



Felm 1859

Annual Report of Felm **2023**

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore 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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18–20.

Painful farewells and building something new

Wherever you turned your eyes last year, you were overwhelmed by suffering and cruelty. The actions of humans have sown hunger, war, biodiversity loss and accelerating climate change. The world was created benign but our good world, our relationships with each other and with creation, have become broken and distorted. In the midst of suffering and hopelessness, we yearn for liberation, and thirst for justice and the end of persecution and oppression.

In the Gospel, the Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God will come. He said: "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed. Nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

It is comforting to think that the kingdom of God exists in the midst of oppression, violence, exploitation and injustice. It can be found where there is loneliness, lovelessness, despair and uncertainty. The kingdom of God breaks through when we talk about God's love, do acts of peace and justice, and strive for the good of our neighbours near and far.

The Great Commission, together with the example Jesus set by his deeds and words, lay the foundation for Felm's view of holistic missionary work. It comprises proclaiming the Gospel through words and deeds and acting for justice. This is the task we have, over the past year, had the opportunity of carrying out in many ways together with parishes, funding providers and international and other partners.

Last year, Felm's work was shaped by development and adaptation measures aimed at securing Felm's future. These decisions will mean reducing our personnel, and in the years to come, we will get ready to discontinue our project support in some of the countries in which we operate. We will also cut back on our service activities in Finland. These cutbacks are regrettable, and it hurts to give up important work and say good-bye to skilled employees. While we give up on some things, we will also develop our work, enabling it to make a bigger impact in those countries where it does continue. In Finland, we will create new ways of being present in the daily lives of parishes.

We are building something new with a strong faith in the future. For this we have good grounds. Our work continues to be extensive and impactful, and it reaches people in the most difficult life situations. As our work is based on supporting churches and NGOs, it is on a sustainable basis. Everything we do is underpinned by strong mutual trust between parishes, Felm's other partners, including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, our staff and elected officials, and the encouragement of the people who support our work.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks for your productive and impactful cooperation in 2023.

Pauliina Parhiala
Executive Director





Board members
elected at the AGM
on 19 August

Bishop emeritus
Simo Peura
Chair
Lapua Diocese

Administrative Director
Sari Anetjärvi
Deputy Chair
Espoo Diocese

Vicar
Leena Kairavuo
Archdiocese of Turku

Pastor
Pia Kummel-Myrskog
Porvoo Diocese

Financial
Management Expert
Juha Nivala
Oulu Diocese

Vicar
Jukka Pakarinen
Helsinki 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

Project Procurement
Manager
Simo Suutari
Mikkeli Diocese

Bachelor of Social Sciences
Sampo Untamala
Helsinki Diocese

Director of
Communications
Sakari Vanhanen
Tampere Diocese

”

*I was impressed to see how deeply
the church is involved in people's
lives here. The way the church enga-
ges other actors in working together
and assuming responsibility, rather
than trying to do things alone, is also
important. It brings tremendously
good results.”*

Archbishop Tapio Luoma,
who was introduced to the work of Felm
and its partner church in Colombia
in November 2023.



94
Employees in
Finland

59
Employees
abroad

882
Local
employees



335 000
people benefited directly
from Felm's work, of whom
160 000 benefited from
Felm's development
cooperation



4 735 000
people in total were within
the scope of the work, of
whom **2 060 000** within
the scope of development
cooperation*

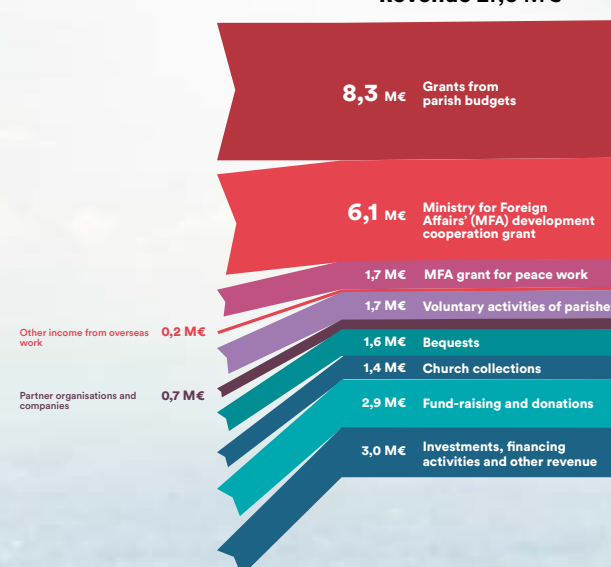
*) People within the scope of the work refer to both
people who are directly benefiting from the project
as well as people, groups or organizations with no
direct connection to the project, but affected by it,
e.g. family members of beneficiaries and members
of the community.

Work areas of Felm



LAURA HÄKLI

Revenue 27,6 M€



Expenditure 27,7 M€



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 everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." John 14:26

The Lutheran Church in Cambodia received its first Cambodian bishop as Sreyleak Touch was ordained, accompanied with the good wishes of partner and sister churches. On the same day, the new bishop ordained four new pastors for the church.



**Supporting
local
churches**

LINDA JUUNTUNEN



The campus area of Nyakato Lutheran Bible College has been planted with many trees and other vegetation.

Nyakato Lutheran Bible College supports the growing churches of Tanzania's Lake Zone

The Bible College supported by Felm turns out pastors, evangelists and parish workers for the needs of the growing church of Tanzania. The church has a strong missionary vision in its native country.

The green campus area of Nyakato Lutheran Bible College is waking up to a new day. The air is fresh and full of the smell of wet soil after last night's heavy rain. A few students have got together to read the Bible before the lessons of the day start.

Nyakato Lutheran Bible College in the city of Mwanza in North-west Tanzania has been providing theological education since 2010. The College turns out pastors, evangelists and parish workers for the dioceses in Tanzania's Lake Zone. Felm has supported the work of the College since its establishment.

4591

children, young people
or adults participated
in Christian education
work with Felm's
support

"The Eastern Diocese of Lake Victoria is relatively young, which means that the number of Christians in this area is smaller than in many other parts of Tanzania. The diocese's missiological identity involves spreading the gospel, which also helps it grow," says **Janne Juhaninmäki**, Programme Manager at Felm.

"Rather than having pastors, many parishes of the Lake Zone are led by evangelists. Theological competence is seen as important, and the education of pastors provides skilled employees for growing parishes. Nyakato Bible College plays an important role in supporting the growth of churches in this area," Juhaninmäki explains.

Nyakato students graduate to serve the church and God

The number of students in Nyakato has grown steadily year after year and has now reached 83. About one half of these students are women. Nyakato is one of the educational institutions in Tanzania from which women can also graduate as pastors.

The College's work has a high impact as almost all of the evangelists, parish workers and pastors it turns out find employment in the new parishes of the region. In 2023, a total of 52 students graduated from Nyakato, 19 of whom were women.

Nyakato receives students from different backgrounds and starting points. Understanding people's diversity and traditions that may be unfamiliar to the future church employees is an important skill. Some of the students in Nyakato do not have a basic education certificate. Felm provides financial support to these students and to evangelist students from poor backgrounds. In total, Felm supported 47 students in 2023.

"The pastor's most important task is to serve the church and God. By their

example, parish workers lead people to the right path, the path of salvation," says **Benjamin Melkizedek**, Deputy Principal of Nyakato.

In December 2023, an open discussion event about heresy was held in Nyakato. Participants from village communities, universities and parishes were invited to discuss fallacious Bible interpretations that lead to harmful practices. The event was a great success in the Diocese of Lake Victoria.

"Nyakato enjoys a very good reputation in Tanzania. Some of our diploma level theology students complete their degrees in cooperation with the University of Iringa. We recently received feedback in which the university praised the excellent quality of the students' theses," Melkizedek rejoices.

Evangelists, parish workers and priests who have graduated from Nyakato find employment almost one hundred percent in the churches in the area.

Felm supports theological education

FELM WORKS TO IMPROVE the quality of theological education around the world in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Asia In Hong Kong, Felm offers scholarships for theology students from Mainland China through the Lutheran Theological Seminary. Jukka Helle is employed as a teacher at the seminary, while Laura Kallatsa came to teach there in the autumn through Felm Theology programme.

