



مجلس الكنائس المتحدة في الشرق الأوسط
The Middle East Council of Churches

MECC Unit on Diakonia & Social Justice

Activity Report

January – September 2008

***Presented to Executive Committee Meeting
29 September – 3 October 2008
Cyprus
By Seta Hadeshian***

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Progress Report

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Introduction

The following overview summarizes the activities, the aims and the aspirations of MECC Unit on Diakonia and Social Justice Program. Upon the decision of the 9th General Assembly the Executive Committee brought changes in the structural make up and some of the programs of MECC. Among the changes being the downsizing of the Unit on Life and Service and limiting the activities to Service to Refugees, Displaced and Migrants and renaming the Unit to Diakonia and Social Justice. While the General Assembly thought that the Council's structural changes would bring betterment of work, it also recognized that the financial pressures would downsize some of its programs. However at the partners meeting in May 22 - 24, 2007 in Beit Anya in Harissa, the issue of migration, migrants and refugees raised as top priority and recognized by partners as an imperative issue and decided to be assisted financially. The issue was raised as well in the 9th General Assembly in Cyprus and agreed that the Executive Committee in March takes decisions. It was decided therefore, that MECC programs should continue carrying its mission in Diakonia and Social Justice activities for the survival and welfare of the migrants in the region. As Diakonia is the core and essence of the mission of churches and since the Middle East Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which through Diakonia, transcends the confessional, national and cultural boundaries and struggles against social injustice, it was therefore the mandate of MECC to be in solidarity with the oppressed the poor and the exploited, and in the aim of abolishing social injustices, and in the aim of transforming the cosmos in all its dimensions, structures and manifestations, it was agreed that the Unit should go on in serving the marginalized the migrant and the refugees.

MECC Unit on Diakonia & Social Justice

The Unit on Diakonia and Social Justice is one of the MECC's three program Units. The three program Units being: Faith and Unity, Education and Human Resource Development and Diakonia and Social Justice. The Diakonia and Social Justice program is the diakonal force of the Churches, which is mandated to promote and is concerned with work for refugees and migrants, supporting churches in their services for refugees, advocating for the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, Implementing UNHCR program for refugees, developing human resource for social services, training in a variety of fields, collaborating regionally and internationally for the promotion of and welfare of the oppressed and advocating for their rights. Although financial concerns dominated all the programs of MECC however, the Unit on Diakonia and Social Justice has managed to carry on its activities forwarding a four-year plan covering the period of 2008-2011.

Activity Report of DSJ January – September 2008

1 - Participation in ACT Annual Meeting in Geneva

Action by Churches Together International has embarked on an Alliance-wide, innovative and multi-phased Capacity Development Initiative. The primary aim and the objective of the Capacity Development Initiative (CDI) is to strengthen the capacity of ACT members and to enhance the ability, principally of member organizations and ACT Forums, related churches and other institutions of the Alliance to mitigate the effects of, and respond to, disasters and humanitarian emergencies. MECC General Secretary nominated Ms. Seta Hadeshian Director of the Unit on Life & Service, to represent the Council and the Middle East region in Capacity Development Initiative. Currently the CDSG has ten members representing Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East. The CDI started its preparations in January 2008. At its first meeting on the 14th of January 2008 at the WCC Headquarters, Geneva, the CDGS elected its chairs: Ms. Seta Hadeshian - MECC and Mr. Herman Brouwer - ICCO. Members meet once a year in Geneva and every two months by teleconference, report and discuss regional initiatives and updates about progress in ACT members' involvement. A detailed and easy to respond guide tool is prepared to undertake organizational capacity assessment of interested member churches and organizations.

I- Service to Refugees Displaced and Migrants

The reality of constant crisis and struggle for survival and human rights in the region creates constant influx of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers of Iraqis, Somalis, and Sudanese who are constantly moving in large numbers. In addition there is a growing population of migrant workers from different nationalities who are economic migrants struggling for their daily bread and who are often victims of violation abuse and trafficking.

