

NEWSLETTER

July 2014



Dear participants in the project schools500reformation, dear readers!

A brief glance at the internet platform www.schools500reformation.net shows that already more than 170 schools have joined the project schools500reformation.



If you click on the different categories so you can study, already at this early stage of the project, the diversity of the participating schools. Having a look at the already existing blogs, you can feel the great commitment that is provided locally in a global perspective.

This newsletter invites you to get a more accurate picture of schools500reformation. To this end, we will take a closer look on some activities which have already taken place, on current events and on future activities. As about two-thirds of the already participating schools are located in Africa, this continent gets a special focus in this newsletter.



Teaching Module 2014: Putting down roots – bearing fruit

The project homepage is extended by the section "Teaching Material". The first teaching module focuses on the topic of the year 2014 "Rediscover roots in Reformation worldwide" and will provide multilingual material on the subject of "Putting down roots - bearing fruit" for downloading. It intends to support the participating schools and others to reconstruct the Reformation roots of their own history; it invites also to reflect on how these roots can bear fruit in the current school profile.

Your activity should also be documented on the project website in order to present, in this way, the global diversity of Protestant schools and to stimulate mutual learning to know each other and to establish school partnerships.

Proposals how to organize the commemoration of the Reformation on 31st October 2014 will be available on the homepage soon.

Proposed activity:

"On the Road with the logo of schools500reformation"

Meanwhile, the logo can be found on banners, school façades, road signs, clothing and somewhere else. This led to the idea to call for action "On the road with the logo of schools500reformation". More information is available on our project homepage.



Social Media



The website editorial team is presently setting up a Contact Forum at www.forum.schools500reformation.net in order to facilitate exchange and global networking of Protestant schools worldwide. Twitter and Facebook will take up a more active role in the future as well:

- [https://Twitter.com/s500reformation](https://twitter.com/s500reformation)
- <https://Facebook.com/schools500reformation>

Regional Conference Goma/Congo

The following brief report was drafted by principle Michael Schopp who travelled as a member of the International Steering Group of schools500reformation to the regional conference in Goma last April.

„Since more than one year an International Steering Committee with significant participation of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) and representatives of Protestant schools in Germany has been preparing the project schools500reformation. At the latest in 2017, the year of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation - in commemoration of the publishing of 95 Theses against the sale of indulgences by Martin Luther on 31 October 1517 - a global network of Protestant schools and educational institutions should be established. We want to celebrate this anniversary together, to reflect on our history and to search and show similarities - locally, regionally and globally; in short, to witness vividly to the strong message of the Reformation through the centuries up to present days. From the beginning, I could take part in the project on behalf of the Evangelical School Foundation (Evangelische Schulstiftung) and our regional Lutheran church. I reported on the current state of affairs both to our school Parliament and at the annual meetings of the leadership of Protestant schools and institutions.

In Germany and in most of the countries of the North it is relatively easy to convene regional and national conferences, but this rarely applies to the countries of the South.

Thus, the International Steering Committee - supported by EKD, Bread for the World and other organizations - proposed to organize three meetings in Africa.

The first of these regional conferences took place in April in Goma/Eastern Congo covering francophone countries in Africa. Delegations from Cameroon and Rwanda met with numerous representatives of Protestant schools and churches from the vast Congo in Goma. To meet at this location was possible as currently no armed conflicts have taken place in this troubled province, which was quite often in the focus of the global public by terrible images of misery and violence. Our Congolese hosts have been happy and proud of hosting once again a major international conference. Just the participation of a representative and large delegation of 16 members from Rwanda as such has been understood as a symbolic sign because misfortune and violence had too often spilled over from Rwanda to the neighbouring country during the past 20 years. This is especially true for the period of the genocide in this small African country, as in summer 1994 many members of militias and gangs of murderers have come to the Congo and are partly still plying their murderous trade as mercenaries there until today.



I cannot present the program of the meeting in great detail but want to mention that I was deeply impressed by the intensive debate and the open exchange of opinions among the participants. The message of the Reformation and in particular the confession of the Protestant churches at the beginning of the 16th century concerning education and the development of the school system has definitely reached Africa.



