

**Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees  
Middle East Council of Churches  
Dr. Bernard Sabella  
Executive Secretary  
Central Office  
Jerusalem  
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**Continued Witness in times of Tribulation**

In times of tribulation, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches continues its work of witness in the Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Galilee. As a result of the political impasse in the Palestinian Territories, DSPR in consultation with ACT Geneva Office launched a new ACT Appeal MEPL71 seeking to serve thousands of families in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Our objective from this appeal, as with previous ACT Appeals since October 2000, with a target of three quarters of a million US Dollar is to reach to the neediest of the most adversely affected families and to provide them with some relief. Altogether, the 7 Appeals launched so far have brought in over \$US3.5 million. The response of partners and their constituencies; Churches, Civil Society Groups, Governments and Private Individuals, has been rewarding primarily on strengthening the human link that reaches across to lend a helping hand unconditionally, in the truest Christian love tradition. In Lebanon, the after effects of last year's war are still felt and DSPR has cooperated with MECC and others to ensure its witness in times of great need. In spite of the hardships suffered by so many in the Palestinian Territories and the Lebanon, our work there continued as before and indeed has progressed. Likewise, in Jordan and Galilee our commitment to the needy and to the refugees led us to persevere in our work and programs. Jordan's overall outreach has diversified to women's and youth groups and remains persistent in providing needed medical care. In Galilee, beside the largest university student loan program, inter group work promotes the idea that there is a common ground that unites even the most different groups in society or across societies. DSPR in all of its activities and projects is guided by a common strategy that gets translated into plans of action that seek to develop a new DSPR, based on the recommendation of a major evaluation of our programs and activities in 2005.

**Major Programs and Activities**

Our major programs and activities revolve around 4 areas of operation: Vocational Training and Education that reaches to over 1200 students and trainees in a variety of educational and vocational programs in all Areas of DSPR, including 800 university students who receive loans; Health Program that reaches to 90,000 family members in 5 family health centers in both the Gaza Strip and Jordan; Community Infrastructure Capacity Building and Development that reaches rural communities in the West Bank with water cisterns to scores of families and communities, water purification in Gaza that benefit tens of households, Awareness-raising workshops on environmental issues, children and special needs in Jordan that reach to hundreds of women and youth, in-service training and capacity building to communities, staff and program beneficiaries in all Areas of DSPR operations, cross-cultural and inter-group focused events in Galilee reaching hundreds of people of all religions and nationalities; construction of playgrounds, retaining walls and classrooms in schools, agricultural roads, remodeling youth centers in all Areas of DSPR; human rights youth group in Dbayeh refugee camp in Lebanon; special agricultural farm and rural capacity building in Tyre Lebanon.

### **DSPR Administrative Capacity**

Our Finance Officer, Mr. George Stephan, has been entrusted with the important task of internal auditor in all Areas of DSPR. He has undertaken visits and written reports on the Areas that he has visited. These reports help us in standardizing financial performance and reporting and enhance the internal control procedures while keeping DSPR as one operating organization.

DSPR has recruited a new Program Development Officer, Ms. Fadya Salfiti, whose task is to work with the Areas' Executive Directors in order to develop ongoing projects and activities as well as to plan for new activities, if the Areas so agree. The recruited officer is well qualified and has been offered the post in line with the recommendations of the DSPR evaluation. It is our expectation that the new Program Development Officer will help us advance the new DSPR.

A new Administrative Assistant, Ms. Hanan Turjman, has been hired to take over the responsibilities of running the day to day operations of the Central Office. She comes to us with a very impressive background.

### **Relationships with Partners**

Daily communications with partners, whether at their home base or while on visits to the region, are ongoing. DSPR attendance at various regional workshops and membership in partnership networks, such as that of ICCO, takes place regularly. With the presence of partner's representatives in the region, such as Norwegian Church Aid, DSPR is always in consultation with them and is active in all related partnership activities and workshops. DSPR has participated in a number of specialized workshops outside the region such as those on micro finance initiated by Church of Sweden. DSPR Central Office has provided a helping hand in developing special "Woman at the Well" and "United for Peace" olive wood pins for Church World Service USA and United Church of Canada, respectively.

DSPR is member of the ACT Forum locally and takes part in occasional consultations. We are also in constant contact with Jerusalem Interchurch Center and always coordinate relevant programs and activities. DSPR as part of MECC is always cooperative with the World Council of Churches and its initiatives for promoting peace in our region. At the local level, DSPR is in network with other Church Related Organizations in order to enhance delivery of services and to optimize performance.

### **Thanks for Your Support and Partnership**

All in DSPR are committed to the NEW DSPR and to partnership that will help us achieve it. This cannot be done without the active support of MECC; its most distinguished and honored Presidents, its ever caring General Secretary, various Committees and Staff. The support of our Partners is truly our mainstay. Our local Churches and their esteemed Heads are also supportive of us and our work. DSPR Central Committee with its diligent Chairperson and members continue to insist on the NEW DSPR. To all of You and to DSPR Executive Directors for their hard work and continuous commitment, to Committee Chairpersons and Members for their voluntary and dedicated work and to the Staff for their giving and commitment: THANK YOU. May we all be rewarded with an era of PEACE, HARMONY and PROSPERITY IN ALL OF OUR LANDS.

