



Office for Personnel staff team attends briefing, 2003.  
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## Office for Personnel (OP)

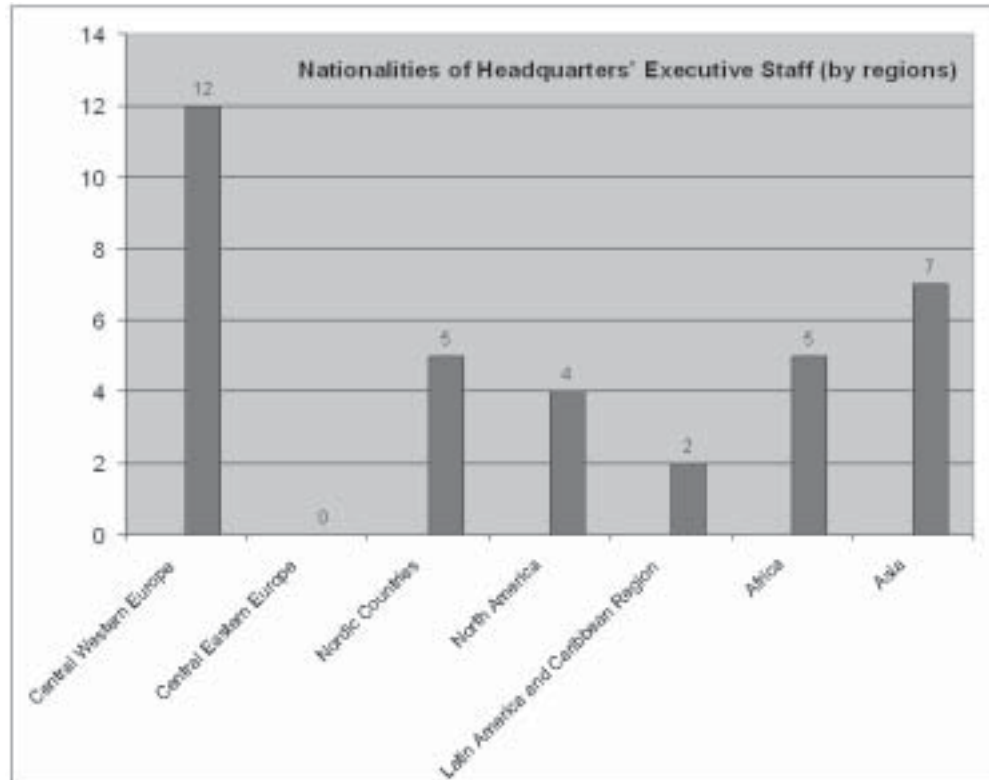
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People are the LWF's most important and most valuable resource. It is people who transform plans into projects and programs, people who achieve the aims and goals of the Federation.

### Headquarters' Staff

Since 1997, the number of staff working in the Geneva Secretariat has remained

comparatively stable. At the time of writing, there are 92 staff, two youth interns, and, within the capacity training program, a member of the field staff is serving currently in the Geneva Secretariat. Twenty-five nationalities are represented on the staff. Of the 36 executive staff members, 12 are from the South and 13 are women. There are three women among the eight permanent Cabinet members.



### International Field Staff

There have been significant changes during the past few years. For example, at the time of the last Assembly, over 100 staff were employed on contracts for periods of one to three years; now there are 54. At the same time, demand for employment—of international staff as well as secondment of staff from LWF-related agencies—for short-term service (1–12 months) has risen considerably, resulting in an average of 60 appointments annually. Eight members of the international field staff are women, three of whom are in charge of field programs.

Among the reasons for these changes are the financial constraints confronting related agencies and partners which support LWF field programs and the new response to emergencies embodied in Action by Churches Together (ACT), founded in 1995. Over 15 international staff are employed annually, in partnership with ACT, on short-term, tripartite contracts to assist in the implementation and management of ACT-financed emergency projects.

### Equality in Employment Conditions

Like any organization, the LWF is concerned with the development and application of its policies and regulations governing the employment of staff. In consultation with the Staff Representative Council (SRC), the LWF Headquarters' Personnel Regulations were reviewed and amended in 1998 and implemented in January 1999. A Field Representative Council was established in 2000 along similar lines to the SRC to represent the interests of international staff in matters relating to their employment and welfare, both collectively and individually.

