

Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue

منتدى التنمية والثقافة والحوار

## 2005 Annual Report



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### **Note from FDCD President, Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, and Executive Director, Mr. Samuel Rizk**

The Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue is currently completing its second year as a civil society organization working in Lebanon and the Middle East region. We have had an excellent start to our activities and look forward to more fruitful activities in the years to come. More specifically, 2005 brought with it more new partnerships, new initiatives, and greater impact on the ground as far as programs and projects. FDCD, in keeping its focus on the grassroots, has worked to further empower communities around the region to become more aware of their situation, better able to address the challenges, and more able to be in solidarity within one another. While FDCD has worked to touch the grassroots, it has also played an important facilitation and coordinator role in the region in between civil society organizations on issues relating to conflict resolution and human security, in relation to interfaith intercultural dialogue, and has worked with different media organizations and outlets to highlight issues all of the above issues. We look forward to another challenging, fruitful, and busy year in 2006.

We wish to also acknowledge the continued support and contributions of FDCD partners and friends in the region and around the world. Their commitment and companionship continues to provide a solid foundation for our activities, and we look forward to closer cooperation in the years to come.

# The Urban Rural Mission - Annual Spiritual Retreat: “Mission to the Marginalized: Past, Present and Future”

*“The Urban-Rural Mission, to me, corresponds to such an essential priority – in the Gospel, in our Christian life – that I consider it one of the most important aspects of Christian mission altogether.” – Father Paulo Dall’oglio, Mar Musa monastery.*

Social workers, clergymen, journalists and activists from different organizations and churches came together in February to reflect on the things that bound them together: their shared commitment to the poor and the marginalized, and their common Christian faith.

The organizations in attendance at the Urban-Rural Mission’s annual spiritual retreat included large professional relief programs with budgets in the millions of dollars, and outreaches of local churches with budgets in the thousands. There were wide-ranging programs reaching out to whole societies, and narrowly-focused groups helping the poorest of the poor, such as the street children of Beirut or the *zabalin* – the so-called “garbage people” – of Cairo. The 31 members attended from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine, and came from all the different indigenous branches of Christianity.

The place they gathered was the retreat center of Anafora, in the desert a couple hours away from Cairo. Much of the time the group spent together was devoted to sharing their experiences in helping the poor and marginalized. Members hearing these reports were engaged, discussing examples, seeking clarification, and offering comment, advice, and



occasionally criticism.

Bishop Mousa, the Coptic Orthodox Bishop of Youth, shared his church’s work with the marginalized. He traced the modern history of Coptic Orthodox work among the poor to the example of St. Abraham of Hayoum in the 19th and early 20th centuries. “St. Abraham loved the poor, and he highlighted all over the church that caring for the poor is like caring for the Lord Himself. He said, ‘these are my masters, because they are the brothers of Jesus Christ, my master.’”

Moussa was encouraged to be able to report a trend within the Church of people from rich areas going to work in service to the poor. He highlighted the work of a group of young people who spend four days a month away from their homes in the rich parts of Cairo working with the poorest of the poor in Upper Egypt. “They visit the people and enter their homes, if there is no roof, they start to make a roof - if there is no WC they start to dig one.”



*Bishop Thomas shows his visitors around Anafora*

The group also engaged their mutual issues at a more theoretical level. Dr. Nabil Marcos discussed the definition of poverty. According to him, “the conventional understanding of poverty as a lack of resources requiring philanthropic intervention to mitigate its symptoms, from the privileged to the underprivileged, is not valid any more. Poverty reflects a relation of hegemony by the dominant entities over the underprivileged





*Two Coptic Bishops: Moussa (left) and Thomas*

entities. If the power dynamics do not change, poverty will reproduce itself, at the local, national and international levels. Unless we work for change, we are just beautifying the status quo in our work.”

He also challenged the Christian organizations there to reach out beyond sectarian boundaries. He felt both that Christians need to be involved in secular organizations, and that organizations need to “build alliances and coalitions, branching out, even opening their premises. A meeting like this, why not invite Muslims or seculars? Christianity flourishes in openness and fades away in closed circles, and we are living in closed circles.”

