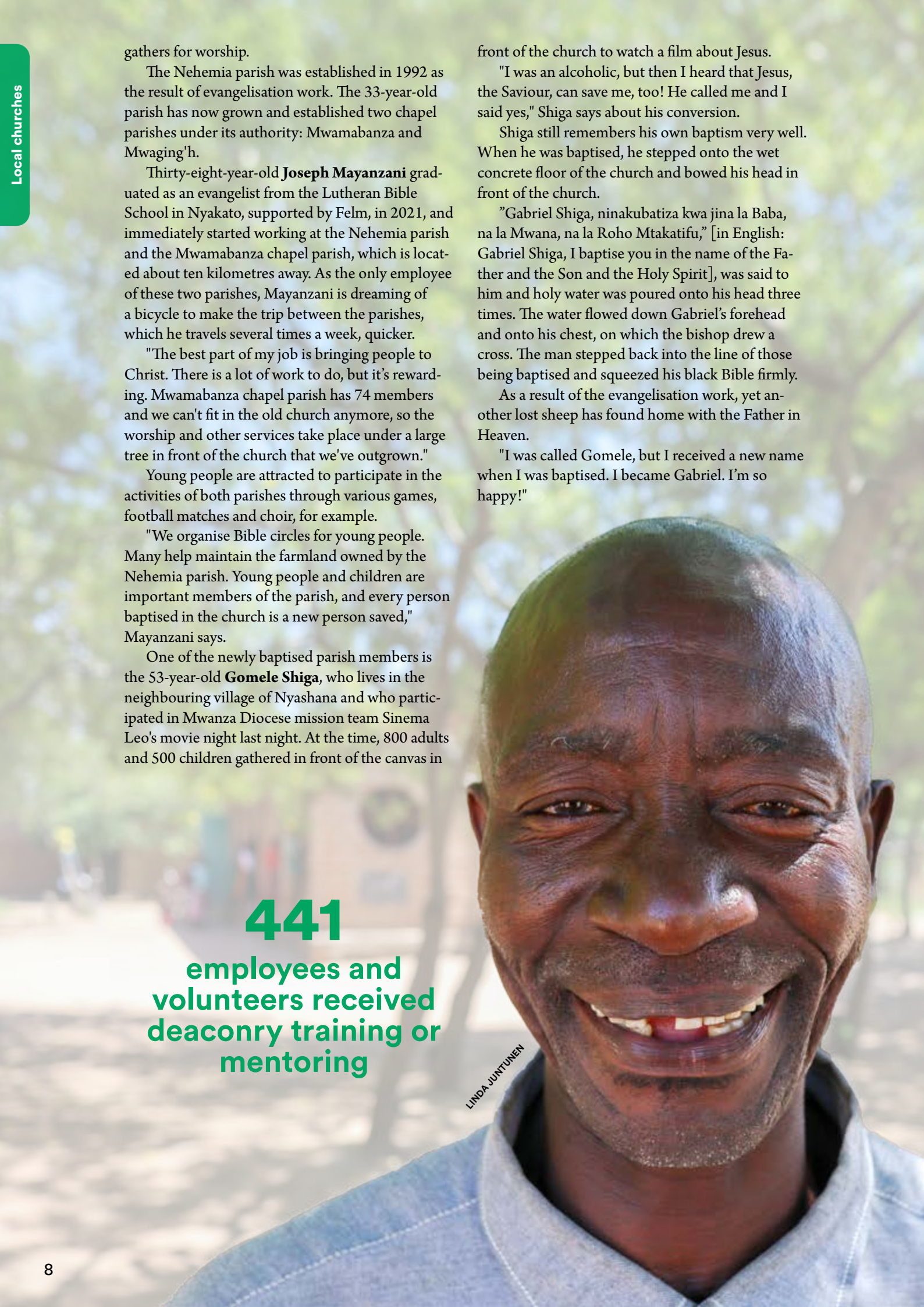
"I was an alcoholic, but then I heard that Jesus, the Saviour, can save me, too! He called me and I said yes," Shiga says about his conversion.

Shiga still remembers his own baptism very well. When he was baptised, he stepped onto the wet concrete floor of the church and bowed his head in front of the church.

"Gabriel Shiga, ninakubatiza kwa jina la Baba, na la Mwana, na la Roho Mtakatifu," [in English: Gabriel Shiga, I baptise you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit], was said to him and holy water was poured onto his head three times. The water flowed down Gabriel's forehead and onto his chest, on which the bishop drew a cross. The man stepped back into the line of those being baptised and squeezed his black Bible firmly.

As a result of the evangelisation work, yet another lost sheep has found home with the Father in Heaven.

"I was called Gomele, but I received a new name when I was baptised. I became Gabriel. I'm so happy!"



441

employees and volunteers received deaconry training or mentoring

LINDA JUNTUNEN

During the year, 101 Sunday school teachers were trained.

Angola: Sunday schools reached a record-high number of children and young people

Teachers of Sunday schools are trained with Felm's support. Sunday school work is important: during the year, thousands of children and young people attended Sunday schools, and 1,595 Bibles were distributed to families.

"I was called Gomele, but I received a new name when I was baptised. I became Gabriel. I'm so happy!" says Gabriel Shiga.

EVEN THOUGH CULTURES and circumstances vary, the world of children is the same around the world.

"Children are children everywhere. Working with them requires the same basic things: presence, play and singing," says **Teija Lievonen**, who works as a specialist in the education of children and young people in Africa.

According to her, the content of the Sunday school in Angola is very similar to the Finnish version. The emphasis in teaching is on biblical narratives, but a pedagogically diverse approach is important too.

"In training courses, we talk a lot about the importance of playing and working together. Sometimes the Bible's teaching can be so emphasised that the importance of play and presence is forgotten – even though these are often the most appealing things for children."

There are also challenges in training. Sunday school teachers cannot always be encouraged to read the Bible text in advance or search for additional material online if they lack literacy skills or do not have electronic tools. Crafting with recycled materials is also impossible if there simply is no material available. Material packages were distributed to Sunday school teachers and their parishes to help them to do their work.

In Angola, as in many other Africn countries, there are a lot of children and young people, and they actively participate in the activities of the parish. This is why the training of Sunday school teachers plays an important role.

"Sunday school teachers have a big responsibility and we want to give them the best possible tools for the job. It's great to be able to share one's own expertise and educational background as a teacher to support others."

"In mission work – just like in educational work – the impact of work may not be immediately visible. Sometimes you sow seeds, the significance of which only becomes apparent years later. But there are also moments of joy when you notice that a song that was learned together is already being sung the following Sunday at Sunday School, or when a teacher is encouraged to do their job. My work is inspired by the idea that hopefully, through our trainings, more children will be encouraged to join the church and be treated as their own worthy selves," Lievonen says.

> ***"This Bible helps me on my journey of faith – I am deeply grateful that I got my own Bible and that I finally found such a valuable source of spiritual knowledge. This Bible is the most precious Treasure in my life."***
>
> **Nelson, Sunday school student from Angola**

Movie night in a Senegal village in April 2024.

Senegal: Christian movie nights in Muslim villages

A large screen and speakers are set up in the sand in the middle of the village, and those watching bring their own chairs. When the night gets dark, the air cools down too, so the conditions are ideal for a movie night.

IT IS AN ACTUAL SURPRISE how well spiritual movie nights have been received in Senegal villages – where the majority of the population is usually Muslim. The movies are often watched by almost all of the people in the village, and many stay for the moment of prayer after the movie.

"Evangelisation is the lungs of the church, and it cannot be stopped," says **Ibou Diouf**, Pastor of the Lutheran Church of Senegal, who tours villages to organise movie nights.

He has been sent to the Tambacounda region, where the Lutheran parish is still in its infancy and there are very few Christians at all. The majority religion of the region is Islam.

In one large village, for example, there used to be only one Christian family. The attitude towards Christians was very negative and, with the exception of the grandmother, the members of this Christian family returned to Islam.

