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MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (MECC)

Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR)



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Message

*from Dr. Michael Abs,
the Secretary General
Middle East Council
of Churches*



It is really a challenge to deal with refugees that have been as such for several decades. When the Palestinians were first expelled by force from their historic land, everybody thought that it was for a few weeks until the fighting is over and the situation calms down. At that time, the deeply inspired and faithful group of persons who started the Church assistance towards Palestinians, never thought that this service will carry-on for almost eight decades and will become a department of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), devoted for the service to Palestinians (DSPR). This DSPR includes today five sub-organizations spread all over the territory where the refugees are. Since the very beginning of the Ecumenical activities, Palestine, its refugees and its cause, were in the heart of our concerns and actions. The DSPR is the main development support provider, but other departments of the MECC helped throughout its history. One main concern in our international contacts and meetings is the Palestinian cause. The changes in attitudes towards this cause, which we are witnessing in the international circles, the Ecumenical as well as the non-church related ones, is the main reward to our efforts. Between the days when a part of the world ignored the Palestinians' rights and today's worldwide support to the Palestinians, the difference is phenomenal. When you go through this report, done with high professionalism, one realizes the competencies of the teams who compose the MECC-DSPR. Furthermore, we can locate immediately the volume of the needs and the response to the challenges as performed by the field teams whom I long to visit when the circumstances allow. From MECC head office in Beirut, I send, in my name as well as in the name of my colleagues, a word of appreciation and solidarity to our people in Palestine and to our teams of the DSPR. Your patience and resilience have no equal. A better tomorrow awaits you.

Prof. Dr. Michel E. Abs
Secretary General

Foreword from the Chairperson & Executive Secretary



Dr. Andeh Quarvas
Chairperson
Central Committee



Dr. Bernard Sabella
Executive Secretary
Central Office

2020 will go down in history as the year of the COVID. As the world dealt with its challenges, we all learned from each other and followed the news and kept up with our work from home. Whenever the health situation allowed, we went into the communities we serve and offered our services constrained by the health instructions to ensure that infections will not occur. We would say that our coping mechanisms were suitable to the conditions imposed by the pandemic but they certainly did impact the work done on face-to-face basis, such as intergroup and interfaith meetings. Continue with our services we did across all Areas of DSPR, thanks to the commitment and dedication of our Executive Directors and their Staff Members and Volunteers. We also continued with relationships with partners and we had ongoing exchanges with some of them on matters of mutual concern. ACT Alliance membership continued to empower us in DSPR/MECC whether when coming to the aid of the afflicted due to the Beirut Port blast in August or to those who particularly suffered as a result of the precariousness of conditions of life due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We introduced the DSPR/MECC Webinars which were supported by some of our partners. These were an occasion for some DSPR and Regional issues to be discussed and followed up. Most important these webinars provided the opportunity to meet with each other and with our partners and friends across the globe. We went on with our Central Committee work via Zoom and again the virtual meetings kept us busy with a variety of DSPR/MECC related topics. We are optimistic that 2021 will herald the beginning of the end for the pandemic as we wish all of you, both Partners and DSPR/MECC members and staff all the best as we continue with our important work and partnerships.

a nurse gives a mask to a girl in Gaza



About DSPR



Who we are

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees “DSPR” of the Middle East Council of Churches “MECC” started in 1948 as an ad-hoc ecumenical group with both international and local spirited clergy and lay people to tend to the trauma of over 726,000 Palestinian refugees from the first Arab-Israeli war. DSPR eventually evolved into five Area Committees one each in Jerusalem and West Bank; Jordan; Lebanon; Galilee and the Gaza Strip coordinated through a Central Office that is located in East Jerusalem since 1997. DSPR was initially registered in Cyprus in 1970, where members met regularly from all over the region, and became part of the MECC when it was established in 1974.



History & Structure

With the different socio-economic, political, and legal contexts, each of the five Area Committees had to register independently thus evolved the different names of the Area Committees ensuring their legal entitlement:

- International Christian Committee (ICC – West Bank)
- International Christian Committee in Israel (ICCI - Galilee)
- Joint Christian Committee for Social Service in Lebanon (JCC - Lebanon)
- Near East Council of Churches Committee for Refugee Work (NECCCRW - Gaza)
- The Near East Council of Churches Committee for Refugee Work (NECCRW - Jordan)

The Central Committee, and its Central Office, operates as the unifying board and foresees the implementation of decisions and recommendations adopted in the two meetings held each year. There are 9 voting members in the Central Committee one each representing the respective Area Committees and four Members-at-Large nominated every four-year cycle, to coincide with the General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches, by the Heads of the Four Families of Churches.



Vision

The vision of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches (DSPR MECC) is of an empowered pluralist Palestinian society which guarantees equal opportunities for all its members and vulnerable communities based on the ideals of justice, equality of rights, opportunities and freedom.



Mission

The mission of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches (DSPR MECC) is to foster and advance the socio-economic conditions of the refugees and marginalized through provision of health, education, economic, social and humanitarian programs in keeping with the exercise of basic human rights.