Dr. Joseph Faltas presented a thorough explanation of the theological basis of service to the marginalized. His presentation outlined 3 elements on which respect for the marginalized is based. The anthropological perspective involves seeing other people as all children of God, helping all equally because God loved all people. The Christological aspect holds up the trinity as a model for relationships between people – we can deal with other people as individual persons, respecting their uniqueness but also their connection to others, just as Christians believe that the persons of the Trinity are distinct but also one. Furthermore, Christ’s assumption of a human nature implies that all humans share in a divine nature. Finally, there is the soteriological aspect. Humans were created by God for a special goal: to glorify God and take part in his kingdom. We need to help people not just financially or socially, but to achieve this goal.”

The final major presentation, by Father Paulo Dall’oglio, melded a practical and theological perspective. “I do think that charity is not enough

– that Christ’s love can be better structured than just a pious charity. This is a consequence of using vision and intelligence together with love.”

He concentrated on the transition facing the Middle East, and especially its Christians: “We need to look forward and to be able to conceive a Christian-Islamic cooperation in terms of something like theology of liberation; theology of social justice; theology of solidarity... it is very important to rebuild a social sense – otherwise charity is just one more activity within a liberal capitalistic society – one more means of self promotion, one more way to turn a profit.”

## Community Organizing and Individual Empowerment:

FDCD through URM-Middle East supported the following projects in 2005:

### Coptic Orthodox Youth Bishopric, Cairo

The Youth bishopric works in urban slums around Cairo, training local church leaders, men and women, to respond to the urgent needs of the local communities there.

### Sohag Orthodox Church, Southern Egypt

This project trained young women from the church who were close to the age of getting married in secretarial skills and managing small projects.

### ECred project, Cairo

The ECred center works to empower the “unofficial” garbage collectors of Cairo, who derive their livelihood from collecting and recycling the garbage that the inhabitants of the city throw away.

### Saray Evangelical Church, Alexandria

The Saray Evangelical Church ran a project training women living in urban slums south of Alexandria in sewing. The



church provided sewing machines to 30 women who completed their training.

### Sharkiyya Orthodox Church, Northern Egypt

Sharkiyya is a rural agricultural area to the north of Cairo.

### Individual Empowerment and Economic Assistance:

URM-Middle East provided tuition for schools, assistance to people in dire need as identified by their local churches, and economic support for local churches in both Syria and Lebanon.

## Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention and Human Security Defines its Structure and Plans

The Middle East is home to a number of local and international conflicts. While the Middle East is not the only region suffering from violent conflict, its strategic location often gives local conflicts greater international impact. In addition, there are numerous ethnic and religious differences that have been exploiting to contribute to social tension. These grievances occasionally burst to the surface in acts of communal violence and are quickly co-opted by other players, both inside and outside the region, with their own agendas.

In response to this situation, the Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention and Human Security (APCPHS) was founded in February 2005, bringing together over 20 organizations from 9 countries in the Arab world to curtail the potential for local, communal or national violence, limit the impact of isolated incidents of violence, and mitigate the influence and reach of major conflicts in the rest of the region, through a common platform for effective action on conflict prevention at national, regional and international levels.

APCPHS is a member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), a loose alliance between the United Nations, governments and civil society to develop a common platform for effective action on conflict prevention from the community to the global level, that convened in July 2005 at the United Nations headquarters in New York to plan the future direction of the network and to share experiences between the various regional networks who comprise GPPAC.



In addition to the July meeting of GPPAC, the Partnership held 3 meeting in 2005, in February, April and December, during which the members hammered out their Regional Action Agenda, their priorities for action, and their organizational structure. During the first months of 2006, members were to develop a detailed work plan and project proposal.

The work will be undertaken within five predetermined task groups that have contributed to their respective components of this plan:

1. Establishment of a mobile conflict prevention task force to provide support and mitigate the reach and impact of incidences of violence;
2. Awareness building and advocacy in support of the APCPHS and global action agendas;
3. Early warning & early response mechanisms for the purpose of preempting violent conflicts;
4. Capacity building, empowerment and sustainability for the partnership and its members; and
5. Knowledge building & resource sharing.