The situation of human misery and poverty of these groups: migrants and refugees, urges the churches through SRDM activities to respond to their needs, through advocacy, capacity building training skills, through helping build a pro human rights, pro refugee culture and environment.

A- The project Organization

The SRDM operates through MECC Diakonia and Social Justice regional office in Beirut. The director of the Unit on Diakonia and Social Justice program together with her administrative assistant supervise the programs, developing and initiating in parallel advocacy, awareness raising and skill building activities, supervising and monitoring at the same time church projects supported by SRDM, promoting interregional collaboration, networking and initiating activities with CSO concerned in refugee and migration issues.

The SRDM staff performs in full capacity and ensures a coherent service for all refugees.

B- Ongoing projects

1- Direct Assistance programs to Refugees and Migrants

The UNHCR partnership program for refugees, in joint collaboration with MECC is going on now for 34 years, and has given the program a strong base and developed many activities.

This project aims at providing direct assistance to refugees in their basic needs, allowing them to survive pending the identification of resettlement, as local integration or repatriation remain impossible.

A team of seven social counselors, one medical doctor, one coordinator and two Iraqi volunteers are responsible for the UNHCR/MECC partnership refugee program implementation.

The peak for refugee influxes in Lebanon Syria and Jordan in 2006, forced UNHCR in Lebanon to register 10.000 Iraqi refugees meaning that the load for MECC office grew disproportionately. From January - August 2008, **MECC served 6000 Iraqi refugees**. 70% representing male population and 30% females. Their needs were focused on medical, food and education needs, and small percentage of Somalis benefited from this project, pending durable solutions. Counseling, home visits, medical follow ups, service to refugee prisoners, referrals and orientation to educational or vocational training institutions were provided as integral part of the program. Children, unaccompanied women, elderly people and victims of torture, trauma have been given special care and attention, and few cases were resettled to USA. A total of 1.200.000USD budget is allocated for UNHCR refugee assistance implementation to MECC.

2- Humanitarian Aid to Displaced Iraqis in Lebanon and Syria- Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

With the generous financial assistance of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, an amount of 94.000USD, MECC offices in Beirut and Damascus launched food and medical/health distribution program to provide food parcels and medical assistance to poor Iraqi families living in different areas of Lebanon and Syria. The aim of the project was to meet the needs of the socio economically disadvantaged Iraqi refugees and support the burden sharing policy agreement of UNHCR, reaching a far greater number of refugees seeking assistance from MECC/UNHCR. The program was launched on September 15, 2007 following several different coordination meetings with church representatives and other Islamic entities in Syria. 1500 food coupons and 675 were distributed respectively in Syria and Lebanon and 819 beneficiaries were assisted with medical, (medications and hospitalization fees) residing in different districts of Syria, while 40 cases were assisted with medication, rental and other material needs in Lebanon. The program ended in August 2008.

3- Our Lady Dispensary

The Socio-medical Center in Sad El Baoucherieh, under the auspices of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Lebanon, continues to assist many stateless and refugee persons in the aim of promoting their integration into the Lebanese society and their development towards self reliance. The project functions under the direct supervision of the SRDM targeting very needy Iraqi, Palestinian, migrant workers: Egyptian, Ethiopian, Filipino and internally displaced Lebanese populations residing in the area. The center operates with one social counselor, a part time nurse, one assistant and six visiting doctors.

Services offered by the center are: Primary Health Care, Maternal and Child Health, Social Services counseling and group activities for women, elderly and children, osteoporosis campaigns, polio, Hepatitis A, B vaccination, food distribution, skill building sessions in beadwork and cooking.

From the period of January – August the center served 689 families around 2756 persons.

4- Assistance to migrants in Lebanon – Philemon Project

Under the auspices and supervision of the National Evangelical Church of Beirut pastoral, diakonal and material assistance is offered to hundreds of migrant and refugee Sudanese, Filipinos and Ethiopian families who have found refuge in Lebanon, in the aim of facilitating and improving their living situation in Lebanon.

