



2022

ANNUAL REPORT

The Middle East Council of Churches

"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid"

(Matthew 14:27)



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط
The Middle East Council of Churches

BUILDING BRIDGES STANDING TOGETHER

نتواصل ونتكاتف

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WELCOME LETTER:

Emerging Challenges, Resilience and Responses



The year 2022 was a challenging and difficult year by all standards, be they political, economic and financial at the macrolevel, or elementary services necessary to run the daily work, at the microlevel, without excluding the difficulties imposed by a still ranging pandemic.

Besides expediting the usual daily duties, the MECC team had to deal with the preparation of the twelfth general assembly, to be held in Egypt for the first time and after two years of delay caused by the pandemic.

In “normal” societies, people deal with daily challenges, usual ones, constructive ones, which overcoming leads to individual and collective development, whereas the challenges we have been dealing with in Lebanon, and in the Middle East in general, are ones which are so overcoming that they allow you to barely reach the surface after drowning and prevent us from sinking totally and be reduced to nothingness. We are operating, as an MECC team, in broken-down societies, which lost their social structures. This reality, I have been underlining and analyzing through different approaches in the Momentum editorials as well as in public conferences, for the third year, after having lectured about it for decades at university level.

Our people, who individually are educated, serious and performing, are pushed to emigrate when they see that their societies, having lost their structures, cannot any more meet their aspirations having become too tight, socially, politically and economically to nurture their ambitions. Our people are in fact successful everywhere in the world, expect in the place to which they belong.

The scenery doesn't look promising at all in our area, in the light of the political, religious and ethnic divisions, corruption, ascending hate speech, poverty, ignorance and illiteracy and, worse still, the totally

neglected human rights at all levels. There is a race between destruction and development, the first caused by unscrupulous leaderships that nobody holds accountable for their deeds, and the second achieved by altruistic decent professional people, that one can find in churches, social help organizations as well as in a number of a few private initiatives. They are the fighters against anomie, i.e. the total vanishing of values and norms.

What is cementing society in some of the Middle East now, are these people, in small percentages, who still spread love, honesty, transparency and competency. The accomplishments of such a God- blessed group of people keep us from reaching the total debacle. In this context our teams operate, dealing with the daily ill placed induced obstacles, which we call challenges.

The regional nature of the MECC is the baseline of its action. Churches in all countries feel they are one; MECC team feels one too. This was reflected in the historical General Assembly that was held in Logos Papal Center – Anba Bishoy Monastery in Egypt from 16 to 20 May, during which the efficient regional coordination at distance and via the online work was the proof that the unity in spirit of determined people can overcome cultural differences, distance, political borders and technical obstacles.

The departmental reports are self-explanatory. From Theological and Ecumenical work to Diakonia and Service to Palestinian Refugees, to Communication and media activities, to the Seminars on Human Dignity, the MECC is a beehive and its teams perform with love and dedication. No time limitations, no blocked roads or terrible traffic jams, no electricity or internet cuts and not any other difficulty constitute a demotivating reason for this faithful team. Things have to be done no matter what it takes.

In all that, one needs to underline a main characteristic of the MECC team who is proving, day after day, a high level of resilience and determination. Sometimes obstacles, which seem unsurmountable, become a usual matter to deal with due to the will of the persons who



compose the team. Their will to achieve and succeed overcomes all difficulties, a fact which is reflected by the volume and quality of work accomplished that gives the impression that the number of the personnel performing it supersedes by far the actual number of people forming the team.

The Holy Spirit is continuously inspiring us to make the most efficient choices for our service be it in the field of social development, ecumenical relations, communication, human dignity, or any other domain. We have the feeling that the Lord is holding our hands, guiding our steps and watching us in all our moves. He knows that we are doing all we can in His holy Name for the destitute as well as on the land where He was born, where He proclaimed His teachings, where He was crucified, then resurrected. The image of the Lord never quits our vision in all our actions. He is with us at all times.

Moreover, the team is fully conscious that we serve in the name of the churches together and this is the way society looks at us and shows its admiration since our services are oriented towards all people in need regardless of any affiliation, be it religious, ethnic, political or national. This policy has marked our approach since the founding of the MECC and was carried on for decades, a fact that makes us accepted with deep respect by all the groups of which our societies are composed.

Time runs, and the witness continues. Its concretization is described and explained in detail in the present report which includes all that we were able to do in one of the most difficult years of the last decade. In our witness, we listen carefully to the concerns of people, of youth, of refugees and of the displaced, of the impoverished, of the ones affected by terror and wars as well as of all other vulnerable groups of society. We aim at being the voice of love and reconciliation via all our services in an area torn by conflicts and hatred which is living a self-inflicted destruction.

In this process of help and rescue we provide to our wounded societies, we rely on the support of our international partners who never hesitated to provide it whenever it is needed. Our loving and caring partners made us feel that we are and will never be left alone in the turmoil our societies are experiencing. Their technical as well as their material support are for us a token of love and solidarity. Their considerate approach makes us feel that while some of this world are meant to make havoc, some others are focusing on providing relief to the desperate. It is the classical battle between love and hate, good and evil. By the support provided by our partners, we are able to

witness for a better tomorrow for this unlucky part of the world.

In this present report we meant to share parts of what was dealt with as topics and which was taken as resolutions by the MECC Executive Committee, the MECC leadership. Partners, local and international, who don't attend its meetings, should be made aware of what the MECC leaders think and plan to accomplish. The shared details reflect the high level of interaction between the field and the MECC team and leaders. The nature of delegation given by the MECC leaders to the team shows the depth of trust the churches in the Middle East have in their ecumenical team who responds to that by a great appreciation and more engagement towards the MECC culture and values. After dealing with the harvest of the twelfth general assembly, the MECC is preparing itself to enter the prelude of the fifty-year jubilee in the year 2024. It is an eventful period which links a general assembly with a Jubilee Year, both fruitful in thought meant to bring up-to-date a vision for a continuously renewed MECC.

May the Lord help us serve humanity in His Holy Name!

Dr. Michel E. Abs

Secretary General | The Middle East Council of Churches

ABOUT MECC

The Middle East council of churches (MECC) brings together the Four Families of churches in the region — the Orthodox, the Oriental Orthodox, the Protestant and the Catholic to deepen spiritual Fellowship among its constituency and to unite them in word and deed. It strives to achieve and maintain christian unity, presence and witness throughout the region, by bearing a living witness and spreading the gospel of salvation, reconciliation, love, and justice.

VISION

The council envisions a Middle East which is diverse and vibrant in its spiritual and social dimensions; where churches are united in their commitment to ecumenical christian witness and diakonia; where compassion, justice and peace are the Bounding elements of nations, communities and institutions; and where all can Fully exercise their human rights and live in dignity

VALUES

- Love and Compassion
- Justice
- Participation
- Integrity of creation
- Peace

APPROACHES

- Partnership
- Sustainability
- Advocacy
- Empowerment
- Professionalism

MISSION

The Council's mission is to work towards the unification of visions, perspectives and attitudes among Eastern churches, especially on issues related to christian presence and witness in the Middle East. The council's mission is seen today as being a bridge: A bridge between Eastern Christians: to remove prejudices and barriers between churches, the MECC brings together most Christians and churches in the Middle East. It provides them the adequate space to come together, pray, reflect, analyze, speak with a common voice, and act and witness together. A bridge between Christians and peoples of other religions in the region: to reinforce and develop organized dialogue and partnerships with people of good will aimed at strengthening and deepening Friendship and peace for the good of humanity. A bridge between the Middle Eastern churches and churches around the world: to connect Christians and churches in the region and their brothers and sisters in Christ elsewhere.

MEMBER CHURCHES

WE ARE PRESENT IN 8 Countries:



IRAQ PALESTINE CYPRUS

Oriental Orthodox churches (3):

- Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and See of St. Mark
- Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch
- Armenian Apostolic Church of Cilicia



EGYPT IRAN

Orthodox (Chalcedonian) churches (4):

- Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria
- Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch
- Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem
- Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus



LEBANON SYRIA JORDAN

Evangelical churches (13):

- Coptic Evangelical Church-Synod of the Nile
- Union of The Armenian Evangelical Churches in The Near East
- National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
- National Evangelical Union of Lebanon
- Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and The Middle East
- Evangelical Lutheran Church on Jordan and The Holy Land
- National Evangelical Church in Kuwait
- The Synod of the Evangelical Church in Iran
- Evangelical Church in Sudan
- Episcopal Church in Sudan
- Presbyterian Church in Sudan
- Protestant Church in Algeria
- Methodist Church in Tunisia

Catholic churches (7):

- Syriac Maronite Church of Antioch
- Greek Catholic Melkite Church of Antioch, Alexandria And Jerusalem
- Chaldean Catholic Church – Babel
- Syriac Catholic Church of Antioch
- Coptic Catholic Church
- Armenian Catholic Church of Cilicia
- Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem





THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT



I- The MECC twelfth General Assembly – the main event of 2022

Under the theme “Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid” (Matthew 14:27), the MECC twelfth General Assembly was held from 16 to 20 May 2022, at the Logos Papal Center – Anba Bishoy Monastery, in Wadi Al Natrun in Egypt, upon a generous invitation from His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, POPE of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark of the Coptic Orthodox Church and a generous support from Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaki, Head of the Protestant Community in Egypt.

The assembly was held with a delay of two years approximately, due to the pandemic that paralyzed the whole world. In late 2021, the General Assembly Preparatory Committee, emanating from the MECC Executive Committee, agreed on the date and the venue after the invitation of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and since that time the large part of the energy of the general secretariat was geared towards making this event succeed.

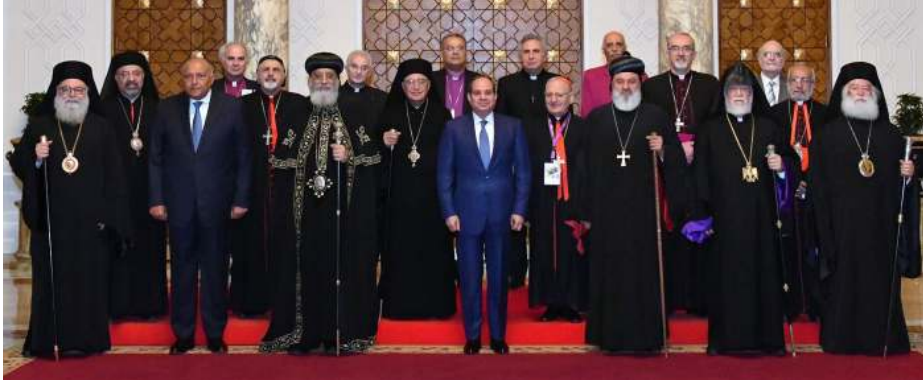
Worth mentioning that, during the half-century age of the MECC, this is the first time that the general assembly is held in Egypt, the fact that made this assembly take a special stamp.



A- The Proceedings

The assembly which gathered most of the church leaders of the Middle East, and which included the twenty-one-member churches belonging to the four families which constitute the MECC, started with the Opening worship at the Church of the Logos Papal Center, followed by a word from the Secretary General introducing His Holiness Pope Tawadros II who made the opening speech on the theme of the assembly at the Holy Synod Hall. This was followed by addresses from the MECC Presidents, then addresses from Middle East Churches' Heads of Delegations, then greetings from H.E. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), then from Rev. Fr. Prof. Ioan Sauca, Acting Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and from Mr. Rudelmar Bueno Di Faria Secretary General of ACT Alliance. The last to talk in the introductory session was Dr. Michel Abs, Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches who gave a welcoming word. This session was ended with Closing Prayers.

The next day, the Heads of the Churches were received by the President of Egypt, His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, at the presidential palace in Cairo. During this session, the church leaders and H.E. President Sisi exchanged, in an opened and transparent way, their visions as to the area and its future with the insistence on the importance of the stability and openness. This fruitful and loving session spread a general feeling of tranquility as to the future of the Middle East and the role of the Christians.



Then the assembly was carried-on as usual: Opening prayers, then a session of greetings from churches and ecumenical organizations, who were around 19 to attend followed by two lectures developing the theme of the Assembly from the two perspectives: One theological done by Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaki and the other socioeconomic and Geopolitical done by Prof. Ibrahim Maroun. The committees of the assembly and the recording secretaries were appointed. In the first part of the following session, the Secretary General made his report which was discussed and received. The second part of the session was devoted to the Working Groups discussion on MECC Strategies in its five dimensions:

- 1- Diakonia and Social Service
- 2- Communication and Advocacy
- 3- Christian Witness and Ecumenical Relations
- 4- Dialogue and Social Cohesion - Social Capital Rehabilitation
- 5- Organizational Development and Sustainability

After the closing prayers and the dinner, the MECC Family Churches met in order to select their candidates to the Executive Committee, after their candidacy was ratified by the Credentials Committee.

The next day, after the opening prayers, the working groups resumed their discussions in a first session, then drafted their recommendations, which they presented in the second session, after which, the drafting committee, appointed since the beginning of the assembly, read the draft of the final statement and discussed it for a finalization. This day finished with the closing prayers.

The next day was the day of the visits to Coptic Monasteries: The Monastery of the Virgin Mary known as Al-Baramous Monastery and Monastery of the Saint Anba Bishoy, the Monastery of the Virgin Mary known as the Syriac Monastery and Monastery of St. Makarios known as Monastery of Abu Makar or the Monastery of the Saint Martyr Mar Mina and Pope Kyrillos Shrine. The participants were unanimous that this was a unique and blessing experience.

B- The decisions and the closing

After this “pilgrimage” the assembly resumed its work and held its last session: after to opening prayers, the report of the Nominations Committee was read and the names of the elected MECC Presidents and members of the Executive Committee were made public. This part included the information and confirmation of the Election of the Secretary General, elected by the former executive Committee in September 2020, due to the impossibility to hold the assembly because of the pandemic. Moreover, and since the next election of the Secretary General falls between two general assemblies, the actual general assembly decided to allow the elected Executive Committee to elect the general secretary in September 2024 and to consider this election as final.

Once this phase ended, the final statement was read live on the media, and the session was concluded with the closing prayers. After that, all the attendees, and the support staff, who performed with an incredible efficiency, were invited, by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, to a Spiritual Night performed by the Choirs of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The next day, the Executive Committee met and discussed the date of the next meeting and it was decided to hold it online on June 27.



C- The Working Groups Recommendations

The working groups, which discussions precluded the assembly were efficient in dealing with the strategic issues proposed to the assembly. They made recommendations to orient MECC's work for the coming quadrennial period. These recommendations can be summarized as follows by working group:

1- Christian Witness and Ecumenical Relations Report, Group Work-One

- a- Drawing an ecumenical plan of action for the next four years, in which steps and activities are defined, and establishing an implementation mechanism
- b- Work on unifying the celebration of Easter and acceptance of baptism, and common prayer on some occasions, such as the week of prayer for unity.
- c- Establishing ecumenical committees in each country, to be in contact with the Council, and organizing dialogue meetings to discuss life issues at the present time, on all levels
- d- Keeping pace with the Christian youth in their concerns and aspirations.
- e- Supporting ATIME which success makes it a role model for other ecclesiastical institutions.

2- Diakonia and Humanitarian Assistance Report, Group Work -Two

- a- The need for networking between diakonia institutions in each country with the aim of coordination and cooperation and synergy.
- b- Participating locally and regionally in developing an emergency plan for rapid and effective response.
- c- Continuing to implement joint activities and contribute to building the capacities of churches.
- d- Working with partners to meet the needs of Christian families, especially young people to prevent migration.
- e- Benefiting from the development experiences of both the Archdiocese of Social Services in the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Development Department of the Evangelical Church in Egypt.
- f- Taking into account linking the methodology of the Department's work with advocacy programs.