In Thailand, Felm supports the Luther Seminary, at which Anja Markkanen organised a pilot course on the theology of deaconry in 2023.

In Nepal, Felm provides general support for the Ebenezer Theological Seminary, also known as NETS.

In Taiwan, Felm supports the Lutheran Seminary in Hsinchu.

Africa In Ethiopia, we support especially female students at the Mekane Yesus Seminary. Felm has had a particular focus on women's education, for which it is difficult to obtain support elsewhere, at the Seminary. In 2020–2023, 64 female theologians have graduated from the Seminary.

We also support the accreditation processes of auxiliary seminaries. Kai Ojala was employed as a teacher at the Seminary in 2023, while Mari-Anna Stålnacke worked in the Seminary's Felm Theology programme in spring 2023.

In Tanzania, we support theological education at Nyakato Lutheran Bible College. Kari-Antti Kitunen worked as a teacher at the College in 2023.

In Angola, Felm supports theological education at Shangalala Bible School. We also fund theological education organised by the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA).

Latin America Felm supports the Christian education of parish members in Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia, for example through Bible study groups. Lutheran identity is supported by theological teaching.

In addition, Felm supports the global scholarship programme and leadership training of the Lutheran World Federation.

”

I have now been in Hong Kong for two and a half months, and I'm really impressed with Felm's work here. Felm supports financially theology students from Mainland China, but the impact of our work is not limited to that region and Hong Kong alone. My colleague Jukka Helle and I teach many international students who study at the Seminary. These international students receive a good academic education at the Seminary, which will help them develop their churches around Asia."

Laura Kallatsa, Doctor of Theology, Hong Kong.
Felm Theology programme launched by Felm in 2019 sends doctors of theology in short-term teaching positions to its partners' seminaries around the world. Laura Kallatsa was sent to Hong Kong as part of this programme in 2023.



Felm supports church leadership

DEVELOPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP is a multidimensional priority relevant to almost all of Felm's partner churches. In this development are stressed promoting the participation of women, young people and marginalised groups in decision-making as well as strengthening the church's internal strategic direction and profitability with the aim of enabling churches to manage without external support.

In Felm's work areas efforts to develop leadership have, for instance, been made together with the Taiwan Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in Cambodia, Continuous Learning Organization (CLO) and Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Holy Land. Leadership has been identified as a cross-cutting theme at the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) in Hong Kong.



SAMI MANNERHEIMO

"The church has decided to accept both sexes as pastors, and I very much hope that I will not be the only one. Nevertheless, our church has a very strong focus on work with women and its own gender equality policy. Women are involved in all church bodies and committees."

Sally Azar, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. In 2023, Sally Azar became the first local woman to serve as a pastor in a Felm-supported church.

Hundreds waiting for baptism in Ethiopia

THE ETHIOPIAN Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, which is supported by Felm, carries out high-impact missionary work in Ethiopia. The church's synod of Dessie, which covers the northern and central area of the country, operates in the states of Amhara, Afar and Tigray, in which Islam is the dominant religion and which have suffered from protracted conflicts in recent years.

Felm supports the education of employees and volunteers in the Dessie Synod of the church in Ethiopia. "The education programmes include a lot of Bible study, as in an area where Christianity is a minority religion, it is particularly important for Christians to know the founding dogmas of their faith and to also be able to tell others about them," says **Kristiina Ojala**, Director of the Country Office in Ethiopia.

Many volunteers of the church work as missionaries in their regions, and their enthusiasm for spreading

the gospel has borne fruit. Last year, the church opened nine new outreach work parishes with 25 to 50 members each. More than a hundred new adult parish members were baptised as they joined the church, and more than twice as many are receiving teaching to prepare them for baptism and currently waiting to be baptised.

Most of the new parishioners are Muslims who have converted to Christianity. While Christians and Muslims have traditionally lived in harmony in Ethiopia and respected each other, converting to Christianity is still dangerous for Muslims. Converts may be rejected by their families, their lives may be at risk, and they may have to remain in hiding for the rest of their lives.

"Please pray for God's blessing and protection for the new parishioners as well as for the pastors and workers of Dessie Synod!" Kristiina Ojala asks.

In what other ways does Felm support churches around the world?

In poor countries and small minority churches, a number of challenges and educational needs are often associated with leadership, and the churches themselves have asked for support with these issues. Developing church leadership is indeed a priority of the work that concerns almost all of Felm's partner churches.

In addition, Felm bolsters the role of women, young people and those discriminated against for other reasons in decision-making in churches.

Felm supports the strategic direction selected by the church, its outreach work and its profitability with the aim of enabling it to manage on its own without external funding.

Many reasons to support education

Supporting the education of church employees is an important form of missionary work.

Tanzania has the world's second largest Lutheran church with around 8 million members. According to the statistics of the Lutheran World Federation, only the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia is larger with its over 10 million members. Why do churches as large as this need support from Finland?

FIRSTLY, large and growing churches suffer from labour shortages. The churches in Ethiopia and Tanzania are growing faster than the number of trained employees, and churches are afflicted by a lack of pastors. And because education is expensive while churches are extremely poor, it is important for churches in different countries to support each other. "The Scandinavian countries and Germany are great countries from which we can receive support for theological education because they are Lutheran. But they are not the only ones. The world is getting smaller at such a fast rate that learning from others is becoming increasingly important," says **Elisa Buberwa**, Bishop Emeritus from Tanzania.

ANOTHER REASON to support theological education is the rise of misleading theologies in Africa and around the world. There is nothing wrong with the neo-charismatic

movements as such, but problematic exercise of power has come up in some of them. If the church is born from its leader's personal spiritual vision, the leader typically develops the theology themselves.

"In Tanzania, the Lutheran church is concerned over losing its members to neo-charismatic movements, but above all over the fact that in some churches people's faith can be abused," says **Lotta Gammel**, a Felm employee who defended her dissertation on neo-charismatic movements in Tanzania.

THE THIRD REASON for supporting theological education is the possibility of developing theology in interaction. Students benefit from having teachers who come from a large variety of different cultures. Most people in Tanzania say that they are either Christians or Muslims, but old customs live on underneath the surface. When they are sick, people may seek help not only from a doctor but also a traditional healer. While believing in curses and fearing witchcraft may cause anxiety in individuals, at the level of society they hamper the country's development.

This context can be best understood by a Tanzanian teacher, but in terms of developing theology, an outsider's perspective is also helpful.