5- Assistance to Sudanese in Egypt- St. Charles Lwanga Center

Under the auspices and the supervision of the Roman Catholic Church belonging to the Latin Vicariate of Egypt. It provides financial and material assistance to around 1500 refugee students between 15-20 years of age of African origin, mainly Sudanese of different tribal, cultural and religious backgrounds, 95% are Christians. The center operates in the aim of upgrading the educational level of Sudanese students and facilitates their integration into the Egyptian society.

6- Ecumenical Primary Health Care Center - Arbaa Wa Nuss

Under the auspices of the Ministry of the Episcopal Church in Egypt, provides Medical and social Assistance to a very poor Sudanese and African refugee communities residing in Arbaa Wa Nuss area in Cairo, in the aim of improving the health and social conditions at the first two years of their arrival to Egypt.

7- Assistance to refugee Mothers and New Born Infants

Assistance to very needy refugee mothers and their newborn infants with layette and necessary canned infant milk is provided for a period of six month. This project complements the assistance provided by UNHCR as part of MECC partnership agreement in Lebanon.

8- Repatriation of Migrant workers

This project protects and assists migrant workers, men and women to repatriate, who are stranded and detained for reasons of abuse by employing and recruiting agencies, or exploitation by employers. The project operates in the Gulf countries, Syria and Lebanon. Eight migrant workers were repatriated from Lebanon (1) and the Gulf (7) in 2007-2008.

9- Gulf Liaison Office

Coordinates the Gulf Liaison office, networks with churches, embassies, governments and international organizations, visits labor camps, safe houses for runaway maids and produces information on living and working conditions of migrant workers in the aim of initiating justice based activities, and involving churches and interested people in helping the abused and the oppressed.

C- Advocacy Activities:

In order to support and promote change in the lives of the poor and the marginalized, in order to promote changes in institutional policies and practices or individual attitudes, advocacy activities and projects are developed by the Unit on DSJ in collaboration with national institutions and Human Rights Institute. A close collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, Interior Security Forces and the General Security, facilitate the networking and bridging the gaps between the CSOs and the National Institutions.

1- Advocacy Workshop on Migrant's Rights

"Migrants Rights and Development Prospects" was the theme of the advocacy workshop organized by MECC Unit on Diakonia and Social Justice, Program, which took place on February 7 - 8, 2008, at hotel Le Meridien - Commodore, Beirut - Lebanon. More than 50 participants from churches, church-related NGOs, national and international organizations participated in it. Present were the Lebanese Director General from Minister of Labor, and a delegation from the Ministry of Labor, representatives of Interior Security Forces, representative of General Security, Director of Human Rights Institute Beirut Bar Association, Philippine's Labor Attaché, and representative of the Embassy of Sri Lanka. In view of providing information on the situation of migrant workers residing in Lebanon, several interventions were made by the representatives of Caritas Migrant, Minister of Labor Mr. Razzouk reported on the activities and progress of the National Steering committee on the Migrants Rights; and the Human Rights perspective; the Philippine Labor Attaché Mr. Reynaldo Gopez reported on the situation of Philippine Migrant workers in Lebanon; and Mr. Antoine Germanos from Annahar daily news on the role of the media.

The workshop was run thereafter, by Mr. William Gois the regional coordinator of Migrant Forum for Asia who focused on *the humanitarian Protection of Migrant Workers, Strategies for building capacity of Migrant Workers, and the Role of the CSO, Agencies and the Interior Security forces.*

Participants identified concrete action plan and recommendations to the Ministry of Labor for consideration in future development plans of the National Steering Committee.