3- Communication & Advocacy Report, Group Work-Three

- a- Distinguish between media work and advocacy work which should not be limited to media work only.
- b- Hold a broad conference, with the participation of all media centers in the member churches.
- c- Training young people on the good use of the media, and on the ethics of use.
- d- Improve the exposure of the theological faculties of the churches.
- e- Monitoring the quality of media production. The quality is twofold: the quality of media work from a technical point of view, and the quality of content provided by the media.

4- Dialogue and Social Cohesion – Human Dignity and Social Capital Rehabilitation Report, Group Work- Four

- a- Enhancing the role of the Church in the construction of cohesion and social capital and in the fight against migration.
- b- Identify the actors who will contribute to building social cohesion and preserving social capital and human dignity.
- c- Identify the paths to follow to insert and adapt basic structures of social cohesion.
- d- Develop the programs that are supposed to achieve and maintain social cohesion, and dignity.

5- Organizational Development and Sustainability Report, Group Work -Five

1- Financial Sustainability: the member churches should consider increasing the annual participation and pay nit in fresh foreign currencies, applying management fees to amounts provided to churches, to pay in FRESH \$ where possible, and to provide the MECC with in-kind contribution, such as providing land, or seconding personnel.

2- Financial Emergency / Contingency plan: MECC to consider setting up an emergency reserve to cover all personnel and locations for 12 months and key personnel and locations for 6 months; to consider moving into its own place with a permanent location that member churches may provide as a long-term location; Creating a consultancy/ advisory group, to address emerging financial and HR risks.

3- Governance bodies: MECC to consider national MECC Committees which include leaders of all member churches along with setting national offices in all countries where the MECC is present and to discuss the modalities and the support;

- (a) To make the development of projects – programs more flexible before the creation of departments
- (b) To nominate a contact person for each church to be the reference for MECC for all administrative matters.
- (c) To develop internal regulations by department, standardization of these regulations and the policies and procedures.
- (d) To fine tune the Bylaws which could be done by the Executive Committee as per the Constitution.
- (e) To appoint a committee to develop income generating projects.
- (f) To move towards quality management.



Prelude: Meetings of the Executive Committee, the General Assembly Preparatory Committee and MECC Staff Team were held before the assembly, but they all focused on the preparations of the assembly in addition to the

running of MECC on-going work. In this report, the focus is on the dynamics that were released in the post-assembly period and will carry-on for the whole mandate of four years.

II- The First Executive Committee Meeting 27 June 2022 – Online

This was the first meeting of the Executive Committee elected during the 12th General Assembly, and due to the schedules of the members and their engagements, it was held online.

The different sessions of the meeting were moderated by MECC Presidents who led the opening prayers and expressed their thoughts and feelings:

H.B. Patriarch Youhanna X, MECC President, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Greek Orthodox Church stressed the importance of collaboration and coordination between Christians and indicated that stopping Christian emigration is a major challenge that must be tackled. It was mentioned that His Beatitude is taking very courageous steps and this is very much needed during this period to preserve our churches and people, so that we are able to keep our roots deep. We are the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World and we shall remain.

Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, MECC President and President of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East thanked the Coptic Orthodox Church for their generous hospitality during the General Assembly which is a great form of Christian Witness. He indicated that the coming four years is a chance for the Executive Committee and for the church to be renewed as Christians, and for MECC to play its role as the bridge for churches, especially that within two years MECC will celebrate its 50 years' golden jubilee.



H.E. Anba Antonios, MECC President, Archbishop of the See of Jerusalem and the Near East, Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and See of St. Mark thanked God for the success of the General Assembly. He indicated that the role of MECC is a practical role and it has a message that is reflected in every Christian, and its role is vital in working on the unity of churches, asking God to grant us wisdom to succeed in this matter. He also valued the importance of conducting frequent meetings for the Executive Committee.

A- The stipulations of the MECC Constitution and Bylaws with regard to the role and functions of the Executive Committee:

Dr. Abs shared with the attendees excerpts from the MECC Constitution and Bylaws: “Structure of the Council”, “The General Assembly” and “The Executive Committee”.

After discussion, it was suggested that:

- 1- Church family meetings are supposed to be conducted more frequently.
- 2- Executive Committee should meet more frequently rather than only once a year it should be 4 times a year.
- 3- There is a need to create an office in Iraq.
- 4- The last modification of the bylaws was made in year 2004, however the General Assembly did not delegate the new Executive Committee to review the Bylaws and the Constitution. It was suggested that for the upcoming General Assembly it would be necessary to propose modifications and fine tuning of the Constitution and Bylaws. Each family will be asked to assign a representative to be part of this committee. Comments done by different Secretary Generals should be taken into consideration.
- 5- The text of Article No 12 of the Constitution should be developed in order to be more precise taking into consideration the circumstances that necessitate its application.

B- In the Organizational, governance and decision-making matters the possibility of Extraordinary Meetings was proposed and approved:

In case an urgent decision is to be taken between two meetings of the Executive Committee, the proposed decision is circulated by email for comment, approval or reject from the side of the ExCom members. This decision shall be applied and then validated in the minutes of the next ExCom meeting. This

decision shall be applied and then validated in the minutes of the next ExCom meeting. This process is to be called Extraordinary Meeting.

C- After that, the MECC team made a brief presentation of MECC Programs after which the floor was opened for discussions. The following comments, reflections and recommendations were made:

1- Theological and Ecumenical Relations Department (TED):

- a- The project of an ecumenical handbook on ecumenism is a great step towards unity of churches.
- b- TED is invited to organize dialogue on theological issues, within a commission, point by point, like the matter of the celebration of Easter.
- c- The MECC has a message to deliver to all and has a role to play. This should be done with wisdom so that all Christians will benefit from it.
- d- TED is the core of MECC but why an important project such as Kairos was stopped. The answer was that the suspension of Kairos was a decision of TED ecumenical committee which was taken after a long discussion. The committee estimated that there are enough ecclesial documents published; it is now time to act.

2- Diakonia and social services: The role of this department in Lebanon needed to be stressed in its different aspects including education, vocational training, physical and mental health, renovation of damaged businesses after Beirut blast in coordination with a church committee.

3- The financial situation of the MECC was discussed with a focus on the reserve and the unrestricted funding. The churches membership fees were raised and its actualization should be considered.

4- There is a need to recruit a specialized employee in fundraising at MECC and to integrate the sectors of the UN and the EU.

5- The future perspectives of the MECC were raised and it was mentioned that a networking of the church organizations of the same field should be implemented.

6- A new dimension shall be created within MECC about Social Cohesion, Dialogue, Human Dignity and Social Capital Rehabilitation as a response to the social structure collapse some of our societies are experiencing.

III- The Second Executive Committee meeting Monday 28 and Tuesday 29 November 2022

This was the second meeting of the Executive Committee elected at the 12th General Assembly and it was held in Our Lady of the Well Monastery - Bkennaya – Lebanon

A- Evaluation of the 12th General Assembly of the MECC

The Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, Dr. Michel Abs, presented a documentary about the twelfth general assembly of the Council, which was held at the Papal Logos Center, in Wadi El-Natrun, Egypt, from 16 to 20 May 2022.

Then, a general evaluation of the activities of the General Assembly was done by the attendees which considered that the General Assembly was distinguished by serious organization and careful follow-up by the organizing office, as well as distinguished hosting and spiritual embracing on the part of the Coptic Orthodox and Evangelical churches.

In this context, some expressed the need to have deep knowledge of the Church in the host country, as it happened during the General Assembly. In addition, it was suggested that the MECC should schedule discussions to bring churches closer together, and request them to submit research papers on ecumenism in order to consolidate the credibility of ecumenical work.

In terms of managing the sessions of the General Assembly, it was suggested that a booklet containing all the details of the proceedings of the General Assembly should be prepared, from beginning to end. It is also necessary to limit the times of discussions so that no delay is done in the program. In addition, there must be someone who assists the presidents during the General Assembly in managing the sessions.

As for the final statement and the aspirations of Christians, the attendees considered that the final statement included a recurrence of previous ideas, and this is not in line with what Christianity in the East is going through in terms of fateful conditions, and Christians have begun to lose hope, so the MECC should focus on prophetic words that touch people at the core of their aspirations and that his work be tangible.



On the other hand, members of the Executive Committee presented future proposals and recommendations for the work of the Council, which were divided into the following points:

- 1- Continuity of the role of the General Assembly: It is necessary to inform the members of the General Assembly of the progress of the Executive Committee's work between two general assemblies.
- 2- The council should schedule discussions to bring the churches closer together, and ask them to develop research papers on ecumenism in order to consolidate the continuity and credibility of ecumenical work.
- 3- Dealing with the problems of the churches and sharing their concerns: The council must contribute to finding solutions to the problems of the churches and develop suggestions and recommendations for these problems because it represents a spiritual entity for the churches of the Middle East.
- 4- Unifying the celebrations: The council is invited to work towards unifying the celebration of the Resurrection in all churches, especially that the year 2025 happens to be the year of the jubilee of the Council of Nicea.
- 5- The kidnapped bishops and human suffering in general: The year 2023 is the tenth year of the kidnapping of the two metropolitans of Aleppo. Therefore, a joint committee must be formed from the Executive Committee and the MECC team to follow up on the issue of the kidnapped and act, provided there are practical steps in order to keep alive the memory of the two metropolitans. Therefore, the council should hold a symposium on the kidnapped and forcibly disappeared, on April 22, resulting in a follow-up committee that will exert pressure in this direction.
- 6- Seeking, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, to establish an endowment fund for the Council in order to strengthen its financial position and ensure financial sustainability.

7- Cooperating with churches in the problems of youth, striving to fill the void in which they live, and working to preserve them by fulfilling their needs and dealing with them.

For his part, the Secretary-General answered, clarifying some points, according to the recommendations included in the interventions of the members of the Executive Committee. He also stressed that the work of the Council is carried out with high financial transparency, as its credibility results from its high programmatic performance and financial transparency.

B- Assistance to the affected families of the Beirut Port Explosion

A video about the Beirut port explosion was displayed, and Ms. Nina Hallak thanked all the churches that helped implement this project, explaining that the work team focused on those without a breadwinner and families that include people with special needs or multiple children. She also indicated the difficulty of carrying out an accurate survey, so the work took a long time.

In the same context, the Secretary General referred to the formation of an ecumenical committee for Beirut from all churches, which directly supervised the project.

C- Nominations and appointment of committees

1- Nominating the Associate General Secretaries

Based on a letter from the Armenian Orthodox Church, Ms. Seta Hadeshian was appointed Associate Secretary General for the Oriental Orthodox Family. The two former Associate Secretary Generals, Rev. Refaat Fikri for the Evangelical family and Father Dean Nicola Bustros for the Catholic family, were re-elected, according to nomination letters from their churches.

2- Nomination of boards and committees of council departments

After discussing the matter, the Executive Committee decided the following:

a- Program and department committees must include only one member of the Executive Committee.

b- The rest of the members must be appointed from among the experts of the member churches, in order to have experts from the churches in the committees on the basis of four people for each committee, one person from each church family.



c- MECC Presidents appoint the two categories mentioned in the two items above and others, and the duties of these committees must be clarified with the understanding that they are in line with the organizational structure of the Council.

d- Ratification of the members of the Department for Service to Palestinian Refugee committees as presented by the Secretary General to the Executive Committee on the basis of lists of the members of the Palestinian Refugee Service Department committees as appointed by the concerned heads of churches. The names were confirmed by the Executive Committee as received.

3- The Jubilee Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches

After discussing the issue of the fifty-year jubilee of the Council, which falls in the year 2024, the following was decided:

a- Appointing a committee to supervise the activities of the jubilee year, which includes:

- Ms. Wafa Goussous
- Rev. Fr. Refaat Badr
- H.E. Archbishop Daniel Kourieh
- H.E. Archbishop Hosam Naoum
- Experts can also be invited to help in the planning

This committee should develop a vision of the activities, studies the costs and determines the budget, and then presents the project to the Executive Committee. It was stressed that these activities should not have a ceremonial nature outside the evaluative and strategic work.

b- Moreover, the possibility of holding an extraordinary general assembly to be the Jubilee Assembly was suggested.

D- International partnerships

The Secretary General presented the implications of the World Council of Churches and ACT Alliance visit to Lebanon and Syria as follows:

- They were our defenders against the siege our societies are exposed to
- There is a document on cooperation between the World Councils of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches which is keen on having its terms applied
- We stress that we are a society under siege and we must lift the siege put on us ourselves. We are put under a permanent emergency

The relations between the Middle East Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches were also presented, with an examination of the future prospects for this cooperation.

Dr. Michel Abs then presented a summary of the partners' meeting that was held on November 3 and 4, 2022 in Beirut. After that, a video was shown as report of the partners' meeting.



E- Youth participation

The conversation was initiated by Father Antoine Al-Ahmar, who welcomed the Secretary-General of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), and thanked the Executive Committee and the MECC Secretary General for facilitating this work.

He explained that youth meetings are held under the title "Christian Youth in the Middle East" and that the youth contribute to crystallizing a clearer picture of reality, as they understand the future of the Church.

Therefore, the Middle East Council of Churches organized consultative seminars to find out about their concerns as a prelude to issuing a document expressing the youth's expectations. He also explained that the discussion sessions are currently focusing on the reality of the churches and the Christian concerns.

After that, the youth held a dialogue session in which they expressed their concerns and made suggestions that they consider to secure a better future for them. The ideas and concerns of the youth were presented according to the country and the church as follows:

- The most important challenges mentioned in the interventions of the youth revolved around the financial situation and immigration, lack of confidence in the political class, lack of acceptance of the other, weakness of the parishes from a spiritual point of view, ignorance of the essence of ecumenical work, the distance of youth from the Church, the discrepancy in attitudes between the heads of churches, the law of minorities, and the lack of special care for Christians in schools and hospitals affiliated with the Church, the problem of environmental pollution and climate change, the problem of harassment and homosexuality, and other problems that they suffer from in their daily lives. (documents attached)

- As for the proposed solutions, they included working to reduce immigration and consolidate steadfastness through Christian awareness and activities, investing church resources and not relying on volunteering, the church to conduct awareness sessions and programs on civic education, and to give opportunities to the laity to participate in decision-making, and to promote awareness and upbringing through training Young people to run dialogue sessions, and prepare programs to enhance the ecclesiastical role of youth in order to strengthen the parishes and take care of them.

- The youth also suggested setting clear information and statistics on the number of Christians and their ages so that there would be fairness in the case of aid, and establishing a policy by the church to secure material support for Christians in schools and hospitals. Moreover, the youth considered that it is necessary to motivate church vocations by carrying out theological knowledge strengthening programs for priests, stimulating openness among church leaders, in addition to unifying holidays.

- In addition, the youth called to amend the law of adoption and inheritance, and to encourage carrying out cleaning campaigns and environmental work, and to consolidate the concept of patriotism and not to introduce religion into politics, with the need for the church to stand up to injustice and not take a position of neutrality, and for the call to prayer to be made without permission from occupation in Palestine.

- The youth called to have judges and lawyers in churches, to hold educational courses for Christian women, and to find job opportunities for young people.

During the session, the WSCF Secretary, Mira Neaimeh, indicated that the youth were able to express the problems without fear, and that the East can no longer tolerate that the churches are dispersed, so we must establish a gathering where the youth can discuss the issues that concern them.

After discussing the expectations of the youth by the members of the Executive Committee, the Committee Members considered that every church should take upon itself the concerns of the youth and try to find solutions to the problems they suffer from, especially with regard to immigration, the shortage of ministers and the quality of their service, the imbalance in the personal status laws, the preparation for marriage, and job security.

The Executive Committee members added that it is necessary to bridge the gap between youth and the church by representing them in dioceses and parishes and help them establish committees of their own. Church Leaders must communicate with the youth, adopt their aspirations, and by contacting Christian politicians to support them in ensuring the future of the youth in their countries.