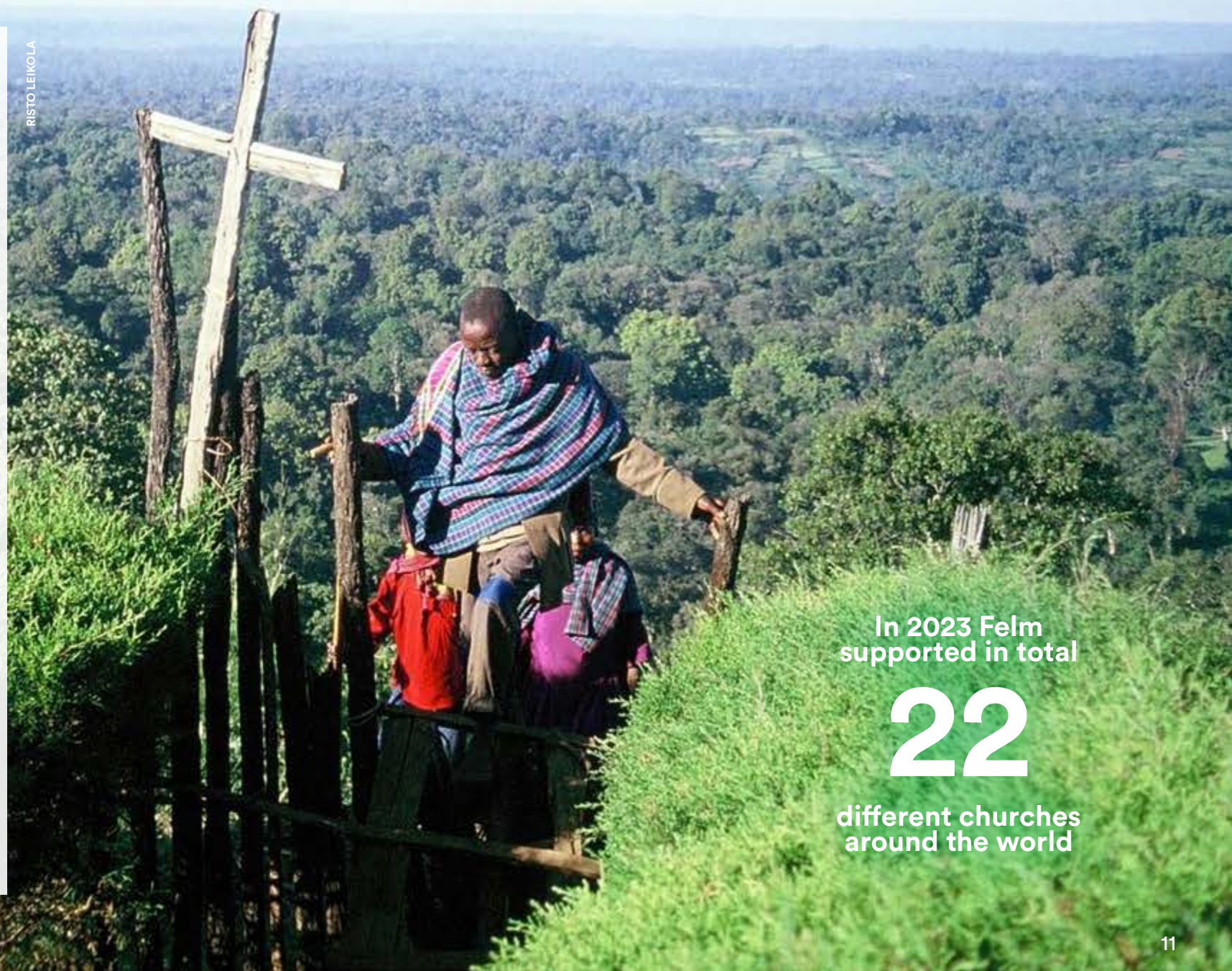
MANY OF THE PARTNER churches' leaders have been educated by Felm. They have a clear understanding of how theological education is the best tool in evangelisation work. In Nyakato Lutheran Bible College in Tanzania, Felm has supported basic level theological education, and the church employs the graduates in its parishes. At the Mekane Yesus Seminary, Felm has focused particularly on women's education, support for which is difficult to get elsewhere. In 2020–2023, 64 female theologians have graduated from the Seminary.

FELM ALSO SUPPORTS theological education in China and academic research from a base in Hong Kong. There is no other similar educational institution providing Lutheran education in this region.

The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong provides high-quality basic and advanced theological education for employees and future leaders of churches in Hong Kong, Mainland China and South and Southeast Asia.

Felm also supports individual students in cooperation with the Lutheran World Federation through its scholarship programme, and many current church leaders have received support for their education from Felm.

RISTO LEIKOLA



In 2023 Felm supported in total

22

different churches around the world

"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Luke 18:16

804

teachers and teacher students received training in multilingual or mother tongue teaching



Education

Felm's support has enabled many children in Myanmar to attend school.

War slows down but does not stop progress

In Myanmar, life has been coloured by fear and insecurity since the coup of the military junta in February 2021. Despite the conflict, Felm has been able to continue working with its partners in the country. In 2023, there was a special focus on supporting school attendance in a situation where the education sector, similarly to many other basic services, has been paralysed.

The spiral of violence in Myanmar continues in form of battles between the democratic rebel forces and the governing military junta. The situation deteriorated further in autumn 2023 and, as a result of violent clashes, more than 600,000 people were forced to flee their homes.

The junta's new military service act, under which young men and women have been forcibly recruited into the army, has exacerbated the refugee situation. By the end of 2023, nearly 2.6 million people had been forced to leave their homes. (Source: EU)

"The arbitrary conduct of the army inspires in people a fear that they can be arrested anywhere at any time," says **Päivi Lilja**, a Felm

A virtual trip to an indigenous people in Columbia

IN 2023, FELM FILMED the life of Kogi, an indigenous people living in the mountains of Sierra Nevada, with a 360 camera. The result was a fascinating, experiential virtual reality game suitable for schoolchildren of all ages.

"We Kogis lived in closed communities for a long time because we wanted to preserve our own culture, rather than be influenced by others. Today, however, we have understood the benefits that cooperation may bring. It is

important that we learn how to cope in both worlds," says **Pablo Gil**, a Kogi university student.

In the game, players visit a local school and a football pitch and do everyday chores. The game also offers an interesting introduction to Felm's own-language education project, which is carried out together with the Kogis.

The production of the game was supported from Finnish development cooperation funds.



2299

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

employee in Myanmar. Lilja is currently performing her tasks from Thailand.

Conflict hits schools

“Children’s access to education is highly uncertain when schools, which have been targeted by air strikes, are forced to keep their doors closed. Schools additionally suffer from a shortage of teachers, as many teachers have joined the resistance movement and are not willing to work in schools controlled by the military,” says Lilja.

Together with its local partners, Felm improved children’s access to education in several projects in 2023. For example in the Paletwa region, which has been the scene of armed conflicts, Felm supported financially the access to education of 274 children and young people, in addition to 325 children and young people in the poor Zweekanar region. In Maramaa, successful recruitment of 24 teachers was great news, as this will make it possible for 319 pupils to go to school in the next term.

Children with disabilities are at a special risk

While Myanmar ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2001, discriminatory practices and attitudes persist. For example,

access to education has been poor, and the necessary data collection and evaluation systems or support services do not exist.

“With the paralysis of the education sector, the development of inclusive education has also slowed down,” says Lilja.

As part of her role, she supports the Eden Centre, a Myanmar-based disability NGO. The Eden Centre bolsters the education of persons with disabilities in Chin, which is the least-developed state in Myanmar. This difficult-to-reach area has the highest number of people with disabilities in the country, and most disabled children are not sent to school. In addition, continual armed conflicts in the region hamper mobility even further.

“The risk is that the conflict will increase the isolation of persons with disabilities, as leaving home is a particular risk for them; they are more vulnerable to violence, and it is harder for them to reach safety in a hazardous situation,” Lilja says.

In 2023, the work of Felm and the Eden Centre made it possible for more than 100 children with disabilities to attend school, and 60 teachers received training in working with children with disabilities. In addition, 29 schools carried out an accessibility survey, and construction work to facilitate access was completed in eight.

“It often takes the whole community to achieve the change towards realising the rights of children with disabilities. This is why it has been important to organise training on the rights of people with disabilities in schools and villages,” Lilja says.

The project on the education of children with disabilities was supported from Finnish development cooperation funds.

”

In 2023, the situation in Myanmar deteriorated further as the armed forces targeted their military power at not only the military groups within the democratic movement but also directly at civilians. Despite the escalation of the conflict, the peace project managed to maintain and strengthen the country’s democratic forces. Improving coordination and dialogue among key actors in ethnic states – ethnic armed groups, political parties and civil society – while striving to strengthen state-level administrative mechanisms was of particular significance.”

Johannes Vierula, Project Manager of Myanmar peace project.
Felm engages in peace work in Myanmar with the support of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

* The impact of the project is measured cumulatively throughout the programming period. The figure indicates the number of beneficiaries in 2022-2023.

ANNA LUNDÉN

1465

children received support
for moving to the next grade.

Own-language learning materials

Education delivered in the pupils’ mother tongue is one of the priority areas of Felm’s development cooperation. More than 600 million children and young people in the world do not have even basic literacy and mathematics skills, even if most of them have attended school. One reason for this is using a language that children do not understand properly, or speak as their mother tongue, in primary education.

In Colombia, Felm promotes the use of indigenous peoples’ mother tongues in teaching together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. The project was launched in 2022 with the Kogi and Embera peoples, while an agreement was also concluded in 2023 with the Arhuaco people on developing a curriculum in four communities. The situation has also been surveyed among the Wiwa people.

