



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

*IX General Assembly*  
*"So we are ambassadors for Christ,*  
*God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor5:20)*  
*26 – 30 November 2007*  
*Cyprus*

**Report**

**UNIT ON LIFE & SERVICE**

**2004 - 2007**

*Presented to*

*MECC IX General Assembly*

**IX GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
*“So we are ambassadors for Christ,  
God making his appeal through us” (2 Cor5:20)*  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This report is an attempt to sum up the activities of the Unit on Life & Service as a substantial contribution to the Ecumenical Diakonia of the churches. It predominantly speaks of the church's involvement in social ecumenical Development prospects as the core commitment of the council expressed through the Unit on Life & Service.

The Unit functioned according to this mandate through a structured program, identified and approved by the churches. These are: Human Resource Development program, Comprehensive Health care program and Service to Refugees, Displaced and Migrants.

In the course of four years 2004-2007, the Unit implemented the proposed plan of action approved by the General Assembly and the Commission, in the context of a continuous political stress, wars, internal domestic conflicts, economic stagnation, unemployment and social instability.

While, MECC financial resources diminished as partner churches assessed different standards and needs, which often breached the programs and activities of the MECC Units in general.

Challenged with internal and external factors, the Unit on Life and Service dedicated itself in bridging the gaps and building dialogue for better understanding and collaboration of churches together in their role for advocating Peace, Reconciliation and National Unity.

## **I- INTRODUCTION TO UNIT ON LIFE & SERVICE**

This paper provides a framework of the program of the Diakonia of the churches of MECC Unit on Life and Service. It covers the regional activities of the member churches of MECC in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan from 2004 - 2007.

The Unit on Life and Service is one of the four units of MECC that functions regionally to cooperate with and complement churches' response to humanitarian services. It is engaged in the ministry of the poor, the marginalized, the refugees and the migrants. The Unit has strategic importance to MECC in social (poverty, Justice) economic (unemployment, migration) and political (stability and security) terms. The political situation in the region is characterized by persistent tensions due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, war in Iraq, terrorist activities, domestic political tensions and expansion of religious extremism. In the economic domain free market economy, globalization and the business of the elite are resulting in unemployment, slow economic growth and migration. In social domain lack of access to education, empowerment deficit, discrimination and employment opportunities are resulting in poverty and injustice.

MECC Unit on Life & Service policy response to this situation is guided by three coherent and complementary strategies: Human Resource Development Program, Comprehensive Health Care and Service to Refugees, Displaced and Migrants' Program. Policy priorities for the Unit to operate were decided by the General Assembly in December 2003 and the Commission meetings of Unit on Life & Service in 2004 and 2005.

This paper channels the contents of four years work program (2004 – 2007) into three main objectives implemented at regional level.

- a. Human Resource Development area with a focus on development of potentials & skills and empowerment of church members.
- b. Comprehensive Health Care activities with special focus on preventive care and training of health care givers.
- c. Service to Refugees Migrants and Displaced with a focus on Advocacy interregional networking and awareness raising through trainings, empowerment activities, media, publications and workshops.

## **A- REGIONAL ANALYSIS**

**1- Political situation** - The political challenges facing the region, the Israeli – Palestinian war, the American lead invasion and the war in Iraq, internal domestic disputes, political instability, terrorist explosions and assassination of political leaders and the fragile peace that can at any moment break into war again have destabilized the region to the edge of civil war between Shiites, Sunnites and Christians, the options for addressing them, political process, civil liberties, political rights, independence to the media and to civil society have been extensively debated in most of Unit's activities, however, issues related to justice and home affairs and crime have not been emphasized at the expense of political freedoms.

Political reform remains key to achieving sustainable security and stability in the region. The need to further democratic reforms free and fair elections and respect for the rule of the law for fundamental freedoms and human rights characterize the political situation of the region. While unresolved conflicts in the Middle East peace process remain the fundamental obstacle to reforms in the Middle East.

**2- Economic situation** - War in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the recent hostilities in Lebanon and Israel have continued to produce strongly negative repercussions on the economic activity in the region. Per capita income varies widely ranging from 1000US dollars in Egypt and Palestinian territories to 5.200US dollars in Lebanon and over 17.000US dollars in Israel. Unemployment has remained unchanged, poverty varies from 7% in Jordan to 44% in Egypt. Political uncertainty, security risks and weak economic competitiveness and corruption continue to have negative impact on the business environment and attractiveness for both domestic and foreign investors.

**3- Social situation** - The expansion of working population, slow economic growth rate and security issues directly impacted unemployment and poverty, furthermore Arab women's participation in economic and political life remains among the lowest in the world seriously affecting the potential for social and economic development. While access to education, with tangible progress in improving literacy and enrolment rates in higher education remain limited. The way forward lies in strengthening capacities to acquire and communicate knowledge in the region, including in education system, in freeing society from limitations on political and economic participation and in improving political and economic governance in the region.

**4- Reforms** - The political, economic and social challenges in the region require a variety of responses to accelerate reforms in the political domain, specific programs to enhance development of civil societies, the rule of law, justice and security. In the economic domain domestic policy reforms, opening to external trade and structural reforms and banking sector, privatization or restructuring of government enterprises, will have a real impact on the level of regional economic development. While policy changes in education, social and cultural sectors, initiatives on, gender equality, through legislative changes, civil society organizations will avoid "clash of civilizations" and promote intercultural dialogue contributing to human resource development in the region.

**5- Priorities** - The above mentioned issues have been discussed in a variety of MECC- WCC, meetings, Commission meetings, Joint Working group Meetings, Local Ecumenical Committee Meetings, regional and interregional meetings assessing the impact of the measures and mechanisms recommended.

To address them, priority areas have been focused on advocacy and human resource development project.

The objectives and activities included in this program constitute the basis for Unit on Life & Service cooperation with churches at regional level. The specific regional programs include activities generating information and awareness, cooperation and exchange of governance reforms, networking advocacy and human resource development.

In order to address the challenging issues that churches are facing with unemployment, poverty and migration, churches are encouraged to closely cooperate and be actively involved in the implementation of the Unit on Life and Service projects.

## **B- OBJECTIVES OF UNIT ON LIFE & SERVICE**

- To provide a regional forum for diakonal cooperation to sustain Christian populations on their lands, abate tensions, and create pro - conciliation and pro peace environment.
- To help churches identify where and when inter-church cooperation in diakonia is necessary, desirable and possible. To provide appropriate instruments for common response or action.
- To facilitate exchange of information, experience and insights gained by institutions and projects, by their inter-church initiatives or those of a specific church.
- To establish appropriate relationships with the WCC' s Unit IV Migration & Social Justice and related supporting agencies with regard to areas of common concern and the sharing of resources.
- To coordinate its humanitarian services with and assists Christian institutions engaged in diakonia.
- To create a pro peace and pro conciliation environment on principles of justice, respect for human rights and democracy,
- To engage in a process of increasing awareness, renewal and transformation.
- To strengthen dialogue between governmental and non - governmental actors.
- To promote South / South and South North regional dialogue on shared values and a common understanding of the need to institutionalize respect for human rights.

## **C- FOCUS GROUP**

The activities of the Unit are addressed to the churches, church related diakonal and development organizations, clergy, laymen, women and men, Human Rights organizations representatives of NGOs, religious authorities, Government officials, ministers, parliamentarians, deputies, EU Delegation representatives and the civil society at large.

## **D- METHODOLOGY**

In response to specific needs the Unit gathers resources & information and makes them available to churches for their use. It assists further through research, training and various types of consultancy, seminars, conferences, and publications.

## **E- ORGANISATIONAL SET UP OF UNIT ON LIFE & SERVICE**

- ***Commission of Unit on Life & Service:*** The mandate of the Unit is pursued through a Commission of eight members appointed by the Executive Committee. They represent the four families of member churches. It includes clergy, laity and resource people directly involved in Christian *diakonia*. The Unit functioned in accordance to the decisions

and recommendation of the commission on Life & Service and on the orientations of Executive committee and General Assembly of 2003.

The Commission defined service needs, proposed policies, programs and budgets, and outlined staff needs approved by the Executive Committee. It supervised the processes of implementation of approved programs and assessed the changing realities needs and conditions of Christian communities calling for common witness and diakonia.

Commission of the Unit on Life & Service convened twice during the reporting period in 2004 and 2005. The 2006 meeting was skipped while in 2007 for personal and security reasons the meeting fixed for 27<sup>th</sup> of July did not convene.