2- The Unit Celebrates the World Refugee Day

In solidarity with the world refugees, and in partnership with UNHCR, MECC Diakonia & Social Justice Unit and partner humanitarian organizations, Caritas IMC, ArcEn Ciel, AMEL Association, Insan, NRC, IECD, MDM AJEM, RESTART, and Al Majmouaa organized and celebrated the World Refugee Day with a series of activities during June 20-27, 2008. Official representatives of the Interior Security Forces, national authorities, International Humanitarian Organizations and Regional Director of OHCHR were present.

The World Refugees Day was an expression of solidarity to around 10.000 Iraqi refugees officially recognized by UNHCR in Lebanon. The World Refugee Day, June 20th, is recognition of the struggle and courage refugees express in running away their homes and countries, running death and leaving behind everything they have built and strived for. Arriving to unknown and inhospitable countries where asylum laws do not provide room for these groups to work and subsist, mandate humanitarian organizations like MECC Diakonia and Social Justice/ Service to Refugees, Displaced and Migrants program, to respond to their needs in moral, financial, health, educational, legal, psychological assistance. At this occasion, official ceremonies were held at Babel Theatre, Hamra, where UNHCR Regional Director Mr. Stephane Jaquemet and NGO representative Mr. Kamel Sioufi delivered speeches. Refugees took part in the program as well delivering speeches and presenting national folkloric dances, recitations, songs, creating a very enthusiastic and happy atmosphere.

MECC/ SRDM offered a special lunch at the Near East School of Theology (NEST) on the 27th of June to around 100 elderly refugees, where addresses were delivered by UNHCR Regional Director, MECC Associate General Secretary and Amel Association Director.

3- World Refugee Day - Lunch for prisoners

In the context of and in the series of the World Refugee Day Commemoration, MECC Diakonia & Social Justice – SRDM program (Service to Refugees, Displaced & Migrants) offered a lunch to around 100 refugees and asylum seekers detained in the prisons of Roumieh - Lebanon on the 16th of July 2008.

The lunch was co - organized together with Association for Justice & Mercy (AJEM) & Mediciens Du Monde (MDM). Present were also prison guards, colonels and UNHCR Detention officers. Representatives delivered speeches upholding the courage of refugees to strengthen and increase hope towards a better future through enhancement of support and protection by inter agency cooperation and collaboration. The prisoners, mostly Sudanese, Iraqi and Syrian, delivered speeches as well, thanking the organizers and conveying their feelings of gratitude towards the Lebanese NGOs in service of refugees.

The event was highly appreciated by the refugees and the prison administration.

II- Interregional Collaboration

In view of exchanging information and experiences on refugees and migration issues of concern to the ecumenical organizations and the churches, in view of sharing information and advocating on the situation of Christians in the Middle East and other issues of concern to the ME and Europe, interregional collaboration has become a focal point for both European and Middle Eastern partners to follow up the recommendations of Global Ecumenical Network, Amman Process and Joint Working group meetings. In this context was organized the Public Hearing in Lebanon in April 2008.

1- WCC-MECC Public Hearing on Migration held in Lebanon

“Migration & the Changing Ecclesial Context of Churches” was the theme of the international conference that focused on migration concerns identified and organized jointly by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)/Unit on Diakonia & Social Justice. The Conference took place at the Armenian Catholicosate of Holy See of Cilicia in Antelias from 14-16 April 2008. Representatives of Lebanon’s faith communities (Christians and Muslims) around 120 shared their opinions as the Public Hearing on Migration and the Changing Ecclesial Landscape was officially opened on the 14th of April 2008. Representatives of the Druze, Shiite and Sunni, communities joined their words of welcome to those from Catholic, Orthodox and the Evangelical Churches, to the WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia, MECC General Secretary Mr. Guirgis Saleh, as well as to His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the (Armenian Orthodox) Holy See of Cilicia, who hosted the Public Hearing.

Both Muslim and Christian leaders stressed: “migration as an existential factual phenomena concerns not only religions but all humans. We can neither turn our backs to it nor control it”. They called on

preserving the scheme of coexistence in Lebanon with its diverse religions, and that dialogue was the only solution for political consensus in Lebanon.