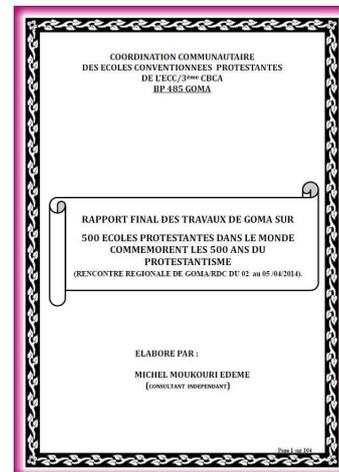
The longing for a country without corruption and oppression, with orderly operating administration and well-equipped schools, with an infrastructure worthy of the name and without mercenary bands supported by local politicians or multinational corporations was expressed frequently. Last not least, the participants had been searching for ways to peace between the neighbouring countries Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially for those people in the border region who have suffered most. They prayed for peace in French and all other languages of the region. The entire region belongs to the most fertile areas in the world and is at the same time home to countless valuable minerals (coltan, titanium, gold etc.). Food and modest prosperity instead of misery and violence would be quite possible and we wish it on the people. The two participants from Germany have been impressed most by the keynote speeches and the cultural performances of the students - including poetry, songs and dancing.

Even if in the Africa of the year 1517 no one guessed anything of European history - by the way just like the other way around! - the conference showed clearly what sort of power and motivation can be brought about by the liberating message of Christianity and the Reformation even today. We can become infected and get carried away by the enthusiasm of our African partners and friends. It is to be hoped that the growing network of Protestant schools will actually be used worldwide by all and thereby strengthened.

Despite logistical difficulties let's hope that school partnerships and co-operation can be developed and maintained for many years. We can learn a lot from our African friends and colleagues: serenity in misfortune, enjoyment even from little progress, unshakable faith in God and the power and optimism that derive from it."

For further information, more photos and a detailed report see at

www.schools500reformation.net

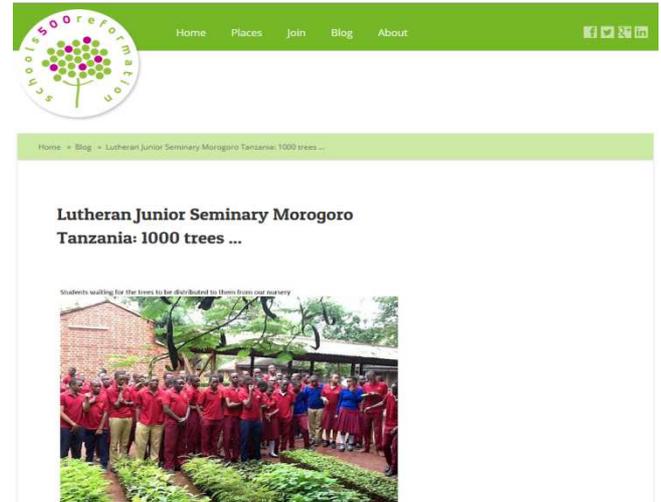


In June, another regional conference took place in Koforidua/Ghana where Dr. Gerhard Pfeiffer participated. You will find some impressions of this meeting at the project home page or on Facebook.

In July, Rev. Birgit Sandler-Koschel will travel to Tanzania participating on behalf of the International Steering Group of schools500 reformation in the regional conference in this country.

Planting trees

The project logo shows the tree as a symbol of hope, which emerges from a cross. Each participating school is invited to plant a tree. Rev. Abdiel Ndosu reports in a blog on his initiative of planting 1,000 trees. He pursues the impressive goal planting 10,000 trees.



"And if the world were to end tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree." (Martin Luther)
– Document also your tree planting activity in conjunction with the content of the annual commemoration day of the Reformation and send your photos plus a short text to

editors@schools500reformation.net

We are looking forward to more blogs.

It's the wish of the entire project team:

“Let us join hands
for schools500reformation!”

Cordial greetings
from all members of the project team

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