- **Local Ecumenical Committees** – The Local Ecumenical Committees of SRDM, HRD & Health in each of the countries Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan aimed to develop dialogue between local churches, consolidated the spirit of partnership and cooperated towards promoting of basic human rights and democracy. They planned and organized workshops, seminars and conferences in response to their churches concerns and interests.

## **F- THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE WORK OF THE UNIT ON LIFE & SERVICE**

The mission of Life & Service as a theological conviction and as the raison d'être of the churches encompasses two dimensions, Life and Service. Life in biblical – theological perspective being the vital dimension of the Holy Spirit which empowers life in Human being, and which is a gift of God, sacred, embracing physical, biological and spiritual dimensions and as it is God given, therefore, implies responsibility to protect and enrich God's creation.

Service, in theological terms Diakonia, is the very nature of the church. It is being in communication with Christ, which means loving one's neighbors, being with the sick and the affected, meaning to bring Christ to the world and implement the gospel message.

Churches for decades have developed Diakonia to such extent that it goes beyond charity today and express the basic Christian values of life through sharing, solidarity and community building. Churches involvement in the area of justice, health welfare and education has become the driving force in the development of social action in the multi religious societies of the Middle East. The existence of the MECC is therefore, to develop Diakonia beyond charity, to proclaim the gospel calling toward the injustice of the world – hatred, violence and evil. This implies taking sides with the oppressed, solidarity with the poor and bring justice within our societies.

The life and the Diakonia of the churches of the Middle East is the mandate of Middle East Council of Churches and more specifically of the Unit on Life & Service.

## **G- MEETINGS & CONSULTATIONS**

### **1- General Secretariat**

MECC Unit on Life and Service, during the course of the four years participated to all of the meetings, organized by the General Secretariat: senior staff or staff meetings, visiting heads of the churches, participated to the MECC Executive Committee Meeting in Egypt in March 2006, presenting the annual activity report.

Furthermore, the Unit Director presented its Financial Requests and Activity Reports on time to all of the concerning Ecumenical funding partners, updating them of the activities of the Unit.

**2- Partners' Meeting**

MECC's Ecumenical partners' meetings were held in Egypt, May 15-20, 2004, Syria May 9 –12, 2005, Jordan May 22 –25, 2006 and Lebanon May 22 –24, 2007.

The Unit attended and presented its activity reports and plan of actions for evaluation and consideration.

**3- Life & Service staff meetings**

In the aim of improving collaboration and coordination, assessing needs to the programs and identifying difficulties hindering implementation, Unit director organized staff meetings with the personnel of different sections of the Unit during the course of four years: Our Lady Dispensary, UNHCR/MECC SRDM Program and Community Development Center listening to their concerns about their work and their difficulties trying to solve them out together for the better dissemination of the aims and goals of the Unit on Life & Service.

**4- Policy Paper on Diakonia & Development**

Commission Meeting in 2005 studied and approved the document presented to the Commission members identifying the main guidelines and framework for the Unit to engage in Diakonia & Development.

This policy paper proposed the philosophy, principles and theological perception by which the Unit's programs will be guided. The policy paper was the reflections and ideas of commissions accumulated during the past decades adapting and adjusting them to the emerging problems, issues and policy guidelines of Diakonia and Development.

**H- RELATIONSHIP AND COOPERATION WITH WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

Unit on Life & Service continued and pursued its relationship with WCC Unit IV on Diakonia and Justice, later Migration & Social Justice in the aim of establishing cooperation, consultation, resource sharing and finances.

The Unit participated to WCC 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Porto Allegre and organized together a workshop on detention "Freedom Denied", on February 2006. Together with Unit IV the Unit organized as well during the course of the reporting period Joint Working Group meetings and participated to the WCC Unit's meetings, the Global Ecumenical Network Meeting, Pre Ex-com meeting and Migration related regional and International meetings.

## **II- HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

### **A- JUSTIFICATION**

This priority area is focused on a number of programs aiming to enhance the enabling environment for the development of Human resources, contributing to development of civil society, social cohesion of our communities, empowering churches and faith based organizations with human resources for social, economic and political involvement and a better understanding of contemporary trends in socio – cultural and technological changes affecting their lives. It aimed at the establishment of democracy, justice, economic development to achieve real progress in democratization and social development.

Churches as owners of land, hospitals, social centers, schools, whereby management patterns, and economic activity are faced with the demand for quality, perfection and competition, their growth as institutions is increasingly dependent on the development of their systems and is considered a necessity and a guarantee for survival.

To respond to this demand churches are challenged to make modifications, to adapt their programs to contemporary technological advancements and methodologies.

Furthermore, wars, conflicts and political instability, globalization and open borders economic policies, monopolistic practices and unfair terms of trade have created a severe deterioration of social and economic conditions and standards of living, increasing unemployment rate and poverty, a mass of unskilled workers incapable of competing with new technological advancements or educational systems. Churches are compelled to respond to these challenges through involvement in reeducation, reevaluation of their human resources promoting employee and organizational performance and establishing and maintaining modern administrative systems through capacity building, empowerment, social economic training seminars, awareness raising and advocacy initiatives, and development policy proposals.

### **B- OBJECTIVES**

- To build the capacity of the churches and develop their resources to promote their diaconal and development ministries.
- To encourage churches' cooperation and coordination towards the eradication of poverty and just development.
- To combat unemployment and poverty, as an essential element for development and promotion of social welfare,
- To develop potentials existing in the churches into qualified leadership.
- To integrate change in our systems,
- To ensure continual improvement and keep pace with changing environment.
- To engage civil societies to have a larger place in the say of their communities.

## **C- PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Human Resources Development Program in the Unit on Life and Service, organized social economic training seminars, conferences, and awareness raising workshops during the reporting period of 2004-2007, proposing better and practical alternatives, up to date managerial, employment and working systems, increasing level of awareness and understanding in each of the countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

The achievements were:

### **In Lebanon:**

- ***“The Role of the Church and the Civil Society in Disseminating the Culture of giving for Development*** from 25 – 27 November 2004, at the Commodore Hotel.
- ***“Administrative Barriers to development in the Churches-Workshop”***, from 7 – 9 November 2005, at Hotel Commodore.
- ***“Administrative Barriers to development in the Churches-Workshop”- Session 2*** from 13 -15 December 2006, at the CSP, Customer Service Progress.
- ***“Cultural Pluralism and Sustainable Development”***, from 19 -22 July 2007 at the Hotel commodore.

### **In Syria:**

- ***“Advanced Workshop on Information Technology for sustainable human development in churches and related organizations”***, from 21 – 23 October 2004 at the Holy Cross Church – Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus.
- ***“Training Session on Modern Administration Techniques in Small Income Generating Projects”***, from September 19-23, 2005, at the Holy Cross Church.
- ***“The Educational System: Between Dominance & Democracy, Educational Vital Methods in Christian Non Profit & Sunday Schools”*** from October 12 – 16, 2007 in Damascus.

### **In Jordan:**

- ***“The Educational System: Between Dominance & Democracy, Educational Vital Methods in Christian Non Profit & Sunday Schools”*** from October 24 – 27, 2007.

### **In Egypt:**

- ***“C.V. Writing and preparing for Interviews in Search of Employment”*** from 16 –19 December 2004 at Caritas Center – Shabra in Cairo.
- ***“Employment Social Justice and Societal Well being, the World Development opportunities”***, from 14 –16 December 2006, in the Roman Villa at Marriott hotel.
- ***“The World Development Opportunities: Discrimination and Deprivation. Equitable Development as a Challenge to the churches”*** from 28 –30 September 2007.
- ***“The Educational System: Between Dominance & Democracy, Educational Vital Methods in Christian Non Profit & Sunday Schools”***

In each of the trainings and workshops, bishops, priests, directors of hospitals & socio – medical centers, NGO workers lay and clergy together, around 30- 50 people attended totaling to 550 persons.

## **D- EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- The programs provided the opportunity to learn and apply the skills and information to incorporate in their churches' and organizations' activities.
- Provided the opportunity to closely cooperate with the local & national NGOs and Churches, promoting the regional social cooperation and enhancement of faith based organizational relationship.
- Provided the possibility of improving domestic and regional capacity in development opportunities.

The impact of all the conferences and workshops was measured through individual evaluation questioners, whereby participants affirmed the fulfillment of the aims and the goals of the workshops. The number of attendees increased in the up coming events, indicating the growing interests among the participants.

The activities were compiled into booklets and reported in the local papers, MECC News briefs and the "Mountada".

