



LWF Twelfth Assembly
Pre-Assembly Visits
4 to 9 May 2017
Namibia

lwfassembly.org

Twelfth Assembly delegates and participants will be given a chance to learn and experience some of the most pressing challenges facing Namibia through visits to be organized before the Assembly. The pre-Assembly visits will take place from the 4th (arrivals) to the 9th of May 2017 and will be organized by the Assembly Offices in Windhoek and Geneva with the support of the hosting churches. (During this period, youth and women delegates will be at their respective pre-Assembly meetings. Opportunities to learn about Namibia and encounter members of local congregations will be built in their respective programs.)

Some facts about the Pre-Assembly Visits

- The visits will take place from the 4th (arrivals) to the 9th of May 2017
- The visits will be open to all Assembly delegates and participants (except youth and women delegates participating at the youth and women's pre-assembly meetings)
- The visits will be entirely self-supporting which means that a fee to cover all expenses will be charged to each participant
- Because of limited capacity and the vast area that will be covered by the visits, the program will only be able to accommodate 40 participants
- In order to share the experience to the whole Assembly community, participants in the pre-Assembly visits will be asked to organize a story-telling session at the Omatala.

Themes and issues to be dealt with in the visits

- Poverty and inequality
- Desertification and climate change

Poverty and inequality

Namibia is categorized as a high middle income country (2009) and has enjoyed steady economic growth since its independence in 1990. However, Namibia is also the country with the highest levels of inequality (2009). It is estimated that 30% of the population live below the poverty line (2015)ⁱ.

In 2008, a pilot project organized by a coalition of churches, trade unions, NGOs and AIDS service organizations was implemented in the settlement of Otjivero, in the Omitara district, in Eastern Namibia. The project called the Basic Income Grant (BIG) involved the handing out of N\$100 (EUR6.50) per person, per month to 1'200 residents without any conditions attached. After one year, an impact assessment was carried out and the findings included a "dramatic reduction in malnutrition among children, an increase in income-earning activities among residents and a large increase in self-employment; a significant increase in the rate of school attendance as well as payment of school fees; higher levels of nutrition among recipients of ARVs and increasing control by residents over their own lives." These findings exceeded the expectations of the Coalition and are using them to intensify the campaign for a roll-out of the Basic Income Grant across the country.

Participants in the pre-assembly visits will be given the opportunity to visit Omitara, discuss with the inhabitants of the community about the impact of BIG, and get to know their current situation and the challenges facing their community. Participants will also be given the chance to discuss with national and local government authorities on their poverty eradication program. They will be taken on a tour of Windhoek and the largest township in Windhoek called Katutura. While in Katutura, they will see some of the livelihood projects and programs being implemented by the Lutheran churches.

Desertification and climate change

Changing weather patterns brought about by climate change have severe consequences for Namibia's fragile ecosystem. A process of desertification has led to continuous land degradation evidenced by the "lowering of ground water tables, soil erosion, loss of woody vegetation, loss of grass and shrubs, bush encroachment and decrease in soil fertility."ⁱⁱ

Participants in the pre-assembly visits will be exposed to the phenomenon of bush encroachment. Bush encroachment is defined as the "invasion and/or thickening of aggressive undesired woody species, resulting in an imbalance of the grass ratio, a decrease in biodiversity and concomitant economic losses"ⁱⁱⁱ. For many farmers, bush encroachment endangers their livelihoods and is a threat to food security as well as the entire economy. Bush encroachment also affects the fragile ecosystem in Namibia as wild animals are made more vulnerable by this phenomenon brought about by climate change.

Participants will see bush encroachment first-hand and understand its impact on people and wildlife. They will also get the chance to see some programs and hear directly from those that are involved in addressing the consequences of this worsening problem.

A chance to see wildlife at its best

As in most countries there is always a special place, extremely beautiful and unique. Namibia also has such spaces. These spaces are awe-inspiring and replenishing. They are:

- An important part of the lives of Namibians
- Important for us to recognize God's greatness
- Important for us to accept God's grace.

Participants in the pre-assembly visits will be taken to a national park for an overnight stay and see wildlife at its best.

For those interested

The details of the program as well as logistics are being finalized. With regards to costs and due to the huge distance to be covered by the visits, one should expect to pay an all-inclusive (meals, transport, accommodation, entrance fees) fee in the region of EUR800. Please email LWF_Assembly@lutheranworld.org to register your interest by 31st October 2016.

ⁱ <http://www.na.undp.org/content/namibia/en/home/countryinfo/>

ⁱⁱ http://www.the-eis.com/data/literature/Bush%20Encoachment%20in%20Namibia_deKlerk2004_1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.the-eis.com/data/literature/Bush%20Encoachment%20in%20Namibia_deKlerk2004_1.pdf