The situation changed when Pastor Diouf started visiting the grandmother, organising prayer meetings and later Christian movie shows. The films dealt with superstition, for example, which is a major problem in Muslim communities as well.

By the decision of the village head, the film viewings were soon moved to the village's central square. After the shows, the willing could participate in prayer meetings, and the pastor distributed Bibles to those who asked.

During 2024, many villagers felt that they received many responses to prayers. According to the village head, the impact on the village's life has been so positive that those who bring the Christian message are very welcome to pray and show films.

Churches also use films to evangelise in Tanzania, for example. Last year, 15,630 people watched an evangelisation film during six months in the Sinema Leo project.

HELI VUOHELAINEN

Sunday schools accessible to everyone as audio

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SENEGAL is growing rapidly and an increasing proportion of its memebers are children and young people. The small church has limited opportunities to make Sunday school teaching accessible to all children and young people belonging to the Serer minority, as there are still too few Sunday school teachers.

However, the church has now succeeded in developing its Sunday school work so that it serves an increasingly wide population in rural Senegal. The coronavirus pandemic restrictions on movement forced the church to look for new ways to reach children and young people. At that time, the church began recording Sunday school lessons on Megavoice audio players, on which parts of the Bible in the Serer language have also been recorded.

Local Sunday school teachers and other active parish members organised the distribution of the audio players in the villages. Small audio players are easy to use and work well in an area where there are also illiterate people. Nowadays, many adults also listen to Sunday school programmes, as spoken text plays a stronger role in traditional Senegalese culture than writing.

SAT-7

SAT-7 also involves children and young people in making programmes and is constantly looking for potential new performers among the audience. Young hosts of SAT-7 include Tia Ghaly (right) from Egypt and Manessa Audi (centre) from Lebanon. They have both been involved in the programmes already when they were less than 10 years old. The photos also feature Mark Awaraji, director of the SAT-7 KIDS channel, and Heli Vuohelainen, communications specialist at FELM.

Middle East: Satellite conveys hope to those living in the midst of crises

Through its programmes, the SAT-7 media organisation brings hope to people living in the midst of crises in the Middle East and North Africa. The organisation produces and broadcasts satellite TV programmes and social media content in Arabic, Farsi and Turkish.

The region is home to many Christians who do not have a Christian community around them. Some states forbid Christian witnessing altogether. SAT-7 gives these Christians the opportunity to connect with other Christians. In many programmes, viewers have the opportunity to share their stories and also have the opportunity to call the support hotline maintained by the organisation.

With the support of Felm, SAT-7 produces programmes for children and young people. One of the new programmes is called "Sun of Hope", a teaching programme in Dari aimed especially at Afghan children aged 5–7 years. The programme teaches reading and basic maths.

In Afghanistan, which has been taken over by the Taliban, children's and young people's education is in crisis. Approximately 3.7 million children do not go to school and 60 per cent of them are girls. The new educational programme can benefit adults as well, as only 37 per cent of the Afghan adult population can read.

*"...'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
There is no commandment greater than these."*

Mark 12:31

44,740
people received emergency relief

Gaza: Support for children in the middle of war

THE HUMANITARIAN disaster and children's distress worsened in Gaza during the year. An increasing number of children have lost both parents and close relatives in the war, and they have no support networks left. In Gaza, children in particular suffer from severe malnutrition. There is also an extreme shortage of water in the area, and there is no clean drinking water at all. Dysfunctional sewerage combined with heat has collapsed hygiene conditions. As a result, diseases spread into widespread epidemics.

Felm continued to support the most vulnerable civilians in the middle of the war and granted a total of EUR 130,000 from the Children's Fund and the Emergency Fund for medical assistance and psychosocial support in 2024. The aid was delivered by Felm's church partners.

19,882
children received emergency relief

Humanitarian aid

Felm supports the work of Augusta Victoria Hospital in Eastern Jerusalem. Owned by the Lutheran World Federation, the hospital provides cancer and kidney treatment for Palestinians living on the West Bank and in Gaza. The conflict has made it difficult for the hospital to operate and for patients to access treatment.

ALBIN HILLERT

Bolivia: Help for those affected by forest fires

Felm responded quickly to the severe environmental crisis in Bolivia, where an extreme drought and the resulting extensive forest fires particularly affected the states of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Pando on the Amazon. The three-month project supported more than 3,700 people, most of whom were farmers. Many of them belong to the indigenous peoples of the area.

The disaster exacerbated by climate change left behind destroyed homes, lost crops and animals and great human distress. Some families also lost their loved ones due to the forest fires.

The work started quickly in the crisis area. In cooperation with the local authorities, the destroyed areas were surveyed and activities coordinated. The relief was delivered to families personally: food, hygiene supplies and medicines were distributed with the support of the municipal authorities.

"This year has been very difficult for our families. Storms wrecked our homes, fires took our manioc and rice harvests, and we had to act as firemen ourselves to protect our community. We were desperate, not even having water for firefighting. The help of the Lutheran Church has been a great blessing for us. We are grateful for every piece of food and hygiene supplies – they are precious to us when the road to the outside world is in poor condition," says **Maria Beyma Cartagena** from Puerto Gonzalo Moreno.

In addition to concrete help, mental and spiritual support was also offered, as the losses were crushing for many. The families were provided with psychosocial assistance in a situation where the future seemed uncertain in terms of livelihood and coping. For the post-crisis treatment, the local authorities were encouraged to take further action so that the assistance would not end with relieving the emergency but would support longer-term recovery.

Maria Beyma Cartagena was happy to receive food and hygiene supplies.

”God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."

Genesis 1:31

Women from the indigenous Colombian Aruacho people were educated on equality and their rights.

Latin America: Work against violence

FELM SUPPORTS WOMEN'S RIGHTS and well-being around the world. In Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela, the work focuses on supporting vulnerable women, preventing gender-based violence and improving livelihood and educational opportunities in cooperation with local Lutheran churches.

Gender-based and domestic violence are serious problems in Latin America. A lot remains to be done in terms of women's equal participation and position in society as well. In Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela, ongoing political and economic instability is making people's everyday lives more difficult. There is a shortage of food and medicines, for instance. Families are forced to cut back on hygiene products and healthcare.

In Bolivia, women and men participated in training on gender justice and leadership. Through the training, women have learned about their own rights and, among other things, the laws prohibiting violence against women. The participants have learned new crafting techniques and baking recipes, which will help them to improve their livelihood and financial independence.

In Colombia, women received entrepreneurship training and financial support to start a small business. The church introduced an operating model for preventing and intervening in gender-related violence. Women's participation and leadership in parishes was strengthened in women's groups.

In Venezuela, 38 entrepreneurship workshops were organised for 263 women to strengthen their financial independence. Gender equality training was organised for parishes. Psychosocial support was provided to victims of gender-based violence. In addition, reusable period products were distributed and support for medical treatments was provided.

33,400
people from discriminated groups received diaconal help

"I am happy to see small but determined steps in promoting women's rights."
Claudia Florentin, Felm's Equality Specialist in Latin America

ANNA SUOHEIMO

Almaz Abamacha is the leader of the Saylem women's group.

Ethiopia: Education is a leap towards equality

The position of a woman in the Ethiopian village community has long been dependent on the man. Husbands may have made financial decisions without consulting their wives. Now, education and personal funds have given women more financial opportunities and decision-making power.

The women's cooperative in Kaffa, Ethiopia, is a testament to what can be achieved by supporting rural women and girls by organising education and supporting small entrepreneurship. Amounts that would be tiny in Finland can have a huge impact on people's and families' lives.

"When we started in 2022, we numbered 50. Each of us received 5,000 Ethiopian Birr (approximately EUR 33) as seed money and we could decide ourselves how to spend it. I wanted to buy a sheep. It reproduced and I got income that allowed me to buy a cow. Some founded cafes. Now every woman has paid back the loan," says **Almaz Abamacha**, the group's spokeswoman.