Organizationally, the Partnership will be coordinated by a secretariat, with FDCD filling that role. A task group drawn from its members will oversee each priority area, and the chairpersons of those task groups, along with the executive secretary, will make up an executive committee that will oversee the partnership's work. Policy will be set by the General Assembly, consisting of all the member organizations, which will meet on an annual basis. Membership will expand to 30 members in 2006, and possibly 45 in 2007.

The Partnership will begin its active work, if all goes according to plan, in September of 2006 in its five priority areas of focus.





## Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

July 16-22, 2005

The Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention & Human Security sent a delegation of 17 – 16 members and 1 press representative – to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Conference in New York from July 16, 2005 until July 22, 2005. In addition, the Arab delegation met with Dr. Andrea Bartoli and others from the Center for International Conflict Resolution, Columbia University, to discuss potential future joint projects, and took part in a number of press interviews to promote the global partnership, the regional partnership, and the work of their own organizations.

The panel was well-attended by approximately 50 conference participants and was recorded by APCPHS. The panel was composed of three expert speakers: Dr. Clovis Maksoud, American University Professor, former Arab League Permanent Representative to the UN and a UN Arab Human Development Report contributing author, Amb. Yahya Mahmassani, current Arab League Permanent Representative to the UN, and Dr. Azza Karam, UNDP Senior Regional Program Advisor, Regional Bureau for Arab States and the coordinator of the UN AHDR 2004; and four civil society practitioners: Dr. Abdel Hussein Shaban of the Iraqi Network for Human Rights and Development and another contributor to AHDR, Mr. Oussama Safa from Search for Common Ground – Partners in Humanity Lebanon, Ms. Saida Benhabylis, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize nominee and founder of Women Defending Peace in Algeria and Ambassador Mahmoud Kassem from the Ibn Khaldun Center in Egypt and formerly the Asst. Secretary General to Kofi Annan for the Great Lakes region.

During the afternoon workshop, six APCPHS members told success stories of conflict resolution and prevention from Algeria, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. It was an informal opportunity for the workshop participants to learn about the indigenous techniques used in the Middle East with success and to pose questions to the various members of the delegation. These stories show the unique challenges and opportunities in the field of conflict prevention in the Arab world and were recorded for possible future usage.

The Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FD CD), regional initiator for APCPHS, managed all communication with the APCPHS members and organized logistics and participation in the New York conference.

## FD CD at UN General Assembly

June 23-24, 2005

FD CD Executive Director Samuel Rizk took part in a meeting of civil society organizations at the United Nations, June 23-24, 2005 as part of a delegation representing the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. During these informal interactive hearings, Mr. Rizk delivered the following remarks on “Freedom from Fear”:

While we often blame governments for being ‘detached’ from the genuine concerns of their citizens, lately I have been getting the sense that even civil society organizations (CSOs) can lose touch with reality – the reality of fear that people endure when they dare to speak up against the powers-that-be, against the status quo, and against the injustice they see and feel as ordinary citizens. What relevance do our ‘activities’ and ‘events’ have if ordinary, moderate citizens are being killed around us?



... Encouraged by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, a group of conflict resolution and human security organizations in the Arab World came together in February of this year and formed APCPHS... Together we formulated a set of 11 principles upon which our Partnership would be based. Among them are:

- Reaching a just peace through peaceful means
- Promoting ‘the’ Arab culture of peace
- Opening channels of cooperation between CSOs, governments, regional inter-governmental organizations, and UN bodies.

It is within the context of this last principle that these hearings are valuable for us.

Mr. President, with the convening of these historic hearings, all of the stakeholders responsible for the prevention of violent conflict, for the elimination of fear, and for bringing about a genuine, grass-roots-based culture of peace have effectiely been engaged... We appeal to the UN, and specifically the General Assembly, to continue to encourage governments to find and create space for interaction with civil society both regionally and nationally. We further appeal to the UN to convene and provide a ‘space’ at the regional and national levels for government to interact with CSOs – specifically in the area of prevention of armed, violent conflict.