Beneficiaries 2020

Vocational Trainings

Multimedia and Graphic Design	29
Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning	62
Electronics, Computer Maintenance	14
Carpentry & Furniture Making	60
General Electricity and Solar Energy	98
Metal and Welding Works	51
Barber & Hairdressing & Beauty Skills	125
Folkloric Handicrafts	60
Agriculture	30
Aluminium Works	35
Teacher Training	67
Secretarial & Office Management	57
Advance Dress Making	46

Community Empowerment

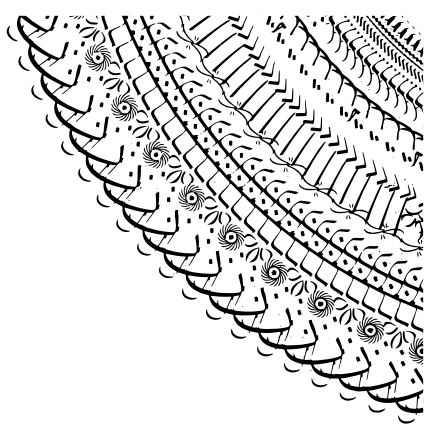
Micro Credits for education & business	16
Social & life skills report for girls	520
„Start Your Business Program“	900
Women Empowerment Program	1,500
Intergroup / Interfaith Dialogue	3,055
Covid 19 Kits	2,700
Emergency Relief	10,150

Health Service Provision

Expected Mothers - new registered	2,292
pregnant women received follow up visits	2,218
Patients less than six years old	7,316
Dental care visits	3,811
Postnatal care visits	1,777
Antenatal care visits	9,025
Well baby visits	254,278
Women and children get psychosocial support	5,587
Children screened for Anemia and Malnutrition	10,629



Hygiene training in Gaza



DSPR in the Gaza Strip

Located on the south-eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea, and housing 2 million Palestinians in only 365 km² area of land, the Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated urban areas around the world with nearly 5,479 persons per square kilometer. Being overcrowded with very limited resources along with being besieged for 13 years by Israel severely affects Gazans' daily life, including economy, education, healthcare, and other life aspects. The healthcare system in the Gaza Strip is already overstressed and has significantly deteriorated through the repeated rounds of violence with Israel in 2009, 2012, and 2014 alongside other random escalations in 2018 and 2019, The Great March of Return, (GMR) with the blockade imposed by Israel, internal division between Palestinians, and the overall unrest situation as well as limited resources and medical supplies, had had a most negative effect on the quality of life of Gazans.

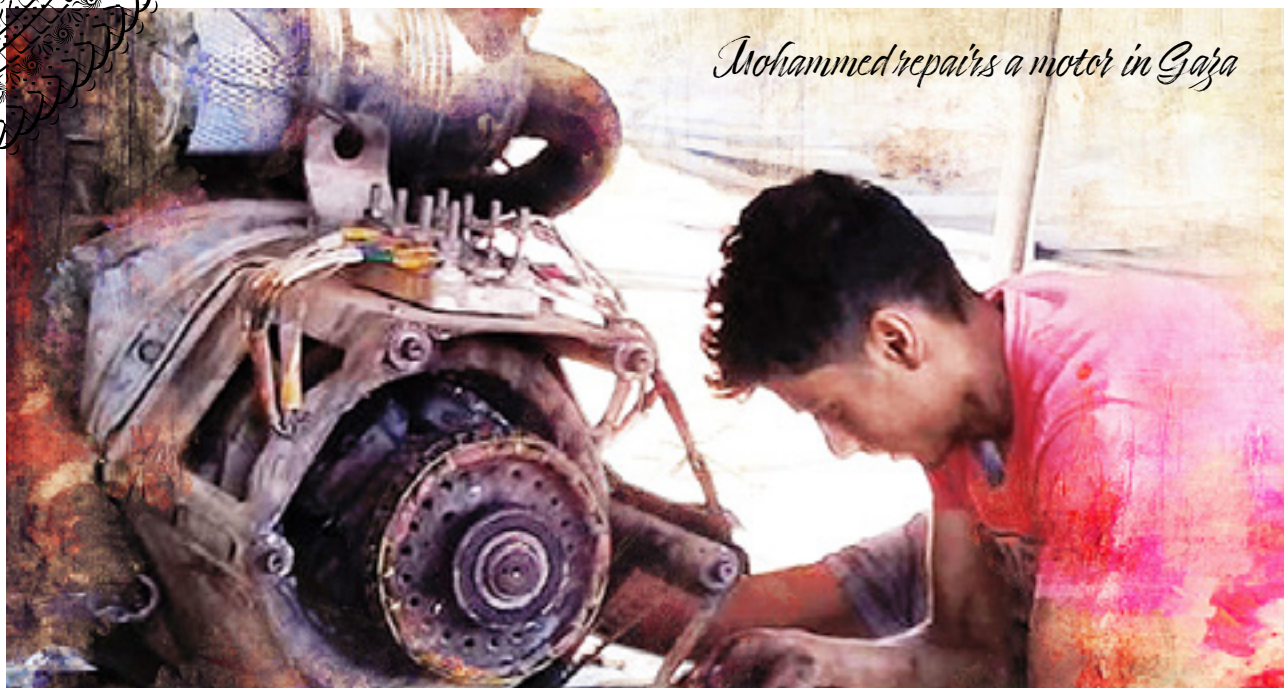
Worldwide and in neighboring Egypt, Israel and the West Bank COVID19 cases continued to increase reaching high numbers since March 2020. Cases of COVID-19 in the Gaza Strip were first detected on 22 March 2020 and were restricted to the two border entry points with strict quarantine for arrivals. This together with the restricted movement of Palestinians to and from Gaza, due to the Israeli imposed blockade, dwindled the movement of people in and out of the Gaza Strip and resulted in lower numbers of infections until later in the year when the numbers started to climb and there continues to be fear of the inability of the health system to deal with the resulting pressures. The government has taken strict measures, including periodic lockdowns, to ensure some control over the spread of the virus.