The women in the group also have dreams and plans for the future:

"Currently, there are 160 women in our group and the total amount saved by the group is ETB 190,000. Everyone saves ETB 25 per month. The goal is to collect enough to set up a mill. This requires three times the current amount of savings. But that would be good business, because the nearest mills are far away in Saylem or Gesha, with bad road connections."

The position of women in the community has been dependent on men. The husband may have made financial decisions without consulting the wife. Education and personal funds have given women more financial opportunities and decision-making power. The project has also changed attitudes, and now Abamacha Kebele (the local administrative area) is led by a woman who is accepted as a leader by the community.

"The group has created many kinds of business activities in the village. With the proceeds, we have been able to buy school uniforms for the children. If we are ill, we don't have to work and we can go to the hospital. We can buy food and coffee. Now that we have money, we use it for the benefit of the family," says Abamacha.

The project is supported by Finland's development cooperation funds.

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Psalm 139:14

Epic Arts professional dance group Epic Encounters.

SOKHENG KONG

75

schools' infrastructure and materials were adapted to be more suitable for persons with disabilities *

* The impact of the project is measured cumulatively throughout the programme period. The figure indicates the number of beneficiaries in 2022–2024.

1,039
persons with disabilities received peer group support *

Work with persons with disabilities

Cambodia: Teaching of children with disabilities expanded

The cooperation between Felm and Epic Arts improves the educational opportunities of children and young persons with disabilities and promotes the livelihoods of persons with disabilities.

In Cambodia, the biggest barriers to the schooling of children with disabilities are the insufficient number of teachers, shortcomings in teachers' skills and learning materials, and school facilities that do not take into account the needs of children with disabilities.

"The worst is the lack of knowledge and understanding. Many Cambodians think that persons with disabilities have done bad things in their previous lives. They believe in karma. Therefore, persons with disabilities face hatred, fear and discrimination," says **Ou Buntheng**, who works at Epic Arts.

Epic Arts paves the way for equal treatment of persons with disabilities in Cambodian society. In 2024, a total of 55 children with disabilities received special education at the Epic Arts centre and in classes established in state schools. Teachers were also trained on autism and intellectual disability. In addition, 347 people participated in parents' clubs, student meetings and peer groups.

Over the past three years, Epic Arts has worked closely with schools and school authorities in the Kampot region, launching classes for children with disabilities in state schools. Thanks to the work, children from different backgrounds learn valuable social skills, empathy and respect for others in addition to school subjects.

"To my mind, the greatest success of the year is that classes focusing on teaching children with disabilities at three state schools now offer teaching five days a week. The collaboration between Epic Arts and state schools started small and initially offered teaching only one day a week, so the change is amazing," says **Mari Kähäri**, specialist on the rights of persons with disabilities.

She also highlights the Language matters project, the aim of which was to raise awareness of language that respects and includes persons with disabilities. There is a strong need for work, as negative language maintains discriminatory attitudes and exclusionary behaviour.

"I believe that the position of persons with disabilities in Cambodia is improving. People learn more about disability, their understanding increases and they are open to learning more," says Buntheng.

In 2024, Epic Arts hosted numerous performances and workshops and produced a wide range of communication materials, from videos to a booklet on language that is inclusive of persons with disabilities. The work reached thousands of people around the country.

"Epic Arts also held workshops for Felm's other partners in Cambodia, and Epic Arts' group of professional dancers performed at their events, which greatly strengthened the cooperation between the partners," Kähäri says.

The project is supported by Finland's development cooperation funds.

"Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold."

Proverbs 3:13–14

LINDA JUNTUNEN

1,410

children received support for moving to the next grade

As a result of the PITA project, the proportion of students entering upper secondary school has increased. Almost one-half of the girls reached upper secondary school eligibility last year. The Shiston upper secondary school is one of the participating schools.

HELI VUOHELAINEN

Mauritania: Parents' associations support children's schooling

IN MAURITANIA on the Atlantic coast of West Africa, many adults have not had the opportunity to develop literacy skills, so supporting children's schooling is not a given. According to the World Bank, about 33 per cent of Mauritanian adults are still illiterate.*

Felm is working to increase children's school attendance. One of the most important results of this work is the activation of parents' associations in schools. Strengthening local ownership of the work is important, as the associations will continue to operate for the benefit of children even after Felm's project ends.

With the support of Felm, parents' associations have been provided with information on children's rights and how important education is for children's futures. Parents have spread the information in their communities.

Now, parents are proud of their children's schooling. They take responsibility for the children's education and the necessary school equipment.

The most active parents tour the neighbourhood in the evening to check whether the children are doing their homework. Volunteering in parents' associations has brought joy to the lives of many grandparents, too, when they have distributed breakfast to children at school.

A grandmother named Mbarka took Felm employee Hilde Paco in her embrace, knowing her from her previous visits. The grandmother says that she has also received new meaning in her own life through the parents' association.

3,067

teachers and teacher students received training on inclusive and child-friendly teaching methods*

* The impact of the project is measured cumulatively throughout the programme period. The figure indicates the number of beneficiaries in 2022–2024.

Education

Tanzania: Teachers need training too

Supported by Felm and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the PITA project in Tanzania aims to ensure access to quality education for children from economically disadvantaged families. The PITA project strengthens teacher capacity by training teachers in student-centered and practical teaching methods.

PITA (Participatory and Integrative Teaching Approach) is a continuing education project for Tanzanian upper secondary school teachers, under the responsibility of the University of Makumira, which is maintained by the church. The project targets the least-equipped upper secondary schools in remote regions established by village communities and church schools in northern Tanzania. The aim is to strengthen the competence of teachers so that children from the most economically vulnerable families also receive high-quality education. In 2024, 34 upper secondary schools participated in the project.

The project addresses topical issues in education, such as promoting student participation as an alternative to traditional teacher-centered approaches, and the relationship between the development of language skills and the learning of content knowledge in upper secondary schools, where the teaching language is still English as a legacy of the British colonial period. Integrating environmental education into teaching and everyday life has been part of the project since the very beginning, and vegetable gardens have been established for schools. In addition, the focus has been on understanding and removing barriers to learning for girls and boys.

As class sizes vary between 40 and 60 students in upper secondary school, the only educational tool in the classroom is a chalkboard and there are only a few textbooks, it is challenging to support pupils' active participation.

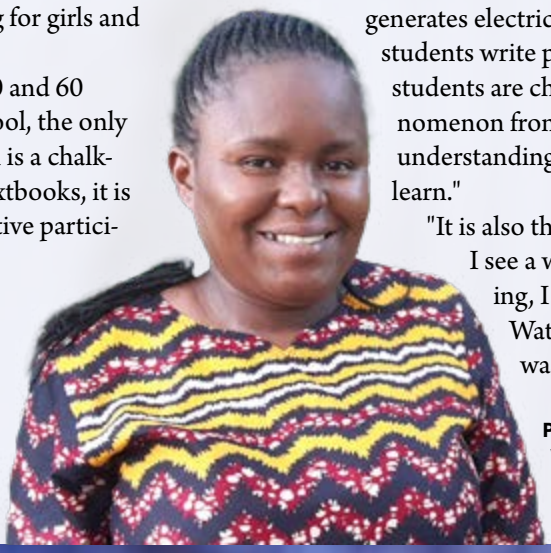
"When there are not enough textbooks for every student and the school cannot afford teaching materials, the teacher feels that they are the only source of information and teaching easily turns into lecturing," says **Ashura Daudi**, principal of the Amsha upper secondary school, which was founded by the village community.

"We have been familiar with the theories and principles of student-centered teaching, but the challenge has been to put the theory into practice. In the PITA project's training, we have learned how teaching methods are applied to classroom teaching. We have seen that the new teaching methods make teachers' work easier and students learn better. Kumbe hiki kinawezekana – this is possible!"