### **III- REGIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM**

#### **A- JUSTIFICATION**

Declining living conditions and reduced access to basic services, disintegrated, health care services in most of Middle Eastern countries, privatization of health care systems and the daily new introductions of market principles into health care delivery has transformed health care from public service to private commodity. The outcome has been the denial of access to the poor, who cannot afford to pay for private care and therefore have led to decreased health status.

Beyond the issue of affordability, private health care is also inappropriate in responding poor countries particular health needs, where infectious and chronic diseases constitute the greatest challenge to health and where public health services are limited in their capacity.

While pharmaceutical companies with intense lobbying to protect their interest around the world through strict patent laws on medicines, allow companies to monopolize their products charging high prices for medicines that people around the world depend on.

Health care, consequently is either unavailable for the poor or is too expensive, contributing to the expansion of poverty.

Health care therefore not only encompass, diverse and multiple issues of child and women health, euthanasia, and bioethics but policies that will need advocacy and ensure the poor's concern: affordability, accessibility and honesty in the effectiveness of the medical care. It is necessary to develop information, education and communication programs advocating necessary steps and responses to increase the use and quality of care.

To respond successfully to the health issues and needs, specific activities and programs were implemented in social and health forums, during the course of the years 2004 – 2007 by the Unit on Life & Service.

#### **B- OBJECTIVES OF HEALTH CARE PROGRAM**

- Raise awareness among the communities, religious and political authorities to make them aware of the abusive policies of medical and pharmaceutical companies affecting people's health.
- To integrate prevention, detection and care provision in the aim of preventing the spread of disease and other health problems
- To endeavor to extend primary health care and to emphasize the development of public health system to redress the inequalities lingering for decades.
- Train health care givers to respond in human rights context and extend services beyond the limits of the pockets of the patient.
- To upgrade and improve medical services in hospitals and other health centers.
- Raise awareness in issues of bioethics and involve greater number of people in matters of medical and biological ethics.

## **C- PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

In this context the Unit on Life Service preventive health care program initiated and organized activities that included:

- Conferences on **Bioethical issues** in joint collaboration with ATIME, in Lebanon, 2004, addressed to the clergy, theological students and lay people.
- **Bioethical issues** in joint collaboration with ATIME in Egypt in 2005.
- **Training for nurses “Medicine & Nursing: Complementary Ministries”** on November 19, 2004, in Beit El Kouloubi in Cairo, Egypt. Addressed to 64 professionals.
- Training for nurses **“Medicine & Nursing: Complementary Ministries”**, in Egypt. A follow up training workshop addressed to nurses with the theme of “Development and Achievement Progress” at the “Beit El Kouloub” – Cairo, Egypt from 10 – 13 December 2004. 58 participants from 21 hospitals of 8 regions.
- **“Training for Nurses”** in Beit Eil – Kalyoub - Cairo from 2 – 5 November 2006. 140 participants from 13 regions in Egypt.
- A certificate was issued to each participant at the end of the seminars.
- **“Christian Doctors’ Conference”** in Egypt, on 17 January 2007 at the Coptic Papal Residence in the presence of Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of all the Copts and President of the MEC Churches. Present were as well, bishops, reverend fathers, and directors of hospitals, doctors, medical specialists and church representatives, around 130 people from all over Egypt, Cairo, Alexandria, Mina, Giza, Assouan, and Assiout. **“Palliative care, definition, practices and implications”** was the theme of the conference.
- A brochure with the names of the Christian hospitals and the specialized services offered was published in the same year.
- More than **500** participants, health care professionals, academicians, doctors, nurses, medical administrative personnel, local ecumenical committee members, theological students, both men and women were actively involved in planning, organizing and implementing the activities and trainings enriching themselves and their churches with basic human rights issues and knowledge.

## **D- EXPECTED RESULTS**

Coping with health challenges in the context of workshop’s and seminar’s debates brought to light some of the issues, and ethical dimensions and formulated appropriate framework of solutions to the imperative issues of the Health, Poverty and Ethics triangle and involved greater number of people in the domain of health.

It is important to note that health programs were much affected by financial limitations. We are not sure if the Health programs will be supported by the Partner churches in the future, it is notably decreasing year by year, making harder the sustenance of on going projects or even the administrative expenses, consequently will lead to the closing of the program.

## **IV- SERVICE TO REFUGEES DISPLACED AND MIGRANTS**

### **A- JUSTIFICATION**

Migration continue to be a serious concern to developing and developed countries, the fall of Soviet regime and the end of the cold war, the American supremacy in technology, military power and economy, 9/11 and the war on terrorism, political developments and consequences stemming from it, diplomatic relations, economic sanctions, border controls, involve conflicting and contradictory responses to migration phenomenon. Furthermore, the demeaning role of UN as an International actor in world order, the failure to become a catalyst between warring countries, favored for ethnic wars & rivalries, persecutions, war in Iraq, in Israeli and Palestinian, in Sudan, deporting waves of asylum seekers from these countries to unknown frontiers of new frustrations and deceptions. While economic instability, unemployment, population growth and poverty favored the exodus of migrant economic workers from Asia to the Arabian Gulf And the Middle East.

Today the number of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are estimated to be around 12 million Asian workers, 4 million Palestinian refugees, more than 2 million Iraqis and 2 million internally displaced persons in Iraq. The absence of refugee conventions and working permissions of each country, lack of legal, transparent, right based instruments for labor migration, corruption of justice and penal system, non transparent and non-democratic practices, non-implementation of law make of the asylum seekers unwelcome foreigners, ending up in detention, centers, exploitations, trafficking, smuggling, abuse and warehoused situations.

Violence, rejection, and racist hostilities, restrictive government policies, detention and prolonged imprisonment of refugees and migrants, challenge churches, and church related NGOs and civil societies to respond to the call of their mission "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was in prison and you visited me" and to take immediate action and implement refugee directed programs and projects.

### **B- OBJECTIVES**

- To cultivate the culture of tolerance and change in our societies, particularly in the churches and related organizations.
- To mobilize the public opinion in support of and reduction of racial discrimination and violence against refugees and migrants.
- To promote understanding and disseminate the basic principles of tolerance, impartiality, non-discrimination and peaceful living conditions.
- To take imperative action necessitating the need for advocacy and awareness raising activities in the national authorities and the public towards a more humane response and better management of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in camps, detention centers, prisons, and warehoused situations.

#### ***1- In the Justice domain***

- To confront the unjust systems and structures of society and serve the poor the deprived and the stranger.
- To provide legal assistance to detained refugees and asylum seekers facilitating access to justice.

- To improve cooperation between Bar Association, penal court as well as human rights organizations facilitating the functioning and liaising of all concerned in justice.
- To advocate for countries' ratification of various UN Conventions on human rights to better protect refugees, migrants, and uprooted people.

## **2- In Migration domain**

- To ameliorate the understanding of migration phenomenon through research and statistical data, networking and information exchange and policy debate.
- To challenge the churches to rediscover their identity, their integrity and their vocation as the church of stranger.
- To challenge States, international organizations, NGOs, individual citizens, civil society and government officials to share responsibilities in the ministry of the uprooted.
- To pressure social, political and legal systems to treat more humanely, responding to the needs and issues of refugees, displaced and migrants, from asylum seeking to resettlement, granting of refugee status, protecting from Detention, trafficking and abuse and improving their working conditions wherever intervention is possible.

## **C- EXPECTED RESULTS**

- Increase knowledge of the reasons for migration and conditions faced by refugees migrants and displaced.
- Increase public awareness of the needs and the rights of the refugees and migrants.
- Increase greater numbers of churches, and civil society members prepared to protect and proclaim the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

### **1- Expected results in the Justice domain**

- Protect migrants and asylum seekers in the context of international human rights conventions.
- Increase access to detention centers or where uprooted people may be held.
- Reduce the use of pre-trial detention practices and stop arbitrary detention.
- Provide legal assistance.
- Release detainees suffering infectious or psychological illness to hospitals.

### **2- Expected results in the migration domain**

- Share information on migration policies states have adopted or debating to adopt new ones.
- Protect migrants and asylum seekers through political debates on these themes.
- Protect migrants through international human rights and refugee conventions.
- Engage in policy debates of states to challenge them develop new polices for migrants and asylum seekers.
- Pursue their rehabilitation & reintegration in the society.