In the same perspective, the Executive Committee Members recommended the General Secretariat of the MECC establishes a special department



with youth, similar to what was previously known as the Education and Youth Affairs Committee. This department has to create a nucleus of youth that can participate in some way in decision-making in the council. The department should provide educational programs for youth and organizes conferences to address issues of concern to them such as immigration, women, violence. On the other hand, the Executive Committee members wished for the youth to get closer to their churches, and indeed to truly reconcile with them. They advised them, in approaching their problems, to focus not only on immediate personal matters, but also to think about the general crucial issues, and when talking about solutions, to think also about their role and the role of their families.

Finally, they suggested that they write down what they presented to the Executive Committee and send it in writing to the heads of churches in their countries.

In conclusion, the Executive Committee took the following decisions:

- Conveying the concerns and aspirations of youth to the heads of churches in each country, and then discussing them in the Executive Committee in order to take the appropriate decisions.



- Formation of a youth league based on the discussions that took place in this meeting.

The Secretary-General indicated that the issues raised are long-term and short-term problems, and that churches must renew their work patterns in line with the development of societies through youth.

After that, a video about the activities in Jordan was shown, and then group photos were taken for the attendees.

F- Financial situation and future prospects

The Director of the Finance Department, Mrs. Manal Bechara Abi Habib, presented and discussed the financial situation and the sustainability of the Council in light of the difficult economic conditions that the region and the world are going through, and the future of working with international partners. After praising the quality and transparency of the financial report and extending thanks to the Treasurer, Rev. Dr. Habib Badr, discussions took place on the following topics with the necessary clarifications:

- The shift in the composition of funding and the increase in the proportion of the restricted to the unrestricted
- The need to study the reserve situation in light of the decline it is witnessing, noting that the largest part of it is held in Lebanese banks
- Losses in the council's income due to the difficulty or impossibility of transferring funds to Syria
- Banking and financial challenges due to the presence of the head office in Lebanon, which is compensated by ease of movement and communication
- The MECC exchange of foreign currencies in Lebanon is taking place at the parallel market rate, after coordinating the matter with donors and auditing offices
- Employment takes place on the basis of competence, and the salaries of the MECC team are covered by the projects
- 60-70% of projects are implemented in Syria
- Donors request the change of auditor and external auditor every 8 years
- The council's salaries should be competitive in order to avoid employee turnover
- Because of the wars in Syria and Ukraine, the priority has become to help these areas

- What is remarkable is that it is the relief efforts that secure the largest rate of funding

During the discussions, the following recommendations were put forward by the members of the Executive Committee:

- Keeping the external auditor for an additional year, during which the Executive Committee would have selected a new one
- Appointing an internal auditor in addition to the external auditor
- Make the governance and approvals system clear
- The process of fund raising must be centralized
- Work to raise the percentage of unrestricted donations and search for funding according to the priorities set by the Council
- Provide a means of livelihood safety for employees due to the unstable conditions



IV- The WCC General Assembly and the visit to the Middle East



The MECC participated to the WCC General Assembly which was held in Karlsruhe in Germany from August 31st till September 9. It was represented by the Secretary general and the Director of the Theological and Ecumenical Relations Department.

During the assembly, and besides participating to the different meetings and plenary sessions, the secretary general moderated the Middle East Panel and participated in the discussions and decisions of the WCC Public issues Committee. In the meeting of the Middle East Panel, he made a presentation showing that the Middle East has been under siege for one whole century, since the King-Crane Commission report of 1922 till what the area is experiencing as siege in 2022. The document was widely circulated so that friends and colleagues of the ecumenical worldwide family voice and work to lift the siege under which this area is lying.

Worth mentioning that the Secretary General and the director of the Ecumenical and Theological Relations Department held several meetings with partners of the ecumenical family and discussed future cooperation.

Fr. Antoine attended the WCC general assembly as observer. He was honored by proclaiming the Gospel in Syriac in the opening celebration. Being member of the Catholic Church, he joined the confessional gathering presided by Cardinal Koch, the Prefect of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He took there the opportunity to raise the question of regular and official collaboration between the Vatican council for unity and MECC.

Besides the plenaries, Fr. Antoine participated in different daily workshops addressing mainly theological and environmental issues. In the discussion group about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, he exposed the background of the preparation by MECC of the materials for the prayer for the year 2022. On the sidelines of the Assembly, he met with number of theologians, namely Prof. Dietrich Werner, with whom he collaborated in the publication of the International Handbook on Creation Care, and discussed with him the project of a common handbook on churches and ecumenism in the Middle East.

A solidarity visit to Syria and Lebanon

In July, and on the basis of an invitation extended by His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, a delegation from the WCC and ACT Alliance visited Lebanon and Syria. The delegation included Fr. Ioan Sauca, WCC Acting General Secretary, Mr. Rudelmar Bueno Di Faria, ACT Alliance General Secretary, and Mr. Michel Nseir, WCC Syria Projects coordinator. This delegation was accompanied in Syria by Fr. Meletius Chattahi, General Director of the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development in the Patriarchate as well as the Director of the Spiritual Cithare Choir, and in Syria and Lebanon by Dr Michel Abs, MECC Secretary General.



The delegation was hosted by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, visited MECC offices and met with the team, several church leaders in Syria and Lebanon and participated in prayers and general gatherings of church leaders and parishioners as well as church rehabilitation activities.

The main focus of the visit was to gather enough information and arguments in order to launch an international appeal to lift the sanctions on Syria since they are deeply affecting the life of the population.



V- The Partners Meeting



The Middle East Council of Churches held its annual partners' meeting on Thursday 3 November, and Friday 4 November 2022, in Beirut, under the theme "Partners Accompanying MECC in the Ecumenical Journey".



Eighteen participants attended, representing their organizations from all over the world, from USA, Canada, Europe and the Middle East. From the side of the MECC the attendees were the President, the Associate Secretaries General, members of the Executive Committee, Directors of departments and several members of the MECC team headed by the Secretary General.

The Prayer and Bible meditation by Rev. El Marie Parker from PCUSA and Archimandrite Jack Khalil.

The sessions were respectively moderated by: H.E. Bishop Joseph Mouawad, member of the MECC Executive Committee, and President of the Episcopal Committee for Ecumenical Relations for the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon; Rev. Dr. Habib Badr, MECC Honorary President, and President of the National Evangelical Union in Lebanon; Dr. Peter Makari, the Executive Director of the international organizations, Global Ministries of the Christian Church and the United Church of Christ, in the Middle East and Europe; Ms. Benedicte Naess Hafskjold, NCA, Country Director Lebanon and Syria; Archimandrite Jack Khalil, Dean of Saint John of Damascus Institute of Theology - Balamand and ATIME President; Rev. Martin Puhén, from the EKD; Ms. Kate Mayhew, from the MCC; Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, MECC President for the Evangelical Family, President of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, and President of Haigazian University in Lebanon.

The partners' meeting included:

- Introductory words by the moderators of the sessions
- A speech delivered by the MECC Secretary General Dr. Michel Abs in which he stressed the risk of the crises threatening the region, and tackled the most important challenges faced by the Eastern societies and to which the MECC has to respond with the support of partners.
- A conference given by Dr. Fadi Nicholas Nassar which included an overview about the difficult circumstances of the Middle East amidst the social, economic, health and security crises, in addition to the repercussions of the global crises and conflicts on the region, tackling the urgent needs of the Eastern people.
- The MECC Secretary General report, which included all the activities, programs and projects that he planned and implemented during the past years of his mandate, followed by a discussion session and exchange of opinions and experiences in order to achieve the desired Ecumenical and humanitarian goals.
- Presentation of Reports on MECC Finances and Annual Audit Report.
- Presentations of departments' report by their respective directors, including all their achievements and future projects to be implemented in the future on the Theological, Ecumenical, humanitarian, relief and media fields. They gave a brief overview about the planned projects and programs for the next period, presented their expectations and the goals planned to achieve.
- Video presentations about the different dimensions of MECC's work.
- The discussions focused on: Regional challenges and response; The development of the MECC's work mechanisms towards a more sustainable future; The latest developments in the region and response strategies and the future perspective of the MECC departments, the Ecojustice Unit and the ATIME; MECC cooperation networking, with Churches and related organizations, civil society organizations, and the Word Council of Churches (WCC), aiming to develop the partnership with them all; The Ecumenical accompaniment of MECC in order to develop the Council's work towards a sustainable and robust MECC in the region.
- Group Discussions: The participants were divided into many regional groups to discuss the current circumstances and the urgent needs, raising their recommendations and suggestions on developing the MECC humanitarian mission.

This partners meeting was an ecumenical gathering that reconfirmed the commitment of the Ecumenical Family to MECC's witness and role in the Middle East.



VI - Organizational development and management follow-up

The development of MECC organization being a top priority to enhance its ability to deal with the rapid growth it is witnessing in a highly turbulent environment, the prescribed measures and procedures have been implemented in the light of what was planned in the four-year strategic framework in the following areas:

A- Exchanging information, meetings, decision-making and developing the flexibility of the work team

The concentration was on reconsidering the classification of the teamwork of the employees, i.e. the staff meetings and the decision-making processes which are being applied in a sustained manner. In parallel, representatives of the Churches met in ecumenical commissions, in the presence of the ex officio Secretary-General and, in some cases, as a convener of the meeting. The Committee to amend the Constitution and the internal regulations, and the Preparatory Committee for the General Assembly.

B - Standardization & Organizational Development Procedures

Moreover, the MECC embarked on implementing a series of measures, aimed at strengthening its organizational structure and improving general administrative processes. These procedures included developing and reviewing the Council's bylaws, following up and discussing the matters of the different departments.

C - Integration and development of human capital

In parallel, the MECC focused on renewing and developing its human capital through the recruitment and integration of new colleagues, holding training sessions in different fields. More sessions are under elaboration to be conducted.

In parallel to the above, the MECC staff attended three spiritual retreats to be held on a quarterly basis. This which will help team members perform their tasks better by connecting them to their Christian faith and a deep understanding of Christianity.

D- Emergency procedures to face crises

Due to the unstable situation in Lebanon, and the emergence of unforeseen crises, including the pandemic, special administrative well-designed mea-

were taken, making the effects of these crises minimal on the team's productivity.

E- Developing and modernizing the data bank

Major data banks have been developed according to need. They include completion of the database related to churches and church leaders, church related associations and organizations, professors, researchers and writers, CVs, and others.

VII- Project development

The Secretary-General followed the development of projects outside the framework of the MECC departments in preparation for the start of a new project or in preparation for the establishment of a new department via motivating, enabling or, in some cases, taking the initiative to enter a new field of activity.

العدالة الاجتماعية في زمن الأزمات

بدعوتكم مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط إلى ندوة عن بعد بعنوان

العدالة الاجتماعية في زمن الأزمات

برنامج الندوة:

- كلمة الأمين العام لمجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط: د. ميشال عيسى
- نحو العدالة الاجتماعية في الدول العربية: دور فرص العمل اللائقة ونظمية الحماية الاجتماعية الشاملة: د. ماري غيور (الوزارة السابقة للتخطيط والتعاون الدولي في الحكومة الأردنية والمديرة السابقة لشعبة العمل الدولية في شرق أفريقيا)
- الأزمة المالية والفقدان ومفومات الصمود الجماعي - د. بشر المير (رئيس قسم العلوم الاقتصادية في كلية العلوم الاقتصادية وإدارة الأعمال - الجامعة اللبنانية)

إدارة الجلسة - د. شوقي عطية

الفلسطينيون والتحرر من منظور مسيحي

بدعوتكم مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط إلى ندوة عن بعد بعنوان

الفلسطينيون والتحرر من منظور مسيحي

برنامج الندوة:

- كلمة الأمين العام: د. ميشال عيسى
- وثيقة "وقفه حق" الفلسطينية - د. برنارد سابيللا
- المسيح في منظور الهوية - د. جيرا الشوملي
- الحق الإنساني للشعب الفلسطيني - الأب د. ماري جرداق
- الفلسطينيون والتحرر: موقف مسيحي - د. كريستو المر

إدارة الجلسة - د. نور أبي خليل

التعقيب على المداخلات - د. شوقي عطية

يوم الجمعة 29 تموز/ يوليو 2022، الساعة السابعة والنصف مساءً



In addition to contributing to the normal operational aspects of the various departments of the Council, the Secretary-General facilitated the launching or the preparation of the following projects:

A- Human dignity: restoration and exploration

This project was developed by a team of four academics who are experts in the field of development which work was coordinated by the secretary general.

The project includes three dimensions: awareness of human dignity at the level of youth as well as at the level of society in general, through awareness and sensitization sessions; a field study on human dignity at the grassroots and societal level; the development of an index of human dignity to be used as a criterion for assessing human dignity situation in our region for social policy purposes.

So far, the team conducted a series of seminars and round tables, some of which are online and other face-to-face, dealing with the following themes:

- 1- Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination
- 2- "Palestinians And Liberation from A Christian Stance"
- 3- SOCIAL JUSTICE" IN TIMES OF CRISIS
- 4- Third Age: On Endangered Human Dignity and The Need for Reintegration
- 5- Women and Human Dignity
- 6- Living in Dignity for Persons with Disability

These seminars and round tables are building a corpus of researchers, intellectuals and social activists around the MECC in the whole Middle East since they involve participants from the different countries of the area.

B- Women and the family

This program, which was initially written as a program to empower women, is currently being reviewed by an expert in social work in coordination with the Secretary-General and deals with women and family issues. Negotiations are underway with a university in order to secure cooperation in this field.

C- Ecojustice Projects – the Season of Creation

Following the success of the Season of Creation Project, the Environmental Justice Unit became active in different dimensions of environmental issues. Its work is coordinated with the Department of Theological and Ecumenical Relations.



D- Agricultural projects

The Council developed a wide range of agricultural project proposals, including feasibility studies, submitted or developed by experts associated with the Church as well as with other civil societies. Negotiations took place with a number of agricultural engineers as project staff in the Council with the aim of assigning them to implement or supervise specific projects. These activities will be implemented in coordination with the Environmental Justice Unit. Furthermore, these projects include the use of church-owned land for development. This dimension of the MECC activities is pending for logistical and financial reasons.

E- Immigrant labor projects

A project dealing with migrant workers is being prepared by colleagues and experts connected to the Council, but it still needs further preparation to be implemented. This project will primarily deal with advocacy and public awareness campaigns. The human resources for the project are available and it is required to secure support for the launching phase. At the end of the year, this project was still pending due to unavailability of this support.



VIII- Meetings, visits and events

F- The Hermel Center

This center for children with special needs in the remote and neglected area of Hermel, northern Beqaa has been closed for a long time. The Middle East Council of Churches negotiated for several months with the Government's Educational Center for Research and Development (CERD) in preparation for reopening it as a training center for children with special needs. Terms of partnership with CERD were drafted by lawyers and finalized, but the Government withdrew due to lack of budget.

The alternative is that MECC operates it by itself and includes a section for children with autism in this remote area. Social awareness training is also foreseen for youth in the area.



G- Cultural dialogue in Iraq

Following the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Iraq, the central working group discussed with His Beatitude Cardinal Patriarch Mar Louis Raphael Sako the best way to invest this historic visit to the interest of Iraq and the Christians of the Middle East in general. The outcome of the brainstorming was that a cultural dialogue project in Iraq should be launched.

Then, after partnering with the World Council of Churches in a symposium on Iraq, the MECC was asked to coordinate a dialogue project at the level of Iraq. A nucleus committee was formed representing churches and non-Christian groups and developed a comprehensive national dialogue project. The project, although well elaborated, is suspended for logistical and financial reasons.



B- Meetings with local partners

Meeting with local partners was minimal, 10 in total, because field partners usually meet with certain MECC constituencies. However, in some cases, these local partners request to meet with the Secretary-General to introduce him to the organization or to discuss long-term prospects for cooperation.