"The training has encouraged us to be creative and improvise. How can we use different everyday objects, recycled materials and the surrounding nature in teaching? For example, students can bring eggs, potatoes or plastic bottles to the school for biology laboratory exercises," says Ashura Daudi.

"As a physics teacher, I am passionate about integrating environmental education into the teaching of different subjects. We have also received guidance on this in the training. How, for example, teachers of physics, biology, geography and Swahili can teach about water from the perspectives of their own subjects. As a physics teacher, I teach my students how hydropower generates electricity, while in Swahili lessons, the students write poems inspired by water. When students are challenged to consider the phenomenon from different perspectives, their understanding expands and deepens, they learn."

"It is also thanks to the PITA project that if I see a water tap that has been left leaking, I immediately run to turn it off. Water is limited and should not be wasted," Ashura Daudi laughs.



Principal Ashura Daudi is pleased with the new teaching methods and better learning outcomes.

KATRI NIIRANEN-KILASI

Asia: Theological education strengthens churches

In mainland China the number of Christians and churches is growing rapidly and there is an urgent need for trained leaders and priests.

Felm strengthens the church in China by offering students scholarships for further theological education. The aim is to improve the students' ability to plan, implement and evaluate work and to carry out theological work.

The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong is an international, ecumenical educational institution with approximately 300 students from all over Asia. In 2024, 48 new students started the seminary. Most of them were locals and mainland Chinese. There is also a large group of students from Myanmar at the seminar.

In June 2024, two sponsored students, **Tina Luo Ya** and **Chocolate Zhu Qiao Li**, graduated from the seminary. This marked the culmination of their academic journey and a significant step towards achieving the project's long-term goals. After graduating, the young women returned to their home towns, where both now work in local churches.

Ya has also taken on the role of a teacher at a local Bible school. With the knowledge and skills acquired through her studies, she now participates directly in the theological training of future church leaders. This is an indication of the broader impact of the programme.

New students who received the scholarship, **Cherry Sun Xin Tong** and **Ina Ren Zhen**, started their studies in the autumn semester 2024. Despite the cultural and linguistic challenges, both have set ambitious goals and are already considering how to apply what they have learned in the future in their own local environments. In addition to direct grants, Felm supports the seminary's teaching work.

"My teaching courses are inspiring and very often I am a student as much as a teacher. For example, in the courses last autumn-

ANNA PELTONEN

Pastor and Doctor of Theology Jukka Helle in front of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. The seminary serves churches in the Southeast Asian region.

we studied together how to follow Jesus, i.e. how to live as a Christian in the face of chaos in life. Another course dealt with Buddhism and Christianity. We have realised that followers of different religions can also learn from each other, and that encountering religions does not have to and should not start from confrontation," says Doctor of Theology **Jukka Helle**, who teaches at the seminary.

In addition to his own teaching at the seminary and instructing students' thesis work, Helle is also involved in strengthening theological education in the Southeast Asian region. The aim is to support churches in Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

"Our seminary aims to strengthen the theological competence of the small Lutheran churches in these countries in particular," says Helle.

In May 2024, the Hong Kong Theological Seminary was responsible for organising a regional theological consultation in Bangkok. The theme was church service and the church's mission. In November, the annual Mekong Mission Forum was held, where representatives of Southeast Asian churches came together to plan their joint work.

The seminary's anniversary was celebrated late in the year. The Lutheran Theological Seminary of Hong Kong was established in Hubei, Mainland China in 1913. Felm is one of the founders of the seminary.

"The anniversary is an important annual event. A large group of former students, seminary supporters and friends always arrive. Being posted by Felm, it is a pleasure to be part of this long chain – which has already lasted for 111 years – in support of the theological education of Asian churches," Helle says.

751

students received theological education with the support of Felm

As a leading advocacy specialist, Niko Humalisto supports local partners in the planning of advocacy clinics.

Advocacy work starts with the needs of our partners

FELM SUPPORTED ITS PARTNERS with a new concept: advocacy clinics. Advocacy work can be used to scale and multiply the results of practical development work.

The advocacy clinic is Felm's response to the partners' desire to intensify cooperation in order to achieve a fairer world. Our partners encounter discrimination, financial injustice and, for example, undemocratic decision-making in their work. In many cases, the obstacles to development are structural and require tailor-made solutions for which the tools for advocacy work are best suited. They can also be used to multiply the results and operating methods of good projects.

Niko Humalisto, leading advocacy specialist at Felm, gives an example: our partners can support persons with disabilities in understanding their own worth and rights, which they do not know about beforehand because they may have been isolated from the surrounding society. Isolation and lack of appreciation and knowledge prevent them from asserting their rights or participating in decision-making that affects them. Instead of changing the lives of individuals, a greater change in the lives of persons with disabilities can be achieved when advocacy work enables decision-makers to open up opportunities for them to participate in decision-making and eradicate harmful perceptions of persons with disabilities not having social value or competence.

The idea behind an advocacy clinic is simple. The partner discusses the structural problems they encounter, after which the clinic tailors an advocacy solution based on their needs and expertise. This may involve community efforts for a clean environment or, for example, opening up churches' negotiation links with decision-makers. Local actors know the challenges of their own environments best, which is why the marching order is clear: the activities are planned together, but the actual work is done by the partner with the support of Felm.

The clinic has been enthusiastically received by partners, and projects have already been launched in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the first year.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

Genesis 2:15

BRIZENDRA BHATTARAI

Smallholder farmers receive training and tools to improve their food security with the support of Felm.

15,300

people received training on disaster risk reduction and management*

* The impact of the project is measured cumulatively throughout the programme period. The figure indicates the number of beneficiaries in 2022–2024.

16,512

smallholder farmers received support for sustainable agricultural production and sale of produce*

Climate action

Nepal: Development cooperation improved food security

Children and women in low-income villages of Nepal's remote regions are especially impacted by negative effects of climate change, as farming becomes more difficult and there is not enough food. In the past, families could eat nutritionally poor and unvaried meals only twice a day.

In some families, the harvest was not enough for even one month a year," says **Maniksha Acharya**, project coordinator for the Nepalese association Sahas Nepal.

This was a harsh reality in many areas of Western Nepal before Felm and its local cooperation organisation Sahas Nepal began development cooperation there. The Nepalese farmer and mother of four, **Devi Batha**, told us about the sad situation in her village before the start of the work: climate change had made farming more difficult and rains, which used to be regular, were now unpredictable. There were more pests and not enough water. The family had to skip one meal and the children were crying from hunger.

Previously, Batha ate twice a day and the family ate vegetables only once a week. The main diet was limited, mainly rice and bread.

"Now, I eat four times a day. I eat lots of vegetables, rice, lentils, bread and yoghurt and drink milk. I have received seeds from the project. I use them to grow vegetables in my own garden," she says.

Thanks to her work, Batha has also obtained a wood-saving stove that consumes less firewood. It produces less smoke, making the stove healthier for the whole family. She has also been given a water filter to purify water.

"With the project, farmers are able to use technologies that adapt to climate change. One example is growing vegetables in greenhouses, which is new in this area," says project coordinator **Acharya**.

The families with whom Felm cooperates are very marginalised and poor. No other relief can reach them.

"All women have started to grow a variety of vegetables and fruits in their home gardens and to keep chickens or goats. The nutrition of the families has improved and they can sell the surplus in the market," Acharya says.

The project is supported by Finland's development cooperation funds.

LINDA JUNTUNEN

Africa: Spreading smart climate change solutions

Ruusa Gawaza, a climate sustainability expert from Zimbabwe, participated in a peer learning week during which Felm's climate work partners from Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Ethiopia met. During the week, two projects promoting climate resilience in Zimbabwe were explored and experiences were shared across national borders.

"The peer learning week was a real opportunity to see how climate change can be seen and felt in the different countries in which Felm works. During the week, many practical methods that promote climate resilience were found useful and experiences of their different opportunities in different country contexts were shared," Gawaza says.