The conference gave the opportunity to reflect on cultural and religious actors that affect migration and living together, pointed to the historical challenges, focused on the application and interpretation of rights and responsibilities, of civic citizenship mentality, integration and national social cohesion, of assimilation and integration, of friction between minorities and majority.

Testimonies by the youth from Lebanese different universities, on why they leave the region in search for a brighter future spoke powerfully of their attachment to their country in a context in which university graduates all face the question "What am I staying here for?"

His Holiness Patriarch Paulos, who is one of the Presidents of the World Council of churches, addressed the conference in his coinciding short visit to Lebanon.

In terms of participants from other regional ecumenical networks the conference hosted The General Secretaries of Christian Conference of Asia, Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe; representatives of churches in Latin America, Australia National Council of Churches, Church World Service in USA, Canadian Justice Initiative, and participants from sister agencies, representatives of local civil society religious leaders, academics, politicians and graduate students NGOs and Government representatives from across Lebanon, around 120, who gave significant input to the hearing.

WCC General Secretary Dr. Sam Kobia presented a public statement, which was adopted by the conference at the closing.

The Public Hearing on Migration and the Changing Ecclesial Landscape was the first in a series of hearings on the topic, which are to take place over the next years in the different regions of the world.

2- Global Ecumenical Network Meeting – GENM

The Public Hearing was followed by a 2-day meeting of the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration-GENM co-organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) Unit on Diakonia & Social Justice. It was hosted by His Holiness Aram Catholicos of Holy See of Cilicia and took place at the Museum of the Catholicosate.

The meeting brought together 25 regional ecumenical organizations, Churches and Christian agencies working on migration and related issues around the world. From Europe-Christian Commission for Migrants in Europe-CCME, North and Latin Americas-Church World Service; Australia- National Council of churches; Canada-Kairos; Asia-Christian Conference of Asia and the Middle East MECC. They discussed migration issues and related policies and the challenges /responsibilities churches are faced with. It focused on "Living Together in Diversity and Churches Response". Participants reported on their regions and their churches activities.

3- WCC/MECC General Secretaries in Dubai

On 17-19 April Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia, visit to the Middle East was extended to the Gulf countries, Dubai, accompanied by MECC General Secretary Mr. Guirgis Saleh, General Secretary of Christian Conference of Asia Dr. Prawate Khid-Arn, General Secretary of Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe, Ms Doris Peschke, to engage in a dialogue with the representatives of various churches present in the Gulf States. MECC Gulf Liaison office hosted the delegation. The delegation learned about the Christians in the Gulf and their activities in the areas of inter religious dialogue and how the churches are serving the needs of the migrant workers who are mostly expatriates from South Asia. Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia held services in the Holy Trinity Church, and was invited to the Indian Orthodox Church. He witnessed the Christian life in the Gulf Church compound on a Friday and visited the labor camps in Jebel Ali and Sharjah. The Gulf Liaison office held a seminar as well on the life and the plight of migrant workers. The Gulf Liaison office carries Inter religious Dialogue under the MECC General Secretariat as well as Service to migrants under the MECC Diakonia and Social Justice program.

4- Preparatory meeting to UNHCR annual consultations took place at the WCC Ecumenical Center, in Geneva on the 24th of June, where WCC member churches to Migration and Social Justice Program participated. They were from Australia, Canada, USA, Asia, and the Middle East. MECC Diakonia and Social Justice Unit Director Ms. Seta Hadesian participated in it presenting a paper on Iraqi refugees in the Middle East.

5- Participation in the UNHCR Pre Ex-Com Meeting

UNHCR Annual Consultations with Non Governmental Organizations took place on June 25 - 26 2008, at the International Conference Center, Palais Des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. 200 organizations with 300 representatives participated in it. MECC was represented by Diakonia and Social Justice Unit Director Ms. Seta Hadeshian as implementing partner to UNHCR in Lebanon.