D- Participation in local events

Due to the central place occupied by the Council in the social and cultural life of the region, the Secretary-General is required to attend all kinds of events. Among the large number of events, the 10 most closely related to the objectives of the Middle East Council of Churches were attended.

A- Individual Meetings with International Partners

International Partners are the voice and support for Christianity in the Middle East as well as for the global ecumenical movement. As such, the Secretary-General's activities have included meetings with 30 of MECC's international partners. The meetings dealt with various topics and were detailed on the MECC website at the time.



C- Participation in international events

The Secretary-General attended a total of 15 international online events, most of them Church related.





E- Local visits to church leaders

The Secretary-General, accompanied by the Associate General Secretaries, as well as members of the MECC team, visited 10 leaders of the local churches.

We need to mention that the Secretary general represented the MECC and participated to the funerals of the late Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus, His Beatitude Chrysostomos I, with Church Leaders from the different countries in the area and worldwide. It was an opportunity to pay tribute to the church leader who lead the Church of Cyprus for three decades and who was a great support to the ecumenical efforts in the Middle East.



IX - Articles, lectures, and appearances in the media

embodiment of a belief whose adherents intend to achieve certain goals in their surroundings and society. From here, the Council must express to those concerned with its course, as well as to the people in general, its opinion, aspirations, and view of life and the universe based on the Christian faith in its ecumenical dimension that it embodies.



Our starting point is that the Council must have a sustainable audible voice in the local, regional and international circles. Since the beginning of my service, in coordination with the Department of Information and Public Relations, I launched a unified Arabic- and English-speaking bulletin that communicates our voice to whomever it may concern. We called this bulletin “Momentum”, meaning momentum. .

The positive feedback that we receive and the translation of this bulletin into several languages in the world is conclusive evidence of the correctness of the decision and the need for the world to hear our voice and follow up on our news. Here I congratulate the team working in the communication department for the tireless work they are doing to maintain the high quality of the newsletter and to deliver it to the largest possible number of stakeholders.



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A- Editorials and articles

The Secretary-General writes an editorial for the Council's weekly Momentum newsletter.

This is based on the need for MECC to share ideas and interact with its community, including church leaders, parishioners, partners, and the general public. The total of these articles reached (54) during the year 2022.

B- Media interviews and videos

The Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches is constantly invited to give interviews and media appearances on various topics and issues. The total of these activities for the year 2022 is sixteen (16).

C- Meetings, seminars, lectures and similar activities

Despite the pandemic, the stone, and the lack of fuel and electricity, the activities of the Middle East Council of Churches on the cultural and intellectual level continued in various forms. The Secretary General attended webinars and gave many lectures on various topics, where he presented the Middle East Council of Churches' vision of things and spoke about the Council's values, views and future programs. These activities reached seventy-seven (77) in 2022.

D- Statements

In some cases, the MECC will issue a statement regarding a specific situation or event. In general, when we can deal with the matter with an article published in Momentum, we do so or else we issue a statement. For 2022, the Middle East Council of Churches issued ten (4) statements.

All these documents are accessible via the QR Code put at the end of this section.



Scan here for all of the Activities of the Secretary General Dr. Michel Abs during 2022, such as weekly messages, Media interviews, meetings, webinars, lectures, gatherings, other activities..., Visits, statements and Press Releases





The Spiritual Life

The MECC is not an organization like others. It is first and foremost an ecclesial Council. Therefore, the theological department takes the most care to create the spiritual atmosphere in which the General Secretariat as a whole and all staff members must operate. It is towards this goal that the department invites colleagues to the weekly prayer celebrated alternately in different rites, and accompanied mainly by a biblical reflection. In addition to these regular moments of prayer, the department invites MECC personnel to celebrate together some occasional events and organizes for them, at least twice a year, a one day spiritual retreat.

In the liturgical context, the department prepared and edited the booklet containing multi ritual and multi lingual prayer services used by the MECC General Assembly held in Egypt in 16-20 May 2022.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Considering that Christian unity is the ultimate goal of every ecumenical work, and that the prayer is the most efficient way to approach this goal, the department devotes its potential and competencies to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In our region, situated in the northern hemisphere, the WPCU is traditionally celebrated from 18 to 25 of January. Before that time, the booklet published by the WCC and the Vatican, which contains the presentation of the theme of the year, the ecumenical prayer service and the biblical meditations, is translated into Arabic and shared online so that it is available for use by all churches and communities in the Middle East and all Arab speaking Christians around the World. Since the materials of 2022 have been prepared by the MECC, the booklet was published and distributed free of charge to all member churches.

In collaboration with the MECC communication department, a media campaign was launched before and during the WPCU to sensitize our fellow brothers and sisters about the unity of the Church we believe in and the significance of praying together, and to introduce the theme chosen for the year. This awareness and education campaign was conducted through the various social media platform and in a series of TV interviews.

In Lebanon, the opening and closing of the WPCU gathering head of churches, as well as the celebrations in the various regions of the country, are coordinated by the episcopal commission on ecumenism belonging to the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon. The department is associated with the coordination through the director who participates in the commission meetings as invited member.





The Season of Creation

The celebration of the Season of Creation the first time in Lebanon in 2021 and the environmental activities executed mainly with the youth have had great impact, despite the sanitary restrictions related to Covid. The department, along with the MECC Eco-Justice Unit, has built on that success to embark upon a regional program including more varied activities to campaign for the environmental protection and remind about our responsibility as Christians to respect God's creation, our common home. In 2022, the program was launched during the Season of Creation, from September 1 to October 4, with ecumenical celebrations hosted each week in a different capital: Damascus, Cairo, Amman and Beirut. This last one, the closing ceremony, was held in Bkerke on October 3. It was presided by the Maronite patriarch with the presence of church leaders of the various churches and some representatives of national and international organizations. But most important was the participation of the youth, engaged in various movements, belonging to different church denominations and coming from different parts of the countries.

As for the booklet of prayer for unity, the department took charge of the publication of the Arabic version of the Season of Creation Guide and its distribution free of charge to churches and organizations.



Youth Consultations

We are all aware of the role of the youth in building the future of Christians in the Middle East. Generally, young people are those who receive formation from the elders. However, with their enthusiasm, clarity of vision, and creative talents, they have much to say. From this point of view, the department took the initiative to approach the youth to get a closer look at their views and to listen to their concerns and aspirations.

With the collaboration of WSCF-ME, five meetings were organized during 2022, one in each of the following capital cities: Bagdad on April 2; Damascus on April 8; Cairo on May 21; Amman on June 17; and at last Ramallah on September 30. For Lebanon, an initial session have been held in July 2020.

Thus in these countries, young people belonging to the various churches and actively involved in their communities, were invited for one-day long consultation consisting of ecumenical prayers, moments of conviviality and 4 sessions of discussions and debate on 2 series of topics: the first concerning the church and their role in its mission, while the second set of questions is more related to the living conditions and the challenges facing the presence in the homeland. A synthesis of the debate was drafted at the end of each consultation and approved by all participants.

These results were submitted to the MECC executive committee held in 28-29 November 2022 by representatives chosen from each session. In a preparatory meeting, the group of 18 young people consulted amongst themselves in order to fine tune the content and method of their participation in the one hour and a half session of the ExComm.



The conversation between the youth and the MECC leaders were straightforward and vibrant, and the following debate among the ExComm members was so animated so that it was extended to the successive session. At the end, decision was taken to share the youth concerns and thoughts to all church leaders and to organize a series of ecumenical youth encounters at national level and plan a large regional gathering during the MECC jubilee year 2024.

Anyway, our youth were admirable. Their presence in the ExComm meeting will be remembered, and from now on, their participation in the various bodies of the Council is somehow ineluctable.

The Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling Program

The successful « Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling » (THSC) program which started in 2018 in Iraq, and reached subsequently Syria, Egypt and Lebanon, has been relaunched after the lifting of the restrictions related to the pandemic. In 19-23 June 2022, a THSC session was offered for Jordanian and Palestinian church ministers. It took place in the splendid Rosary Sisters Visitation Home situated in Al Hashemia area of Amman and included 16 participants, men and women belonging to the various church denominations, occupying different missions in their respective communities. There were priests and pastors, as well as social workers and christian group leaders.

The 5-day program consisted mainly of daily spiritual and psychological group sessions and group therapy followed by one-to-one consultations provided by specialized psychotherapists and spiritual counselors. It included moments of prayer celebrated in an atmosphere of profound recollection to refresh the spirit, and morning physical exercises to comfort the body. Participants acquired also technical training on effective community leadership, communication skills, stress management, policies to apply during crises, and tools for need assessment. In the evening, they spontaneously animated themselves joyful moments of conviviality.

The psychotherapy and the spiritual counseling follow a progressive pattern in the subjects according to four words of Jesus: « Why are you hitting me? » (John 18, 23); « My God, why did you abandon me? » (Mark 15, 34); « God, forgive them » (Luke 23, 34); « I am the resurrection, and I am the life » (John 11, 25).

Based on the participants' evaluation, the key expected outcomes of the

ministers showed to be strengthened in their resilience towards traumatizing crises, and acknowledge becoming equipped with potential humanitarian, spiritual and psychological basic skills and tools to pursue their pastoral and spiritual mission within their communities. Moreover, an ecumenical network was established among them which would lead to a deeper knowledge and extended cooperation between churches.



The Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East

The director of the theological department followed the good functioning of the Association of Theological Institutes of the Middle East (ATIME), mainly through his active participation in its meetings at different levels. The head of TED is ex officio member of ATIME general assembly and executive secretariat.

After a period of stagnation, the Association has been revived through the election of new staff: the President, the Executive Secretary and the 3 associates secretaries completing thus the representation of the four ecclesial families. That leads to the finalization and adoption of the new bylaws, and the planning of several projects and activities for the coming years. These achievements have been reached through a series of meetings of the and two online General Assembly on February 22 and April 5, 2022. They were confirmed in the last General Assembly held in May 22-23, 2022 in Cairo, and the work is continuously going forward.





Ecumenical collaborations



The MECC theological department, in charge also of the ecumenical relations, aims to create an ecumenical networking at regional and international levels. To this end, every opportunity is taken of establish partnership and collaboration with organizations as well as individuals.

In this context, the department co-organized, with the Bible Society in Lebanon, Syria & Iraq and the British and Foreign Bible Society, the second part of « The Magi Initiative: East-West. A dialogue conference among Church Leaders ». While the first session of this ecumenical encounter took place in Lebanon in October 10-12, 2019, the second round was held at University Arms, Cambridge, England, in May 12-14, 2022. It was in the course of this conference that emerged the idea of inviting bishop Philipp Mounstephen to Lebanon, for a talk and debate on the topic « Why our Religious Freedom Matters ». The conference was co-organized with the Bible Society in Lebanon and the University of Saint Joseph in Beirut where it took place in October 13, 2022.

On a strictly ecclesial level, the director of the department took part as a full member in all the meetings of the Episcopal Commission on Ecumenism of the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon. In October 19, 2022, he had the privilege of opening the series of ecumenical training sessions by a lecture on « The unity of the church. Theological and historical perspectives ». The most significant ecumenical event of the year 2022 was evidently the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Karlsruhe (Germany) in August 30 - September 8, under the theme « Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity »

Invited as an observer to this universal gathering, the director of the department participated actively to several workshops on theological and environmental topics, and met with a number of church leaders and prominent theologians. On October 26-30, he joined the Syrian Christian young leaders conference organized by the Hope Center in Damascus, where he met with youth movement leaders and with the representatives of partners' organization, namely MCC, ACN, l'Œuvre d'Orient and Pontifical Mission.

On the scientific level, the department collaborated in the publication of the « International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia. Concepts and Perspectives from the Churches of the Global South ». The book is edited by Dietrich Werner and published by Regnum Books International. The four articles submitted by the department completed the section about key issues and best practice models for creation care in the Middle East. The second collaborative theological work was the report on mission published for the IMC centenary and entitled: « A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation. The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921-2021 ». Both publications have been presented at the WCC General Assembly in Karlsruhe.





By : Prof. Michel E. Abs
MECC Secretary General



The Middle East Council of Churches, being a fellowship of the churches in the Middle East, and being concerned by the different needs of people in the area, the spiritual as well as the material ones, is called to carry-on its service towards the destitute and the less privileged due to the turmoil that this area is experiencing.

Ever since its inception, the MECC considered that the social service and development are main concerns in its strategies and policies. This service to the needy and the deprived started with the Council and still carries-on, and we do not see that it will reach to an end in the foreseen future, due to the political and security instability in our Middle Eastern societies.

The Diakonia and Social Service Department of the Middle East Council of Churches, is dealing with this specific aspect of our Christian faith, service and witness in the area. He, who came for our salvation, fed the hungry, healed the ailing and provided to the needs of many social categories of His time. We, at the MECC, we do not see ourselves witnessing for His faith by doing otherwise.

The aim of this introduction is not to present the Diakonia and Social Service works of the MECC. The report and the witnesses speak for themselves, and they tell the stories of accomplishments we are proud of.

The Executive Committee of the Council, the highest level of governance at MECC, meeting in November 2022, congratulated the MECC team in general for their performance, with a special focus on the diaconal services.

The Diakonia and Social Service Department, is fully conscient that the MECC includes several other dimensions, concertized by departments too, or by projects, and is in deep coordination with all of them in the light of the emerging situations and the foreseen fields of necessary interventions. The needs are huge, and increasing at an accelerated pace. So, we, at the MECC, try to identify with the Incarnate Savior who was able to feed thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. Our strength comes from the certainty that it is in His Name that we act.



A MESSAGE FROM DIAKONIA DEPARTMENT

In 2022 and after several years of war in Syria, the Middle East Region continued to face numerous challenges related to the negative impact of the presence of many displaced Syrians and Iraqis in neighboring countries, the fragile economic and political situation, and the instability in many parts in the region. The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences emphasized the common vulnerabilities of humanity. It brought particularly harsh consequences on the globe and on the communities in countries where we operate. Millions of people have been pushed to live below the line of poverty while young people face gloomy destiny without any hope to see a promising future waiting for them. The impact of the ongoing sanctions on Syria as well as the economic collapse in Lebanon, has added numerous challenges in all operations. In spite of such protracted challenges, our objective during 2022 was to continue saving lives, reaching the most vulnerable, and providing vital and timely assistance to all people affected by the crises using dignified actions and innovative modalities. Peace building and shared future approach were part of all our interventions towards preserving the social fabric and the sustainable social cohesion. Gender equality and inclusion were a benchmark in all our activities by providing more space for women and girls to participate in different programs.

Acknowledging that there is an entirely challenging situation in the region on one hand, and in countries that are still suffering from the protracted crises and economic downfall in particular, there will not be any positive change in the near future.

As such, the expectation of the number of people in need will increase in parallel with the decreasing external support from the international communities. In spite of such gloomy scenario, we believe that challenges always bring new opportunities and our success during 2022, with all its difficult situations, will not hinder us to achieve more success in the coming years. Our determination and trust in our partners and stakeholders will motivate us to be more creative so that we bring joy to every suffering face created in the image and likeness of our God and make a real change in people's lives.