"The peer learning journey was an impressive experience and broadened my understanding of climate sustainability projects and highlighted the key role of faith-based organisations in building sustainable communities. Through the sharing of experiences and best practices, I gained valuable insights into different innovative approaches and strategies that my organisation, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), can leverage."

Wellington Makunura
monitoring and evaluation specialist, ZCC

KIRKON YMPÄRISTÖDIPLOMI

FELM was the only organisation to be awarded the Church's environmental diploma for a second time. The environmental diploma was awarded for the new period of 2024–2028, during which Felm will continue its work to reduce climate emissions and conserve natural resources. In its new environmental programme, Felm is committed to reducing emissions from flights by 30 per cent and reducing energy consumption by 10 per cent by 2028. Felm aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. Environmental issues are also taken into account in procurement, among other things.

6,697

households participated in using climate change mitigation technologies, such as solar panels*

348

people participated in environmental and climate education organised by the churches

Tomondo upper secondary school students planted trees on a plot of land next to their school in Tanzania.

ANNA SUOHEIMO

Ethiopia: Working for minorities

Being born in a certain group means living as a second-class citizen in Ethiopia. Working with minorities strengthens food security, promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, and upholds everyone's right to live with dignity as part of their community.

THE KAFFA REGION IN SOUTHERN Ethiopia is famous for its coffee farming. In the green, mountainous region, it rains almost nine months a year. Here, the Manja minority has long lived in discrimination outside their community.

Aster Mechalo and **Desalegn Delili**, who are members of the Manja minority, have been able to build a new home for themselves and educate their children with the support of Felm. In addition to the parents, the family has six children, four of whom still live at home.

"This project has had a big impact on our lives. We have been trained in the breeding of sheep and then we got three sheep. The sheep reproduced. When we sold them, our children were able to go to school and we were able to build a house for our family. We have also been able to buy school uniforms. Now we have a cow from which we get milk, and it had calves, too," says Delili

Although the family's standard of living has improved, their social status is still challenging. Previously, they were not allowed to have guests come into their home, nor were they allowed to enter the homes of others. They had to bring their own dishes to parties, because it was impossible to eat with others. Many still refuse to eat with them.

"We eat pork, which is a problem for others. They consider it unclean. If we cook food, the majority think that we have contaminated the food and they cannot eat it. Others think that we do not wash ourselves enough. We are considered dirty," Delil says.

Daughter **Ejigayehu** is in fifth grade. She has also experienced discrimination at school.

"Others don't want to sit with us. We must always sit at the back of the classroom, we must not sit in front. During breaks, we play separately," Ejigayehu says.

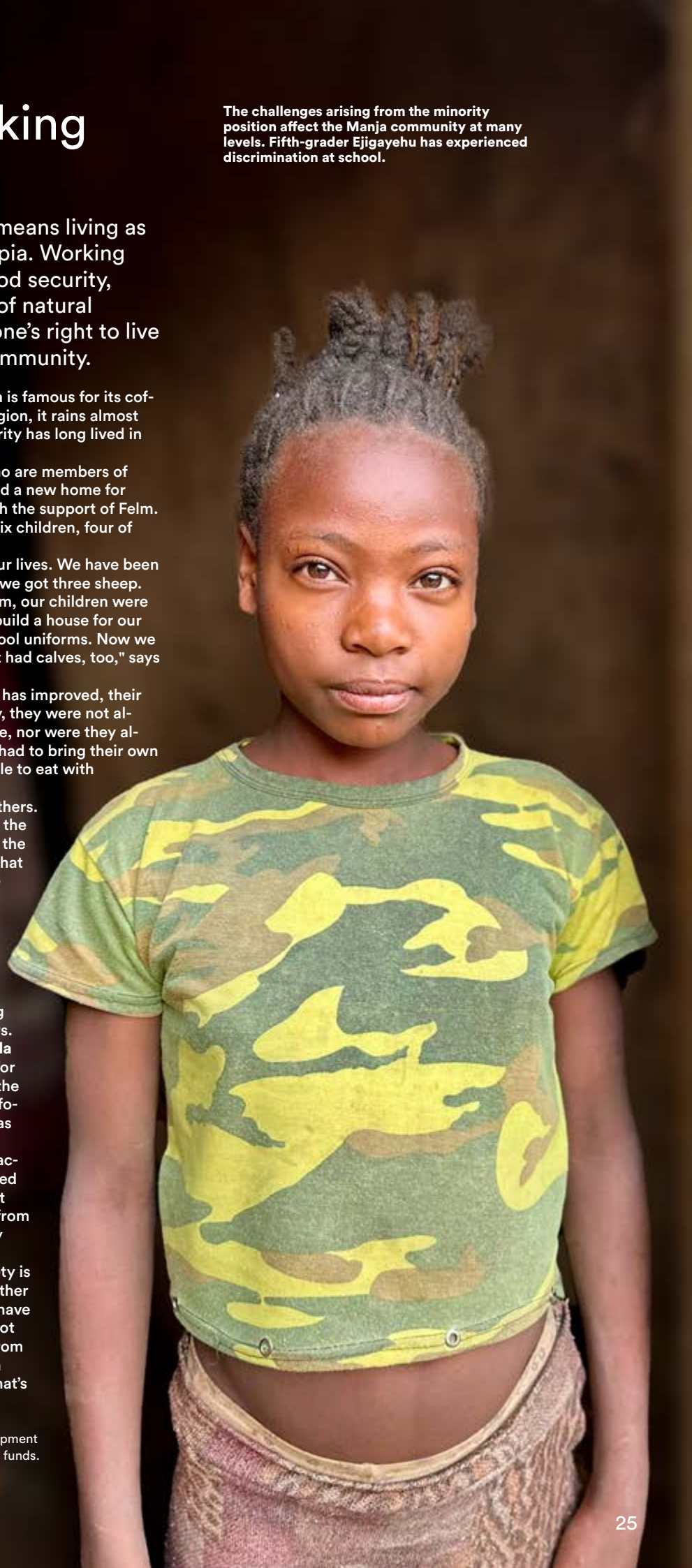
Felm missionaries **Kirsi** and **Risto Leikola** lived in the villages of Saylem and Gesha for a long time and worked determinedly for the benefit of the Manja minority. Their work focused on recognising the Manja minority as God-created and equal people.

"Initially, even the local church did not accept the Manja. They were not even allowed into the church. Later, they were let in, but they were assigned a lined-off area away from the others," says **Anna Suoheimo**, country manager for Ethiopia.

"The participation of the Manja in society is limited. For example, they cannot marry other ethnic groups. Educational opportunities have also been limited. Previously, they could not rent apartments, which prevented them from for example studying. Now the first Manja have graduated from the university, and that's a big thing."

The project is supported by Finland's development cooperation funds.

The challenges arising from the minority position affect the Manja community at many levels. Fifth-grader Ejigayehu has experienced discrimination at school.



"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' "

Luke 10:5

Churches play an important role in peace work," says Milton Mejía, head of DiPaz, an interchurch platform for dialogue for peace in Colombia.

MARIA SANTTO / CMI

Felm participated in the organisation of an international peace conference to find ways to implement dialogue processes in the challenging global situation.

The power of dialogue in the midst of crises

IN JUNE 2024, Helsinki hosted the sixth National Dialogues conference, which brought together more than 200 peacebuilding actors from more than 60 countries. The conference organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was carried out in cooperation with the CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, Finn Church Aid, Felm and the Abilis Foundation. The conference celebrated its tenth anniversary as a promoter of national and informal dialogue processes.

The main themes covered the importance of national dialogues in conflict prevention and strengthening crisis resilience, the roles of different actors and the consideration of complex and interconnected phenomena – such as climate change, artificial intelligence and mental health – in peace processes.

The discussions were based on extensive international experience. Speakers were from Colombia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, South Africa, Sudan and Yemen, among other countries. Felm's Colombian partners also participated: Bishop **Atahualpa Hernandez** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, DiPaz network coordinator **Milton Mejía** and the World Council of Churches special envoy **Humberto Shikiya**.