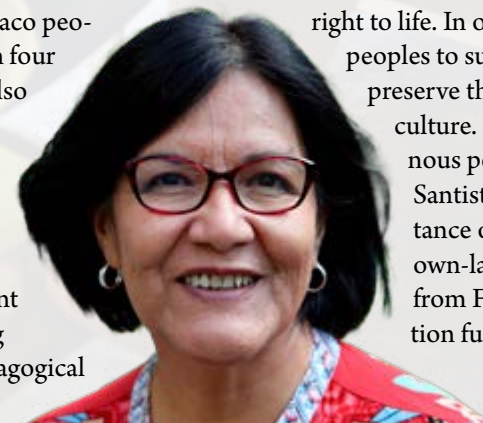
During the year, several training workshops were held with the Kogi, Embera and Arhuaco communities on the content and methods of curricula. Putting three curricula together with pedagogical

institutions of the relevant regions was a significant step forward. During the year, three teaching documents dealing with Kogi language grammar were also updated. New Kogi language teaching material was additionally produced for pre-school children during the year.

“This work is highly culturally sensitive. The communities themselves develop solutions for teaching. This project of Felm and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia is, as far as we know, the only one in the entire country that promotes indigenous peoples’ right to their own language and culture in practice and at such a fundamental level,” says **Ruth Santisteban**, Country Director of Colombia at Felm.

“This work is also about indigenous peoples’ right to life. In order for small indigenous peoples to survive, it is important that they preserve their territories, languages and culture. If these three are lost to indigenous peoples, they will cease to exist,” Santisteban reflects on the importance of Felm’s work. The project on own-language education is supported from Finland’s development cooperation funds.

RUTH SANTISTEBAN



"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

Genesis 2:15

10 226

people received training on disaster risk reduction and management*



Climate action

530

people participated in environmental and climate education organised by churches

Why is missionary work also climate work?

CLIMATE CHANGE affects people who are already in a vulnerable position the most – and Felm supports them in coping with the crisis.

Although climate work is carried out in many quarters, climate change is often seen only as an environmental issue. In missionary work, the perspective is precisely to take care of people living in the midst of a crisis so that they do not have to starve or become refugees. Climate work is love for one's neighbour.

4633

households participated in using climate change mitigation methods and technologies, including solar panels*

7933

small farmers received support for sustainable agricultural production and sale of products*

This is how Felm supported people facing the climate crisis in 2023

The poorest people in developing countries bear the greatest burden of climate change. They face floods, droughts, landslides and storms. Supporting people so that they can adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change and remain in their homes is at the core of Felm's climate work.

Underground greenhouses and clean water

In autumn 2023, the impacts of climate change and the El Niño weather phenomenon affected people's lives in Bolivia in concrete terms. Six of the nine provinces of Bolivia suffered from drought, and more than 70 municipalities were declared a disaster area. The water level in Lake Titicaca in our work area was two metres below usual. The drought has caused forest fires, destroyed crops and hampered livestock farming.

In the Aymara community of Ucha Ucha, which is one of the target areas of Felm's water project, dozens of alpaca died during the autumn. This community is particularly vulnerable to drought as alpaca breeding is currently its only source of livelihood. In December, a clean water system was completed for the community with the support of Felm and the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The system gives 134 families access to clean water.

* The impact of the project is measured cumulatively throughout the programming period. The figure indicates the number of beneficiaries in 2022-2023.

Before the water system was put in place, poor-quality well water had to be divided between five families. Now each family has their own water supply point and filter in their house. The source of the water is underground at a depth of 70 to 80 metres.

In addition to the Ucha Ucha community, clean drinking water was supplied during the year to the municipalities of Santiago de Callapa, Pichin and Jok-hopampa as well as the Umala Cultani community.

The use of underground greenhouses (walipini) was also launched with Felm's support in three different communities in 2023. The greenhouses are located underground because, at the altitude of four kilometres in the mountains, it is too sunny and dry for ordinary greenhouses. Plants and vegetables, including tomatoes and cauliflower, are planted in the underground greenhouses. A dedicated water system will also be installed in them.

Biogas from manure

While many areas in Ethiopia suffer from drought, others are afflicted by floods. This results in hunger and conflicts as people are forced to fight for less resources. Many people leave their home regions and flock to the cities in hopes of livelihoods and survival.

Sabina Hamis Lukelesha in Kilwa is harvesting sweet potatoes. In 2023, farmers in Tanzania received training with Felm's support, for example on the right time to plant sweet potatoes and other agricultural techniques that reduce the risk of losing crops to flooding or drought.



BRIZENDRA BHATTARAI

Nepal has been assessed to be the world's fourth most vulnerable country to climate change. With Felm's support, village communities received training on climate-resilient farming, in other words techniques that enable cultivation despite difficult weather conditions. For example, farmers were given seeds that can tolerate drought better, and they received training in recycling the grey water generated in their households, planting kitchen gardens, and using drip irrigation and greenhouses.



ANNA-KAISA KÄHKÖLÄ

20,5 %

of households in communities covered by the projects used wood-saving or other environmentally friendly stoves.

Together with its partners, Felm has already helped more than 5,000 families adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Communities have received training in soil improvement methods and the introduction of new crops. Self-sufficiency has been improved by developing local energy sources, such as solar energy and biogas capture from manure. Fertilisers are obtained as a by-product of biogas, which saves money by eliminating the need to buy expensive artificial fertilisers. Thanks to wood-saving stoves, women need to collect less firewood, which leaves them more time for other things. On small-scale entrepreneurship courses women, in particular, learn to grow avocados, apples and lemons and earn an income from selling their produce.

Climate work in Ethiopia, Cambodia and Nepal is supported from Finnish development cooperation funds.

Climate change and deforestation have forced indigenous peoples living in Ratanakiri to look for new livelihoods and crop varieties. With Felm's support, they have received training in the cultivation of such crops as fungi. Nin Samreth, an employee of Felm's partner organisation ICC, was watering a fungus cultivation on a wall in Ratanakiri, Cambodia, in spring 2023.



GEORGE JEFFERIES

Felm received the Church's environment diploma for a second time

FELM RECEIVED the Church's environment diploma as the first Christian organisation in 2019. In December 2023, the Church Council of Finland awarded the diploma to Felm for the new period of 2024–2028, and Felm remains the only organisation to have received this diploma.

In its new environmental programme, Felm undertakes to reduce emissions from flights by 30% and to cut its energy consumption by 10% by 2028.

While Niko sits in the conference room for hours, Rose is building stoves in the heat

Felm influenced climate talks and provided village communities training on climate change adaptation in 2023.



Ruusa Gawaza

Climate Advisor

You work as a climate advisor in Zimbabwe, and in December you visited the countryside to provide village communities with training on climate resilience. What does this mean in practice? "During my trip, I provided training for 50 local people on climate change and coping with its impacts. They learned about sustainable cultivation methods, drip irrigation, income diversification, apiculture, agroforestry and improving disaster preparedness. The training culminated in a practical exercise in which the participants learned to make wood-saving stoves for their homes. The stove halves the need for firewood compared to the traditional method of cooking on an open fire. After the training, four enthusiastic young people were declared climate ambassadors: they will go on to spread information to other young people and organise campaigns and events in the village.

What do you remember particularly about the trip? "The climate crisis is a reality in Zimbabwe. Drought and food insecurity are present everywhere, and they were repeatedly brought up by the people I talked with. It is obvious that damage and losses affecting farming are already a fact for many because they can no longer cultivate their fields as they did before – if at all. We are talking about losing the entire culture of farming and livelihoods across a large area."

What does your work as a climate advisor involve? "I give our partners versatile and practical support. I check that projects are carried out following the plans included in the development cooperation programme. I visit projects and make sure that their results are sustainable. My work involves training our partners and sharing best practices in climate work between our different work areas."



Niko Humalisto

Leading Advocacy Specialist

You participated in the Dubai climate talks in December as part of the ACT Alliance, a delegation of Christian actors. What is it like working in climate talks?

"My work focuses on the technical aspects of climate talks. The preparation of negotiation documents is expert work on which the parties involved, including the EU, the Arab countries or groups of poor countries, strive to leave their mark. I monitor the progress of this work and hone interpretations and compromise proposals, which we then pass on to the various negotiating parties. All significant political commitments from doubling adaptation funding to phasing out fossil fuels are based on this expert work that sounds quite dull."