BRIEF CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW IN TARGETED COUNTRIES



Syria: After nearly 12 years of conflict, it remains a complex humanitarian and protection emergency characterized by ongoing hostilities and their long-term consequences, including widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, economic collapse, explosive ordnance contamination and one of the largest numbers of internally displaced people in the world. There are 15.3 million people out of 22.1M population who require support to meet their needs, 5.3 million are internally displaced people (IDP) - many having been displaced multiple times and more than 2 M children are out of schools. The neighboring Arab countries host about 5,443,083 M Syrian refugees and 1 M are hosted in different European countries. Ongoing sanctions on Syria contribute to increasing the vulnerability ratio of all Syrian population and prevents them from accessing basic services that can preserve the wellbeing of people with minimum standards according to core

Lebanon: It is grappling with economic and financial melt-down, the disastrous impact of the Beirut Port explosions and continued impact of the Syrian crisis. Many people live today below the income poverty line, despite the various initiatives implemented to benefit the poor. Since 2019, poverty has been increasing owing to a decline in economic activity and widespread political instability. Between June 2019 and June 2021, the inflation rate in Lebanon amounted to 281 per cent. As a result, the poverty line increased, which led to a rise in income poverty from 25 per cent of the humanitarian principles. The imposed sanctions by the Western countries on Syria, already exhausted by war, are causing the deterioration of the wellbeing of more than 95% of Syrian people and to the collapse of Syrian economy and the rate of local currency. An estimated 12 million Syrians are facing a deadly winter with no fuel for heating, no petrol for transportation, and no electricity for their dark homes. Although the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, Alena Douhan, has called for the lifting of sanctions against Syria, warning that they were adding to the suffering of the Syrian people since 2011, no action has been made to lift up the sanction to enable Syrian people to retain their recovery after 12 years of wars.

“ After a 12-day visit to Syria, most of the Syrian population currently lives below the poverty line, with shortages of food, water, electricity, shelter, fuel for cooking and heating, transport and healthcare , most infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged, and sanctions imposed on oil, gas, electricity, trade, construction and engineering have reduced national income, which has hampered economic recovery and reconstruction and the continuing exodus of educated and skilled Syrians in response to the economic hardships of living at home.” Douhan said.



population in 2019, to 55 per cent in 2020, and almost 74 per cent in 2021. With more than half the population below the national poverty line, and the unemployment rate on the rise, an increasing share of households is facing difficulty in accessing basic services, including health care, education and food security. The deteriorating economic and living conditions and increased poverty have exacerbated the brain drain of professionals' national human



Jordan: It hosts the second-highest share of refugees per capita in the world, putting unprecedented pressure on its budgetary and natural resources, infrastructure and labor market. The country is a semi-arid country, facing chronic water scarcity and a growing set of climate hazards.

Since 2012, Jordan has accepted hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing conflict. Today, Jordan hosts 1.36 million Syrian refugees (including the registered refugees in UNHCR). This resembles nearly 15% of Jordan's total population; that is demonstrating Jordan's tremendous commitment towards refugees within its borders. However, with the twelve years of the Syria crisis which is recognized as one of the worst humanitarian crisis in 21st century, Jordan remains committed to its moral obligations while bearing more than its fair share of the response through meeting the short and long term needs of Syrian refugees, which are exhausting Jordan's absorptive capacities. The costs of hosting Syrian refugees has direct and indirect impact, with 90% of Syrian refugees living among host communities and adding capitals. The presence of around 1.5 M Syrian refugees and around half millions of registered Palestinian refugees have added more burdens on the Lebanese economy. This made national resources hardly available to Lebanese citizens. While hosting almost 50% of refugees out of its overall population with no evidence that they will return soon to their home countries, Lebanon will undoubtedly face more pressures and challenges at all levels.

pressures on schools, hospitals, electricity, health services, resources, sanitation systems and jobs. The situation has escalated due to the increase of beneficiaries, especially in the Northern parts of the Kingdom. These indirect impacts of the Syria crisis have also affected Jordanians living in host communities, as their quality of life has been severely impacted.

DIAKONIA PROGRAMS' APPROACH



MECC is a regional faith based organization which provides support to affected people impacted by different kinds of crises in the region through different innovative and modality interventions and by reaching all people in need irrespective of their backgrounds. Diakonia team strives to respond on time by offering the required aid according to the nature of crises in coordination with local faith based entities and with other actors on the ground. Diakonia programs has different layers from emergency to early recovery and development so that vulnerable affected people can cope better with their changing situation and become more resilient. MECC programs focus on different sectors: Food Security, NFI, Protection, Livelihood and Early Recovery, Health, WASH, Shelter and Education. It also works on enhancing the concept of peace building and restoring the social fabric towards more cohesive societies through the concept of “Shared future” which ensures a safe space for all affected beneficiaries to overcome their conflict sensitivities and build positive relationships that pave the way toward a better future. Participation of beneficiaries in discerning their needs and sharing the designing of their activities is the corner stone of Diakonia’s approach. Finally, “Service in Dignity” is the moto that Diakonia department follows in all its programs so that all can be served equally with no harm.



Rehabilitation of Social Capital and the Value System – Restore Human Dignity
Support for vulnerable and at-risk groups: Youth, Women, Rural people, Migrants and Refugees.

Our Values and Principles



SERVICE IN DIGNITY: We respect the privacy of people irrespective of their background while believing that all people are created in the image and likeness of our God. All have the right to live in dignity and equality and to have all service they deserve in respect and confidentiality. We follow ethical principles through existing policies that ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable people including children, girls, women and PWDs.

POSITIVE IMPACT: We design our activity and execution modality to achieve qualitative result and not only a quantitative one as well as sustainable impact. We are committed to provide the needs of people through variety of program modality that lead to improve the wellbeing and resiliency of served people.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: We act and commit to be fully accountable and transparent towards our beneficiaries, partners and financial donors, by providing access to all information related to allocating and using of funds. We strive to provide all requested structure, documents and policies to ensure the correct management and operation of the resources provided to us.

TIMELY AND EQUAL SERVICE TO ALL: We strive to discern the emerging needs of affected people depending on our contacts and networking in places we serve, in order to design appropriate projects to meet the realistic needs on time and to ensure



equal services to all affected people and communities irrespective of beneficiaries' affiliations and backgrounds.

NO-DISCRIMINATION: We do not accept any forms of discrimination based on race, gender, age, personal orientation, disability, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality or beliefs.

IMPARTIALITY: We respect the religious beliefs and we act without any consideration of political or religious orientation.

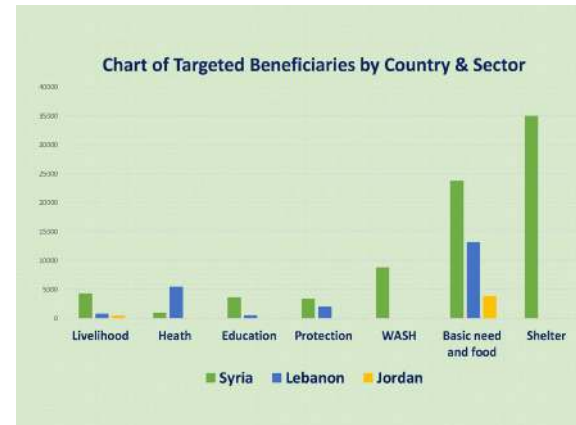
ZERO CORRUPTION: We act with utmost care in all our programs to support, ignore or turn a blind eye on any suspicious action that affect the reputation and accountability of MECC and we peruse to have zero risk in all our operations.

CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY: We design our programs and activities to respect as much as possible the safety of the climate and the wellbeing of affected people in places where we serve and act. We encourage our beneficiaries and stakeholders to adopt possible actions and measures to reduce the negative impact of climate negligence especially in places that witness protracted crises and destruction of civil services.

DO NO HARM: We care and act in ways to preserve the dignity and privacy of people we serve, in order not to create any kind of harm or insecure action especially to those who are targeted due to their religious affiliations, personal orientation or gender. MECC ensure to have the required policies in place to deal with any violation of preserving all forms of harms on time and with quick action.

GENDER EQUALITY: We provide equal services and opportunity to women and girls in need in all forms of activities including participation in decision making, employment opportunity and equal access to all existing services.

OUR PROGRESS OVER 2022



Nationality	Number of Beneficiaries
Syrians	85431
Lebanese	16792
Iraqis	1376
Jordanians	2581
Other nationalities	96

DETAILED TARGETED BENEFICIARIES BY COUNTRY, SECTOR AND GENDER

Sector	LL		WASH		Basic needs		Health		Education		Protection		Rehabilitation		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Syria	2297	2038	4316	4447	14356	9459	0	1010	1666	1968	1917	1483	17500	17500	79957
Lebanon	112	693	0	0	5810	7363	1448	4006	293	210	347	1687	0	0	21969
Jordan	40	445	0	0	1974	1891	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4350
Total	2409	2731	4316	4447	20166	16822	1448	5016	1959	2178	2264	3170	17500	17500	106276





Contribution towards Sustainable Development Goals



The Diakonia activities contributed towards achieving the following strategic sustainable Goals:

- 1: No poverty:** through many agriculture activities and financial grants to initiate new SMEs.
- 2: Zero hunger:** through providing food assistance and supporting agriculture and livestock investments.
- 3: Good health and wellbeing:** Through supporting chronic disease and cancer patients, vaccination to children, medical counselling and rehabilitation of health services.
- 4: Quality education:** through providing safe education space, restoration of schools and training to teachers on quality education and applicable of child protection policy.
- 5: Gender Equality:** All MECC programs takes Gender representation into consideration. at least 50% of targeted beneficiaries are female.
- 6: Clean water and sanitation:** through the provision of clean drinking water in schools and rehabilitated of WASH and sewage system.
- 8: Decent work and economic growth:** By initiating small business for unemployed HHS and revering disrupted business as well as supporting value chain system in targeted rural communities.

13: Climate Action: Through adopting MECC environment policy in all MECC operation as well as launching community campaign to preserve the climate conditions by initiating CASH for Work activities in the area of sanitation and irrigation

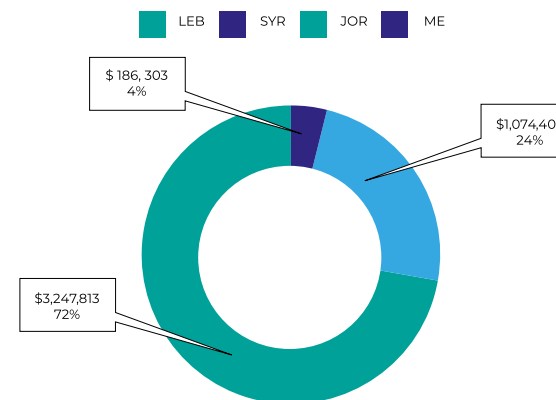
16: Peace, just and strong institutions: Through adopting shared future approach in all activities to enhance peace building among population, tolerance and forgiveness

PARTNERSHIP AND FUNDING

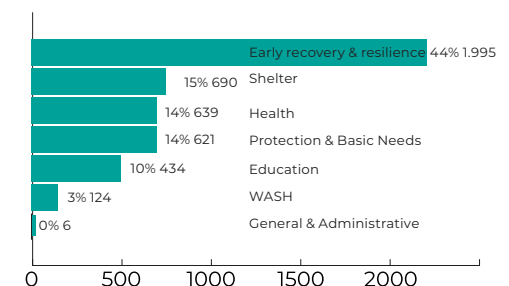
Diakonia department maintains the required funding over 2022 to continue the ongoing activities and launch new ones over 2023. Due to success in achieving all designed activities in efficient and transparent manners, new partners joined the council and engaged in new partnership during 2022. The overall income of MECC /Diakonia department in 2022 is (4,508,517.68 US\$) as the following:

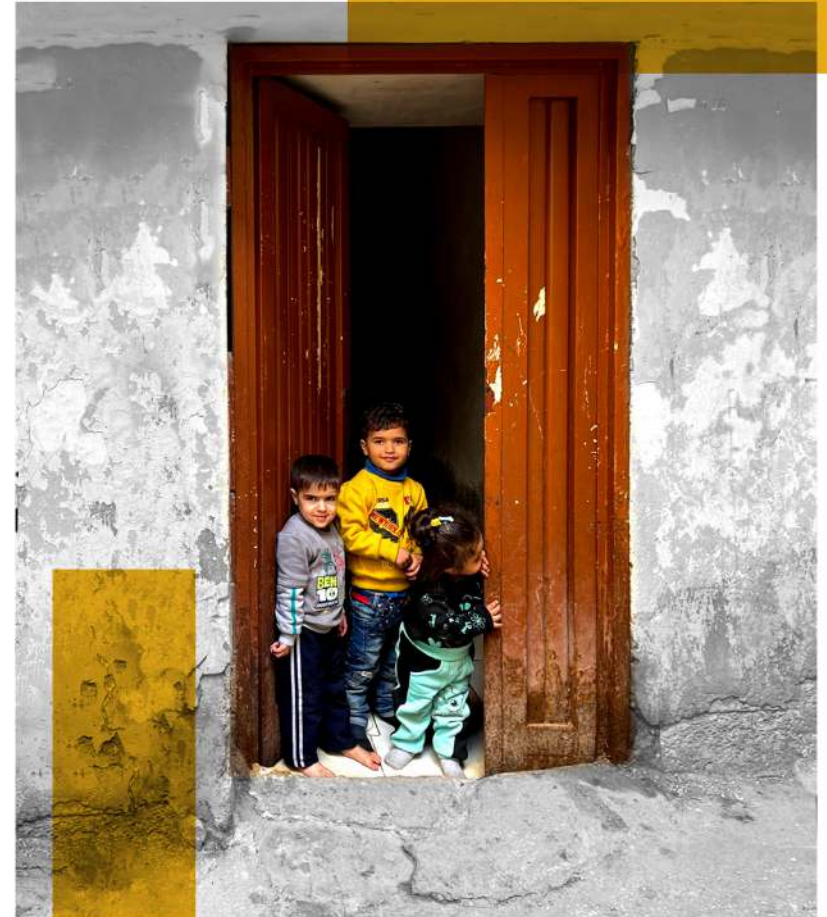
Country	LEB	SYR	JOR	Total
Diakonia income / country	\$ 1,074,401.85	\$ 3,247,813.04	\$ 186,302.79	\$ 4,508,517.68
%	24%	72%	4%	100%

CHART OF FUNDS ALLOCATION BY COUNTRY AND BY SECTOR



PROGRAM SPENDING BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR





2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Member of
actalliance



THE CHALLENGE GOES ON AND SO THE RESPONSE

For the third year, I am invited to introduce the annual report of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, DSPR, as Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, the mother organization. Although I do not physically live among this department's family, or families, as they are five, but I follow-up with most of them, on a regular basis, their experience, their worries and their aspirations.

The department is the oldest among MECC's, as we always remind it, and it accumulated, throughout several decades of service, a substantial and commendable amount of know-how and networking power which is reflected in its reports. This was underlined in my report at the MECC 12th General Assembly, held from 16 to 20 May, 2022, at the Logos Center - Anba Bishoy Monastery at Wadi Al Natrun. This assembly was attended by the Executive Secretary of the department, Dr. Bernard Sabella and several church leadership from Palestine. I need to underline, at this level, the high-quality cooperation between MECC head office in Beirut and the DSPR central office in Jerusalem. The interaction is improving, first, due to the good will of the concerned persons, and second, due to the establishment of the online working facilities and culture. The being there feeling is so advanced between Beirut and different parts of the occupied land, namely Jerusalem.

After the assembly, and the election of a new Executive Committee and Presidium, the MECC Church Leaders were asked to appoint new members of the different committees which make the DSPR governance body. This was accomplished in an exemplary coordination between MECC General Secretariat team and the one of DSPR central office, which is now about to enter a period of renewal at

manmade obstacles which aims are to divide and humiliate our people in the Antiochian Levant.

At this level, we need to congratulate the DSPR family, committees and teams, for their capacity to perform their duties and accomplish their tasks under very difficult conditions. Moreover, the report shows to what extent these units - and subunits of the MECC, were able to interact properly with their respective environments and provide the adequate responses to the continuously emerging needs. To conclude my word, I can only ask the "people" of DSPR to carry-on their service and witness on the land where the Savior was incarnated and accomplished His mission on earth by crucifixion, after which comes resurrection.