The major themes on Refugees focused on 10 areas:

Human Rights and Protection, Resettlement, nationality UNHCR and NGO – advocacy and Refugee law.

An NGO statement conveying the concerns and the recommendations of NGOs was issued on the third day for UNHCR to consider at the Pre EXCOM be held in October 2008.

6- Participation to the International Detention Coalition Meeting in Geneva

International Detention Coalition yearly meeting took place on June 26 at the Catholic International Center in Geneva. More than 25 participants from around the world shared their experiences and reported on their activities on Detention related issues. A new director for the Coalition was designated, Mr. Grant Mitchell, from Australia who will link members and share their reports and activities.

7- Participation to the III World Social Forum on Migration in Spain – Madrid from 10 –14 September 2008

In the aim of advocating for a better and fairer, more solidarity based world III World Social Forum for Migration together with the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR), the Municipality of Rivas Vaciamadrid and the III WSFM International committee had organized a three-day conference in Rivas – Vaciamadrid to which participated around 3000 persons from different corners of the world. 500 volunteers assisted in the organization and facilitation of the Forum, 70 translators and 200 persons from the media assisted to the Forum.

The aim of the forum was to express the need for a different approach to international trade and investment in order to stop poverty, exploitation, injustice and environmental disaster everywhere. It will be impossible to build a social, ecological and democratic world, while the leading Europe and the West, pursue corporate oriented trade policies, like Global Europe. The aim of the Forum was to create spaces to link current struggles emerging grassroots, resistance movements and alternative visions. It encouraged social movements, NGOs, Women's organizations, Unions, human rights organizations, migrant and refugee organizations towards a joint action to build people centered alternatives.

Topics discussed stem from the neo-liberal globalization policies giving space for dialogue, solidarity, suggestions and critiques on migration movements, legislative and cultural walls separating peoples of the world, impeding their circulation, and changing migration processes to the worse. Different seminars, workshops, plenary sessions, reunions and meetings, cultural events and demonstrations expressed the character of universal citizenship and a promise of "**Another World is possible.**"

MECC Diakonia and Social Justice Unit director, Ms. Seta Hadeshian participated in this Forum as part of the Migration Forum for Asia delegation.

III- Human Resource Development

Mandated for the development of human resources and development of culture of justice in our society, mandated to promote fundamental concept of change in the national institutions, i.e. management system of prisons and in the treatment of prisoners, and in the aim of providing information on measures of International Human Rights for prisoners, and raising awareness in the prison staff of the role they have in defending the human rights of prisoners and practical information to implement them in everyday life, specialized prison ministry workshops were organized to persons working in and with prisons, government officials, parliamentarians accountable for prisons, officials working with ministry of Justice, lawyers, judges, prison directors, police, Interior Security Forces and the General Security personnel.

1- Training Seminar on Human Rights in Prison Ministry

MECC Diakonia & Social Justice Unit jointly with the Human Rights Institute held a training seminar in Beirut – Lebanon on **“Human Rights in Prison Ministry” (29 – 30 April)**. The seminar tackled the issues of international human rights laws regarding the treatment of prisoners, international instruments overcoming the use of violence and torture in prisons, the concept of prison in healing prisoners, and the international laws regulating the conduct of staff in prisons.

Diakonia & Social Justice Director Ms. Seta Hadeshian welcomed the participants in affirming the role of churches and religious institutes in defending the rights of prisoners and those who are under injustices. Invited expert trainers were Mr. Karim Mufti expert in International Human Rights Law, Mr. Walid Nakeeb, Associate Director of Human Rights Institute, Nidal Jurdi, Lawyer in International Law, and Emile Aoun professor of Law.