What were the successes of the climate talks? "As a key success can be regarded the phasing out of fossil fuels. This decision inaugurates a new era of hope in climate policy. Without changes, humankind will march towards disastrous global warming of almost three degrees."

What do you remember particularly about the talks? "The establishment of a fund to compensate for climate damage in the early stages of the meeting. In Felm's work, we see how difficult it is for poor communities to recover from the damage and losses caused by climate change. For people's movements in developing countries, the fund will be an important step towards safeguarding the rights of poor and vulnerable groups of people."

Climate work in Zimbabwe is supported from Finnish development cooperation funds.

"You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:31

10 490
children received
emergency relief



**Humanitarian
aid**

With the support of Felm, DSPR has provided psychosocial support to children and mothers in schools and refugee centres in Gaza.

DSPR

19 360
adults received
emergency relief

Assistance to victims of earthquakes, war and violence

Turkey and Syria were struck by a powerful earthquake in February 2023. Felm granted the sum of EUR 70,000 to help earthquake victims in Syria, which was channelled through the Middle East Council of Churches. The funds granted by Felm were used to support the operation of schools and children's school attendance in the earthquake area. Felm continues to support this work, and food aid and hygiene supplies have been delivered to vulnerable inhabitants.

In 2023, Felm continued to assist Ukrainian refugees in Ukraine and Poland together with the Lutheran World Federation. In Ukraine, the focus was on handing out aid supplies, repairing damaged homes and providing psychosocial support.

Dozens of churches and Christian homes were destroyed in a wave of violence in Pakistan in August 2023. Felm granted an amount of EUR 20,000 as support for families, which was distributed as cash grants. This enabled families to buy food, kitchen supplies and similar.

The food crisis was exacerbated around the world in 2023 due to such factors as unstable weather conditions, conflicts and inflation. Felm supported its partners in providing emergency food assistance and improving food security, for example in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Colombia, Cambodia and Myanmar. Both collection funds and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' development cooperation funds were used for this work.

Support in the midst of the Gaza crisis

The terrorist organisation Hamas attacked Israel in October 2023, after which Israel launched a counter-attack in the Gaza Strip. The war faced Gaza with a humanitarian crisis of gigantic proportions. Tens of thousands have been killed and injured, there is a shortage of food and water, and most of the hospitals in the area have ceased to operate. Around 80% of people in Gaza have been forced to flee their homes.

In 2023, Felm granted EUR 75,000 from its Emergency Fund for the provision of humanitarian aid in Gaza. The aid is delivered by the DSPR, a division subordinate to the Middle East Council of Churches.

Felm's support is used to provide basic health care, medicines and hygiene products to people in the Rafah region in South Gaza. The clinic has also distributed milk portions to children. More than 400 patients visit the clinic every day.

DSPR has also provided psychosocial support for children and mothers in schools and refugee centres. In addition, more than 620 families have received a small amount of

cash to purchase the goods they need.

In Northern Gaza, the NGO has provided support to approx. 800 people who have been accommodated in two churches. During the ceasefire in late November, DSPR managed to deliver food and basic supplies to the churches. At Christmas, food packages were dropped from an aircraft to the area.

Felm's Emergency Fund also supported the work of the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem. This hospital of the Lutheran World Federation specialises in treating cancer and kidney patients. Due to the war in Gaza, some patients and staff have not been able to travel between their homes and the hospital, as many of them live in the West Bank or Gaza. Felm's support has been used to accommodate patients and their family members, for example.

Felm also supported distressed families with children in the West Bank through the deaconry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. In the West Bank, many families have lost their livelihoods since the beginning of the Gaza War due to both the end of tourism and mobility restrictions.

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well."

Psalms 139:14

1168
persons with disabilities
received peer group support*



**Work with
people with
disabilities**

Efforts continue in the midst of conflicts

WHILE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE DEAF have changed in Ethiopia, there are still villages where people hide away deaf children and have no inclination to send them to school.

"The parents believe that a disabled child is God's punishment for their sins. They are afraid of being discriminated against in their community if others find out about their child's disability," says Felm specialist Mekonnen Mulat. Such beliefs persist in Southern Ethiopia near the Kenyan border, for instance.

The work is also hampered by the conflict-prone situation in the country. Some of the planned trips have not gone ahead because regional unrest restricts mobility. As the project is national, training can fortunately be provided flexibly in different areas.

"At the moment, the biggest challenge are deaf pupils from grade 5 upwards. They may be placed in classes with hearing pupils without an interpreter. This means that advocacy, in other words discussions with the authorities, will continue," says Mekonnen.

57
schools' infrastructure
and materials were
adapted to suit people
with disabilities*

14-year-old Sok Leap from Cambodia has been admitted to a state school through the work of Epic Arts, a partner of Felm's disability work, and is now breaking down disability-related prejudices in her community with her determined attitude.

* The impact of the project is measured cumulatively throughout the programming period. The figure indicates the number of beneficiaries in 2022-2023.

Sign language dictionary complemented in Ethiopia



Over the years, a project that supports the education of those with hearing impairments in Ethiopia has received awards both in

Ethiopia and internationally. Last year, too, the work carried fruit – quite literally.

"The key outcome of my work last year is a new edition of the sign language dictionary," says **Mekonnen Mulat**, Felm specialist working in Ethiopia. Such words as the names of fruit have been added to the new, sixth edition of the dictionary. This dictionary produced as a result of Felm's pioneering work is widely used throughout the country.

"The sign language dictionary is an important tool for anyone who wants to learn to sign. This is an elementary dictionary used in schools across the country," says Mekonnen.

Baskets to say thank you

The demand for sign language materials increases as awareness of hearing impairment and the rights of people with disabilities spread. Many schools and state authorities wish to train their employees in sign language, which means a lot of travel for Mekonnen.

What he remembers particularly from last year is his visit to Harar in Eastern Ethiopia, where little or no work has been done for the deaf so far.

"Many deaf children now have the possibility of going to school, and the authorities support

them better than before. The regional administration and the Education Agency thanked us for the training by giving us local colourful baskets as gifts. They were really happy", Mekonnen says.

A busy anniversary year

Felm started its work on the education of deaf Ethiopians in 2003, which means that the project celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. These efforts have included not only work at grassroots level but also advocacy, which has by now made Ethiopian government representatives fairly well aware of the rights of their deaf citizens.

The state hired 150 deaf teachers in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

Today, the state requires every school to have at least one teacher who knows sign language.

"Government representatives are asking us where they could find interpreters," says Mekonnen.

To meet this need, Felm supported sign language interpreters in establishing their union. Last year, the union received an office of its own and now finances its operations with membership fees. The union makes it easier for interpreters to offer their services to such customers as the government.

The project on the education of deaf children is supported from Finland's development cooperation funds.



VIRVE RISSANEN

*"Whatever house you enter, first say,
'Peace to this house!'"*

Luke 10:5

382

children and young people
participated in peace education



Peace work

ZCC

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches brings together churches to work for peace.



The church is a trusted peacebuilder in Zimbabwe

In a difficult situation of Zimbabwe, churches are some of the few trusted parties that play a key role in building peace. Last year, Felm's support for these churches was particularly important as the country was once again sliding onto a path of violence.

Three elections were held in Zimbabwe at once in August 2023: a vote for the President, Parliament and local government representatives. Felm supported its partner, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), in advocacy striving to ensure peaceful conduct of the elections and to encourage the people of Zimbabwe, especially young people and women, to vote. More than one million people were reached through ZCC's social media channels.

"We carried out peace work before and after the elections. We engaged in a dialogue with the government, the independent election commission and political parties. We organised events at which we prayed for peace," says **Admire Mutizwa**, Head of ZCC's Division on Peace & Just Societies. "A day before the elections, we organised a prayer event with high-level participants, including Members of Parliament. This event has been regarded as an important factor in reducing violence. You cannot say that the situation was calm because there is a lot of deeply entrenched hatred in our country, for example associated with elections. But we are happy that few lives were lost because of the elections," says Mutizwa.

ZCC and the churches published their own critical statement on questionable incidents associated with the elections. ZCC has also established a group of value leaders, which includes bishops of member churches and leaders of other denominations. The aim of this group is to strengthen the role of churches in society and to promote dialogue on Zimbabwe's future.