In an era of global uncertainty and multiple crises, the conference reinforced the key role of dialogue in building sustainable peace and addressing global challenges together.

565
children and young people participated in peace education

"Through peace education led by locals, we truly bring people together."

Daniel Munayer, Executive Director of the Musalaha peace education organisation at Tampere Peace Day

MINNA HAVUNEN

Colombia: Peace is built together

Churches and Christians are tasked with being peacemakers and working for peace and reconciliation everywhere. According to Milton Mejía of Felm's Colombian partner DiPaz, churches are listened to in peace work and, most importantly, they offer people support and protection in the midst of conflict.

Colombia's armed conflict, which has lasted for nearly 60 years, officially ended in 2016 with a peace agreement, but there is still unrest in the country and violence against civilians by armed groups has continued. There are nearly seven million displaced persons in Colombia due to the civil war.

Together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, the interchurch platform for dialogue for peace DiPaz and the World Council of Churches, Felm is leading a more participatory peace process project supported by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The project is coordinated by pastor **Milton Mejía**. According to him, churches have the power to demand peace from the government and armed groups.

"There are a lot of tensions and crises in peace negotiations. We are in contact with the parties and discuss so that they would not leave the negotiation table and would reach an agreement. They listen to churches," says Mejía.

The project of Felm and its partners strengthens the cooperation of national and international actors in peace work. It also supports ongoing peace processes and dialogues in different regions of Colombia. According to Mejía, this work happening directly in the local communities is the most important part of the project, as local peace processes reduce violence in the regions.

When the peace agreement was signed in 2016, people voted against it. Many people working in churches, especially conservative groups, also voted against the agreement. Mejía believes that religious actors play an important role in peace work.

"Our answer is to proclaim the Gospel of peace. People come to church to seek support and shelter. Churches welcome victims of conflict and also representatives of armed groups and help them to rebuild their lives," says Mejía.

According to Mejía, the current administration gives religious actors even more opportunities to participate in peace dialogues with armed groups. Therefore, it is now possible to discuss how Christians fulfil their responsibilities based on the Gospel.

"Of course, there are also tensions, because we think that Christians should not take up arms. We respect our discussion partners, but say that this cannot continue, war is not the right way. War causes deaths and so much damage to communities."

He emphasises patience in resolving the decades-long conflict in Colombia.

"We have to keep up the hope that peace is possible. Conflict cannot be resolved by war. We need to engage in dialogue and make peace agreements. We must demand social and economic changes to strengthen society. We need to build a broader democracy that recognises diversity and allows everyone to participate. It takes time, but you have to be patient. Above all, you have to pray."

"The church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Ephesians 1:23

Confirmation school students take a break at the log church in Päiväkumpu.

Faith and the world came closer

AINO RINNE ENDED UP AT the confirmation school in Päiväkumpu on the recommendation of a family friend. She didn't know anyone to begin with but had a close group of friends by the end.

How did you get to know the other camp participants? Right when we started the camp by having coffee, a couple of the camp counsellors asked me to sit with them. Already after the first day, we had a group of friends that lasted for the rest of the camp. First we got to know each other in the camp band, then we all went to the courtyard to play a throwing game and a couple of other people joined us.

How was internationality visible to you at the camp? It felt easy to be bilingual because I speak English quite well. There are two Swedes, one American and three Finns in my group of friends from the camp. We don't meet so often, but we have a WhatsApp group, and quite a few of them were at the Riihis camp.

What did you learn from mission work? I learned concrete things about how to help people in mission work. Africa in particular came to mind, as one of our leaders had been on mission there.

What should everyone know about international confirmation schools? The Päiväkumpu community is so close-knit that I want to be part of it. It's nice to feel like you're part of it.

93 %
of Finnish-speaking parishes had a service agreement with Felm.

95 %
of parishes in Porvoo Diocese had a service agreement with Felm.

VIRVE RISSANEN

Confirmation camps became even more international

Felm has combined its confirmation school activities with the Finnish Association for Children and Youth. In practice, the change means that the camps are now multilingual and more international than ever.

Felm has been organising camps focusing on mission themes and music in Päiväkumpu since 1957, and the Finnish Association for Children and Youth has gathered young Finns living around the world in its confirmation schools for over 30 years. Internationality has united the two camp organisers from the outset.

When the camps merged last summer, 215 young people came to camps in Päiväkumpu. Some of them were "traditional" young Felm people, for whom the association with Felm runs in the family or friend circle, while some came from abroad with the aim of gaining experience of Finnish confirmation school and Finnish culture in general.

International confirmation schools had their own traditions, while the young people of Felm had their own. In early summer 2024, **Miina Kurjenmiekka** from Felm and **Kaisa Kahra** from the Finnish Association for Children and Youth made it clear to the camp teams that it is not worth getting stuck in their own traditions. Now something common was in the works.

The camps have tuition groups in both English and Finnish, and young people can choose a group based on their stronger language. Part of the teaching is organised jointly in both languages. Other languages, such as French or German, may also be used.

English-language teaching makes life easier not only for young Finns from abroad, but also for children of missionaries who have been part of young Felm people throughout history. Bilingualism and multilingualism presents challenges for the camp leaders, not so much for young people.

Each camp has an expert in mission work, as has been the case at Päiväkumpu camps so far.

"From the point of view of the Finnish Association for Children and Youth, the strengthening of mission education and the visibility of the various sides of the global church is a positive aspect of uniting the confirmation schools," Kahra says.

According to Miina Kurjenmiekka, encountering different cultures and multilingualism always presents unique challenges.

"On the other hand, they are a tremendous wealth, opportunity and blessing."

Felm was visible in the media

Last year, Felm was featured in the media, especially through its partners. In social media alone, Felm reached 1.6 million people and, through media visibility, virtually all Finns.

IN 2024, FELM APPEARED in Finnish paper and online magazines a total of 1,225 times. Media visibility decreased by approximately 17 per cent year-on-year, largely due to the lack of negative news topics that exceeded the news threshold – in 2023, change negotiations were held at Felm, which resulted in a lot of media publicity. Last year, media visibility was neutral and fact-based, with no negatively toned media hits at all.

Felm's communications department worked hard to ensure that journalists would write stories about partners visiting Finland during the partnership consultation and to inform the general public about the situation of churches and Christian operators in the world, their work and its results. The work was fruitful and Felm's partners gave interviews to MTV, Keskisuomalainen, Karjalainen, Savon Sanomat, Turun Sanomat, Hufvudstadsbladet and Kotimaa, among others. In addition, articles were published in, for example, Seurakuntalainen, Kyrkpressen and several parish newspapers around the country.

The most accessible media in Finland, Yle, wrote 15 articles about Felm during the year, the most significant of which was the news article about a study of Finnish Christmas traditions commissioned by Felm from Taloustutkimus. According to it, the Greatest Christmas Carols community sing-along events are among the most popular Christmas traditions and part of the Christmas of one in three Finns. An interview with **Pauliina Parhiala**, Felm's Executive Director, was used in television, radio and online news.

One of the most widespread news hits was the news related to the climate meeting in Baku, where Felm's specialist **Niko Humalisto** commented on the meagre results of the meeting. The news item was published in 25 newspapers around Finland.

Cooperation with Radio Dei continued, and Felm produced the Kirkko maailmalla (Church around the World) programme for the channel every week, allowing Felm people to provide news from churches and work around the world and giving a voice to Felm's partners around the world.

"One of the important tasks of Felm is to turn the eyes of Finns to the outside world, remind them of the importance of mission work and create space for the voice and advocacy of churches and Christian organisations. I feel that we succeeded particularly well in this last year and that many Finns got to know our partners through their face-to-face visits, but also through the media," says **Laura Häkli**, Director of Communications and Advocacy.

In social media, Felm reached a total of approximately 1.6 million people (1,270,916 on Facebook, 196,196 on Instagram and also on Tiktok, Youtube, and X).