2- Prison Ministry Training Workshop in Lebanon

“Human Rights Approach to Prison Management” was the theme of two training workshops organized by MECC Unit on Diakonia & Social Justice, in joint collaboration with the Human Rights Bar Association and Lebanese General Security that took place **on June 11 and 24**, at the Human Rights Institute. The workshops were the fourth and the fifth in the series of trainings in the personnel of national institutions. It focused on the General Security personnel directly involved in detention issues in detention centers. Opening words were addressed by the Directors of the Human Rights Bar Association and MECC/ Diakonia & Social Justice Unit and representative of the Lebanese General Security. The trainings provided the opportunity to participants to discuss the existing national laws, their implications and application in reference to the International Human rights laws. The need to collaborate and to coordinate with different ministries and national sectors and with the civil society actors to promote life and situation in detention centers, it recognized the need to bring the prisons under the management of the Ministry of Justice. It focused on the understanding and application of national laws and conventions ratified by the Lebanese government. The training ended with the closing remarks of the General Security Director, Colonel Ma’arouf Itani. Director of MECC Diakonia and Social Justice, Seta Hadeshian, thanking the organizers and the participants, emphasizing the importance of the trainings and underlining the need for coordination to promote the standard of prison life and enhance the reintegration of the prisoners as constructive elements of the society. Certificates were issued as sign of recognition, appreciation and encouragement to the participants. This training is the fifth in the series started in 2007.

3- SRDM Staff Training:

In the aim of empowering and building skills and capacities of the SRDM’s social workers, Unit Director encouraged SRDM Social worker Celine El Kik to participate in the following workshop:

- “Rights Based Approach” Training workshop in Amman 19 August – 22 August, 2008,

IV- Publications

1- Awareness Material – Publication

- **Publication of Children’s Rights “Beyond the Silence – A Child’s World” illustrated book.**
In the context of raising awareness on the rights of children and refugee children and providing an insight to children and adults alike to practice human rights guide, the Unit is publishing a storybook on refugee children providing guide tools for Human Rights.
The book is named **“Beyond the Silence – A child’s world”**, illustrated and hard cover that will be published in November 2008 by the generous donation of the **FinnChurchAid**.
- The Unit publishes reports and activities of the training workshops and distributes them to the participants.

Upcoming events in 2008

The following events are on the agenda of the Unit on Diakonia & Social Justice to which the Unit Director will participate and present papers.

- Prison Ministry Regional Training Workshop on **“Prevention on Torture - “Monitoring Human Rights in Places of Detention: Tools and Experiences”** in 14 – 16 October 2008 in Lebanon.
- Participation in **17th General Assembly of CCME**, 7 – 11 October 2008 in Cyprus.
- Participation in **2nd World Forum On Migration and Development** organized by UN on 27-30 October 2008 in Manila - Philippines.
- Participation in **WCC - United Nations Advocacy Week** of 16 – 21 November in New York.
- Participation in the **WCC Meeting in Dubai “Churches Role in the Gulf Countries”** from 27 –30 November 2008.
- Participation in the **Annual Meeting of ACT/CDGS**, in Geneva in 15 –18 December 2008.

Conclusion

We are modestly aware that this report is a humble effort in the immense need of migration related issues. We hope however, that this report will contribute to the understanding of initiatives undertaken by the Unit on DSJ program on migration and inspire churches to exchange and cooperate more on relevant topics on migration. In many Middle Eastern countries churches provide services for migrants and refugees following the message of the Bible, which insists, on the dignity of every human being. The strangers are welcomed, and persons in need of protection are provided with shelter. We sincerely hope that this information will contribute to developing of adequate response and finding adequate structures for ecumenical fellowship. As we progress in our work for refugees we become aware of the fact that a number of churches and their respective migration agencies do not have statistical information in order to make decisions on migration related issues, there are still much more to be done and could be done, as migration is a complex and rapidly changing and challenging area for investigation, and is affecting historic communities in the Middle East.

We look forward in developing better structures of service to refugees in the churches and church related institutions.

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Director Diakonia & Social Justice

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