In order to provide greater equality in the employment of international field staff, the LWF Personnel Policies for Headquarters' Staff were reviewed and amended to ensure that the governing principles of employment also applied to international staff working abroad. This process was completed in 2000. In addition, to facilitate their understanding and application, the conditions and regulations pertaining to the employment of international field staff

(which had hitherto formed part of employment agreements) were recorded in a separate document entitled “International Field Regulations” and entered into force in January 1999. In October 2001, these regulations were complemented by “Administrative Guidelines for International Field Staff.”

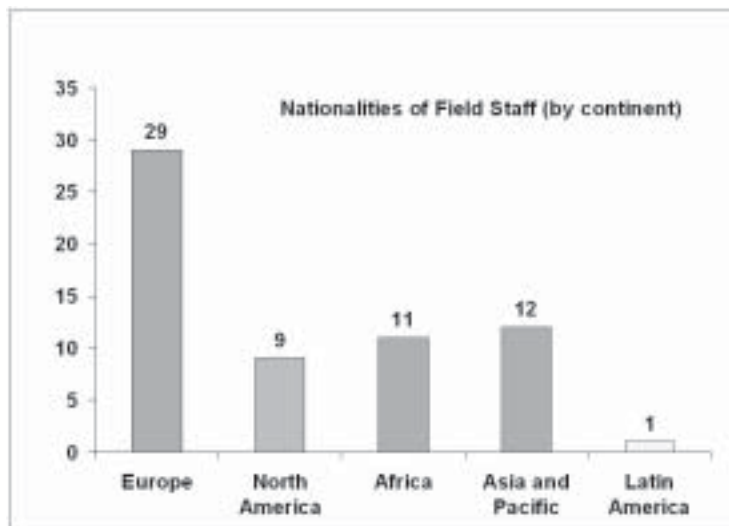
With the creation of the Field Representative Council and the new field regulations and administrative guidelines, the basic conditions of service for international field staff have been codified in a comparable manner to those for staff working in the Geneva Secretariat.

## **Finding the Right Person at the Right Time**

It is expected that job vacancies will be filled as soon as possible. However, finding qualified personnel is a complex and time-consuming process.

### **Vacancies in the Geneva Secretariat**

Executive staff vacancies in the Geneva Secretariat are announced in member churches, national committees, related agencies, and field offices, all of which are invited to nominate persons with suitable skills and experience. Applicants must have the endorsement of their home church. In addition to the primary need for competence, there is also need to ensure a balanced representation of member churches on the staff and to strike geographical, gender, and age balances. Short-listed applicants are interviewed by Cabinet members, after which the name of the selected candidate is submitted to the Executive Committee (or, in the case of a Cabinet position, to the Council) for appointment. The whole process—from vacancy announcement to appointment—takes approximately six months. Once the appointment has been made, the Office for Personnel applies to the Swiss cantonal immigration authorities for the necessary



work permit, a procedure that may take two months or more. When necessary, arrangements may be made for short-term consultancies and secondments.

The recruitment process for filling vacant administrative posts in Geneva is somewhat simpler. Because the number of foreign workers in Switzerland is limited by the government, LWF recruits administrative staff on the local labor market: Swiss workers or foreign workers already holding a valid work permit.

### **Recruiting Staff for Service in the Field**

The recruitment of personnel for the field is an ongoing process and requires a substantial amount of staff time. Personnel for the DWS 24 country programs is recruited when qualified local staff cannot be found. Recruitment requests are prepared by the Office for Personnel and sent by e-mail to related agencies, ecumenical and other personnel service agencies and field offices. Most requests are also placed on the UN-sponsored Relief Web used by most NGOs to advertise jobs and consulted by interested persons worldwide.

Water, agricultural and construction engineers, project coordinators and finance managers are among those most frequently recruited. In addition to a good command of English, some posts require knowledge of other languages, depending on the location.