"Churches are trusted institutions in Zimbabwe. More than 84% of

our population are Christians. People trust churches more than state institutions. A survey conducted in 2017 showed that 72% of Zimbabweans trust churches. Churches are credible and people have a positive attitude towards them."

According to Mutizwa, churches have special potential for building peace because of their trusted position. In addition to its work relating to the elections, ZCC has supported churches' preparation for the process of dealing with the 1980s genocide.

"In Zimbabwe, there is an unresolved conflict known as Gukurahundi, in which nearly 20 000 people died. These events are still causing polarisation as the issue has not yet been dealt with. We are supporting citizens in a government-led process that seeks to provide tools for resolving it," says Mutizwa.

The churches plan to offer local pastors' support at the hearings. In addition, experts in psychosocial support and psychological first aid are being trained.

"With Felm's support, ZCC is able to respond to the complex and deep-rooted problems in our country. Our economy is in poor shape, inflation and unemployment are high, and incomes are low. Young people are emigrating. By means of deaconry and humanitarian aid, we can support families who have no food security. Felm supports us in building peace and responding to the complex challenges of our country, while it helps us meet people's acute needs. This is the added value of the support provided by Felm," says Mutizwa.

Felm supports us in building peace and responding to people's acute needs," says **Admire Mutizwa** of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches.



ADMIRE MUTIZWA

Churches discussed theology of peace

IN NOVEMBER 2023, Felm and its partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, organised a conference on theology of peace in Bogotá. It was attended by representatives of churches and church organisations around the world. The participants agreed that the churches' contribution to peace work is increasingly needed in the current world situation.

"The churches can set an example in the midst of war and show both local and national actors that achieving peace really is possible," said **Atahualpa Hernández**, a Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia at the conference.



ANNA LUNDÉN

"Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold."

Luke. 18:16

5047
children received training
on children's rights



**Child
protection**

Our children's rights expert received an award for her work in Tanzania

IN DECEMBER 2023 WiLDAF, a NGO working for women's rights, presented an award to Anna Holmström, a children's rights expert at Felm, for her outstanding work in Tanzania. This recognition was given for Holmström's commitment to defending girls' rights both in the UN sexual and reproductive health agency and while working for Felm. Felm has gained significant visibility in Tanzania for its work against child marriages and gender-based violence.



Human rights activist Helen Kijo Bisima presented an award for defending girls' rights to Anna Holmström.

Many types of work to promote children's rights in Tanzania

Together with its partners, the Felm works to promote children's rights in Tanzania, for example by preventing child marriages and organising anti-violence training. One of the key priorities is improving the quality of education, and in 2023, Felm supported a teacher education project in Tanzania, thanks to which the pupils of a secondary school achieved the best results in the school's history in national final exams.

"A child has the right to be a child. A child should play and go to school, not work. And be safe, physically and mentally," stresses Hanna Londo, a children's rights expert at Felm.

However, these rights are not always realised in Tanzania with its 63 million inhabitants, more than a half of whom are minors. For example, a population study found that 21% of girls and 16% of boys do not have an opportunity to school for one reason or another. And even if they did, there is no guarantee of the quality of the education.

Felm supports a teachers' continuing education project in Tanzania, thanks to which the pupils of Ngyeku Secondary School in North Tanzania achieved the best results in the 15-year history of the school in national final exams in 2023. Things were different in 2012; the school was in dire straits, and corporal punishment was commonly used.

"When a teacher is uncertain about their teaching skills, it is easier for them to resort to the cane. The more qualified teachers are, the less they use corporal punishment," says **Terevael Mbise**, Deputy Headmaster of Ngyeku Secondary School.

Children should not work.
The child's job is to play.

One million in funding for work against child marriages

Around one girl in three in Tanzania ends up being married as minors. Felm has been working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) for decades to prevent child marriages, and last year, our long-term cooperation got a new boost as ELCT was granted EUR 1 million by the EU to end child marriages. The grant application was submitted in cooperation with Felm, which is involved in the project as a co-funder and provider of technical assistance.

As part of the new EU project **Jacob Mameo**, Bishop of the Diocese of Morogoro, condemned child marriages in a television speech. This speech was considered particularly important as in Bishop Mameo's own ethnic group (Masai), child marriages are widespread.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania has campaigned with other Christian denominations and also with Islamic religious leaders for a legislative amendment that would ban child marriage in Tanzania.

In addition to education and legislative amendments, it is important to ensure that communities understand the harm gendered violence and unequal treatment causes to children.

"The child's world is different from that of an adult, and childhood is a surprisingly short period. A lot can happen in a short period of time, and if you encounter abuse as a child, it is like having your childhood taken away from you, something that will affect you well into your adult years," says Londo.



Terevail Mbise, Deputy Headmaster of Ngyeku Secondary School, is happy about the school's excellent success in national final exams.

KATRI NIIRANEN-KILASI

Knowing your rights is of primary importance

Of Tanzanian women and girls who have experienced violence, 94% have not sought help or told anyone about what happened. In 2023, Felm provided different types of anti-violence training in remote areas of Morogoro, especially for girls but also for entire village communities. The purpose of the training was to help girls recognise their rights, strengthen their self-esteem and improve their general life skills.

Thanks to their influence in society, religious leaders play an important role in changing norms and values associated with the treatment of girls. In November 2023, Felm organised a training programme for religious leaders in the Tabora region on teenage pregnancies. The aim was to end the harmful practice of punishing teenager mothers by excluding them from the parish, school and the whole community "The fact that God loved the world encourages Christians to adopt a different attitude towards the trials of teenage mothers. We have all been given a second chance," said **Nehemia Godwin Moshi**, Doctor of Theology and Philosophy, at the end of the training.

The teacher education project in Tanzania is supported from Finnish development cooperation funds.

Good food, a happy child

Happy Child, Felm's partner in Angola, works in multiple ways to improve the quality of life for poor families with children living on the outskirts of the city of Lubango. The NGO runs day-care centres, schools and orphanages, among other things.

Child malnutrition is one of the biggest problems in Angola. In 2023, work supported by Felm responded to the uncertain food security situation in the Tchingui region, in particular, which has been exacerbated by heat and drought.

A farming course organised in September 2023 taught the participants new agricultural skills to help them cope with extreme heat. The lessons learned were put into practice at once as the families planted their own kitchen gardens using tools and seed packages distributed at the course. Those families who had no land of their own planted a community garden on a site owned by the Happy Child centre.

Water supply in the area was also improved by building a 100,000-litre water tank in Tchingui. The new water distribution network delivers clean drinking water directly to 12 different distribution points. All the 3,000 to 3,500 inhabitants of the region benefit from access to clean water and the introduction of new climate-resilient agricultural practices in the community.

Participants in an agricultural training course in Tchingui learned to cultivate drought-stricken soil.

Building up churches' child protection competence

FELM'S PARTNER organisation, First Step Cambodia, provides church employees with training on children's rights and the importance of child protection. In its first year, this project launched in 2023 trained 72 local church employees in total.

As a result of the training, ten churches wished to start preparing child protection together with First Step. The purpose of the child protection guidelines is to improve the safety of children who participate in church activities.

The impacts of this Felm-supported training were extensive: having completed the training, the employees were inspired to organise a child protection workshop for 920 participants, relying on their own resources.

824
parents received
training on
children's rights
and child-friendly
behaviour



*"The church is Christ's body,
the fullness of him who fills all in all."*
Ephesians 1:23

92 %
of Finnish-speaking
parishes had a service
agreement with Felm

91 %
of parishes in Porvoo
Diocese had a service
agreement with Felm



**Work in
Finland**

HEIDI TIRRI

Young people took part in the
procession of the cross at the
Pieksämäki Mission Festival.

”

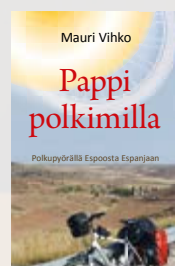
*Confirmation school may be a complete turning
point in a young person's life in many ways. This
happened to me last summer. As a result, I made
lots of new friends, found more courage and gained
memorable experiences. I often wonder what
would be different in my life if I hadn't ended up in
Päiväkumpu confirmation school camp last summer. I
would probably be much more closed about my faith,
and I would not know about the Evangelical Lutheran
Church's work around the world."*

Siiri Pyykkö, who participated in the confirmation school camp of Felm.
Felm and the Finnish Association for Children and Youth agreed to combine
their confirmation schools in 2023. As from summer 2024,
Felm and the Association will offer bilingual international
confirmation schools in Päiväkumpu.