The economic situation in Gaza is very harsh and has deteriorated as a result of the pandemic with rising unemployment particularly among daily paid workers who are the first to be laid off. Poverty has become a salient feature with most of the popula-

tion being food insecure. Children are particularly susceptible to anemia and malnutrition. These conditions had contributed to the rise in psychological distress and domestic violence especially directed against women and children. The health system in the Gaza Strip is placed in a precarious situation, particularly as the rise in covid19 cases puts added pressure on an already overburdened system.

A 2019 assessment and report indicated that an estimated 1.2 million people need humanitarian health interventions across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, of whom almost 900,000 are in Gaza. More than half of those in need are women, and children constitute nearly 40%. In the Health clinics DSPR NECC health staff practiced their work providing primary health services and treatment for expecting mothers, infants and children. Safe work practices including wearing face mask, gloves, and disposable gowns were systemically followed together with infection prevention guidelines. Mothers and patients who suffered from respiratory difficulties were given the space that would ensure their safety and those of others around them. DSPR NECC health centers also intensified awareness sessions and health education through lecturing, and audio-visual measures on coronavirus prevention and protective measures. Home visits were suspended, and replaced with counselling, and consultations over the phone for more safety during COVID-19 pandemic.

Children continued to be screened for anemia and malnutrition and needed remedial interventions were appropriately provided. Following the emergency guidelines of the Palestinian government, DSPR/NECC Gaza has taken a decision to start on an online education plan whenever the TVET centers for male and female students needed to be closed for health reasons. This plan also applied to the course given to Secretaries and the course for Graphic Design.



Mohammed repairs a motor in Gaza

Mohammed graduate in the field of general electricity

Mohammed, 23 years describes the impact of his enrolment at the General Electricity and Motor Rewinding and solar energy program at El-Qarara VTC. I am a graduate of El-Qarara vocational training center of general electricity and solar energy which is belonging to DSPR NECC in the southern area of the Gaza Strip in the Qarara village.

I am 23 years old; I have succeeded in the high school certificate (Tawjihi) with a total grade of 60% and I graduated from El-Qarara center with 94% total average grade. I live with my family in Khanyounis city, the family is consisting of 7 members headed by my father. My father was previously used to work on daily-wage basis but he is unemployed in the meantime, the family is receiving subsidy from the ministry of social development. I and my little brother are the solely breadwinners of the family.

I enrolled the vocational center on November 1st, 2017 and graduated after two years in October 31st, 2019 with excellent grade. During my study at the center, I learned new knowledge and gained new competencies in the field of general electricity, automatic control applications, electric instalments, motors and transformer rewinding, solar energy

applications especially solar panels and invertors and batteries among other useful things.

I already learned in the first year how to do the house instalments, introduction to solar energy applications among other topics. As well, during my enrolment, I get to know new friends whom I made good relationships with them, shared together the training in electric exercises and shared knowledge with each other. After I finish my studying at the VTC, I received a tool box from NECC including the essential tools and equipment needed to launch my work in the electrical field. The tools I received from NECC enabled me to work in house instalments and motors. During the last period, I got a short-term employment chance offered by UNRWA but it was ended according to Corona pandemic procedures.

My deep thanks go to my trainers and tutors who provide me with all the knowledge and practice that I need. Thanks a lot for each of them. I am very happy with my career and I advise every person of my friends who have had no job opportunity to join vocational training diploma as to be able to find job and gain income and build a better future.



Youssef in the Baby Clinic in Gaza

Youssef benefited from the well baby clinic

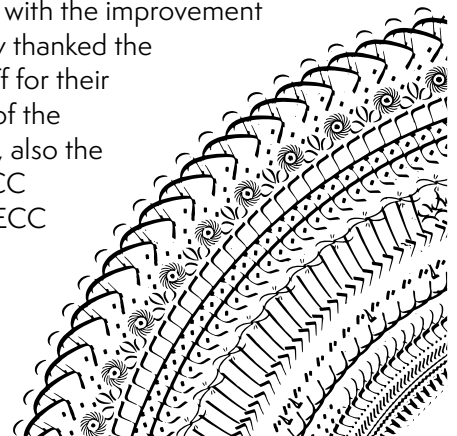
This story of child Youssef Mahmoud Khudair, who was following at Al Daraj DSPR NECC well baby clinic, the child attended with his mother to DSPR NECC well baby clinic, and his body measurements were taken as follows: Weight 13.5 - Height 95.7 – and HGB 10.8g/dl. These measures revealed that the child suffer from anemia, and malnutrition, and according to national protocol followed at the clinics, the child enrolled to anemic and malnourished program at the clinic to be followed at this program.