## **D- ORGANIZATIONAL SET UP OF SRDM**

- SRDM operates through the MECC regional office in Beirut, Lebanon. A team of 7 social counselors implements **UNHCR** projects of assistance to Refugees in Lebanon. Two social counselors and one medical nurse are responsible for the running of "Our Lady Dispensary" Medico – Social center in Sabtiyeh, which offers social and medical services to the poor population and the refugees of the Sabtieh neighborhood. Liaison offices of Life & Service in Syria, Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf, assist as needed and perform to full capacity to ensure the services for the welfare of the uprooted.

- ***Working Group on Refugees, Displaced & Migrants***  
The WCC/MECC Joint Working group Meeting is a regional network of churches and church related organizations of refugees and migrant workers that are committed to protect and promote the rights and welfare of the refugees and migrants. The forum is a consultative body of WCC, MECC and related refugee organizations that convenes every year and is composed of representatives from regional MECC member churches and related organizations. It is open to similar institutions that address the refugee and migrant workers issues in the M.E.
- ***Local Ecumenical committees for uprooted People***  
The local committee meetings are directed towards developing a dialogue between the churches at local and regional level, towards consolidating the spirit of partnership and ecumenical awareness for mutual understanding and cooperation and towards collaborating in the promotion and supporting of basic human rights and democracy. The local ecumenical committees for the uprooted operated in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan.
- ***Ecumenical coordinating committee for uprooted people in Egypt.***  
The committee is actively engaged in addressing and responding to the needs of the uprooted and refugee populations, particularly, the growing influxes of Sudanese refugees in Egypt, through educational, material, psychosocial and medical assistance.
- ***Ecumenical coordinating Committee for displaced Sudanese in Lebanon***  
Under the auspices and with the initiatives of the National Evangelical Church, formed in 1996, the Sudanese refugee community is assisted in their financial, legal, educational, material and spiritual needs to be able to respond to their basic needs of survival. SRDM senior social worker participated in some of the meetings, but due to overburdened schedule it was not possible to continue. Hopefully SRDM will be able to revitalize its participation in the committee in the future.
- ***Ecumenical coordinating Committee for Sudanese in Syria.***  
The local ecumenical committee for uprooted people in Syria operated on need basis rather than on regular basis. The Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, Sudanese Community Church in Damascus, Syria, referred occasionally to Unit on Life And Service to organize Sudanese refuge mothers educational training programs as well as repatriate stranded Sudanese refugees back to home, to which the Unit responded with financial assistances.
- ***Local Ecumenical Committee of Unit on Life & Service in Jordan***  
The Local Ecumenical committee of Jordan started with very ambitious programs of assisting refugees and organizing activities, however many organizational and internal difficulties blocked the members from implementing their objectives in the course of the years.  
We look forward to welcoming the committee in overcoming their difficulties for the benefit and welfare of their local community and refugee communities.

## **E- PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

### ***1- MECC/UNHCR Partnership***

As the implementing partner to UNHCR, now for more than 30 years and with the financial assistance of WCC, the Unit on Life and Service through its SRDM program provided human development assistance, training, skill building activities, counseling sessions, seminars, lectures on refugee-related issues to community groups, sensitizing the general public in the issues of the migrants promoting change in their attitude and mentality. Furthermore home visits and visits to detainees in “detention centers” and prisons, educational and medical support, vocational training were provided to refugees through UNHCR program. These activities were carried out at different levels throughout Lebanon.

**UNHCR/MECC** partnership program assisted to Iraqi, Sudanese, Somali refugees and refugees of different nationalities.

The number of the refugees benefited from MECC/UNHCR partnership project varied from year to year. In 2004 the number of refugees were 3000; in 2005: decreased to 1800; in 2006: 1169 and in 2007 a sudden boom took place: 6000, due to an influx of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon and due to the UNHCR’s policy change towards Iraqi refugees.

As the humanitarian and displacement crisis grew intensely and gravely in Iraq, more than 2.5 million Iraqi refugees fled to the neighboring countries, namely Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Iraqis are the third largest displaced population in the world after the Palestinians and Sudanese. Despite the increased international awareness of the Iraqi displacement crisis, adequate resources to address the true scope of refugee needs have not yet been materialized.

UNHCR remain the sole and major responsible for providing assistance to Iraqi refugees. Until 2006 Iraqi refugees were of concern to UNHCR. It is only by 2007 that UNHCR with the financial assistance of the UN state parties and UN agencies allocated funds to assist Iraqi refugees in educational, medical and subsistence needs. In 2007 the funds allocated for 4000 Iraqi refugees amounted to 1.350.000 million USD, residing in Lebanon.

### **MECC – UNHCR Joint Emergency response to displaced refugees during Israeli invasion in July 2006**

Israeli military operations and shelling in all regions of Lebanon in July 2006 created more than a million of displaced people. Refugees and migrants were among those who suffered most. Thousand of refugees ran away their homes and mobilized at the doors of UNHCR. In response to this situation MECC Unit on Life & Service, SRDM Director & personnel, as implementing partner to UNHCR coordinated relief assistance to refugees and thousands of thousands of displaced, escaping from Dahia, the South & North of Lebanon and assisted around 500 refugees in placing in secure centers and provided food, shelter, clothes and assistance allowances.

### ***2- MECC – Diakonia Katastrophenhilfe assistance to Iraqi refugees in Syria and Lebanon.***

With the financial assistance and according to plans and project presented to Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, MECC engaged in assisting 1500 Iraqi refugees families in Syria and 500 families in Lebanon, in the aim of:

- Assisting and increasing support and possibilities for humanitarian services to those displaced from Iraq to Lebanon and Syria,

Addressing specific vulnerabilities of medical and psychosocial needs of Iraqi refugees with food coupons, medical assistance and eventually help them cover subsistence expenses, with special attention to the most vulnerable, including education for children, health and other life support services for people who are traumatized, fragile families, women, children, the elderly, disabled and sick, both Christians and non – Christian, totaling 10.000 persons.

### ***3- Refugee Day Celebration***

Refugee Days were celebrated yearly in every June, in joint collaboration with UNHCR and NGOs like Caritas, Danish Refugee Council-DRC, AJEM, Medecins du Monde- DM, Frontiers, AMEL, RESTART, ARC En Ciel, International Medical Corps-IMC, Chaldean Charity Organization and Insan associations.

**In 19 June 2004** the celebration took place At the MECC/UNHCR Community Development Center on the theme: “A place called HOME”.

On **21<sup>st</sup> of June 2005** at the American University of Beirut, West Hall, on the Theme of “Courage”

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2006** at the AUB West Hall Auditorium, on the theme of ”HOPE”.

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2006.** A musical concert at the UNESCO Palace under the auspices and in the presence of Minister of Culture Mr. Tarek Mitri offered by Charbel Rouhana for free.

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2007** At the UNHCR Community Center.

Refugee Days were celebrated at the presence of UNHCR Regional director and program directors, MECC General Secretary, SRDM director and staff, Church Leaders, Interior Security Forces, Human Rights Bar Association representatives, EU Delegation members, civil Society and NGO members and a multitude of refugees.

Cultural presentation of dances, songs, speeches and recitations were presented by refugees at each of the celebration day. As well as concerts, games activities, puppet shows, exhibitions of refugees’ hand works, posters, activity pictures of the community center, brochures, publications, paintings were exposed.

### ***4- “Annual Refugee Commemoration Day”***

The tradition of celebrating annually Refugee and Migrants Day in the churches on the last Sunday of June continued to be celebrated in the course of four consecutive years 2004 –2007, in all of the churches through their Sunday masses in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine raising awareness of the Refugee situation and issues and advocating the Christian tradition of welcoming the stranger and strengthening Hope in their lives.

### ***5- Community Development Center***

UNHCR in joint collaboration with MECC opened a new center in Tayyouneh on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2004 to respond to the social needs of the Refugees. It is a Community Development Center run by a senior social worker, assistant and a clerk, where Sudanese, Somalis, Ethiopians and Yemeni Refugees, men, women and children are provided with educational skill building, handicraft and youth activities. The activity programs comprised of English, Arabic, French languages, literacy courses and computer classes. The number of refugees that benefited from the center were around **300** persons from June 2004 – June 2006.

By August 12, 2006 due to the circumstances of ongoing hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, a dramatic change in the number (force majeure) of beneficiaries dropped, for whom assistance was foreseen, the activities in the center were terminated.

Consequently, the senior social worker of the community center was transferred to MECC SRDM Refugee Center in Hamra. The assistant social worker was transferred to UNHCR directorate to continue refugee work through UNHCR offices, while the clerk was terminated his engagements with UNHCR and MECC.