## Family Violence and Conflict Resolution: A Training Workshop in Lebanon

Lebanon's different communities built up large reserves of distrust and dislike for each other over the many years of civil war and the uneasy and imposed peace that followed. It is a country at the front lines of the so-called "clash of civilizations" and a place where people are trying to disprove that notion. One of the organizations that has tried to work to build a peaceful society is the Permanent Peace Movement. They primarily work by training young people in conflict resolution, hoping to build up a significant capacity within the society to deal with conflicts in a positive manner.

FDCD was able to help the PPM hold a three-day training program involving 40 young people (17 women and 23 men) from the Shouf region of Lebanon, both Muslims and Christians. The training focused on methods of conflict resolution.

The training took place in four sessions. Session one focused on an introduction to conflict resolution, on analyzing conflicts, and on the different methods

of peaceful conflict resolution. Session two was a practical session demonstrating the value of cooperative work in small groups. Session three focuses specifically on family violence, including violence against women, children, and the elderly, and presented some practical techniques and skills to deal with such situations. Finally, session four dealt with managing one's own anger and managing complicated relationships. Participants took a personality-survey test and assessed what that meant for each one of them.

Participants represented diverse communities, both geographically and confessionally, and came out with a better understanding of what was involved in conflict resolution, and with the basis for more advanced training to become mediators within their communities. The Permanent Peace Movement carries on further advanced training throughout the year – some of the trainees from this exercise will go on to further education.

## Lebanese Study Conflict Prevention at UN Summer School

For the second year, students and NGO activists took part in a 12-day summer school program on conflict resolution and prevention, from 8-19 August, 2005. The program, a joint effort between Lebanese American University, the United Nations, and an alliance of civil society organizations, involved 30 students from different religious groups and regions of Lebanon.

Trainers included academics and UN and NGO workers with practical experience in the areas of conflict resolution and prevention, both within Lebanon and in other areas such as South Africa and the Balkans. This allowed the participants to explore both practical and theoretical sides of conflict prevention, discussing what approaches work and in what way they work.

In addition to discussing different areas of conflict prevention, the participants were able to put their ideas into practice. "The camp was a real conflict transformation tool," says Nizar Ghanem, one of the participants in the camp. "We were from different groups, and the real issues came to surface, about history, about identity. All of these questions were asked inside the groups.

"We had Syrians and Palestinians in the groups. It gathered all the players of the Lebanese war together. This was sometimes uncomfortable for some people, but it served as a learning tool for the Lebanese students."

FDCD was a member of the steering committee for the summer school project in both 2004 and 2005, and contributed financially towards its support. They also helped publicize the event on TV and radio.

It is hoped that in the future, the summer school program will become an accredited program associated with one of Lebanon's universities. It would be the first such program in Lebanon, allowing conflict prevention to be discussed within the Lebanese context.

Ghanem notes that many of the participants in the program have moved on to work in conflict prevention, either in the United Nations or various NGOs. He himself came to work for FDCD in 2006.





## Summer Work-Study Camp Bridges Muslim-Christian, East-West Divides

Thirty people from seven countries and two religions came together for two weeks, to engage in and discuss Christian-Muslim dialogue and the ways in which dialogue can be carried out. They were brought together by the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) and the Arab Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue (AGCMD) from the Middle East, Europe and North America, and over the time they were together they came to appreciate, not only the common things that united them, but the ways in which their differences made them distinct.

Although the participants were young, this was not a “youth conference” in which tough issues were sidestepped and left to the elders. Serious questions were asked and answered on the fears and tensions between Muslims and Christians, between East and West and between the different nationalities of the region.

The overriding theme of the discussions of dialogue was of “mutual respect” - of the importance of each person recognizing the legitimacy of the other’s beliefs, of listening with attention, and of explaining one’s own beliefs in a way that comes from the heart.