The mother was given iron supplementation, and vitamins for her child, and health education on how to give iron, foods rich in iron and basic elements of nutrients for her child, and avoid fast food and ready meals such as chips - chocolate and juices).

The child's lab investigations including urine, stool, and a complete blood tests were done and transferred to the doctor at the clinic. Medical advice and providing iron and multivitamins to the child.

The child was given fortified biscuits, which is a wafer biscuit rich in iron and multivitamins ..

The mother was pleased with the improvement of her child and sincerely thanked the NECC clinic and the staff for their kindness, and concerns of the children and their health, also the mother thanked the NECC partners who support NECC





Outdoor Activity with students in Galilee





DSPR in Galilee Israel

The three-round of elections exposed the fragile fabric in Israeli society in general, and the fragile relations and distrust towards the Palestinian community in Israel. The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, which was passed in 2018, continued to impact the relations between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. The questions of equal rights challenges to society and economy and the allocation of funds to local authorities, based on their national and religious background, raised the concern of Arab citizens as well as those forces that believe in equal standards for all citizens.

The rate of unemployment, which can reach up to 35% in some Arab localities, heightens the effect of discriminatory practices. Young people do not have prospects for their future, and with increased frustration, some turn to illicit pursuits, which can eventually lead to violence. The violence that the Arab community in Israel continues to suffer from scores of victims annually is the result of the community's abandonment by the respective governmental ministries. Educated Palestinian women are particularly hit with unemployment, and overall, the salary of Arabs in the labor force is half of that of Israeli Jewish laborers.

The „unrecognized villages „in the Negev and in Galilee, where about 100.000 people live, do not receive government development funds and remain accordingly without the needed service infrastructure. DSPR ICCI continues to follow up on some of these villages and their needs, especially in the North of the country. The separate social and geographical contexts in which Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians in Israel live are reflected in close to 90% of Israel's Arab citizens living in entirely Arab villages and towns.

On an institutional level, the dual run school systems cement the segregation, starting with kindergarten

and upward. As a consequence, Jewish and Arabic children grow up in „different worlds“ and know each other mainly through the (negative) information that is available within their community or via the media. The prevailing stereotypes and negative images within both groups and the segregated neighborhoods provide no opportunities to dismantle them through direct, positive contact.

Arab Christians, numbering between 120,000 - 125,000, comprise 8% of the country's Arab population and less than 2% of the total population of Israel. The feeling of marginality and a developing tendency to exclude themselves from both Jewish and Muslim compatriots adds to their unease in interfaith and intergroup relations. How to establish a common ground on which the socio-economic and political issues affecting all citizens can be addressed becomes of relevance. DSPR ICCI, through its programs and activities of intergroup and interfaith relations and its youth training programs, seeks to help establish a common ground for resolving some of the outstanding societal issues.

Indeed, the pandemic had and still having a tremendous negative effects on the psychological and social wellbeing of the girls of the DSPR program in acre. A psychological stress on the girls' families who face a tremendous problems in normal days mainly economic and social. The rate of unemployment was unprecedented affecting a lot of households and increasing poverty in such a vulnerable community. The domestic violence incidents increased and affected several girls and in some case a direct intervention from our group coordinator with the parents was inevitable. According to the ongoing directions of the ministry of health, the centre can only small groups even in the outside. So we continue combine now face to face meetings together with virtual meetings. Due to increasing poverty, more than ever we continue to bring hot meals for the girls in the centre. At the beginning of the year, our coordinator together with some volunteers from Acre provided food kits to several girls and their families.

Socialworker Mary

is working with young girls in Acre

Mary manages the DSPR center in Acre and especially the year 2020 in the middle of the pandemic was a big challenge for her. For more than 15 years now, she has been accompanying the Baladna Girls Center program. In it, she accompanies girls between the ages of twelve and twenty-one in individual weekly meetings in the old center of Acre. The program is financed by the full support of the international Christian association. Her goals are to empower the marginalized and distressed girls emotionally, socially and educationally.

It is also important for her to motivate the girls and encourage them to pay attention to and complete their education in order to reach higher institutes or learn different professions. This can help the girls to get out of the cycle of hardship and economic and social poverty and empower them socially and economically. Mary cares lovingly for the girls from Acre, she has a big heart for them. She helps them improve their knowledge in general culture

and daily living skills. It is important to her that the girls learn to communicate well and reasonably with other people and go out into society.

A big problem among girls in Acre is the high school dropout rate and many early marriages. Mary would like to reduce that. Especially in 2020, when it was often not possible to meet indoors, Mary organized many recreational events and outings for the girls.