Development cooperation communications included cooperation with actress-photographer **Laura Malmivaara** and gospel musician **Papipike**, monitoring the progress of project work in Nepal and explaining the role of churches in development cooperation. Development communications reached 2.2 million Finns.

From darkness to hope, from creation to childlike faith – new Finnish Christian literature

Erkki Jokinen
Ihmisen varjo – Esseitä pahuudesta ja toivosta

The work reveals the nature of evil in order to clarify the feeling of hope. Christian Book of the Year 2024 finalist.

Pia Pyhtilä
Eläköön luomakunta!

Encounters between missionary workers and nature and animals around the world.

Titta Sevanto
Valtteri ja Raamatun salaisuudet

A colourfully illustrated children's book teaches the Bible through different themes, combining Valtteri's stories and general knowledge.

Peace and sense of community with the new pilgrim's guide

PILGRIMSVANDRING i missionens tecken (Pilgrimage in the spirit of mission work) is the new Swedish-language inspirational material produced by Felm. The pilgrim's guide can be used by both groups and individual pilgrims.

The participants reflect on the gift of life, the presence of God and the beauty of creation. The global perspective of mission work is present in the meditations and texts used during the pilgrimage. While we walk, we are reminded that we walk alongside our fellow people in other countries and that we have a shared world. We can remember all of the vulnerable people who have to flee to get to safety.

The texts in the guide were written by **Stefan Djupsjöbacka**, **Helene Liljeström**, **Claus Terlinden**, **Ben Westerling** and **Maria** (Mia) **Westerling** based on Psalm 67.

The guide can be downloaded from our website: finskamissionssallskapet.fi/pilgrimsvandring

COVER PHOTO: JOANNA LINDÉN-MONTES

HEIDI TIRRI

LAURA HÄKLI

The Greatest Christmas Carols sing-along events raised more than EUR 900,000

PARISHES ORGANISED The Greatest Christmas Carols sing-along events in churches all over Finland, but Christmas carols were also sung in shopping centres, restaurants, service stations and even swimming halls. According to the study commissioned by Felm from Taloustutkimus, the Greatest Christmas Carols events are part of the Christmas traditions of one in three Finns.

In 2024, the fundraising result for the Greatest Christmas Carols totalled EUR 932,176. This amount approaches the record years before the coronavirus pandemic, when revenues were over one million euros. The proceeds of the campaign support the most vulnerable children in developing countries. The campaign of 2024 was supported by President **Alexander Stubb**.

More than 230 parish visits

Last year, Felm employees visited parishes 233 times, and the visits concerned 132 different parishes. The visits included meetings with parish employees, trustees, volunteers and parish members. Employees also visited confirmation camps and schools.

JOANNA LINDÉN-MONTES

Mission circle in Oulu celebrated its 125th anniversary

THE VANHA PAPPILA (Old vicarage) mission circle in Oulu celebrated 125 years of continuous operations. The celebration was attended by a large group of circle members and other friends of mission work, as well as representatives of Felm. The opening speech at the celebration was given by **Leena Lehmuspuu**, the longest-standing participant in the circle, who used to work for Felm in Namibia. She ended up doing mission work after confirmation school. In honour of the celebration, the Oulu Cathedral Parish donated EUR 10,000 to Felm's disaster work fund.

Felm interviewed nearly one hundred parish employees

IN 2024, Felm wanted to consult the employees of parishes to understand in which direction activities and cooperation should be developed. Nearly one hundred telephone interviews were conducted throughout Finland in total.

"Felm wanted to hear from the parishes themselves what the work is like right now and how the parishes see the future of mission work," says **Karoliina Nivari**, then Director of Parish Relations and Fundraising at Felm.

The interviews highlighted, for example, the importance of the face-to-face and remote encounters of parishes and mission workers, the development of contract models, the challenges of inspiring young people and the importance of communications.

Together for collaboration and stories

A SWEDISH-LANGUAGE CELEBRATION OF MISSION WORK was held on Saturday 25 May in cooperation with the Swedish-language parish in Mustasaari, Vaasa. The theme was Faith – Hope – Love – What our world needs. Almost 180 people participated in the programme at the Mustasaari parish hall and church.

The panel discussion on "Shared Earth" focused on how mission work affects people today. The discussion was led by **Marika Björkgren-Thylin**, Director of Swedish-Language Services. **Rune Lindblom**, chaplain of the Swedish-speaking parish in Mustasaari, has worked for Felm in Jerusalem. He highlighted the significance of stories as keys to mission work.

"We are fascinated and spoken to by other people's life stories. That is why the parish's connection to Felm is important."

Together for the first time

IN AUGUST 2024, Felm organised joint employee days for all employees of the organisation for the first time in history. The idea came from CFO **Jaana Seppänen.**

"All of my previous workplaces had such meetings on a regular basis. After the consultation negotiations in 2023, we also needed an opportunity to get to know each other and do something nice together," says Seppänen.

Thus, Felm employees from abroad and Finland arrived in the same hall for two days, and Nepalese employees of the local office also arrived from Nepal.

"The days were more than successful, and we received an incredible amount of positive feedback," says Seppänen.

The programme included sharing news, inspiring speeches about the future of work and well-being, as well as worship and joint Eucharist.

In the future, the intention is to organise joint employee days every two years. Planning for the 2026 meeting has already begun.

More than 130 Felm employees from Finland and abroad attended the employee days.

JOANNA LINDÉN-MONTES

"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:16

Lilana Kasper

Executive Director, Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa, LUCSA

1. What are you satisfied with in Felm's work? Felm is not only interested in how they are doing, but also in how we, the partner organisations, are doing. Everything is transparent and you can always call the Felm people. I appreciate it.

2. What could we do better? I would like more online meetings where we can meet other local partners and learn from each other. An Africa-wide online seminar like this was held in the spring and was very useful. They could take place a couple of times a year.

HEIDI TIRRI

Partners gathered to improve cooperation

Felm's partnership consultation, which is organised once every five years, was held in Helsinki in August 2024.

In late August 2024, Felm's partners came to Finland from 20 different countries. **Leena Luukkonen**, who organised the event, says that the preparations took over a year.

"The partners had the opportunity to share their thoughts and priorities electronically and face-to-face at different stages. We strive to create work that is as inclusive and engaging as possible and that produces concrete results."

The partners considered what kinds of emphases they want to place on Felm's work in the future. Training in advocacy work, for example, was highlighted so that churches and organisations could participate strongly in the social debate in their own countries.

After the event, many of the partners remained in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. On the last weekend of August, many of them visited parishes around the country. Once all the guests had left after the busy week, Leena Luukkonen felt grateful for the successful event.

"I'm quite satisfied and relieved, having been able to meet our partners face-to-face and the travel arrangements from all over the world having succeeded."

In the consultation, Felm presented the operating model of an advisory group of its international partners, through which partners around the world can directly influence decision-making in Felm's international work.

The advisory group strengthens the voice of partners in strategic decision-making. Executive Director **Pauliina Parhiala** considers this progress to be significant.

"Our international work is based on close cooperation between Felm and our international partners. This requires joint thinking and agreement on the direction. The advisory group is an important strategic partner for the Board of Directors and management of Felm," Parhiala says.

The international advisory group meets twice a year: once remotely and once face to face.

Result of the partnership consultation: Four recommendations

Felm collected recommendations for action for the coming years from its international partners. The partners wished for a focus on these four areas:

1. Spreading the Gospel, for example, by supporting theological education. Developing digital channels and ensuring the accessibility of training.
2. Developing church leadership through mentoring and by strengthening the participation and voice of young people.
3. Supporting climate justice through peer training, for example, involving young people in particular in all climate actions.
4. Supporting churches, organisations and communities in peace work and work to achieve gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities.