UNHCR decided to close the community center and to end the joint cooperation with MECC. MECC handed over the keys and the responsibility to UNHCR, on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

## **6- Launching of International Coalition on Detention**

- To raise awareness of detention policies and practices and promote the use of international human rights standards and principles as they relate the detention of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- To combat detention practices in the world and work for the promotion of conditions in detention centers.

A coalition was formed in September 2005, in Geneva, advocating for alternatives to detention, promoting greater protection of and respecting human rights of those detained persons. More than 100 interested NGOs working in a variety of areas relating to migration/detention participated in the Coalition to carry out advocacy on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers in detention.

MECC Unit on Life & service SRDM as member and the regional representative of the newly formed International Detention Coalition, announced the launching of the International Detention Coalition and the participation of seven Lebanese NGOs in it, on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006 on Refugee Day, at the West Hall of American University of Beirut in the presence of representatives of Minister of Culture, Interior Security Forces, Human Rights Institute, Beirut Bar Association, Church leaders, European Union delegates and International organization personalities.

More than 40 international organizations in 100 countries have signed their membership to the International Detention Coalition.

It is expected that coalition members worldwide will

- Press governments in their obligation to implement Human Rights Laws and their obligation to monitor performance.
- Build constructive dialogue between government and UN Human Rights Committees.
- Urge governments to grant access to detention centers by church & civil society groups.
- Involve NGOs to collect more information, data and research on detention and violence.
- Advocate ratification and implementation of UN Conventions and Human Rights Laws.
- Reduce Detention and Overcrowding.
- Improve the conditions in detention centers.
- Develop a new philosophy on Detention.

## **7- Advocacy and Awareness Raising Activities**

In the area of advocacy and awareness raising as well as promoting the human rights of the migrants and asylum seekers, trainings, seminars and conferences were organized:

- ***“Promoting ministry with the uprooted people”***, advocacy workshop in March 15 – 17 2005, in Saydet El Bir addressed to 30 participants. Run by WCC International Affairs Commissioner member Rev. Shirley DeWolf, Professor of Theology at the African University in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

- **“Denied Rights: Advocating the rights of the weak and the deprived”** in January 23 – 25 2006 at Hotel Le Meridian, addressed to 34 persons in total, run by Christian Aid Advocacy trainer, Mr. William Bell and Ms. Bethan Cobley.
- **“Detention and detention alternatives”** in 29 –30 November 2006, at the Near East School of Theology-NEST, addressed to 25 participants, and conducted by Ms. Anna Gallagher, Refugee and migration lawyer and consultant to the Jesuit Refugee Service, an international NGO advocacy and research center.
- **“Advocating for the Rights of Migrant Workers”** in December 12-14, 2007 in Jordan. Run by MRI chairperson Mr. William Gois.

Advocacy workshops trained around 125 NGOs, and Church representatives working for refugees.

## **8- Training**

- To promote, encourage and develop the diakonal ministry with and for uprooted people of the churches and their related institutions and NGOs.
- To build skills and capacity in the churches and in the SRDM employees.
- To enable them to respond to emergency situations causing displacement or imprisonment of refugees.
- To address the protection and humanitarian needs of refugees and detained persons.
- To orient the Lebanese policy makers to the importance of reforms in prison administration, transfer of the prison administration from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice.
- To analyze and reflect on the root causes of the many problems in the Lebanese prisons.

Unit on Life and Service implemented training activities during 2004 –2007:

- **“Advanced Regional Training Session”** for NGO Workers in the prisons. Organized in September **2004; 2005; 2006 and 2007** jointly with the prison chaplain of Beirut Roumieh Prison in Said El Bir. The training was run by the director of the Prison Chaplain of Catholic bishopric Fr. Elie Nasr. Around 40 -60 theological students and lay people working in prisons were trained in each of the sessions, totaling to 200 theological students.
- **“Prison Ministry – Restorative Justice Training”** in Beirut - Lebanon, jointly organized by Unit on Life & Service-SRDM with ATIME, the General Chaplain of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops and the Institute for Human Rights in Lebanon, in **2004, 2005, 2006** at the House of Lawyers. Around 150 participants – Deputies, representatives of Prime Minister, European Union Delegation in Lebanon, theological students, lawyers, judges, court officials, representatives from UNHCR and different NGOs, prison chaplains and prison governors, Human Rights workers, priests, national and International NGOs, social workers, the media and the T.V. attended the trainings. The trainings were carried out by the Director of the King’s College, UK International Prison Studies, Prof. Rob Allen on the theme of “Restorative Justice and prison management” in 2005 and 2006 consecutively.
- **Prison Ministry Training on “The implementation of Human rights Instruments in the prisons” 27-28 February 2007.** The training took place at the Human Rights Institute and was addressed to prison officers, colonels, commandants, lieutenants, majors, and women officers and prison guards in total 30 participants. Lawyers, Doctors, Human Rights Activists ran the workshop. A certificate was issued to each participant by the end of the workshop.

- **Prison Ministry Training on “The implementation of Human rights Instruments in the prisons” - Session Two, 15 –16 November 2007.** The training took place at the Human Rights Institute and was addressed to prison officers, colonels, commandants, lieutenants, majors, and women officers and prison guards in total 30 participants.”

It is expected that Theological students, churches and related NGOs working with prisoners, prison Directors and officers working in the prisons who attended the training, are enabled and trained with human rights principles and instruments to better approach and treat prisoners and detainees.

### **9- Human Resource Training In The Area of Special Education – Lebanon**

- To promote and train teachers and NGO workers in the field of special education and develop human resources
- To build capacities of educators in the Middle East region by training trainers, (educators, responsible of pedagogical and orthopedagogical departments, NGOs, professors and teachers, at private and public institutes of different communities in Lebanon)
- To better care children with physical, mental and physiological disabilities special education training programs were conducted at St. Joseph University in collaboration with the Lebanese Institute for Education.

The training sessions were conducted by child psychologists, from the University of Montreal, Canada, United States and Europe.

Each course of training comprised of twenty hours and addressed to 80 persons in each session.

- In **2004** it was implemented under the theme; **“Fonctionnement Cognitive d’une Personne Ayant Une Déficience Intellectuelle”, and “Development de l’autonomie des Enfants a Besoins Spécifiques”.**
- In **2005** under the theme: **“Specialized Educational Intervention in the Field of Intellectual Deficiency” and “Behavior Management in Class”.**
- In **2006** under the theme: **“Le Soutien Aux Enfants Ayant des Troubles d’Apprentissage Scolaire” and “Le Remediation Des Troubles d’Apprentissage Scolaire”.**

The courses trained around 200 teachers and NGO workers in total.

It is expected that Children with neurological deficiency, and learning disabilities receive specialized, and qualified care and education helping and facilitating their integration into their schools, communities and society at large.

### **10- SRDM Staff Training**

- To provide, upgrade skills and capacity of the SRDM social workers in the spiritual approach towards the ministry of prisoners,
- To motivate them to be actively involved with migrants and refugees,
- To engage themselves in advocacy activities, and become engaged in promoting change and justice,
- To empower social workers with skills of Stress Management in the domain of the assistance to special cases with stress situations like the refugees.

SRDM Social workers were encouraged to participate to training workshops and seminars organized locally and regionally such as:

- **Prison Ministry Training in France** organized by International Refugee studies in 2005.
- **Prison ministry studies** organized by The “Federation Protestante De France, Commission Justice – Aumonerie des Prison” in Aix En Provence, France in 2005.
- **Training on Forced Migration - England:** 3 weeks in Oxford University – England at the Refugee Studies Center, in 2005.
- **The West Asia Consultation on Migrant Workers** December 2006 in Ngombo, Sri Lanka. The Consultation was organized by Migrant Forum in Asia- MFA, and American Center for International labor Solidarity-ACILS.
- **Protection of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's)** organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Danish Refugee Council, at Holiday Inn - Dunes Hotel in December 2006.
- **Stress Management** organized by RESTART and Medecins Du Monde at the Mouvement social Libanais, Badaro, in December 2006.
- **Monitoring Human Rights in Places of Detention**, organized by Association for the Prevention of Torture - APT, In September 3-6, in Amman.
- **UNHCR Pre Ex - Com meeting** from 28-29 September 2007, in Geneva.

Participation to these trainings enhanced the understanding of root causes of migration and related issues and will serve to the better implementation of their work in the service to refugees.

### **Field training**

During the reporting period MECC UNHCR community Development Center in Tayounneh and SRDM Refugee Center received 12 Social Work students from Saint Joseph and Haygazian Universities to undertake their field training at MECC. This opportunity gave the trainees an understanding of refugee work and raised awareness about refugee issues, problems and rights.