PROF. MICHEL ABS

Secretary General MECC

SERVICE TO PALESTINIANS

ABOUT US

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees “DSPR” of the Middle East Council of Churches “MECC” started with the spirited initiative of religious priests and deacons in 1949 who witnessed firsthand the tragedies that befell the Palestinian refugees following the 1948 War. Together with local public figures and dignitaries they started the Area Committees in the West Bank and East Bank of Jordan which spread to include the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and Galilee. In 1974, the MECC was established since then, DSPR has been a department under the umbrella of MECC with autonomous financial and programmatic arrangements with adherence to the administration of MECC as the one comprehensive organization.

MISSION

DSPR MECC is an Ecumenical Church Related Organization in the Middle East Region. It reflects the Christian core values in its Witness and Diakonia in partnership with local and global actors, to foster and advance socio-economic conditions of Palestinians and the marginalized through active contribution to improve living conditions, though providing health, education, environmental, economic, social, and humanitarian programs with the realization of basic human right.

VISION

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches vision is of an empowered pluralist

society which guarantees equal opportunities for all its members and vulnerable communities based on the ideals of justice, equality of rights, opportunities, and freedom.





2022 was a year of continuing challenges facing Palestinian refugees and the marginalized across our region. The political impasse in Palestine saw at the end of the year the election of a far-right government in Israel dimming further the prospects of peace and stability with economic and social woes extending from besieged Gaza to settler violence in the West Bank. In Israel itself the continuing marginalization of the national Arab Palestinian community and attempts at further side-lining it had contributed to feelings of despondency, particularly among youth. In Jordan, the exacerbating costs of hosting of refugees from Syria and neighbouring countries has added to economic and social pressures on the host communities and taxed the costs for education, welfare, health and other vital services. In Lebanon, the collapse of the Lebanese pound and the havoc accompanying political indecision has affected all and in particular the already marginalized Palestinians in the refugee camps. The war in Ukraine, the spiraling costs of living across all countries of the region beside the inflation that had caused hardships practically everywhere highlighted the need for the work of our department, especially with the afflicted Palestinian refugees and communities.

Faced with these vicissitudes that had hit our region and world, DSPR MECC continued with its work, thanks to the partnerships that tie us to faith-based organizations worldwide and also to the unity of our department which saw continuing support across Area Committees and Central Office. We met via Zoom regularly and came out with decisions and recommendations to enable us to go on with our work. I have had opportunities to be at the Central Office and to carry out reviews on strategy, finances, internal regulations and program reporting and monitoring together with the team and onward to the review of our Central Committee. In December the new Central Committee came together and gave me the trust once again to go on with the tasks of Chairmanship of the Central Committee. I thank particularly those members who had served DSPR for so many years and ended their terms of voluntary service. There were new members across the different Area Committees and in the Central Committee,

this is heartening as it highlights that our work will continue, irrespective of change of membership. The challenges are there and amidst them, the devastating earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria in February of this year reminds us that the calamities caused by environmental factors and the human-caused disasters throughout our region make it imperative that we go on with our work as an ecumenical faith-based organization intent to put our togetherness in faith to the service of the rights-holders, especially Palestinian refugees and communities in need, in the different areas where we serve.

I take this opportunity to thank our trusted partners for their continuing support and to thank the exiting and the new members of the Area Committees and Central Committee, the Executive Directors and the Staff and to assure all that the work of DSPR/MECC will continue despite the various hurdles and impediments. I look forward to work with all for the benefit of our rights holders and in identification with their needs and aspirations for dignity and a better and hopeful future.

DR. AUDEH QUAWAS

Chairperson
Central Committee * Amman



MOHAMMAD IS PLAYING WITH HIS FRIENDS IN THE MADABA CAMP IN JORDAN



RANA AND HER NEWFOUND FRIENDS ARE COMPLETING THEIR TRAINING AS BEAUTICIANS AND HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE IN LEBANON



WE BELIEVE IN OUR WORK, AND WE BELIEVE IN THE PARTNERSHIPS THAT HAVE BONDED US TO CHURCH BASED ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE GLOBE FOR DECADES.



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The question of the unity of DSPR MECC has once again been posed by some of our partners, as these opted to bilateral agreements with the Areas over the previously general contributions that went to the Central Office with decisions on how to use the funds remaining a prerogative of the Central Committee with implementation by Central Office. The Central Office team continued with its outreaching work to all Areas of DSPR MECC whether in Finance, Program Management, Communication and Administrative Assistance. The shift in our partner contributions together with other factors has caused financial constraints on Central Office running budget. Alerted to this, some partners and DSPR colleagues from all areas graciously offered support during the year for Central Office to overcome the constraint.

We look ahead to strengthening the partnership links during 2023 and beyond. The *raison d'être* of DSPR MECC has gained added relevance as transformations and developments both in civil societies across the region and the political, social and economic impasse call on us for faith based accompaniment of our societies and in particular the Palestinian refugees and the marginalized. With our thanks and appreciation for your continued support.

DR. BERNARD SABELLA

Executive Secretary
Central Office * Jerusalem



PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

We focus our health services in the refugee camps in Gaza and Jordan. In Gaza, the fragility of the health system due to the long-standing closure and blockade is a real obstacle, as clinical capacity is weak, especially for cases requiring intensive treatment. In Jordan, health care is especially a major problem in the refugee camps, which have been populated by Palestinians for decades, but are becoming problem areas also in coexistence due to the many new arrivals from Syria, and where drug use and crime are on the rise due to dwindling prospects for the future. In Gaza and Jordan, for example, psychological trauma, poverty and environmental degradation have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the inhabitants; many, including children, suffer from anxiety, stress and depression.

The theme for October 2022 was “Breast Cancer Awareness”. In Gaza, as DSPR NECC, we also themed this month on Breast Cancer Awareness and launched a campaign. Our aim is to give every woman access to screening and the support she needs at the DSPR NECC health clinics. Breast cancer awareness sessions are held at the clinics. Women are encouraged to examine themselves and pay attention to the signs in their bodies. Many avoid talking to anyone about it or seeking any treatment because it can affect their marital status, or they fear being abandoned by their husbands or affecting their daughters’ marriage prospects. We try to counteract this negative image through our awareness-raising work in Gaza. And in Jordan specifically in the Ashrafia region we have opened a new Community Centre, called “Olive Tree House”, with the presence of the association’s management and representatives from the UK-partners Mosaic for the Middle East, priests and local community. It is the poorest in Eastern Amman, where Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, and others live in extremely poor conditions. Services include health, vocational training, non-formal education, trauma healing,

psychosocial support, and direct assistance. Education, trauma healing, psychosocial support, and direct assistance. In our centers in Lebanon teachers participated in workshops to learn new techniques to better guide children’s mental growth and provide psychosocial support where needed. This has proved very useful in their ability to identify children suffering from learning difficulties or psychological problems. In the Sabra Center we work with psychologists, health specialists and speech therapists who are regular visitors to our center to provide help to children in need. A special room in each center is reserved, which ensures confidentiality, privacy, emotional and physical safety of the child. Often the parents need guidance as well. Around 30 children received help this year with speech difficulties, communication abilities, behavioral problems, or slow learning abilities. Those who needed more care were referred for further care.



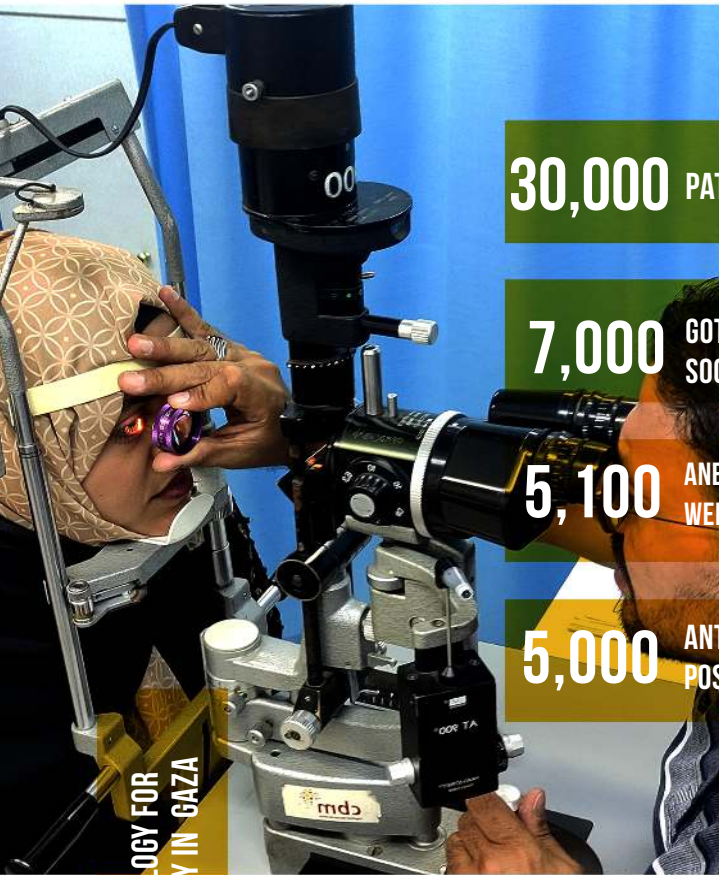
FATMA, A TWO YEAR OLD GIRL SUFFERING FROM ANAEMIA, IS EXAMINED AT DSPR'S HEALTH CENTER IN GAZA



SAHAR IS NO LONGER MALNOURISHED

Sahar is a 15-month-old girl who lives with her four siblings, her parents and her grandmother in a small house in the Turkoman neighborhood in Shajaia in Gaza. The house is humid, not well-ventilated, and the walls are unpainted and full of cracks where insects live, it is located in a crowded area full of rubbish and sewage, especially in winter. The community's water supply is not safe for human use. Sahar's parents are university graduates, but like other university graduates in Gaza, they have not found work since graduation. The psychological state of the family is not good. Unemployment, poverty and lack of resources have a negative impact on the family's mental health. As social contacts and exchange of visits cost money, the family prefers to spend the limited resources available on the essential needs of the family. Therefore, the family tends not to leave the house very often.

Sahar's mother visited the clinic at DSPR NECC during her first pregnancy a few years ago. The clinic was recommended to her by her parents and in-laws because it is a place used by the different generations of her extended family. When Sahar's mother was pregnant with her, she received antenatal care and prenatal care at the clinic. In September 2022, the mother attended Sahar's routine antenatal check-ups. The screening revealed that the child was malnourished and moderately anemic. Sahar was enrolled in the



30,000 PATIENTS IN 5 CLINICS

7,000 GOT PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

5,100 ANEMIC CHILDREN WERE TREATED

5,000 ANTEATAL & POSTNATAL CARE

NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR OPHTHALMOLOGY IN GAZA

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, DISPLACED GROUPS, AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES LIVE HEALTHY LIVES



anemia and malnutrition treatment Programme and her diet was discussed with her mother. The team noticed that Sahar's mother was not sufficiently informed about which foods were rich in nutrients and affordable at the same time.

Three months later, the mother had a follow-up visit at the clinic with her child. Sahar is no longer underweight and her hemoglobin level has become normal. Further, the clinic team is giving her a prophylactic iron dose for three more months and regular follow-up visits are continuing. Sahar's family is happy that her health had improved and she expresses appreciation to the work done. Sahar is now more resistant to illness; her cognitive skills will improve and her mother feels more confident with her development onwards.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The education of young people is particularly close to our hearts. They should have a hope for the future. That is why one of the pillars of our program is the vocational training centers in Gaza and Lebanon. Our focus at the centers is on providing youngsters with skills and trades that would come handy for their future. Besides our centers also offer cultural nourishment as music, art, drawing and painting classes are held in addition to sports and extracurricular activities such as football and basketball teams.

In Jordan, DSPR NECC launched "the Graduation out of Poverty project" in Gaza Refugee Camp, identifying 50 Palestinian and Syrian refugee households living in extreme poverty through a participatory approach based on a multidimensional poverty assessment and underlying vulnerabilities. This project which is of a pioneering nature is part of overall focus on women economic empowerment. Courses to start own business are offered and financial support for women who qualify is offered. These courses in the Madaba and Jerash refugee

camp attract women intent to advance their own economic prospects.

Women cooperatives in the West Bank supported by DSPR-ICC, focuses on collective participation of women for their economic welfare and that of their families and community. The work with West Bank women cooperatives highlights new economic opportunities and initiatives aimed at financial resilience of women and their households.

DSPR JCC in Lebanon hold a variety of training courses and workshops for women and youngsters to enable them to feel confident about themselves in a challenging world. In particular, given the dire situation of Palestinian refugees, the courses offered by JCC become value-added as graduates venture into opening their own businesses or find employment opportunities in the difficult economic situation.

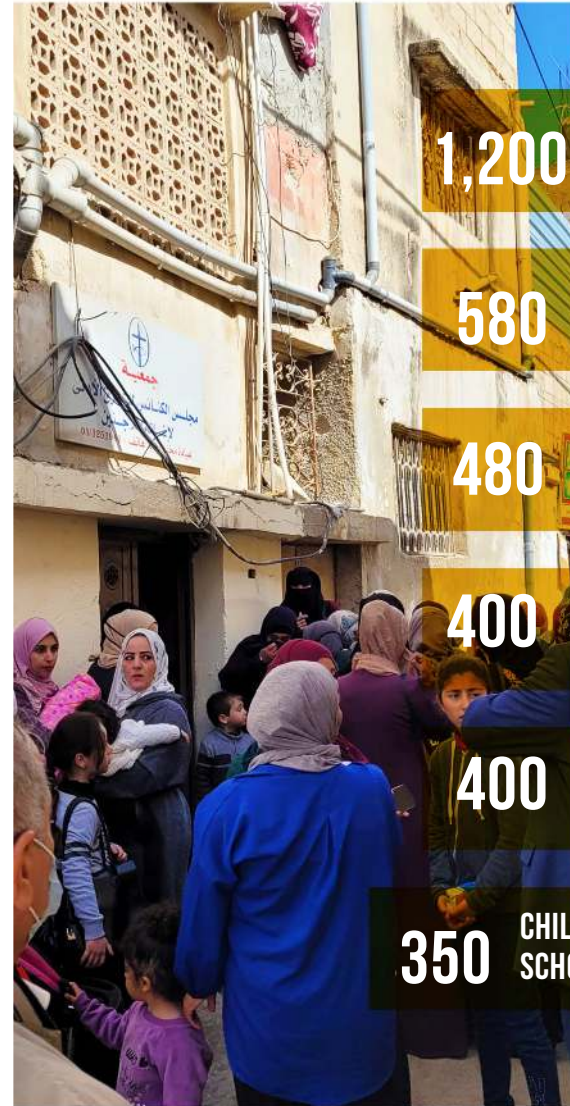
DSPR ICCI also focused on "My Business" for Nazareth and Galilee women between the ages of 18 to 50 years. For this purpose, the women receive training in the law for self-employment in Israel, on banking and insurance matters as well as on the tax system and its requirements. This process aims at building self-confidence of women and to start them on the road of developing their own businesses. Strengths and talents of participants are tapped as these help them assert their contributions to their families and communities.

The environment and its effects on sustainable agriculture is also a concern of DSPR ICC West Bank. The Ras Attieh village, in the North West of the West Bank, was provided with an efficient supply of water for irrigating their crops. Installation of transmission pipes ensures sufficient and cost-effective supply of water that benefits 400 farmer families. Besides overall agricultural activity increases with extending crop rotations, enhancing agroforestry and upgrading agricultural lands that had sat idle for long. A small but important contribution to decrease the GHG effect and global warming.

FATMA LEARNS SO MANY NEW THINGS FOR HER BUSINESS AT THE CENTER IN MADABA CAMP IN JORDAN



PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS SUSTAIN THEMSELVES ECONOMICALLY.