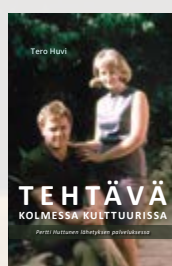
Books published in 2023 bring readers to
Nepal, Russia, Israel and across Europe



Mimosa Hedberg
Rakkaudesta
Kathmanduun



Mauri Vihko
Pappi polkimilla



Tero Huvi
Tehtävä kolmessa
kulttuurissa



Kati Kemppainen
Tarinoita toisilta

Felm on the media

Last year, Felm attracted more media visibility than in 2022. More than one million people were reached on social media.

Felm's name appeared in edited media, or printed and online newspapers, 11% more often in 2023 than in 2022 – in total, Felm was referred to 1,479 times. Felm additionally gained a good level of visibility on the radio and television and in magazines.

The increase in media hits was partly due to the unwelcome news about change negotiations in Felm.

The appointment of **Pauliina Parhiala** as new Executive Director attracted more positive visibility, however, and her interview in Helsingin Sanomat was also the most popular media hit shared on social media. The articles frequently mentioned the fact that Parhiala is the first woman to head Felm.

One of the most significant hits was a story about the impact of the crisis in Ukraine on developing countries' food security that started from a Felm press release. The news item spread to 25 newspapers around Finland.

Before the parliamentary election, Felm and Finn Church Aid asked the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland to speak for development cooperation. Quotations from the bishops were published on Felm's social media channels, and

they were sent to the media as a press release. Such media as Yle, Helsingin Sanomat, Turun Sanomat, HBL, Kirkko ja kaupunki, Seurakuntalainen and Kotimaa reported on the bishops' comments.

Cooperation with Radio Dei continued: Church in the world programme brought to the listeners news about churches and their work around the world.

Several Felm employees were also featured in major magazines. For example, Regional Director Olli Pitkänen was interviewed in several media about his recent book. In many cases, publicity associated with books is much greater than the sales of a book alone, and authors' interviews are good opportunities to tell the general public about Felm's work.

On social media, Felm reached more than one million people whereas Felm's website was visited 484,302 times. "Increasing awareness of Felm and building trust in Felm's work are important objectives in Felm's communications. While media visibility is not important in itself, it introduces more and more people to Felm, and interesting expert and Christian content builds trust in us," says **Laura Häkli**, Director of Communications.

Almost EUR 900,000 collected at Christmas carol events

Most Beautiful Carols community singing events were organised extensively in parishes all over Finland. In total, thousands of such events took place. In addition to churches and restaurants, people even sang at a swimming pool while doing aqua aerobics. Most of the revenue produced by the carol events comes from collections at singalongs organised by parishes, but donations are also received by other means, for example through MobilePay. The collections of 2023 amounted to EUR 882,006, slightly exceeding the previous year's result.

More than 200 parish visits

Felm employees paid more than 200 visits to 126 different parishes last year. On these visits, they reached parish employees and shop stewards as well as parishioners. Felm employees also visited schools and confirmation schools.

Virtual mission circles launched

In 2023, Felm launched virtual mission circles. Felm's employees posted to such regions as the Middle East and Ethiopia joined the circle sessions on Teams from their work areas to describe their efforts and progress. All parishes supporting the work in the region or project in question were invited to join the circle. In addition to those responsible for missionary work in parishes, the audience included entire parish mission circles.

Anti-racism discussions at brunches

Felm organised educational brunches together with the Finnish Association for Children and Youth and dioceses in 12 municipalities on the theme of anti-racist mission education. In total, Felm met around 300 education professionals in parishes at the brunch events.

Advocacy through statements

In the past year, Felm issued a total of 15 statements alone or together with its partners. These statements sought to promote human rights and climate justice. Among others, statements were issued to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).



Examples of networks in which we operate

ACT Alliance
Fingo
Finnwatch
Församlingsförbundet
International Association for Mission Studies
World Council of Churches
The Church Resources Agency
Wider Security Network WISE
Lutheran World Federation
Fairtrade Finland
Ecumenical Council of Finland
Finnish Mission Council
Finnish National Youth Council Alliance
Maaailma.net ry
Scripture Union in Finland
Middle East Council of Churches
Finnish Fundraising Association
World Association for Christian Communication

Mission festival celebrated in Salo, Pieksämäki and Karis

After the mission festival in Tampere was cancelled, Felm organised two local festivals in Salo and Pieksämäki on a rapid schedule. A Swedish-speaking festival took place in Karis. The experiences of these festivals organised with local parishes were very positive. Felm was also involved in the mission festival of Oulu Diocese held in Ranua.



MARJATTA KOSONEN

Lähetysanomat renewed



AT THE END OF 2023, Finland's oldest magazine, Lähetysanomat, was renewed to have a more modern, visual and fresh look. A readership survey of Lähetysanomat was also carried out in the autumn, and according to it, a large proportion of the magazine's subscribers read it from cover to cover. Readers especially like the news of missionary work around the world, interesting personal stories and good pictures.

”Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.”

Isaiah. 26:4



Changes

”

I hope that through these tough decisions made to resolve our long-term structural deficit, we will create preconditions for anticipating changes in the operating environment and thus safeguard the future of Felm’s work.”

Pauliina Parhiala
Executive Director of Felm

SUOMEN¹⁸⁵⁹
LÄHETYSSEURA



What will change?

- In the next few years, the number of countries in which Felm operates as well as Felm’s partners and projects will be reduced. The end result will be organisation of the work around larger entities, deepening of expertise, and increasing the share of churches and Christian organisations among the partners.
- Theological education, support for the work of churches, peace work, work with persons with disabilities and communities’ climate resilience will be strengthened further. In addition, Christian outreach work will be developed together with churches.
- Programme work will be discontinued from the end of 2025 in Oman, Taiwan, some Chinese programmes, Mauritania, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.
- In Senegal, Felm’s work will continue until the end of 2028.
- Felm will close down its regional offices in Hong Kong and Cyprus.
- Posted Finnish workers will remain in Taiwan and Namibia in 2024. Cooperation in Namibia will continue through an umbrella organisation and other partnerships.
- Felm’s communication activities will be consolidated, and advocacy will be combined with communications into a single strategic entity.
- Bible translation work, which has been declining for many years, will be discontinued at the end of 2024.
- In Finland, the parish network and community activities of missionary work, global education and fundraising as well as digital availability will be strengthened.
- Missionary education among children and young teenagers will be reduced gradually while shifting the focus on confirmation-school age teenagers and young adults.
- Felm Volunteer activities will be dropped.
- In-house art and event production and participation in productions will be reduced and lightened.

Changes in Felm

In autumn 2023, Felm faced a time of dramatic changes. The activities were adjusted to reflect changes in the operating environment and the deteriorating economic outlook.

The backdrop to the change negotiations and reorganisation was Felm’s difficult financial situation, which had continued for an extended period. In 2022, Felm produced a deficit of EUR 2.32 million. The objective of the development and adjustment measures launched in the autumn was to sharpen the focus of the activities and gradually adapt the finances, with the aim of achieving structural annual savings of approx. EUR 3 million in 2025 compared to the 2023 level.

It was initially estimated that at most 55 jobs would need to be cut. In the course of the change negotiations, however, Felm attempted to minimise and phase the personnel impacts of the

change, reducing the number of person-years in a controlled manner.

Felm decided to cut 42 person-years through redundancies, retirements and expiry of fixed-term contracts by the end of 2025 from the 2023 level. Savings are also sought in structural costs, including premises, systems and procurements.

“Our goal is ensuring that our global work would be affected as little as possible and that we will have time to plan the transition together with our partners. We also wish to ensure that our core activities in Finland will continue, and to reduce and phase the personnel impacts as much as possible,” commented Pauliina Parhiala, Executive Director of Felm at the end of the change negotiations.

Felm’s role in Senegal has grown smaller year by year

FELM’S WORK in Senegal was launched in the 1970s, resulting in the birth of the Lutheran Church of Senegal. The large role played by Finnish missionary workers at the beginning has grown smaller year by year.