In their working sessions, the group took a look at the holy texts of the two religions, analyzing similar passages to see how they were similar, what points they had in common, as well as how the differences were viewed in each faith tradition. They also discussed issues of heaven and hell, of personal faith, and how religion can be used for bad purposes and how this misuse can be avoided. As one participant observed, “Before I came to this conference, I thought I understood Islam because I had read the Qur’an, but I now realize that you need to ask Muslims who actually practice their faith how they interpret things.”

During their two weeks, split between Lebanon and Syria, the group met and discussed with leaders from Christian and Muslim organizations, including Rev.



John Hoover of the Near East School of Theology; Ibrahim Shemseddine of the Mehdi Shemseddine Foundation; Bishop Matta Roham, bishop of Hassakeh for the Syriac Orthodox Church; Father Paolo Dall’Oglio of the Mar Musa monastery in Nabek; and Sheikh Salah Kuftaro of the Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro Foundation in Damascus. These leaders, though coming from many different faith traditions, were united in affirming the importance of dialogue, of mutual respect, and of the positive value of religious diversity in the world today.

Having spent two weeks together, sharing grueling bus rides across the desert and long and intense sessions of dialogue, the group of thirty new friends dispersed, determined to keep in touch and to build towards better coexistence and dialogue in each of their countries. To that end, they have established an email group and will work on local events, and FDCD will hold an annual conference modeled on this first one.





## FDCD Prepares for Muslim-Christian Meeting on Tensions in Egypt

In October and November of 2005, during the month of Ramadan, a video circulated in Alexandria of a play that had been performed a year earlier. The play, entitled “I Was Blind But Now I See”, told the story of a young Coptic man who converted to Islam and then decided to convert back to Christianity. Many Muslims found the content of the play offensive.

In early November, a series of demonstrations escalated into attacks on churches and Christian-owned businesses in Alexandria. Some also speculated that this was related to the elections shortly afterward, as a candidate for the ruling party, a Copt, had to withdraw his candidacy shortly after these events.

In this context, FDCD and its partner, the Arab Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue, decided to try and hold a meeting to discuss religious tensions and the ways in which local leaders could act to defuse them rather than fan the flames. It was hoped to hold a public meeting in December of 2005. To that end, from Dec. 18-21, a 3-person team from Beirut (Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, Judge Abbas Halabi, and Mr. Samuel Rizk) visited Egypt and held individual

consultations with leaders from both communities, including Bishop Moussa and Mr. Samir Morcos on the Christian side, and Dr. Tarek Bishri and Dr. Muhammad Salim al-Awwa on the Muslim side. All agreed that under the present circumstances an immediate official meeting would not be helpful and might be counterproductive. Accordingly, the meeting was rescheduled for March 31.

The team also held an informal meeting with members of the Arab Group in the country at the time. In addition to those listed above, those in attendance included Lebanese Minister of Culture Dr. Tarek Mitri; Azz-ed-Din Ibrahim, interfaith advisor to the ruler of Dubai; Sameh Fawzi, acting editor-in-chief of Watani, a national Egyptian newspaper that addresses issues from a Coptic perspective; and Abu-el-ela Madi, President of the Wasat or “center” party, which is attempting to offer a moderate Islamist alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood. The discussions helped to shape the agenda for the March 31 meeting, although intervening events subsequently added the matter of the Danish cartoons and the response to them across the Muslim world.

## FDCD, Globethics.net Discuss “Responsible Leadership”

Globethics.net is a global network of institutions and individuals involved in applied ethics. It was created in August 2004, with the primary aim to facilitate institutions and researchers in the South to gain access to and to share resources, knowledge, and contacts through web-based research activities, academic conferences, publishing, and active networking. The governing body of Globethics.net is an internationally composed board of eight members, representing six continents. FDCD serves as the Middle East representative for the Globethics.net board. All board members work in the field of ethics, either in universities, or in study-related agencies in the broader civil society.

From March 3-6, 2005 the Globethics.net Steering Committee meeting was held in Zurich, Switzerland. The meeting began with a short welcome followed by an update from all participants. FDCD was able to share its involvement in the UN International Day of Peace in September, and the workshop on Voices of Refugees in the media. This meeting also included planning for the International Globethics.net Conference in Bangkok, Thailand and the adoption of the theme “Respon-

sible Leadership in the Context of Globalisation”. A Globethics.net book on Responsible Leadership was published in April, 2006 in Nairobi.