Through her work at the center, Mary has now accompanied hundreds of girls and has been able to help them in different ways and in different areas to improve the status of the girl child and Arab women in general and Acre in particular. Mary loves her work in the center with the girls. She feels satisfied and happy when she succeeds in helping the girls. DSPR wholeheartedly thanks the Christian Association for their generosity and support for the „Girls of Our Land“ project in Acre during all these years.



in the Girls Center in Acre



Vegetable production in a greenhouse in Jordan





DSPR in Jordan

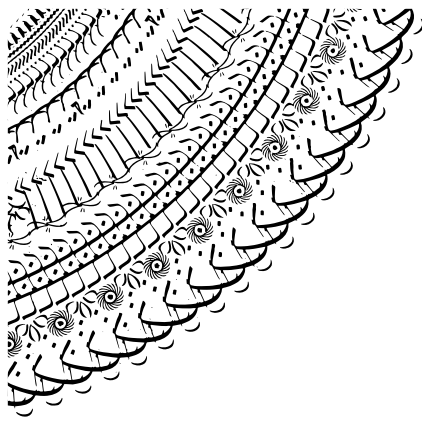
Jordan affected by waves of refugees since 1948, with the first Arab-Israeli war, continued throughout the years in hosting refugees from Iraq and in the last decade from Syria. Besides the enormous burdens that hosting millions of refugees placed on the country, Covid19 put added pressure on the social economic and health systems.

The Government of Jordan has had to deal with these pressures, including that of Covid19 and measures to contain it. One positive decision has been to include all the population, refugees included, in the national health response plan that would, among other things, provide the vaccine to all eligible persons. DSPR Jordan has reached out to more than 20,000 people in 2020, including those living in areas considered high risk for the spread of the virus. Our different programs reached out to women, children and youth and covered food security, provision of hygiene kits, livelihood and resilience training which involved capacity building, awareness-raising events, Psychosocial support, health & nutrition information and child and most at risk population groups' protection programs.

DSPR Jordan continued with its rehabilitation programs for Syrian refugees who covered the eventuality of return home to Syria and how they could benefit from the training and skills that they have earned in Jordan. We also reached out to the host communities in an integrated approach that sought to highlight the welfare of all communities living in refugee camps. We put as objective for these programs to ensure that Syrian refugees living in Jordan including people with special needs are able to make informed decisions and access timely, relevant and accurate information, as well as services and social support whenever they would make a

decision to return, to stay or to relocate to a third country. 1500 Syrian refugees including people with special needs benefitted from these programs.

As part of economic empowerment of women, DSPR Jordan established two production kitchen units at Talbiyah refugee camp south of Amman and at Jerash camp north of Amman. The concept of the project is based on providing special unit called "Production Kitchen "that is equipped with tools, equipment, and materials needed for food production geared to the local food market. Training courses were conducted that are specialized in cooking skills, safety, hygiene, packaging, and marketing in cooperation with specialized national institutions. These units will help women generate income for them and their families. Eight hundred women benefitted from the services of these units. DSPR Jordan started the second phase of Business Recovery Services & Fund (BRS&F). The project aims to promote the economic development and employment of refugees and Jordanian entrepreneurs by supporting business development. Through the provision of both technical and financial support, the BSR&F was able to support 4 entrepreneurs to overcome the social, legal, and financial barriers to starting and scaling-up their businesses. This support took the form of training, mentoring, opening networks of mutual support and providing start-up loans. To face the impact of COVID- 19 pandemic which increased the pressure on refugee families and vulnerable segments, DSPR Jordan managed to reach out to more than four hundred fifty families and provided them with needed food items and hygienic kits that contain items to deal with the pandemic such as sanitizers, hand gloves, face masks, hand soap, toilet paper, hand tissue, Clorox, and thermometer.



Khawla managed to establish a small business in the industry of crochet in Jordan

Khawla, (53) years Palestinian woman living in Ruseifah, East of Amman with one boy and four girls, lost her husband in 2009, which added a very heavy burden on her shoulders, where she had to raise five children on her own. Her education did not surpass high school which meant very limited opportunities of finding a proper job to earn enough to support her family. In 2010, she heard that DSPR Jordan is providing its services at Hitteen Refugee camp, close to where she lives with her children, through a women's voluntary committee that supports the work of DSPR inside the camp. As a volunteer, Khawla had the opportunity to join many of DSPR activities. By time she showed leadership qualities which enabled her to go on and conduct activities herself with some remuneration for her time and efforts. Khawla participated in workshops and training courses that taught her several skills such as sewing, crochet, soap manufacturing, candles manufacturing, and confectionary.

Through this learning opportunity, she managed to establish small business in the industry of crochet and started participating in different

bazaars. With the income she was earning, she bought different items to produce cosmetics, accessories. She sold them at competitive prices in her community contributing as well to solidarity within the community.

To develop her business, she had the chance to receive a loan from DSPR/Jordan that allowed her to upgrade her business to new lines of products for wedding occasions, new born babies' items of crochet, winter clothing items such as caps and scarfs.