“We knew that this day would come, and I’m glad we found out about it well in advance. We can now prepare for the change together. The ending of financial support does not change the fact that we will always be brothers and sisters in the global church of Christ,” said Latyr Diouf, President of the Church of Senegal.

Thanks to Bible translation work supported by Felm, the Bible can now be read in the local language of Serene in Senegal, and it will soon also be available in Pulaar Fouta Toro. This is an important precondition for spreading the gospel in Senegal, where 94% of the population are Muslims.

Over the past ten years, the church has taken major steps forward in such areas as self-sufficiency and the development of deaconry. It today has a small but highly skilled development cooperation and deaconry department which, by increasing the efficiency of its fund-raising, can become one of the church’s financial backbones.

For a small minority church, the Lutheran Church of Senegal

is seeing a healthy growth in its member numbers. It has attracted especially young people, who have a strong drive to make it their very own Senegalese church. This is why, in some respects, they welcome the change in the relationship between Felm and the Church of Senegal.

“Project cooperation with the Church of Senegal will continue until 2028, which means we will be able to support the church for another few years while it shores up its independence. Even though we know that the work will come to an end, it will take another long while, and continuing our support until then will be extremely important,” says **Anu Vasamies-Hackenbruch**, Country Director in Senegal.

Worship in the village of Gandioli, where the work of Felm began in Senegal in the 1970s and where the first church was built.



HELI VUOHELAINEN

Annex 1.

Overseas work in 2023, gross figures

	Number of projects in 2022	Number of projects in 2023	Expenditure in 2022 EUR 1000 €	Expenditure in 2023 EUR 1000 €	Employees 31.12. 2022	Employees 31.12. 2023
Church work	130	138	7302	7997	*)50	**)59
Development cooperation	48	33	6126	6286		
Peace and reconciliation, advocacy	6	2	1069	1771		
Disaster work	7	11	390	585		
Admin. and other expenses 0149	0	0	863	1027		
	191	184	15750	17666	50	59

Region	2022 Programme expenditure EUR 1000	2023 Programme expenditure EUR 1000	2022 Administrative expenditure EUR 1000	2023 Administrative expenditure EUR 1000	Employees 31.12. 2022	Employees 31.12. 2023
Southern Africa ¹	1027	1477	7	8	5	9
Eastern and Central Africa ²	3448	3624	52	56	9	12
Western Africa ³	1292	1268	50	16	5	4
Mekong region and Oceania ⁴	1726	3804	55	57	14	15
China ⁵	719	811	139	154	6	6
Middle East ⁶	1515	1561	192	227	4	8
Nepal and Pakistan ¹⁰	2175	1715	58	108	3	1
Latin America ⁷	1255	1440	8	17	4	3
Europe ⁸	297	109	1	0	0	0
Global cooperation and shared expenses ⁹	1734	1156	0	58	0	1

1 Angola, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia

2 Ethiopia, Tanzania

3 Mauritania, Senegal

4 Cambodia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar

5 China, Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan

6 Israel, Jordania, Palestine, Cyprus, Syria, Oman

7 Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua

8 France, Russia, Estonia, Ukraine

9 Global cooperation and shared expenses

10 Nepal, Pakistan

*) -**) KT, DK, RS and KAT employee number totals in this row for 2022 and 2023.

Annex 2.

Partners 2023

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 • ATOS • Orphanage for girls, Lubango
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 (LUC-CWA)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• China Christian Council (CCC)• Hunan Christian Council (HCC) (no active project work)• Yunnan Christian Council (YCC) (no active project work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institute of Sino-Christian Studies (ISCS)• Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS)• Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC)• Hong Kong Amity Regional Office
(Taiwan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lutheran Church of Taiwan (LCT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• China Lutheran Seminary (CLS)• House of Grace drugs withdrawal centre
Middle East		
Cyprus		SAT-7
Israel		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Christian Committee of Israel (MECC-ICCI-Dspr)• Rossing Center• Musalaha• Baladna
Autonomous territories of Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• East Jerusalem YMCA
Syria		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)
Oman		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Al Amana Centre
Nepal and Pakistan		
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD)• Centre for Mental Health and Counselling (CMC- Nepal)• Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS Nepal)• KOSHISH• Lutheran World Federation (LWF)• Campaign for Human Rights and Social Transformation (CA-HURAST)• Rastriya Mukta Haliya Samaj Federation-Nepal (RMHSF-N)• Leadership Training Department /National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (LTD/NCF-N)• Nepal Ebenezer Theological Seminary (NETS)• Forward Looking (FL)• United Mission to Nepal (UMN)• Minority Focus
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Church of Pakistan/Diocese of Peshawar (DOP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pakistan Bible Correspondence School• Christian Study Center (CSC)

Latin America		
Bolivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB)	
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela (IELV)	
Multilateral cooperation		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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)

A year of transformation

ANNA LUNDÉN

Year 2023 marked a transformation in the history of Felm. A new Executive Director was appointed, the composition of the management group changed, and change negotiations had to be initiated.

Rolf Steffansson served Felm for an extended period in different roles. He had a calling to work as a pastor in Costa del Sol, however, which offered this veteran another new challenge. It was like returning to the basic task of missionary work.

At his farewell party, we looked at pictures taken of Rolf during his years as a Felm employee. One feature emerged strongly: joy and brightness. We are grateful to Rolf for his years at the helm of Felm. I would also like to thank him for our work together, in which we appreciated each other and built mutual trust.

Felm's leadership has received an injection of new blood. Three out of the five management group members are new, including Executive Director **Pauliina Parhiala**.

Our leadership culture has also been developed: we now lead through engagement. This applies not only to the management group and supervisors but also the Board of Directors. We talk about issues and seek a shared vision, delegate responsibility and encourage employees to take it on. We listen to the personnel, parishes and our partners. We engage stakeholders and commit to our common goals. I believe that this leadership approach will bring good results.

One of the first tasks of the new Executive Director was to familiarise herself with Felm's finances. For several years running, Felm has produced a deficit, which has been covered by selling assets. This could not continue, and we had to initiate painful changes.

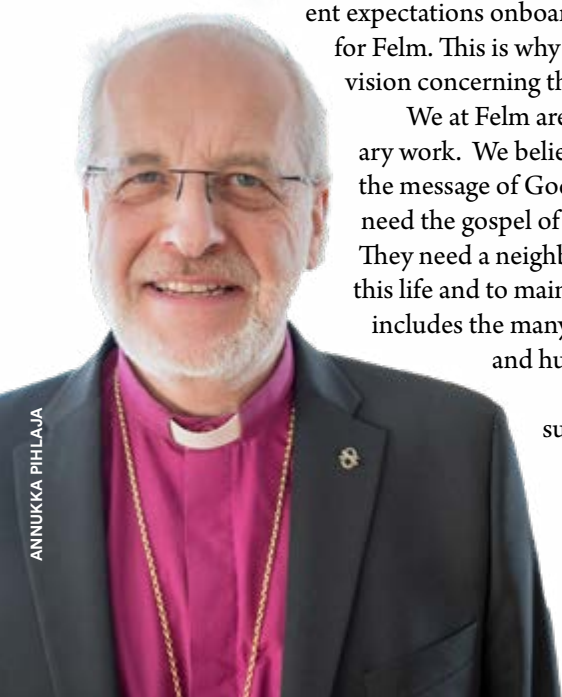
The management group put its back to it in autumn 2023, and supervisors had talks with their subordinates. The operating structure was reformed. The number of redundancies remained moderate. We have since set our eyes on the future and on building a new Felm.

During this process, we have wished to take different expectations onboard. The trust of parishes is crucial for Felm. This is why we have also reflected on Felm's vision concerning the theology of mission.

We at Felm are committed to holistic missionary work. We believe that the whole person needs the message of God's mercy and goodness. They need the gospel of Christ in order to have faith. They need a neighbour in order to cope with in this life and to maintain hope for the future. This includes the many international deaconry projects and humanitarian aid.

I hope that you will lend your support to the work of Felm.

Simo Peura
*Bishop Emeritus
Chair of Felm's
Board of Directors*



ANNUKKA PIHLAJA