From September 22-26, 2005 the Globethics.net second International Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand. FDCD was able to send two participants to the conference, which explored global and contextual aspects of the general theme of Responsible Leadership. During the conference, particular aspects of leadership were discussed in five different sections, focusing respectively on the issues of Political Leadership, Business Leadership, Religious Leadership, Family Leadership, and Media/Educational Leadership.



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# The Refugee and Displaced in the Arab Media

“The Refugee and Displaced in the Arab Media” conference opened with the assertion from the World Association for Christian Communication, represented by Rev. Riad Jarjour and Julianne Munyaneza, of the right of refugees to communicate. The conference aimed to develop action items to help refugees through the media, and to help the media to improve the situation of refugees through their coverage.

The first day of the conference described the situation of refugees in the region. Dr. Ayman Zahri began by providing numbers on the global refugee situation. 10% of the world’s populations are refugees, with 17-18 million in Africa and 4-10 million in Asia. 6 million can be found in the Arab world alone, of which 4 million are from Palestine.

Zahri highlighted 3 solutions for refugees: 1) safe return, 2) nationalization within the host country, or 3) immigration to a third country.

Mr. Sameh Fawzi responded by identifying some of the problems facing the media in their coverage of refugees: 1) lack of accurate information; 2) difficulty for journalists to speak with refugees (language, geographic gaps); 3) negative influence of the media; and 4) lack of access to technology for refugees which limits their involvement in the process.

Dr Tharwat Issac followed with a discussion of the social and economic situation of Sudanese refugees in Egypt. These were often the victims of war and poverty. In Egypt, the social and economic problems that face refugees include: poverty and overcrowded living conditions, sexual abuse and exploitation, a large number of children who end up on the streets, and work that is often limited to the private sector where there is no insurance or human rights protections. He noted a high level of psychological disorders such as depression and alienation from both their new and original cultures.

There followed a series of case studies from the region. In Iraq, Nada Omran and Fadhil H. Al-Ak-kam explained, one issue is the destruction of documents both due to war damage as well as intentional attempts to hide documents. As a result, refugees from Iraq who fled under Saddam Hussein’s regime must return to the country to prove their citizenship.

Ms. Dani Karam spoke on her own experience working with refugees in Lebanon, where they are considered illegal and frequently have no papers. The Middle East Council of Churches works with refugees to teach them skills they can use to make a living in Lebanon and find a place in society.

Ms. Sahar El-Saadani showed a documentary on

the work of the Red Cross in helping refugees of war through financial aid and programs to reunite them with their families or let them visit jailed relatives.

The second day of the conference focused on refugees in the media. Dr. Ammar Ali Hassan began with a paper on media coverage of refugees in Egypt. He argued that newspapers, especially the semi-official *Al Ahram*, underestimate or don’t recognize refugee issues. Coverage deals only with negative aspects, such as violent conflict or legal problems. However there are a few positive signs such as recent refugee protests, and Darfur coverage, which has been sympathetic and balanced, and therefore highly unusual.

Case studies on Palestine by Hiba Assaf and Suheir Farraj-Ismael gave some insight into life in the Palestinian camps. Assaf spoke about her experience in the Jenin camp when Israeli forces encircled it in 2002 and forcibly moved inhabitants to nearby countries, and expressed her frustration that the UN was unable to get involved to help.

Kiray Khoury’s presentation identified the origins of refugees in Lebanon as Iraqi, Sudanese, Kurd and the largest group, estimated at about 370 000, Palestinian. She showed that stories do exist in Lebanese newspapers and have on some occasions improved the situation for refugees, however there is little public interest in these stories.

Hyam Koseifi, a speaker and journalist from *An-Nahar* newspaper, reinforced Khoury’s conclusion, explaining that although *An-Nahar* used to give one whole page to refugee issues, readers were not interested and the space was given up for other stories.