### **11- Publications**

To promote the concept of change and engage them in raising awareness on the situation of and Human Rights of migrants within churches, government structures, civil society, the Unit on Life & Service published the reports of different advocacy seminars, organized during the course of the four years and published illustrated refugee story book, a brochure on detention and an illustrated book on migrants plight as well as “Children’s rights” illustrated booklet, which is still under publication.

- **“Advocacy Techniques Workshop”** Report in 2004, 2005, 2006.
- **“Joint Working Group Activities”** Report in 2004, 2005, 2006.
- **“Prison Ministry Workshops on Restorative Justice** Report 2004, 2005.
- **“Human Rights in Prisons”** Report 2006.
- **“Amman Process Meeting”**, Report 2004, 2005.
- **“Detention: Freedom Denied”**- a brochure presented to WCC 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly Mutirao workshop 2006.
- **“Back To God’s Paradise”** children’s illustrated book about refugee life, in English and in Arabic languages, 2006.
- **“For the Last Teardrop”** Illustrated storybook on Migrant workers plight, in English and in Arabic languages, 2007.
- **“Children’s Rights”** Illustrated storybook on children’s rights under publication.

The aim was:

- To increase knowledge of the reasons for migration, detention, and refugee issues.
- To increase public awareness of the need to protect the rights of refugees, prisoners and migrants.
- To increase greater number of churches and civil society members prepared to protect and proclaim the rights of migrants, displaced, and detained persons.

## **12- Interregional Collaboration and cooperation**

- To deepen collaboration and find common commitments for the future,
- To look for possibilities of meeting and entering into dialogue with each other, to strengthen and broaden the churches network,
- To analyze the root causes for forced migration and learn about the policy trends in European and Northern countries. :
- To respond to the pastoral and legal needs of Refugees & Migrant workers living in the region.
- To enhance the effectiveness of NGOs in promoting the human rights of refugees by promoting cross – border networking.

Interregional meetings dealing with common questions faced by migration, development and human rights violations, deepen dialogue between churches throughout the continent. Taking into account the major challenges for all of them, churches coming from Europe or the Mediterranean, interregional conferences contribute to giving trust, responding to the profound questions of justice, Human rights, discrimination and violation, questions refugees pose to churches and ecumenical bodies with expectations and hope.

Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe CCME, Joint Working Group Meetings, Global Ecumenical Network Meetings (GENM), Amman process, NGO Consultations, Christian Conference of Asia, and All African Conference of Churches, all with different ecumenical experiences have great trust in the journey of interregional collaboration.

With this perspective MECC/SRDM/WCC joint efforts coordinated workshops advocacy seminars, conferences on refugee issues, policies in collaboration with CCME, GENM, Joint Working Group Meeting, Amman Process, North/South conferences and UNHCR Pre-Ex-Com meetings.

### **a- Participation in International and Regional Conferences**

During the reporting period SRDM Director participated in

- **“The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) Conference on Eco-Justice”** in Basel Switzerland, in May 2005.
- **“In the North- South Conference on Forced Migration”** organized by United States Committee for Immigrants (USCI) in Geneva in joint collaboration with WCC, on the 23-26 September, 2005.
- **“International Refugee Rights Conference”**, organized by Canadian Council for Refugees in June 2006 – Toronto Canada, Organized by Canadian Council for Refugees.
- **CCME’s 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe** (CCME) in London from 27 - 31 October 2005.
- **“Community Dialogue on Migration, Development & Human Rights”** the United Nations High Level Dialogue (UNHLD) on Migration and Development on September 14 and 15, 2006 in New York at the UN headquarters.
- **“Migration and Development ”** organized by King Baudouin foundation on 9 -10 July 2007, in Palais d’Edgmont, Brussels.

- **“Migration and Development”** a Parallel event organized by Migrant Forum For Asia MRI, in July 10-11, 2007 in Brussels.
- **“Monitoring Human Right in places of Detention”**, a regional seminar organized by Association for the prevention of Torture APT in September 3 –6 in Amman, Jordan.

**b- Annual Joint MECC/WCC Working Group meetings on Refugees, Displaced & Migrants.**

Joint Working Group meetings were organized in the course of the years 2004-2007 with different themes on migration and justice.

- In Beirut, at Saydet El Bir in June 28- July 2, 2004.
- In Dubai in November 2005, at the International Seaman’s Club in the Gulf region, on **“Detention of migrant workers in the Gulf”**.
- In Beirut, at the Near East School of Theology November 2006, on the theme of racism and xenophobia, **“Developing a culture of tolerance and peaceful living conditions”**.
- In Amman - Jordan, on the theme of **“Migrants Rights”**, October 2007

Participants during these meetings visited to the Refugee Camps and to the labor camps in Dubai.

It is expected that interregional meetings offer and generate trust, remove fears, and encourage to overcome forms of tensions and difficulties existent in the churches, furthermore, information delivered on Resettlement possibilities and realities will promote services and Developmental programs for the maintenance of the Christians in the Middle East, and provide actors with advocacy tools for the rights of refugees and migrants.

Members of the Joint Working group meeting are from WCC, CCME, AAC and partner churches in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and the Gulf.

**c- “Amman Process”**

Started in 1996 in Amman, Jordan as an inter-regional process of collaboration within the framework of the 1995 Barcelona Conference and Declaration on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the Amman Process provides grounds for collective advocacy at international and European levels on refugee, migration issues and their root causes. Amman Process is an initiative in collaboration with Churches’ Commission for Migrants (CCME). It meets every year alternatively in Europe and the M.E.

- To share information and analyze the migration issues in the ME and its impact on Europe.
- To be informed of the migration policies affecting both regions of the Mediterranean.

It is expected that Amman Process assumes a new and better role in the enhancement of socio – cultural integration of migrants in Europe and understanding of migration policies, as well as consider building a working relationship with EU Delegation and representatives through regional discussions.

Amman Process extended its membership from Europe and the Middle East to North Africa in 2006.

During the reporting period,

- “Amman Process” Network meeting took place in **September 9 – 11 2004**, in Lisbon-Portugal“.
- “Amman Process” **2005**, convened in **September 14-16** in Jordan
- **“Amman process”** 2007 convened in **July 9-11** in Brussels at the Ecumenical Center of CCME, on the theme of “Migration and development”.

Participants of Amman process are member churches of: Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe- CCME, MECC, WCC, All Africa Conference of Churches-AACC and Asia conference of churches-ACC.

***d- Global Ecumenical Network On Uprooted People Geneva – Switzerland.***

The Global Ecumenical Network (GEN) is a forum of WCC churches and NGOs, which brings together regional and national ecumenical networks on uprooted people in Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, the Pacific and the Middle East, representatives of Roman Catholic organizations, and church-related agencies.

The GEN meets every year to review the global situation and future trends affecting uprooted people and

- To exchange information, statistical data, regional and global experiences about existing systems and to determine church responses to the needs of uprooted people.
- To learn about the policies designed for and affecting refugees worldwide.
- Identify strategies and monitoring systems and develop recommendations for churches to better serve refugees and migrants.

Unit on Life & Service participated in:

- The Global Ecumenical Meetings convened in Geneva at the Ecumenical Center of WCC in September 25 – 27, 2004.
- In Miami-Florida, at the invitation of the Church World Service, at their Headquarters in September 9-12, 2005.
- In Geneva at John Knox conference Center In September 25-26, 2006.
- In Kenya, Africa from 6-9 June 2007.
- The theme of the meetings varied on the role of the churches in welcoming migrants and refugees, “**Hosting Refugees**”, “**Migration, Trafficking and Detention**” and “**Transformative Justice**” issues.

***e- Participation of MECC Unit On Life & Service to WCC 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly – Mutirao in Brazil. Workshop on Detention: Freedom Denied***

In an attempt to put light on asylum, immigration and detention issues a workshop was organized jointly by WCC Global Ecumenical Network, GEN and MECC Unit On Life & Service at the 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly – Mutirao on the 18 February and presented the issue of detention and called for collective response to condemn detention.

A role-play on detention addressed the impact of detention and portrayed asylum issues in the aim of promoting conditions at detention centers.

Posters, signposts, a brochure and pens, illustrating detention issue prepared by MECC Unit director were distributed to the participants.

***f- The annual NGO Consultation with UNHCR Pre Ex-com meeting***

Pre – Excom meeting is an international forum whereby UNHCR and NGOs (ICVA) meet yearly in every September at UNHCR’s, Palais Des Nations, in Geneva to debate and dialogue on the complex issues of refugees and migrants, on the rights and the security and the solutions to their problems. Over 300 participants representing 200 organizations, from all over the world, of different interests meet to this international forum.