With her determination and success, one of her daughters was enabled to study for a diploma in fashion design, another daughter is currently studying nursing, while two other children are in high school. „The opportunity that DSPR gave me, allowed me to be strongly involved in voluntary work in Jordan, not only in Ruseifah but also in other geographic areas all over Jordan,“ so concludes Khawla with a broad smile on her face.



Khawla started her own business in Lebanon



Music Lessons in the Refugee Camp in Beirut





DSPR in Lebanon

The COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon came as the country was already in the midst of a crippling socio-economic crisis, with total collapse looming on the horizon. Lockdown and other measures further exacerbated existing difficulties. The dual impact of pressure on the Lebanese Pound (LBP), as well as reduced imports (at increased prices), has led to inflation with prices skyrocketing at a time when many people were losing their jobs or being paid at reduced wages. The value of the LBP against the US Dollar has dropped by an estimated 350 per cent in the unofficial exchange as at end June and the spiral of the dropping of the Lebanese Pound went further down with dire and most difficult conditions to all Lebanese, who lost 90% of their purchasing power.

The massive explosion in Beirut in August 2020 was very traumatic, not only to Lebanese but to all those who care about Lebanon and its stability. The blast was a reminder that the country needed leadership to steer it out of its economic, social and political impasse. The blast left hundreds killed and injured and caused massive destruction to the port itself and to the surrounding neighborhoods, including hospitals, churches, mosques and homes of private citizens. DSPR JCC Lebanon rose to the challenge as volunteers from Dbayah Refugee Camp decided to extend help to those injured and debilitated by the blast and whose apartments and homes ended up in debris. With generous support from our partners, from across the globe, we were able to extend the little help we could at the hour of need of many of those afflicted by the blast.

ACT Alliance played its role in coming to the aid of victims and enabled us and our volunteers to stand up to the challenging times, post the port blast. Like in other parts of the world, the disease outbreak has put extra pressure on an already overburdened and under-resourced national health system. Despite the available medical human resources, the health system in Lebanon was already facing structural challenges, including around the import of medicine and equipment. Beyond the health impact of the disease outbreak, the non-health consequences

will be deeper and longer lasting, requiring a collective and whole-of- system approach. In January 2020, and due to the on-going financial and economic crisis, poverty levels were already projected to reach 52 per cent, with a doubling of extreme (food) poverty from 10 percent to 20 percent in 2020. The price of the food component of the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) has increased by 109 per cent between September 2019 and May 2020, with the highest increase recorded between April and May 2020.

The pandemic has further underscored pre-existing poor housing conditions of a large majority of both refugee and host populations living predominantly in urban dense settings, some inadequate and characterized by poor building conditions, lack of tenure security, overcrowding, lack of access to basic urban services or water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. At least half of the population is living in informality: UN-Habitat estimates that the 'slum' to urban population in Lebanon was around 50 per cent in the year 2001. Since then the situation has been exacerbated by internal and external migration and population movements. In the face of this pandemic, the lack of adequate housing has repercussions on society as a whole and is a direct threat to everyone's health and safety. Ensuring secure housing for all and the provision of essential services are crucial, in the medium and long terms, in containing the spread of the pandemic and preventing the loss of life.

DSPR JCC Lebanon continued with its activities, despite the pandemic. Whenever there was a lockdown work from home and the use of digital and telephone communication became the norm. Most of our activities continued with extra care taken to follow health instructions. We updated partners and friends on our activities through newsletters, stories and participation in the DSPR monthly webinars. Lebanon is a big challenge, and it is part of our commitment to it to help out and stand with all, not simply our brothers and sisters in refugee camps.

Teenager helping in Beirut

after the explosion

DSPR JCC teenagers were far too young to note the forlorn stand of the elderly man standing in the middle of what used to be a stunning century home with high ceilings and archaic roof - the trademarks of a charming old Lebanese house. They rushed by him, stopping only to bestow the usual Arabic greetings required, and continued energetically to the small garden behind the house where a mountain of wood debris, mostly remnants of oak doors, awaited them. The man, 90, surveyed them at first without much interest. He had nodded courteously to each "good morning amo (uncle). I hope you are doing well", greeting and silently watched them rush to the garden. His interest suddenly peaked, he walked over to the youngsters and asked them to transport the wood into the house carefully. "Maybe we can save something," he said. "For now, it will protect them from the rain." The teenagers nodded cheerfully and did as asked.