In an afternoon session, Julianne Munyaneza spoke on issues of woman and children and their infrequent coverage in the press. 80% of all refugees are women and children, said Munyaneza. Pleading with the audience to understand that identity is not always chosen and that all individuals have rights, Munyaneza closed with a quote by a refugee woman: “War has changed our life, not our spirit.”



## FDCD Assists in Regional Analysis of Journalists' Needs



The report 'Investing in the Future' was published by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists in Jordan to investigate the training needs of media in the Arab world. It provides an analysis of the issues faced by media professionals in six Arab coun-

tries including Bahrain, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco. The selected countries represent different Arab regions and were selected for their role as emerging democracies in the Arab world.

The analysis of the training needs is based on a survey, which consisted of in-depth interviews with media professionals and other key informants in the six countries, as well as a questionnaire distributed among scores of media professionals. The survey was carried out by partner institutions in the six countries.

FDCD was one such partner. A team of 1 coordinator and 4 researchers did 100 interviews and wrote the background document and country profile. The coordinator also participated in the November conference where the reports were analyzed, conclusions drawn, and recommendations given.

The report presents a general description of the media in the six selected countries in terms of political, cultural and social context, and to describe to what extent the media enjoy freedom and independence. A more detailed analysis of press laws, education facilities and training needs is conducted on the basis of the survey and the in-depth interviews.

The main conclusions were the following:

- Arab media professionals in general, and in the targeted groups in particular, live in an environment that is characterized by political dictatorship, restrictions on freedom of expression and poor economic and educational conditions. Moreover, extremist thinking and fear of modernization is increasing.
- Media professionals lack journalistic and media skills. In addition, they do not know English or foreign languages – except for those who are in Lebanon - and are therefore unable to keep abreast of new developments in their profession. Press syndicates and associations generally do not raise the professional qualifications of their members or disseminate the ethics of journalistic

practice. Furthermore, prominent and large newspapers in the six target countries, except for two newspapers in Lebanon and one in Egypt, are not interested in training their journalists.

- The media professionals suffer from a lack of legal networks to defend them and to confront dictatorial regimes restricting freedom of expression. In addition, there are no independent judicial systems in place, although there are some independent judges.
- Over the past few years, there has been an increased interest in raising the professional qualifications of Arab journalists and media professionals. However, such interest is not well organized. Benefits from previous training courses in the target countries were only moderate to fair.
- There is an urgent need to raise the professional qualifications of media professionals on written and spoken English, use of computers and internet, media management, and journalistic specializations.
- There is lack of interest in obtaining legal awareness, but an urgent need for training on international human rights, particularly the right to freedom of expression.
- There should be incentives in order to encourage journalist to attend and actively participate in training.

The research team's basic recommendation is to improve the professional qualifications of Arab media professionals, as well as their legal awareness. They propose a training plan to be carried out over a period of five years. The plan aims at building a media community for change, by providing advanced training for media professionals in the six targeted countries. These professionals could in turn train other colleagues and fight for press freedom. The training would include three areas:

- Intellectual formation including critical thinking based on the principles of freedom and democracy.
- Professional formation to acquire advanced skills and work more efficiently.
- Legal formation on media legislation, freedom of expression and legal protection.

The organizational structure of the project would include a consulting committee, a steering committee, and partner organizations in the six targeted countries.





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World Council of Churches – Geneva, World Council of Churches – Middle East office, United Church of Christ (USA), Disciples of Christ (USA), Danmission (Denmark), and World Association of Christian Communication (UK).

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Thank you to all of our supporters.

## Board members

- Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, Chairperson of FDCD Board
- Rev. Dr. Habib Badr, President of the National Evangelical Church, Lebanon
- Judge Abbas Al-Halabi, President of the Arab Group for Christian Muslim Dialogue
- Bishop Salim Ghazal, Bishop of the Greek Catholic Church, Lebanon
- Fr. George Massouh, Professor, Balamand University
- Ms. Danielle Hoyek, Lawyer, Lebanon
- Mr. Samuel Rizk, Executive Director, FDCD (ex officio)

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