As the mandate of the UNHCR is to protect refugees and to find durable solutions to refugee problems, the UNHCR Pre-Ex-Com meetings propose broad themes that are of immediate concern and expects NGOs to recommend propositions.

These broad topics are narrowed down to themes, which are discussed in roundtable sessions and side meetings. A closing statement of Annual Consultation is issued to the Executive committee for adoption.

The Pre Ex-com meetings aim at:

- Sharing information and recommending propositions for migration, refugee and asylum issues to the parties concerned.
- Reaffirming participants concern and to making recommendations to UNHCR for adoption.

MECC Unit on Life and Service, SRDM Director participated to the Annual NGO consultation with UNHCR Pre Ex Com meeting in **2004, 2005, 2006**. In **2007** MECC participated to the Ex-Com meeting through the SRDM coordinator.

### **13- Services - Direct Assistance Programs to Uprooted People**

The SRDM program Supports and enables and empowers the churches of the region to provide their own diakonal ministry with and for uprooted people, through moral, technical and financial support. These activities supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants have been going on for years and continued to do during the course of the years 2004-2007.

#### **a- Community Development Project - Socio – Medical Center”**

Established in 1982 within the premises of the Assyrian Church in the East of Beirut. The medical center was transferred to the Sad El Baousherieh region in 2003, changing the name into **Our Lady Dispensary** and establishing at the premises of the Syrian Church. Of course the change in the name did not change the mission and vision of the center it continued to provide protection and assistance to stateless minorities, empowerment and self-reliance opportunities to people who live under difficult conditions.

It functioned under the direct supervision of SRDM with one Senior social Worker, a nurse, an assistant and four visiting doctors.

It provides:

**Primary Health Care, Maternal and Child Health services**, offering medical consultations, and nutritional care, low cost medicines, vaccination, referrals and follow-ups to external consultants on agreements contracted prior, health awareness activities and campaigns against polio, tuberculosis and osteoporosis. More than **3000 persons** have benefited from the center each year.

**Social Services** provided to elderly people, women and children, through monthly gatherings for hot meals, periodic breakfasts at special occasions like Christmas, Easter, Mothers’ Day and Halloween, excursions for the elderly and the women, counseling, social assistance, home visits and orientation, as well as empowerment and self – reliance opportunities, skill building activities, handicraft activities offered to the uprooted people in Sad El Bouchrieh region in Lebanon.

**Group Activities**, this includes recreational activities for children, summer day camps, children’s library, Sunday school activities, social and educational activities for young girls and women. Each activity comprised around **80 children**. Volunteer monitors were recruited for each activity. The Assyrian church and the Bishop take good care of the Center as well as assisted in moral, financial and material support.

MECC/SRDM provides moral and financial support to Our Lady Dispensary, enabling it to pursue its social, medical and community development programs, providing medication and funds for covering the running cost of the center.

The center has served a total population of around

**1634 persons**, 393 families from January to December 2004

**2635 persons**, 527 families from January to December 2005

**3200 persons**, 640 families from January to December 2006

**3700 persons**, 740 families from January to October 2007

The target group is in majority, women, children and youth, as well as elderly people. They benefited several times from a wide variety of health and social services. They are Lebanese,

Syrian, Iraqis, Egyptian, Palestinians, Turkish, Ethiopian and Filipinos, both Christians and non - Christians.

Our lady dispensary served in between 2004-2007 to around **11.500** persons.

### **Emergency response in July war, 2006**

Our Lady Dispensary pursued its activities under the dramatic circumstances initiated on July 12, by Israeli Hizbollah war. The staff of the center kept attendance during the month of August 2006, which is an annual vacation month to support and assist families residing in the neighborhood parks and in the nearby schools.

The Dispensary supported the displaced families with medical assistance, infant milk formulas, special vitamins for newborns, and diapers, also participated in vaccination campaigns for poliomyelitis and measles for children under five years age and for children between nine months and 14 years old, organized by the Ministry of Health.

### ***b- “Assistance to Refugee Mothers and newborn infants”***

To complement the refugee assistance of UNHCR, MECC assists to refugee mothers and newborn infants through the SRDM refugee program in Lebanon, where refugee mothers are provided with baby layettes from 2004-2007. Financial assistance to follow up during pregnancy: that comprised attendance to doctors and hospitalization, laboratory tests, and access to medication, vitamins, calcium and iron, Infant milk to mothers who are not able to breastfeed and financial assistance for vaccinating their babies.

### ***c- Assistance to Sudanese in Lebanon - “Philemon project”***

The “**Philemon Project**” supports migrant workers with immediate relief in providing basic food, clothes, housing, and medication, at the premises of the National Evangelical Church in Lebanon and long term improvement projects helping with schooling fees and building awareness. The activities carried through the Philemon Project falls into: community building, pastoral and diaconal care categories.

A large number of persons receive emergency financial and legal aid, for resettlement through UNHCR. Lessons in English and computer, games and crafts are delivered to children and youth.

### ***d- “Medical, Nutritional and Health assistance to Sudanese- Refuge Egypt ”***

This project assists Sudanese and other displaced in Egypt through Refuge Egypt / All Saints Cathedral – Cairo. It reaches nearly 22.000 African refugees mainly Sudanese with the provision of food, medication, medical care and skill building possibilities.

The program consists of:

- Providing Emergency assistance for two years to only newcomers, with food parcels, clothing and medication.
- Providing Medical assistance, as well as primary care through All Saints Cathedral and a satellite clinic in Arbaa Wa Nuss to TB, Victims of torture, HIV cases, through antenatal, postnatal, gynecological and family planning services.
- Promoting self-reliance and dignity (Tukul Handicrafts) through vocational training and employment programs and training in domestic work.
- Spiritual encouragement, offering counseling and spiritual guidance as a source of hope and Strength to people who are suffering of despair.

### ***e- Educational Assistance to 1500 Sudanese children in St. Charles Lwanga Center”, Sacred Heart Church in Egypt.***

Is a school project for Sudanese refugee and displaced children from different ethnic, tribal and religious backgrounds living in Cairo. Through this initiative the church provides: A quality community based program that contributes to the improvement of the educational levels, and encourages the personal growth and healthy development of the school children.

In each school year, the center served a total of around 1.500 students, employed 35 Sudanese teachers, 5 school workers and a Sudanese doctor. Of the 1500 students 95% were Christians and 5% Muslims. The age range was from 4 -18 years. Two school terms were implemented yearly in the fall and in the spring.

Sacred Heart Church has established four new educational centers in Cairo over the past few years to meet the continuing influx and needs of the refugee community; **St. Joseph's Center for Basic Education** opened in 2001 in the district of Maadi. It served 250 students and employed 18 refugee teachers and three workers; the **Canossian Educational and Social Center** opened in 2004 in the district of Zeiton, provided education to 150 children at the kindergarten (90) and grade 1 (60) levels and employed 6 refugee teachers; and the **Fr. Philip Sina Secondary School** established in 2003 in the district of Shubra to provide secondary education to Sudanese refugee children who have completed the intermediate level and who could not access Egyptian secondary schools. 90 students are enrolled in the secondary school program taught by 12 Sudanese teachers. In 2000, Sacred Heart Church opened the **St Bakhita Center** in Arbaa wa Nus. The center offered primary education to 600 children and employed 25 teachers. In 2004, the Trinitarian Fathers took over the responsibility of the center. All four church schools serve refugee children living in Cairo.

**f- Ecumenical primary Health Center**” in Arbaa' Wa Nuss in Egypt.

Is a clinical center to reach the medical and health needs of 2000 asylum seekers living in the area. The center provides: family planning, medical, child care, postnatal and antenatal services to the refuge, primary health services and medical emergency services, thus raising and improving living conditions of poor local and refugee populations.

This project is implemented with the joint efforts of the three churches - the Catholic; the Coptic Orthodox and the Anglican Church.

**g- “Insan School” for Sudanese, Philippine and Iraqi Refugee Children in Lebanon.**

Initiated in 2000, as a response to educational and human rights needs of migrant workers' children residing in Lebanon and stemming from racial discrimination, poverty and illiteracy.