Mission completed, the old man went back inside and stood exactly where the group had first seen him. His eyes wandered around and then settled on a wall. Here, markings of a growth chart were still clearly on the wall – although the concerned children must be middle-aged adults by now. But it was the only memory left in the blasted house. In a few seconds, his forefather's home was torn apart. The beautiful archaic windows which looked out on the Mar Mikhael Street just a short distance from the city's port were obliterated. The high ceiling had fallen in, exposing a large part of the sky. The oak doors, once the pride and joy of the house, were blown into several pieces and now being carried in by the teenagers. The man continued to stare at the growth chart. The stark reality was that it would take vast amounts of money to rebuild – money he had none of and at the age of 90, had little hope of procuring any. It was pure luck that he and his wife



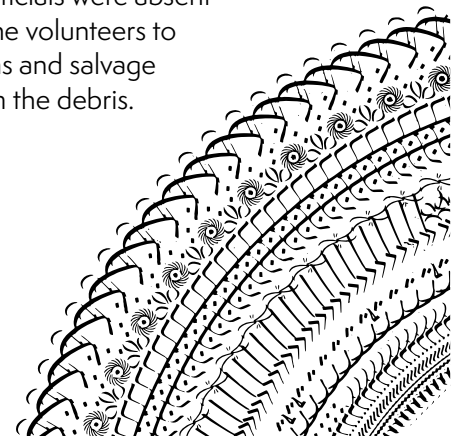
The Youth of DSPR JCC helping after the Beirut Blast

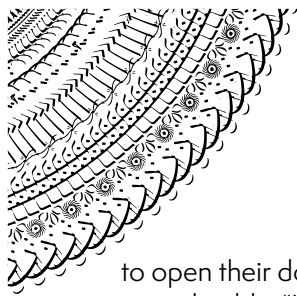


were staying in the mountains that summer. For only a few days into their getaway, a large amount of ammonium nitrate, stored at Beirut's port, exploded on August 4, devastating the surrounding area, killing almost 200, insuring 6,000, and damaging over 300,000 homes. In the garden, the DSPR JCC teenagers continued lifting the heavy wood pieces and carrying them indoors. The old man's son murmured his gratitude to them. The teenagers smiled back. What more can we do for you? What more can we carry and lift? We can do it. Another group of DSPR JCC teenagers was carrying debris in the street below. It was arduous work – a task that only the very young can do and still have the energy to run up the road to the next shambled house with equal zest while joking. "Hey, Rawad!" cried out Jubran Jabr, 18. "Look at your shoes. Still pristine white. Mine are dark. Ha! I guess it means I was working harder." Rawad Khayat, 19, stopped in his tracks to think of a retort. Finally, he grinned at his tormentor. "Well, maybe my shoes are just made better than yours!"

Laughing, the teenagers made their way to their 'rest stop' – a tiny destroyed restaurant in the middle of the destroyed Mar Mikhael Street. This was the DSPR JCC base. Carole Doro, 16, quickly set about distributing much-needed water bottles. It was here that the various groups met several times a day to rest, drink, eat, and take on new assignments from their JCC Youth Leader, Elias Habib. For the past few weeks, the teenagers have been sweeping glass shards, setting aside torn doors and windows, and scrubbing blood off walls and floors. Since Lebanese government officials were absent in the field, it was up to the volunteers to help the distraught victims and salvage whatever they could from the debris.

At first, the devastated area was swarming with volunteer workers. But as universities and schools began getting ready





to open their doors, the volunteers had dwindled considerably. "I think there is only us and another group or two now remaining," said Habib. "But there is a lot of work to be done. People still need us here." As if on cue, a woman in her mid-60s entered the base. She greeted the teenagers warmly. "Hello, Auntie Norma," they responded, "how are you today?" Norma Irani took a seat among the teenagers. "I am well, darlings," she responded, obviously trying to sound cheerful. "I am well." But suddenly, she erupted into tears. Her eyes settled on Habib, the only adult in the group. "I want my home like it was, I want my life back," she looked at him pleadingly as her tears intensified. The teenagers lapsed into silence as they listened to their new friend. One of the teenagers handed her a tissue. Irani's home is on Alexander Fleming Street – a quaint area known only a month ago, for its active boutique-like restaurants. Irani herself owned one of the tiny restaurants. It was her only source of income.

"I have nothing now," she continued to cry. "My home is gone. My shop is gone. It was my only source of money. What do I do now?" When the blast hit, Irani was in her home, tending to her 96-year old father. Her two brothers were in the next room. She watched in horror as blood began to seep from her father's forehead. Glass shards had covered them both. In an attempt to stop the profuse bleeding, she pressed on her father's head while calling for her brothers. Were they even alive? She continued to scream but to no avail. She finally managed to guide her disoriented father to the street below, practically carrying him over rubble and glass, which now blocked her building's staircase. Relieved to see her brothers alive and well, she ran to help the other blood-soaked neighbours descend the stairs.

The teenagers listened in subdued silence. Finally, 17-year-old Vanessa Al Akl broke the silence. "I was there that same day," she said quietly. "I was with my family going to Damour (south of Beirut). We had crossed the port when the explosion happened. We got out of the car. There were people everywhere covered in blood. Some people were dead. I tried to help. There was so much blood." Miguel, 17, looked at her. "My father was there too. He had work to do. He didn't come home and wasn't answering his phone. We thought he had been killed," he said. "But he made it out somehow and came home."

