

Symbols of Hope: Empowering Migrants and Advancing Gender Justice through LUCSA and LWF Initiatives

Migration is a pressing issue in Southern Africa, with many individuals and families forced to leave their homes due to conflict, poverty, or climate change. The **Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA)** and the **Lutheran World Federation (LWF)** are tackling these challenges through holistic diakonia programs that focus on **human rights, gender justice**, and support for migrants and refugees. Central to these efforts is the **Symbols of Hope** program, which serves as a key initiative aimed at empowering communities and addressing the root causes of migration.

LWF's Commitment to Human Rights and Gender Justice

The **LWF** prioritizes **human rights and gender justice** as essential to its global mission. The organization recognizes that women and girls, particularly in migrant communities, are often disproportionately affected by **violence, discrimination, and exclusion**. To address these issues, LWF advocates for **gender equality**, offering vocational training, educational opportunities, and leadership development for women. These efforts align with LUCSA's broader focus on **peacebuilding, gender justice, and socio-economic development**, ensuring that the rights of women and vulnerable populations are protected. See links ([Lutheran World](#)) ([LUCSA](#)).

LUCSA's Gender Justice Programs and Migrant Support

LUCSA's **Gender Justice Program** plays a crucial role in supporting both **migrants and women** across the region. This program promotes the empowerment of women and girls through various initiatives that focus on **education, skill-building, and advocacy**. By addressing the systemic inequalities that migrants particularly women face, LUCSA works to reduce the vulnerabilities associated with migration and displacement.

LUCSA's Diakonia efforts, particularly about **migrant support**, include **psycho-social support and trauma counseling** for refugees and displaced persons. This aligns with the **Symbols of Hope** program, which is dedicated to helping migrants build a better future by providing them with **training and livelihood opportunities** upon their return ([Lutheran Development Services](#)) ([LUCSA](#)).

The Role of the Symbols of Hope Program

At the heart of LWF's and LUCSA's work is the **Symbols of Hope (SoH)** program. This initiative specifically targets **potential migrants and returnees**, equipping them with the skills and resources needed to thrive in their home countries. In Zimbabwe, for instance, SoH provides **vocational training** in areas like masonry and poultry farming, giving individuals the tools to support themselves and avoid the dangers of irregular migration.

In Southern Africa, **Symbols of Hope** has empowered **returnee migrants** like Nomathemba Sibanda in Zimbabwe, helping her rebuild her life through masonry training. This is just one example of how the program provides **vocational and entrepreneurial skills**, offering a sustainable alternative to irregular migration([Lutheran World](#)). Similarly, LUCSA's Gender Justice initiatives align with SoH by promoting **equal opportunities** and supporting women in migrant communities, ensuring their rights are upheld while addressing the broader socio-economic challenges they face([LUCSA](#)).



Nomathemba Sibanda displays her masonry skills at the public works site in Filabusi town, southern Zimbabwe. Photo: LWF/Monmo Dahiru Moodi <https://lutheranworld.org/news/zimbabwe-new-hope-and-decent-work-home>

Together, these efforts reflect the shared mission of **LWF** and **LUCSA** to build **just, peaceful, and reconciled societies** in which the rights of migrants and women are protected and where they can flourish in their communities.