It supports the Insan Association's efforts towards building the learning capacity of refugee children wandering in the streets for economic reasons and/or not being able to fit into the academic system of Lebanese schools, these children lack basic knowledge for schooling and Insan therefore, provides refugee children a basis for education and opportunity to develop their learning skills and potentials needed for their future integration in local schools, communities or schools abroad if resettled or repatriated. The Insan Project has two other different programs to assist the refugees: the Insan House, which provides food and housing, Insan club which provides extra curricular activities to refugee children.

#### **14- MECC GULF LIAISON OFFICE**

MECC Gulf Liaison office has been operating in Al Amana Center, Muscat - Oman, since 2003. From 1997 – 2003 the office was located in Dubai, UAE. It covers all the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and is represented by two staff, backed by the Church of Sweden Mission.

- It runs the program in collaboration with the local churches which support and protect the Migrant workers with repatriation, visits to the Labor Camps, and counseling, pastoral care and advocacy conferences and workshops.
- Develops an agenda of advocacy with the churches in the Gulf and their partners in Asia and elsewhere, for issues of migrant workers.
- Builds networks in the Gulf with churches, embassies, companies, governments, local communities and individuals, in view of creating a pro human rights environment.

- Networks with international ecumenical organizations, human rights organizations and other.

In co-operation with the churches in the Gulf does researches, analysis, statistics and produce information on living and working conditions; recruitment and sponsor praxis; labor laws and health regulations etc.

In 2004 the MECC/ Gulf Liaison Office started a survey on the situation of migrants in the Gulf. This is going to help the churches to better their charity work and build an agenda of advocacy on the behalf of the oppressed and abused. The survey is still going on.

During the course of the year 2005 the Gulf Liaison office has started to develop **a prison ministry** as well as **a labor camp ministry** in Muscat. They are also part of the Ecumenical Council of Charity (ECC) in Oman, which was started as a result of one of their workshops on the migrants' situation.

***Repatriation Assistance to Stranded Migrants in the Gulf*** - A project implemented by the Gulf churches in cooperation with the MECC liaison office in Muscat, Oman in the reporting period 38 migrant workers were repatriated to their homes.

In the aim of building networks with the churches in the Gulf and in the aim of raising awareness on the migrant workers' plight residing in the Gulf, the WCC/MECC Joint Working Group meeting organized its yearly meeting in Dubai in November 2005, where more than 50 participants from the Gulf region, from North Africa and Asia convened to share information, experiences and proposed collaboration possibilities. The report of the meeting is published.

To continue to develop an agenda on justice and advocacy for migrants where the churches can get good and effective assistance, the MECC Gulf Liaison needs for an ***additional staff member in the office*** to work on human rights issues and diplomatic relations. Furthermore, for the Gulf Liaison office to work freely and in better-coordinated manner needs the authorization of the local government issued by a decree as an NGO operating on the grounds. By today this is awaiting pursuance by MECC Executive members.

## V- FINANCIAL

In between four years 2004 –2007, the Unit on Life & Service continued and strengthened the relationship with the partner churches and secured funds for its on going projects and assistance to churches. The Units financial operation was transparent and up to the standards of the partner churches. Project proposals and activity reports were presented on time and in accordance to the expectations of the partner churches.

The Unit on Life & Service received in:

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
	<b>USD</b>	<b>USD</b>	<b>USD</b>	<b>USD</b>
<b>Earmarked funds by Partner Churches</b>	<b>251.700</b>	<b>175.700</b>	<b>187.365</b>	<b>364.500</b>
<b>UNHCR Projects</b>	<b>981.860</b>	<b>881.401</b>	<b>579.281</b>	<b>1.350.000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.233.560</b>	<b>1.051.01</b>	<b>766.646</b>	<b>1.714.500</b>

Partner churches to unit on Life & Service programs are World Council of Churches, Global Ministries, FinnChurchAid, United Church of Christ, MISSIO, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, and Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Unit on Life & Service during the period of 2004-2007 assisted churches and church related organizations in their on going programs and through its HRD, Comprehensive health Care and Service to Refugees Displaced and Migrants-SRDM programs reaching to around 135.000 persons in all of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Gulf regions.

## VI- THE ROLE UNIT ON L&S PLAYED DURING THE 2004 – 2007 PERIOD

The Ecumenical programs and activities organized and implemented by the Unit, tackled the challenges of globalization, democracy and justice, and opened new horizons of cooperation in a renewed manner with national institutions and authorities such as the Human Rights Bar association, the Interior Security forces, International humanitarian organizations, building bridges, constructive dialogue and fruitful cooperation, where the promotion of hope as the essence of Christian mission enhanced the witness of the council and Unit on Life & Service.

Furthermore, the impact of the ecumenical activities in changing attitudes towards migration and migrants and justice issues, helped churches and participants to learn about the emerging issues of globalization, migration, violation of Human Rights of minorities and tolerance. Cooperation with authorities reached to the creation of local national groups concerned with common issues and lead to concrete action towards elimination and eradication of ills and problems prevalent in our communities and societies.

It dispensed efforts to encourage member churches to deepen their knowledge and awareness of international political, socio economic and cultural issues, built relations with partner churches to explore commitments to human rights values, with an emphasis on capacity building and information sharing.

The Unit is dedicated in its mission to continue and pursue its goals in bringing the churches to actively participate in the implementation of the programs of MECC and in dedicating itself in the development of the Human Resources and search for financial resources to support the churches and to maintain Christian presence in the Middle East.

## **VII- RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations concerning organizational matters, training workshops, focus groups or systems of approach were evaluated in each of the activity and studied in consultation with the commission members in the yearly meetings and local committee meetings. The Unit explored possibilities and follow up of these consultations. Shortage of human resources, financial limitations and social – economic and political challenges with increasing acuteness, however did not give freedom to explore more developmental and long-range programs and did not provide the opportunity and the possibility for the churches to act on equal footing with other organizations. Furthermore, the goals and the concerns of the Unit were not articulated concretely at the local level or the experiences, concerns and information shared were not experienced on the local level of the churches. Unit's efforts were often breached by the passive and inert attitude of the participants.

For most of the churches engagement and decisive responsibility in the life and the work of the council or the unit more specifically, was not a priority issue and participation was only nominal, which lead us to the major issue to call the churches to seriously study "how can churches representatives become active participants and implement back home at local level". It is not the aim neither the objectives of the council to represent the churches but call them to commit themselves to engage in the service for the poor, the prisoner, the marginalized and the stranger.

It is recommended that MECC's efforts as a regional organization to cooperate and to complement churches' response to humanitarian services, to respond to the contemporary challenges of Globalizations, Democracy and Justice open new horizons of vision to the youth, and re invoke in them the faith towards their country and reassess their presence as an integral part of their countries.

It is expected and recommended that churches with more responsibilities, commitment and involvement play a significant role in enhancing the council's presence in the region to be more vocal and embark on joint programs and joint ecumenical events, in rebuilding hope in the hearts of the ravaged populations.

If Diakonia remains the essence of churches and to address the poor, the marginalized, the stranger and the persecuted, the prisoner, the migrants and the displaced is the mandate of the churches, involving in monitoring the needs, in designing the programs and in defining the strategies for their implementation, is the role, the aim and the mission of the Council and more particularly of the Unit on Life and Service. It is recommended that both Diakonia and Service complement each other.

## **VIII- CONCLUSION**

To survive the dynamic changes in today's fast & rapidly growing pace of economic and technological advancements, in this new world where political unrest, wars and conflicts, promote destabilization, unemployment and poverty, where terrorism increase the fear of the stranger, detention, intolerance, religious extremism cause migration influxes and outflows, where military conflicts, racial hatred and ethnic cleansings, put human life in jeopardy challenging for urgent and immediate response for spiritual renewal and unity, Churches are defied to respond in a renewed manner, through spiritual rebirth, through alliance buildings and strategic planning, to cultivate a culture of acceptance, understanding and create a peaceful environment.

The Unit on Life and Service as the basis of diakonia and a determinative factor in Ecumenical commitment of the churches is called upon to abate tensions, to advocate for the rights of the migrants, to develop human resources, and skills and develop the performance of the churches in carrying their ministries.

Though with limited resources, however with the support of churches, religious institutions, community organizations with human rights activists, public advocates, legal advisors and experts, Unit on Life & Service tried to create a pro-refugee and pro-migrant environment for them to live in security and in protection. Implemented its activities with a vision of promoting understanding and disseminating the basic principles of tolerance, peace and human rights.

I would like to thank all who shared with us our concerns supported us in our efforts and actively participated in the implementation of the programs of Unit on Life & Service in our role in advocating justice, reconciliation and development.

Thank you

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Director  
Unit on Life & Service