Annex 1.
Overseas work in 2024, gross figures

	Number of projects in 2023	Number of projects in 2024	Expenditure in 2023 EUR 1000	Expenditure in 2024 EUR 1000	Employees 31.12. 2023	Employees 31.12. 2024
Church work	138	108	7997	7207	*)59	**)55
Development cooperation	33	35	6286	6323		
Peace and reconciliation, advocacy	2	2	1771	1458		
Disaster work	11	10	585	395		
Admin. and other expenses 0149	0	0	1027	698		
Total	184	155	17666	16081	59	55

Region	2023 Programme expenditure EUR 1000	2024 Programme expenditure EUR 1000	2023 Administrative expenditure EUR 1000	2024 Administrative expenditure EUR 1000	Employees 31.12. 2023	Employees 31.12. 2024
Southern Africa[1]	1477	1169	8	6	9	8
Eastern and Central Africa[2]	3624	3500	56	102	12	12
Western Africa[3]	1268	1122	16	16	4	4
Mekong region and Oceania[4]	3804	3466	57	56	15	16
China[5]	811	622	154	69	6	1
Middle East[6]	1561	1403	227	128	8	6
Nepal and Pakistan [7]	1715	1605	108	99	1	3
Latin America[8]	1440	1561	17	7	3	3
Europe [9]	109	100	0	0	0	0
Global cooperation and shared expenses[10]	1156	1137	58	-87	1	2
Total	16965	15685	701	396	59	55

1 Angola, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, SZambia, Zimbabwe
2 Ethiopia, Tanzania
3 Mauritania, Senegal
4 Kambodja, Laos, Papua Newi Guinea, Thailand, Myanmar
5 China, Hongkong SAR, Taiwan
6 Israel, Jordania, Palestine, Cyprus, Syria, Oman
7 Nepal, Pakistan
8 Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua
9 Ukraine
10 Global cooperation and shared expenses

*) **) KT, DK, RS and KAT employee number totals in this row for 2023 and 2024.

Annex 2.
Partners 2024

Region/country	Partner churches	Partner organisations
Southern Africa		
Angola	• The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola (IELA)	• United Bible Societies of Angola (UBS)/Bible Societies of Angola and Namibia • Crianza Feliz
Botswana	• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana (ELCB)	
South Africa		• Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA)
Namibia	• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN))	• Girl Guides Association of Northern Namibia, Northern Region
Zimbabwe		• Gwai Grandmothers Group (GGG) • Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)
Eastern and Central Africa		
Ethiopia	• Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)	• EECMY/DASSC • LWF Ethiopia • Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD)
Tanzania	• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)	• Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) • Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA) • Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN)
Western Africa		
Mauritania		• Bienfaisance Sans Frontières (BSF) • ONG-ACTION
Senegal	• Lutheran Church of Senegal (ELS)	• World Council of Churches (WCC) • Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Sénégal EELS, mission yof ELCA (Evangelic Lutheran Church in America) • Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa (LUCCWA)
Mekong region and Oceania		
Cambodia	• Lutheran Church in Cambodia (LCC)	• Integral Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) • Epic Arts • Morodok • M´lup Russey (MRO) • First Step Cambodia (FSC) • Continuing Learning Organization (CLO)
Papua New Guinea		• SIL International • Bible Translation Association of Papua New Guinea
Thailand	• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT)	• SIL International • Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) • Mekong Mission Forum (MMF)
Myanmar	• Myanmar Lutheran Church • Evangelical Lutheran Church of Myanmar • Mara Evangelical Church • Lutheran Church of Myanmar	• Euro-Burma Office (EBO) • Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar • Eden Centre for Disabled Children (ECDC) • Language and Social Development Organization (LSDO)

China, Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan		
China	• China Christian Council (CCC) • Hunan Christian Council (HCC) (no active project work) • Yunnan Christian Council (YCC) (no active project work)	• Amity Foundation • Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (no active project work) • Hunan Bible Institute (no active project work) • Zhongnan University (no active project work) • Dali and Baoshan Bible Schools (no active project work)
(Special administrative region of Hong Kong)	• Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK)	• Institute of Sino-Christian Studies (ISCS) • Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) • Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC) • Hong Kong Amity Regional Office
(Taiwan)	• Lutheran Church of Taiwan (LCT)	• China Lutheran Seminary (CLS) • House of Grace drugs withdrawal centre
Middle East		
Cyprus		SAT-7
Israel		• International Christian Committee of Israel (MECC-ICCI-Dspr) • Rossing Center • Musalaha • Baladna • MECC-DSPR • Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
Autonomous territories of Palestine	• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)	• East Jerusalem YMCA
Syria		• Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)
Oman		• Al Amana Centre
Nepal and Pakistan		
Nepal	• Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC)	• Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) • Centre for Mental Health and Counselling (CMC- Nepal) • Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS Nepal) • KOSHISH • Leadership Training Department /National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (LTD/NCF-N) • Nepal Ebenezer Theological Seminary (NETS) • Forward Looking (FL) • United Mission to Nepal (UMN)
Pakistan	• Church of Pakistan/Diocese of Peshawar (DOP)	• Pakistan Bible Correspondence School • Christian Study Center (CSC)

Latin America		
Bolivia	• Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB)	
Colombia	• Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO)	• Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
Venezuela	• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela (IELV)	
Multilateral cooperation		
		• ACT Alliance • Euro-Burma Office (EBO) • CPMPF (Church of Pakistan Mission Partners Forum) • Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) • Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) • Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa (JCMWA) • World Council of Churches (WCC) • Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) • Lutheran World Federation (LWF) • Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) • Project for Christian Muslim Relation in Africa (PROCMURA) • Wycliffe Bible Translators • SAT-7 • Common Space Initiative (CSI) • United Mission to Nepal (UMN)

Moving forward together

I was appointed Chair of the Board of Felm in late August 2024. I accepted the task with gratitude and humility. I have done mission work myself and my heart is that of a Felm worker. As Chair, I want to take Felm in an even more transparent and interactive direction. The past year has given great opportunities for it. The future vision of the Felm community has grown even stronger.

In August 2024, our church convened its mission work partners for a negotiation on the theme "Your Will Be Done – Church and Mission in Changing Landscape" in Helsinki. The church's partner organisations and their partners from around the world participated in the mission partnership negotiations. Approximately forty partner churches and organisations participated in the negotiations, including Felm's partners. The rapid change in the operating environments of churches sparked discussion among partners. The mission partnership negotiations provided an opportunity for dialogue and clarifying the shared vision of work.

During the past year, here at Felm we have also wanted to ask, listen and engage in dialogue. Partner churches and organisations convened for regional consultations and later gathered in Helsinki in August 2024 for a global consultation. The event not only explored future challenges and identified key areas for collaboration, but also included discussions on partnership and its future prospects. Even though the operational environment is changing rapidly, it was easy to see that our thoughts on the shared mission are moving in the same direction.

I was especially moved by the partners' desire to learn together and from each other. Our partners expressed, among other things, a desire to learn from each other about successful methods of evangelism and reaching new people. Rapidly progressing climate change also resonated with our partners. In particular, we were asked to take action to mitigate climate change in our hemisphere. In the future, we will strengthen our joint work with an international advisory group consisting of partners. It is important that the voices of the partners are also heard in strategic decision-making.

At Felm, it has also been important to ask, listen and engage in dialogue with parishes. Over the past year, we have been actively doing this, wanting to understand how we can further strengthen our shared vision of work and mutual trust. Based on the feedback from parishes, the management and employees of Felm have started development work to further strengthen our ability to meet the needs of parishes.

The adaptation of Felm's finances continued in 2024. The farewells were painful, but the outcome was desirable in terms of the balance of finances. I would like to thank all of Felm's partners, parishes, member communities, all donors and Felm's personnel. From here, we move forward — together in action!

Mari Parkkinen
Bishop
Chair of Felm

KALERVO PÖYKKÖ

ON THE COVER: RODETH, 15 AND FLORENCO, 17, FROM MARTIN LUTHER SCHOOL, ANGOLA. PHOTO LINDA JUNTUNEN.