1,200 WOMEN IN WOMEN COOPERATIVES

580 YOUNG PEOPLE IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

480 HIGH SCHOOL SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS

400 CHILDREN GOT HOMEWORK SUPPORT

400 FARMERS BENEFITED FROM NEW WATER PIPES

350 CHILDREN IN PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS



AHMAD LEARNED TO BELIEVE IN HIMSELF

Ahmad is an 11-year-old Syrian boy who had never been to school. He enrolled in the Sabra Center's "Children on the Move" program in October 2022. This is a program for children who have dropped out of school or who have never been to school. His teachers say that he never showed any interest in learning and had great difficulty concentrating, especially if he is part of a group project. Ahmad, very often, got frustrated and behaved badly refusing to read or write what the teacher asked of him, especially if it were in front of the class. His behavior was the same whether it was in the Arabic or English class. He just refused to cooperate and took upon himself to become the class clown. This made him the center of attraction in the class and seemed to make him happy.



In 2022, Annika Bucksch, a young German university graduate who studied "Education for Children with Learning Problems" came to DSPR JCC as a volunteer. She joined the Sabra Center where she chose to work with the "Children on the Move" program. She immediately noticed Ahmad and decided to give him special attention. She asked to take him, when possible, out of his regular class and work with him on what the teacher wanted him to learn. Ahmad took a liking to Annika and although reluctant in the

beginning, began to responding to her slowly. She helped him persevere in his efforts to learn the letters of both languages and work on reading them in sentences. He began to calm down in his class, respond to his teachers and become cooperative. Annika, who is studying Arabic, sits with Ahmad whenever they have some free time and practice together on Arabic words and short sentences.

By giving Ahmad time and a lot of patience, Annika has encouraged Ahmad not to give up but to believe in himself and his abilities. This has boosted his self-confidence, and he is now participating with his class. The teachers are very happy with the great improvement that he has achieved and he is now perceived as a motivated good student.

EMPOWERMENT TOWARDS CHANGE

In Galilee, we focus particularly on interfaith and intercultural dialogue, which is so important for a better future. Another no less important priority is the empowerment of students and teachers and marginalized groups, of which there are many in Galilee. One example is our program "The girls of our country" in Acre. Girls between the ages of 12 and 22 find a place of refuge in our center. They are empowered and monitored there. These girls have often dropped out of school, are socially excluded, and thus have no opportunity to complete an education or study and lead a life in dignity.

To promote and strengthen the youth in Galilee, young people in Arab Christian communities in Galilee are sensitized to the values of openness to others while cherishing one's faith. Through the "Community Participation of Youth" program, sixty young participants attended weekly meetings where topics such as peace, acceptance of

the other, dialogue between religions, cultures and different nationalities were taught by clergy and professionals. The program was rounded off by visits to religious places and institutions working for social change and interreligious dialogue. We engaged in the past, and we hope to continue when circumstances allow, in exchanges between students of an Arab public school and a Jewish school on issues of learning about the other, peace and prospects for a future of openness and shared citizenship.

At the DSPR Jordan center in Talbieh Camp, Palestinian and Syrian women learn and work together. For many women, the center is a second home where they feel comfortable and safe. There are many problems with violence in the Talbieh camp. Hopelessness, coupled with heavy drug use, is an emerging problem in recent years that our many programs seek to address. Accepting the challenge of change necessitates providing skills and means to overcome the environmental and social impediments, including violence and aggressive behavior at the community and family levels.

MARIA AND HER FELLOW WOMEN CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE ECONOMIC BUSINESS COURSE IN WHICH THEY SET UP THEIR OWN BUSINESSES WITH THE HELP OF DSPR ICC.



YOUTH CONFERENCE IN NAZARETH OCTOBER 2022

EMBRACING COMMUNITIES ARE EMPOWERED: TO CARE FOR THE NEEDS AND PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF THEIR MEMBERS; TO BUILD CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE OUT OF THE ENERGY CREATED BY UNCERTAINTY AND CONFLICT.



120 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTERFAITH DIALOG

66 GIRLS IN PARTICIPATE IN A CENTER FOR VULNERABLE GIRLS

20 EDUCATORS TRAINED IN FACILITATING INTERFAITH TOPICS



WATER FOR ZAKI IN THE WESTBANK

Abu Yousef is a father of seven children in his 50s and lives with his family in the village of Al-Daba'a in the northern part of the West Bank just a few kilometers away from the 1949 armistice agreement line. Zaki is a farmer and works mainly in agriculture, sometimes helping out in construction to earn a little extra money to provide for the basic needs of his large family. He runs the family farm with 90 guava trees, 20 olive trees and some citrus trees. In the past, before the construction of the cooperative's water well, Zaki, like most farmers in the area, had to buy water for irrigation from private wells at a cost of NIS 2.5 per cubic meter. Two years ago, when the society dug the well, water for irrigation was made available at lower prices, but Zaki still had to buy additional quantities of water at a high cost because his farm is at the end of the pipeline. With the installation of water meters on the main pipeline, the pressure in the pipeline became low and prevented the farmers who own lands at the end of the pipeline in the villages of Al Daba'a, Ras Tireh and Jaloud, from regularly receiving adequate amounts of water.

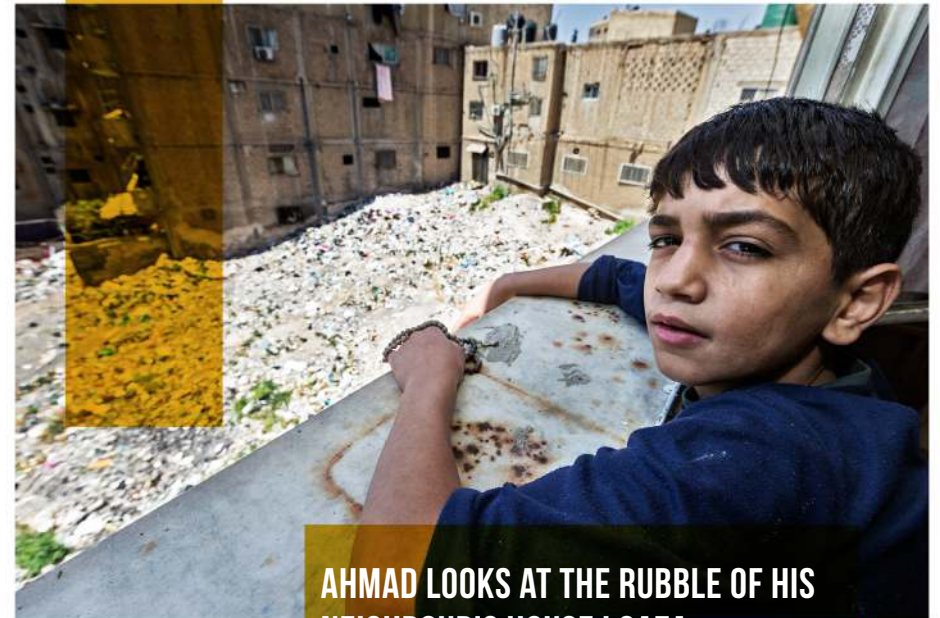


"After the construction of the company's well, I was able to buy water at a lower price (NIS 1.6 per cubic meter), which saved me about 36% of the cost, but the water did not reach my farm in sufficient quantities, so I had to continue buying water from private wells at a high cost, storing it in my own collection well and then pumping it for irrigation.

The additional cost of pumping is about NIS 0.4 per cubic meter per month."

DSPR Jerusalem and West Bank, ICC together with other partners, has had new water pipes laid. The water now flows continuously into the Wadi Alrasha reservoir, from which the water is pumped and distributed via the distribution pipeline to all agricultural land, including those at the end of the pipeline – the villages of Al Daba'a, Ras Tireh and Jaloud - in an appropriate, sufficient and cost-effective manner. Zaki said, "After this project, sufficient water is now available to me and all farmers at a good price, and I do not have to buy, collect and pump water from private wells, which saves me the cost of pumping. Finally, I would like to thank the International Christian Committee for this project and the Ras Atiya Cooperative Society for their efforts."

REFUGEES HAVE A SUSTAINED ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ACROSS MULTIPLE RESPONSE SECTORS AND PROTECTION SERVICES



AHMAD LOOKS AT THE RUBBLE OF HIS NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE IN GAZA



DSPR in the different Areas offer small business and education loans. The targeted groups are university students, women intent on starting their own business, small businesses in need of developing their business as well as enterprising young people, some of whom have graduated from our own vocational training centers, who aspire to have their own business.

EMERGENCY AND PROTECTION

Direct humanitarian aid remains an important part of our work here as our region faces chronic crisis situation. The economic situation in Gaza sees most households living below the poverty line. Cash relief to some of the hard hit families is enabled through ACT Alliance Appeals. In Gaza, these are mainly families with children who are malnourished, suffering from anemia and children who are disabled. We have also continued the emergency Programme for children of school age in Gaza, for children who are particularly affected by the ongoing conflict situation in Gaza some of whom have lost schoolmates and question the purpose of life.

Lebanon has been hard hit by economic, political and social paralysis. The impact on most families has been dramatic as many of middle-class families ended up below the poverty line. The rapid devaluation of the Lebanese pound to the US Dollar and other currencies had put undue pressure on organizations, like JCC, as well as the many families and communities that look for ways to cope. ACT Alliance appeals which helped particularly after the Beirut Port huge explosion are still in need in the paralyzed country, once claimed as the Switzerland of the Middle East.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2022

PROGRAM EXPENSES 2022



	USD
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	572.608
DSPR Gaza	346.015
DSPR Jordan	102.824
DSPR Lebanon	123.769
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT	1.156.652
DSPR Gaza	19.872
DSPR West Bank	148.195
DSPR Jordan	390.403
DSPR Lebanon	391.481
DSPR Nazareth	206.701
HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY	1.089.524
DSPR Gaza	976.017
DSPR Jordan	113.507
ADVOCACY / CAPACITY BUILDING	24.058
DSPR Nazareth	24.058
SPECIAL PROJECTS / EMERGENCY	985.133
DSPR Gaza	656.301
DSPR Jordan	161.315
DSPR Lebanon	145.417
DSPR West Bank	22.100
AC'S ADMINISTRATIVE COST	809.671
DSPR Gaza	166.663
DSPR West Bank	108.501
DSPR Jordan	27.806
DSPR Lebanon	71.522
DSPR Nazareth	88.042
DSPR West Bank Ecumenical Program Operational	347.137
GENERAL & ADMIN. CENTRAL OFFICE / ACT ICF	236.498
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	4.874.144



WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR PARTNERS

DSPR IS A DEPARTMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

ACT ALLIANCE
ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN
ACT FOR PEACE AUSTRALIA
AMOS TRUST
BREAD FOR THE WORLD
CARITAS FRANCE (SECOURS – CATHOLIQUE)
CNEWA PMP
CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE - NEW ZEELAND
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
DAN CHURCH AID
DIAKONIE KATASTROPHENHILFE
EDUKANS
EMBRACE THE MIDDLE EAST
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
FINISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION (FELM)
GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES
GERMAN EMBASSY - JORDAN
GLOBAL MINISTRIES - UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN
CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS (IMC)
KAIROS CANADA
KERK IN ACTIE
LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF
MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (MCC)
MINISTRY OF HEALTH PALESTINE
NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
PORTICUS FOUNDATION
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CANADA
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA
UMCOR
UNICEF
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA KAIROS
UNITED PALESTINIAN APPEAL (UPA)
WELFARE ASSOCIATION
WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES



**WE BELIEVE IN STRONG PARTNERSHIP, BECAUSE
TOGETHER WE ARE BETTER.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND YOUR FRIENDSHIP.**

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

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Chairperson - Central Committee
Member at Large
(Greek Orthodox)

MR FARAH GERAISY

Delegate - Nazareth ICCI
(Greek Orthodox)

MR GHASSAN MUSTAKLEM

Alternate - Member at Large
(Greek Orthodox)

MR ADEL NASSER

Alternate - Nazareth ICCI
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Member at Large
(Armenian Orthodox)

REV DR FADI DIAB

Alternate - Gaza NECCRW
(Greek Orthodox)

MR IBRAHIM MALEHA

Alternate - Member at Large
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Alternate - Jordan NECCRW
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(Roman Catholic)

MS NINA FARAH

Delegate - Lebanon JCC
(Greek Orthodox)

BISHOP IBRAHIM AZAR

Member at Large
(Lutheran)

MR BASSEM THABET

Delegate - Jerusalem & Westbank ICCI
(Lutheran)

REV DR KHALID FREIJ

Alternate - Member at Large
(Anglican)



SANA WITH HER MOTHER IN THE HEALTH CLINIC IN GAZA



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MECC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT



2022 was the year of continuous challenges. The Middle East countries have sunk into many severe crises. The people of the region have witnessed economic, social, health, political and security... difficulties, which were deepening because of international and regional collapses and conflicts. But in a region where Christ was born, lived, died and Resurrected, Christians and people are trying to hold to their land amidst all the struggles. Living in the land of the Cradle and Salvation is a Grace from God, that's why hope should not be lost, especially that we believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

Hence, the Churches of the Middle East which are an important part of these societies had an essential role in supporting its children, helping them overcome all the challenges through strengthening their faith and sorrowing hope in their hearts. From its end, the Middle East Council of Churches extended its efforts to build bridges and be one oasis that brings together the voice of the Churches, each one with its own language and culture.

Believing that Communication is a bridge between Christian fellowship, and have an essential mission in creating an environment of peace and solidarity, the MECC Communication and Public Relations Department dedicated the MECC platforms to raise the voice of the Middle Eastern Churches, promote the Ecumenical Spirit, and enhance advocacy on many humanitarian and social issues.



1- Ongoing Missions

During 2022, the MECC Communication and Public Relations Department pursued the implementation of its media strategy in order to promote the MECC mission and present an Ecumenical platform which reflects the activities and news of the Middle Eastern Churches.

MECC's Website:

60 000 visitors

13 000 from the year before

MECC's Social Media Platforms:

The MECC Facebook Page reached:

290,529 accounts

26,305 followers

The MECC Instagram Page has 650 followers and reached 7,545 accounts

The MECC Twitter Profile has 1,197 followers

Noting that this engagement level increase on social media is organic.

Content:

The department prepared and published many types of materials:

- The MECC Secretary General's weekly messages
- News covering the MECC General Secretariat and Department's activities
- Statements, articles, interviews
- Middle East Socio Economic and Coronavirus reports
- News covering the activities of the Middle Eastern Churches.
- Daily Prayers, International Days

The content centered around the MECC mission, and other topics related too Ecumenism, religious subjects and events, advocacy and humanitarian themes... in addition to journalistic materials and videos. The materials were published in Arabic and English, as well as in Spanish, on the MECC's website

and social media platforms which were almost daily updated and also edited for special programs and projects.

The department also issued the monthly Ecumenical Calendar, which includes Ecclesiastical and Liturgical feasts of different Church families in the region as well specific occasions identified by the United Nations, which are related to the MECC identity and its mission and vision such as the international day of refugees and others.

MECC Posts Per Day:

3 to 4 posts a day

Church News Posts Per Day:

5 to 7 posts a day

MECC Mass Mails:

More than 120 mass mails in Arabic and English were sent in one year to the MECC contacts.

These mass mails included the Momentum MECC weekly newsletter, statements, news, announcements, invitations, materials and reports related to the MECC 12th General Assembly...

Momentum the MECC Weekly Newsletter

100 Momentum

50 per language



MECC - The Middle East Council of Churches

24K likes • 27K followers



Manage Edit

Add to story



MECC Mass Mails:

More than 120 mass mails in Arabic and English were sent in one year to the MECC contacts.

These mass mails included the Momentum MECC weekly newsletter, statements, news, announcements, invitations, materials and reports related to the MECC 12th General Assembly...

