

# AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

## AMMPARO GLOBAL

### Overview of Trends

Ongoing persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, economic shocks and natural disasters, as well as other destabilizing events, all compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, have greatly increased the number of people worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes. Increasingly, the reasons cannot be traced to a single factor; a multiplicity of complex and interrelated factors are at work. Figures reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that as of October 2023 around 114 million had been uprooted from their homes, compared to 110 million people the previous June. The Russia-Ukraine War, crises in Somalia and Afghanistan, and conflicts in Sudan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are principal drivers of the soaring number of forcibly displaced people. Situations in Venezuela, Sudan and the Gaza Strip are also significant. Approximately 7.3 million Venezuelans, or approximately 20% of the country's population, have left the country according to the International Organization on Migration (IOM). This context is critical for understanding the state of contemporary migration and mobility in the world.

### AMMPARO: A Whole-church Response to Migration

The ELCA strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) was adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA) in 2016. The strategy was envisioned to encompass a holistic, whole-church response to the increased migration of Central American minors arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border that began in 2011. While the overall flow of migrants from the northern part of Central America has fluctuated in the years since, the number of unaccompanied and accompanied children, as well as entire families, seeking protection at the U.S.-Mexico border has risen steadily. AMMPARO has enabled all three expressions of the church to work together under one umbrella to welcome all people fleeing violence, poverty and environmental disaster. Since 2020 it has brought together companion churches and partners from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, the U.S. and elsewhere in the Americas to educate, advocate and respond to these emerging humanitarian issues. Since 2022 it has expanded its focus as the ELCA global migration strategy.

There have been significant changes both inside and outside the ELCA since 2016 that call for the expansion of the AMMPARO strategy. In 2019 the Churchwide Assembly voted for the ELCA to become a sanctuary church body in the United States. While congregational accompaniment of migrants has never been limited to Central American children and families, the sanctuary memorial by its very nature expanded our sense of accompaniment to include vulnerable migrants and immigrants of all nationalities who reach the United States. Outside the ELCA, one of the most concerning changes has been national political agendas to limit access to asylum and protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, conflict, natural and human-induced disasters related to climate change, and other factors continue to force people to leave their homes.

Through its emphasis on articulation AMMPARO has been a strategic model unique in the context of church accompaniment and is poised to respond to the significant shifts within the ELCA and in the broader world. The expansion of ELCA AMMPARO to AMMPARO Global is a strategy to respond to humanitarian crises that drive forced migration and displacement in other areas of the world.

### **The AMMPARO Model**

Whenever we explain what AMMPARO is, we talk about it as a holistic, whole-church response. “Holistic” means that it is operative geographically within countries of origin, transit and destination, and that it encompasses the four activities of protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities. “Whole-church” means that the response engages the entire ELCA constituency as well as ecumenical and interfaith partners.

The three original, interdependent guiding principles that have served as the foundation for the successful implementation of the AMMPARO strategy are Accompaniment, Awareness-raising and Advocacy (also known as the “three A’s”). Now a “fourth A” — Articulation — has been added.

Basic definitions of each of the “four A’s”:

1. **ACCOMPANIMENT:** Outside the U.S., accompaniment refers principally to the range of services that staff and volunteers of our AMMPARO companions provide to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers through ELCA-funded projects. Accompaniment also occurs in the U.S. through congregations, synods, social ministry organizations and ecumenical interfaith partners.
2. **AWARENESS-RAISING:** Refers to the ongoing process of educating ELCA constituents and others about the drivers of emigration in countries of origin, on the perils that migrants face during the migrant journey and on the treatment received when they reach their intended destination. The educational process also includes timely information on the immigration policies and practices of governments along key migration routes.
3. **ADVOCACY:** Refers to a comprehensive ELCA strategy for fair and compassionate policies toward vulnerable migrants, particularly migrant children and families, developed in close consultation with our AMMPARO companions and ecumenical partners. The strategy encompasses not only needed policy changes in the U.S. but also policies that address the root causes of migration in countries of origin and dignified treatment for migrants and respect for their human rights in countries of transit and in their home countries should they return.
4. **ARTICULATION:** Refers to the intentional strategy of fostering the development of functioning networks and strategic alliances between AMMPARO companions located in the same country, or among companions in adjacent countries located along the same migrant route, or between companions working with migrants from the same country of origin.

### **WHY: The AMMPARO Strategy Is a Model for Global Migration**

While many ecumenical and interfaith partners are engaged in ministry with migrants, the ELCA strategy has garnered national and even international attention as a comprehensive, holistic, whole-church response. The 2016 AMMPARO strategy document conveys a strong theological foundation and is inclusive of all stages of the migrant journey (origin, transit and destination, with return subsequently added), based upon three guiding principles (accompaniment, advocacy and awareness-raising) and includes activities around protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities. The articulation mentioned above as the fourth A is truly unique, as it includes the important work already being done

by companions that now can be networked. The strategy has a unique way of working that has brought all expressions of the ELCA together in synergy as well as prompted increased collaboration among the ELCA's international companions.

AMMPARO Global will permit a more global focus on durable solutions for migrants who, in many areas of the world, are caught in transition for decades or more. Advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform and full implementation of the Global Compact on Migration already has been enhanced through this effort. By its very nature AMMPARO Global will clearly include ministry and the accompaniment of migrants from regions of the world outside the Americas, both nationally and internationally. This will allow us to address concerns expressed within the ELCA about how the ELCA ministers with and accompanies all migrants and refugees regardless of country of origin.