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## **Adjustment to the New Environment**

Motivation, technical competence, and the ability to communicate effectively in the right language are essential for field program assignments. Appointees must be able to adjust to the environment in which they will have to live and work: a different climate, basic living conditions, isolation, and little social contact. Adjusting to living and working with people from different cultures, religions, and political regimes, or with people who have different concepts of time and, very often, also a different value system, perhaps places even greater demands on them. Appointees must not only work in partnership with nationals, but also respect the cultures and perspectives of the people in the host country.

Those who move to Geneva, in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, are also required to adjust to new living and working conditions. While colleagues facilitate staff members' adjustment to some extent, family members often experience more difficulty. Spouses may find that they are no longer able to work due to language barriers or work permit restrictions, and children also have to adapt to a new school curriculum and, often, to instruction in another language.

## **What Happens in Cases of Illness or Accident?**

Applicants frequently ask this question. Their prospective job may be located in a tropical country, for example, or positions in Geneva may require overseas travel.

### ***Insurance Coverage***

The LWF has taken out comprehensive insurance for its staff in Geneva and international field staff. Both are covered worldwide under group insurance policies that provide benefits in case of illness, childbirth, accident, death, and third-party liability, as well as compensation in case of

inability to work. The majority of the benefits insured exceed minimal requirements. Health insurance is also available for all accompanying family members.

### ***Emergency Evacuations and Repatriation***

Although insurance coverage is reassuring for international field staff engaged in projects or programs in remote locations in developing nations, they are concerned about how they and their families might obtain medical care should the need arise. In medical emergencies, the LWF will do everything possible to evacuate staff to locations where adequate medical care can be provided. Depending on the circumstances, a patient may be evacuated to health facilities in a neighboring country or even be repatriated.

## **Staff Training and Development**

A comprehensive staff training plan, linked to the Workload Assessment and Priority Setting process, was established in 1998. The purpose of the plan is to increase competence, enhance and develop effectiveness and capability, and enable staff to manage and adjust to the important changes the LWF is undergoing. Among other things, these changes will require staff to become more flexible and learn how to work effectively in teams. In October 1998, a first all-staff training workshop was held with focus on community building.

In June 1999, the Executive Committee recognized that the planned activities under the staff development program were an important investment in the human capital of the LWF and voted to include USD 50,000 annually in the Statement of Needs for the period 2000–2. Pending external financial support, the General Secretary set aside funds from other sources to help individual staff members in all units

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who need to upgrade their skills and abilities in order to function more effectively.

## Volunteers and Interns

Volunteers and interns have always played an important role in the life and work of the LWF. As well as making their skills available, they are also vital in interpreting the work of the Federation on their return to their home church or sending agency.

From 1997 to 2002, some 25 volunteers (20 of whom were women) and 173 interns (88 of whom were women) from 20 different nations were recommended and supported through related agencies and member churches. They were engaged in field programs through DWS's training and exchange program. Over 100 of these were young people from developing nations. For volunteers and interns, the experience gained in humanitarian aid and development activities has been very positive in terms of giving and receiving.

In Geneva, fewer persons have worked as interns and volunteers than previously. One of the reasons for this may be that young people wish to finish their studies as quickly as possible, without interruption, because of intense competition on the job market.

## New Challenges and a Look to the Future

The average length of service among administrative staff at the LWF is quite high compared to many other organizations. The LWF gains enormously from their accumulated knowledge, experience, and competence. In 2003, however, six of these gifted staff members will retire. By then, each of them will have served between 25 and 30 years. It will not be long before others follow. Therefore, attention is being given to what can be done to safeguard the institutional memory of the Federation as these people leave.

Another challenge lies in giving priority to staff already on the payroll when vacancies arise, before advertising commences. Where required, the LWF is prepared to help staff acquire any necessary additional skills or technical knowledge. Staff members will need to be flexible, willing to assume new responsibilities, and able to adapt to different styles of work.

Committed and competent staff are the LWF's most valuable asset. The LWF depends on its members and partners to help identify qualified women and men for service—in Geneva or in the field—and to assist them at the end of their term of service to return to their home country.



**From Hong Kong  
to Winnipeg**