Momentum the MECC Weekly Newsletter

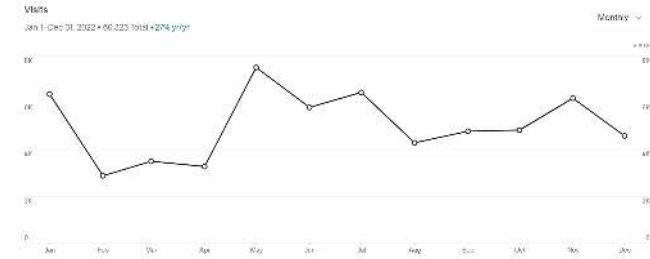
100 Momentum
50 per language

The Communication team launched 100 Momentum issues, 50 per language (Arabic and English); aiming at reflecting the MECC mission, vision and activities, in addition to the updates of the Middle Eastern Churches, in an ecumenical spirit in order to bridge distances and build bridges.

Noting that the MECC Communication contact lists includes more than 1000 contacts and subscribers and each Momentum issue is published on MECC website and social media platforms.



MECC's Website 2022 - Analytics



Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
6,358	2,869	3,475	3,254	7,506	5,784	6,440	4,274	4,777	4,827	6,197	4,562

Top 10 Countries – International and Middle Eastern

- Lebanon: 15,549
- United States: 8,093
- Egypt: 6,111
- Syria: 5,455
- Germany: 2,178
- Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: 2,161
- Canada: 1,792
- Iraq: 1,404
- France: 1,264
- United Kingdom: 1,066

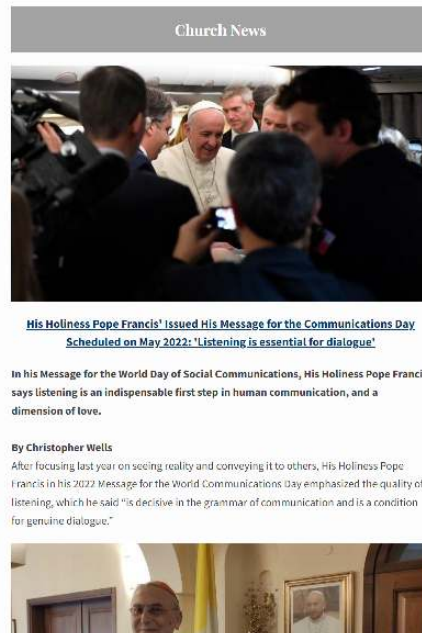
2- Achievements on Various Occasions

“Week of Prayer for Christian Unity”

- MECC chose and prepared the theme and texts of the 2022 booklet to all the world, this is in addition to its translation into Arabic as every year. Thus, the MECC Communication and Public Relations Department worked on the publication of the booklet, as well as the branding and media tools of the Week of Prayer, its booklet and daily Prayers.

- The team also covered via news materials the activities of the “Week of Prayer” 2022 in the Middle East, and prepared many special articles and content related to this occasion.

- MECC prepared and produced special TV episodes with Télé Lumière and Noursat to shed light on various fields and parts of this week, and prepared TV and radio interviews on many local and religious media institutions.





“The MECC 12th General Assembly”

The Assembly was held with the support of the Evangelical Church in Egypt, and with the generous hospitality of the Coptic Orthodox Church headed by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, between 16 and 20 May 2022, at the Logos Papal Center in Wadi El Natrun in Egypt, under the theme of “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid” (Matthew 14: 27).

- The Communication Department worked for the publications, branding and media tools related to the 12th General Assembly.
- The team also worked on the Assembly’s media coverage, Assembly’s page on the website, preparing and publishing many types of materials such as materials from the archive related to the previous Assemblies, and new materials related to the 12th Assembly’s activities such as texts, statements, news, articles, photos, videos and interviews with Patriarchs and Heads of Churches...
- The team sent daily Assembly’s newsletter issues during the Assembly’s days.
- The communication team worked on the field in Egypt with a huge cooperation and support of the Coptic Orthodox Church and its affiliated Media Center C.O.C who consecrated all its teams and equipment for the Assembly’s media coverage and work.
- The Communication Department prepared and produced 3 documentaries on the occasion of the MECC 12th General Assembly:
 - The Middle East Council of Churches... 50 years of Continuous Witness
 - “From Egypt I Called My Son” A Documentary About the Coptic Church
 - A Story of Success

- Given the importance of the media’s role in shedding the light on Christian reality in the East and serving mankind, the General Assembly included in its activities a workshop on Christian Media in the Middle East, presented by the MECC Communication and Public Relations. The workshop was prepared after the Department contacted specialists in the field of Ecclesiastical media from different Ecclesiastical families and countries in the Middle East. They were asked to form an advisory committee to prepare a working paper to be presented during the workshop.



“Season of Creation”

- The Communication Department prepared the branding and media tools related to the “Season of Creation” and its booklet,
- The team covered via news materials and videos the MECC opening, closing and activities... As well as the prepared special materials and videos for the occasion, such as short videos, interviews videos, articles...
- All materials were published using the created hashtag #SeasonOfCreationME, in addition to #SeasonOfCreation2022 #SeasonOfCreation.
- The team has also worked in cooperation with the international “Season of Creation” movement on creating an Arabic page including the Season’s materials translated by MECC into Arabic.

Other events:

The MECC Communication covered many important events through special materials (articles, interviews and videos), such as the 2nd anniversary of the Beirut Port Blast, and COP27 Climate Summit held in Sharm El Sheikh in coordination with the ACT Alliance Communication Department...

As well as, the MECC Communication Department participated in the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches which was held in Karlsruhe, Germany, and prepared many special articles covering the Assembly and interviews with participants in the Assembly.



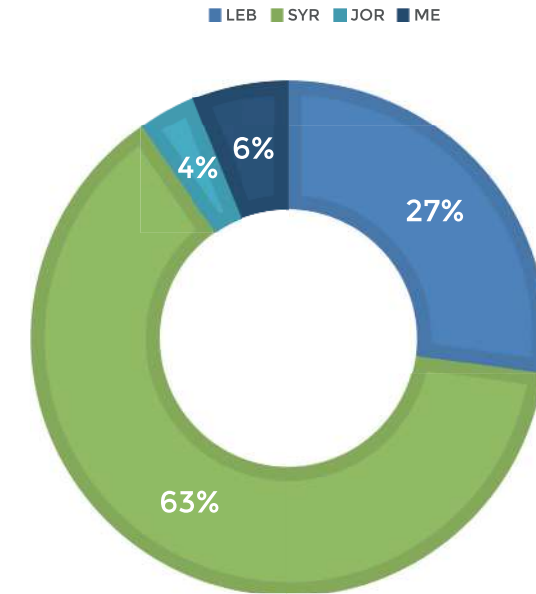
TV and Radio: Episodes and Interviews

The department coordinated with religious and secular television stations to spread the MECC message and highlight many different occasions such as the “Week of Prayer”, the “MECC 12th General Assembly”, the “Season of Creation”... and secured specialized guests to host them in its programs, including Noursat, SAT 7, Suboru TV, the Egyptian Coptic ME Sat, the Lebanese MTV... Let us not forget the coordination for the same purpose with more than 10 radio stations and many news websites and news agencies.

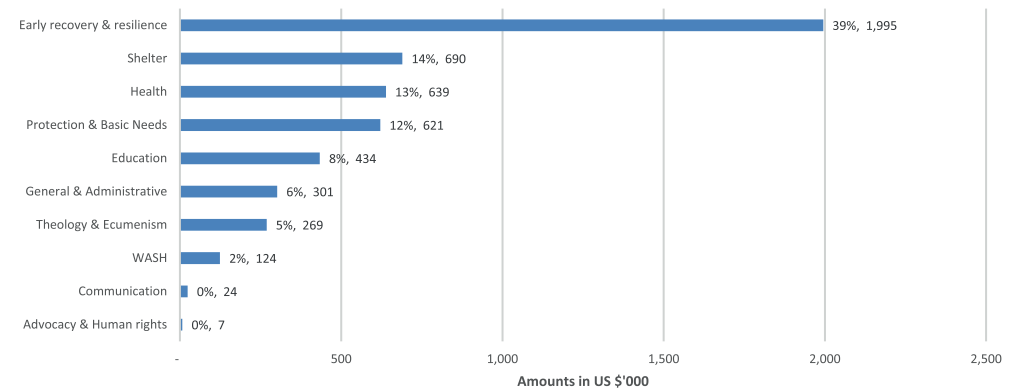


FINANCE DEPARTMENT

SPENDING BREAKDOWN BY COUNTRY - 2022

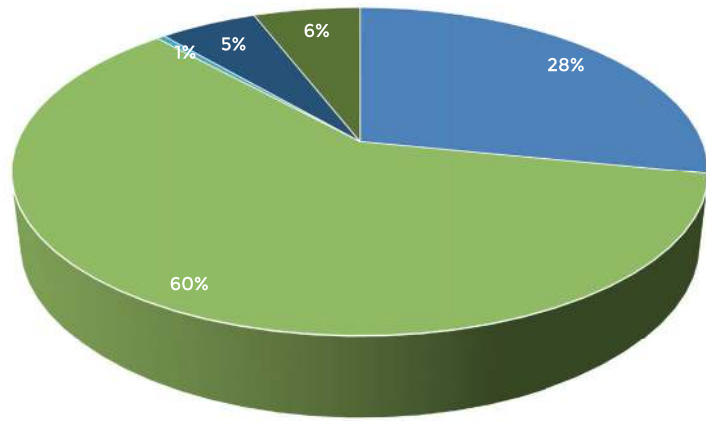


PROGRAM SPENDING BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR



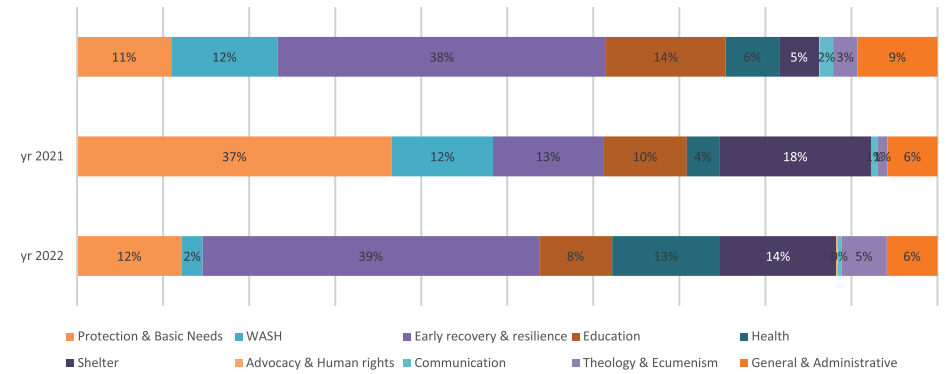


MECC 2022 SPENDING BREAKDOWN

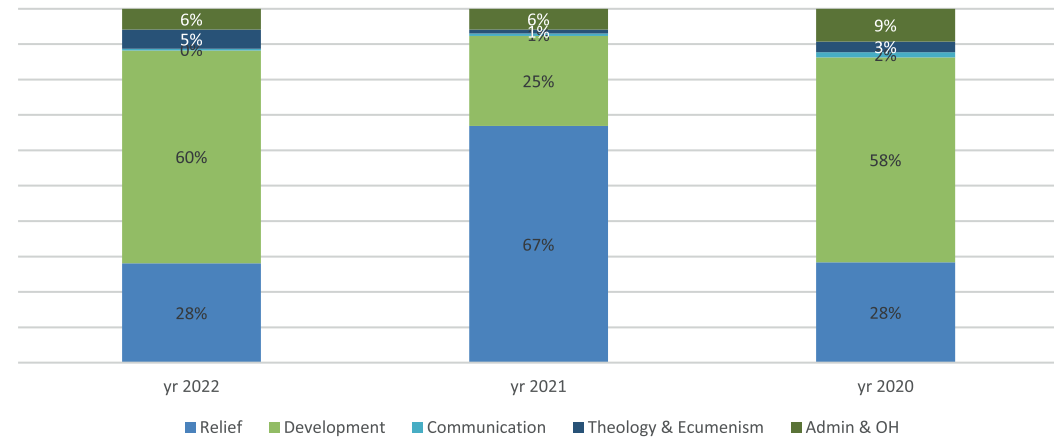


■ Relief ■ Development ■ Communication ■ Theology & Ecumenism ■ Admin & OH

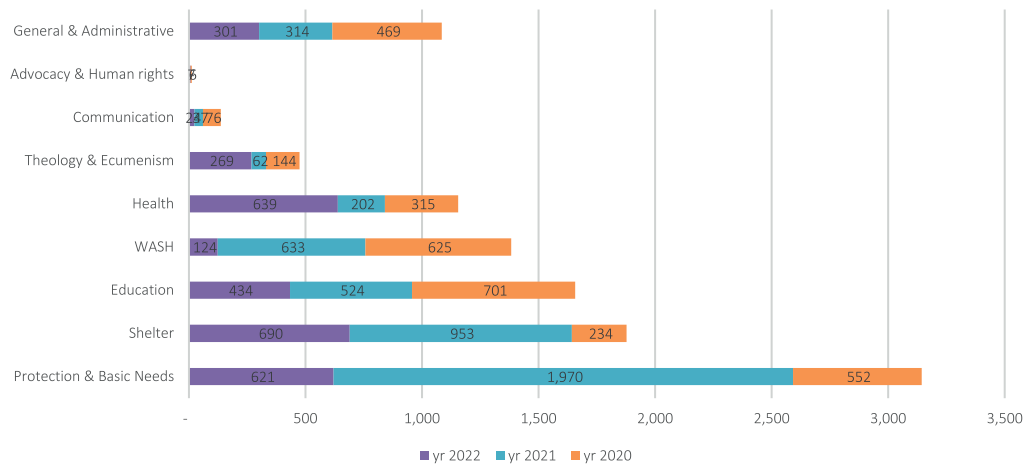
Expenditure composition by Sector (2020 - 2022)



Expenditure composition by category (2020 - 2022)



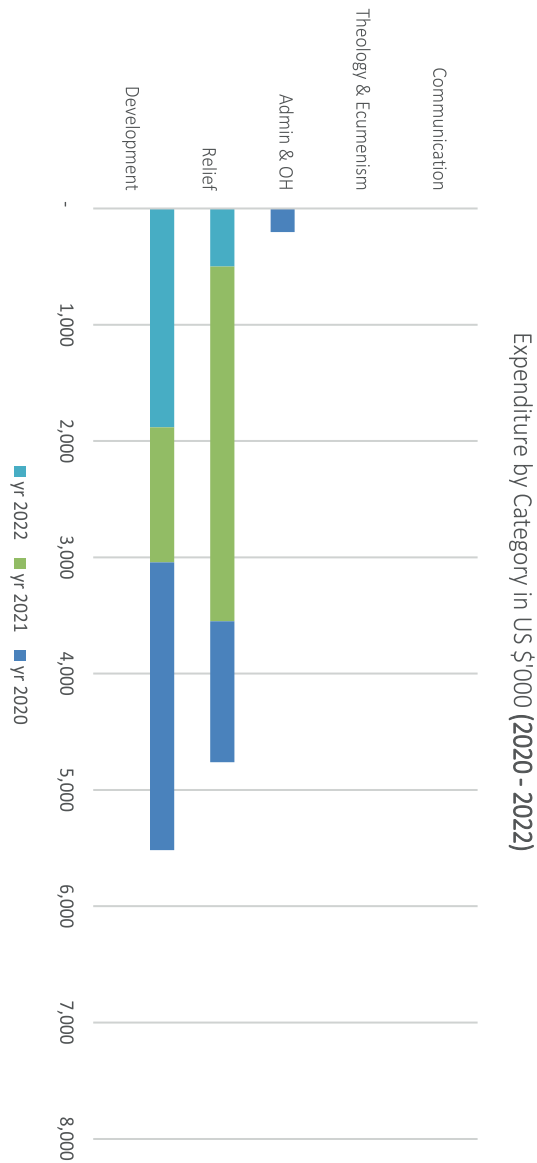
Expenditure by Sector in US \$'000 (2020 - 2022)





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