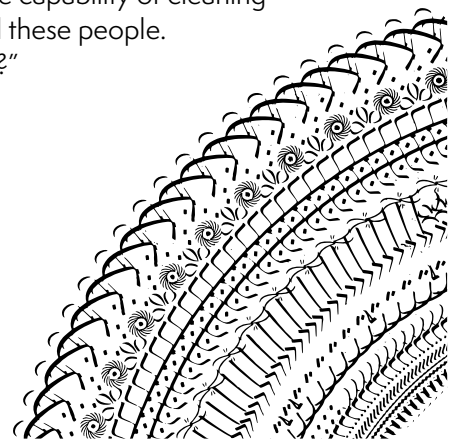
Next to him, Oliver added quietly. "That's why I

come here every day with the DSPR JCC," he said. "I want these people to go home as well." Another silence ensued as young and old delved in their thoughts. "I was there too," suddenly said Mark Abu Sleiman, 19. "There were people dead in the cars. I wanted to help them. I couldn't. That's also why I am here now. I want to feel that I can help."

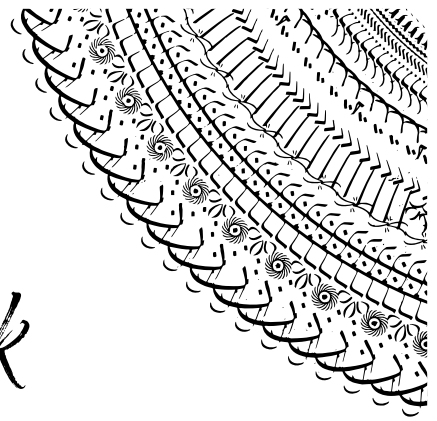
The youngsters looked at each other. "I didn't come," said Elie Boulos, 19, looking shamefaced. "I didn't realize how much devastation there was. Not until we came here." The teenagers practically grew up together at their hillside mountain Palestinian residences, known as the 'Dbayeh camp.' As Palestinians, their futures are bleak. Palestinians are barred from acquiring Lebanese citizenship and thus acquiring Lebanese identity cards, which would entitle them to government services, such as health and education. They are also legally barred from owning property and prohibited from working in over 60 skilled jobs. "Even if we are Palestinians," said Jubran, "we live here. We must help."

Next to him, 17-year-old Johnny Abu Nasr, nodded. "Yeah," he said. "And what if it happens to us next? Everyone would come to help us, wouldn't they? That's why we have to be here. All of us." By now, Irani had dried her tears and was looking tenderly at the youth group. "What would I have done without them?" she said. "These children are now my only help. The Lebanese government hasn't even asked about me. "Every home has been the same. Shattered glass, wood, aluminum pieces, broken furniture pieces, crumbled walls, and disturbing stories. Day after day, the JCC group put up nylon sheets across windows and balcony doors and hauled down the stairs hundreds of bags filled with debris. Irani's house was no exception. Still grateful, she often pops into the tiny JCC base, to check on its young volunteers.

"We kids cannot rebuild her home," said Rudolph Habib, 16. "We don't have money to help. All we can offer is our youth. The capability of cleaning and carrying things for all these people. If we don't do it, who will?"



DSPR in Jerusalem & Westbank



While there are parallels between the situation in Palestine and that in other countries around the world struggling to get infection numbers under control, the context of military occupation and siege in the West Bank and Gaza represents an especially formidable challenge. Indeed, since 1967 the Israeli settler colonial regime has placed these two Palestinian territories under military occupation, with the latter suffering from a blockade since 2007. This absolute regime of control has had a direct and detrimental effect not only on Palestinian access to health care, but also on the quality of the care itself.

This state violence has also been accompanied by another more insidious form of violence: de-development, a process in which, according to scholar Sara Roy, an economy “is deprived of its capacity for production, rational structural transformation, and meaningful reform.” It involves the “deliberate, systematic, and progressive dismemberment of an indigenous economy by a

dominant one, where economic — and by extension, societal — potential is not only distorted but denied.” As it stands, there are only 255 intensive care beds in the West Bank for a population of 3 million.

In addition to this slow but steady violence against the health care system in the West Bank, the Israeli regime has also engaged in more insidious attacks against Palestinian attempts to confront the virus. In mid-April, for example, Israeli authorities raided and shut down a clinic in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan and arrested their workers because they were conducting COVID-19 tests that had been donated by the PA. Other clinics have been totally destroyed, such as one in the Jordan Valley in late March and another in Hebron in late July — the hardest-hit West Bank governorate. Israeli authorities have also arrested Palestinian volunteers attempting to distribute supplies to impoverished communities in East Jerusalem.



Construction work in the West Bank

Organic Kharoub paste

enhances Socio-Economic conditions for Leila in Palestine

Leila, a 46-year-old mother of five, lives in a village in the north western part of the West Bank within the boundaries of Qalqilya Governorate in Palestine. Although her husband was a day laborer at an adjacent Israeli settlement, his health conditions with high blood pressure and diabetes made his working possibilities quite precarious and of an unstable nature.

Leila's family continues to be challenged by the poor economic conditions besides having a daughter suffering from hearing impairment. Kharoub Paste can be preserved and bits of it are used to make a drink that carries some medicinal qualities particularly for an upset stomach. the Carob drink is popular with Palestinians on hot dry days when ice is added to it. Since her childhood Leila was keen on pressing the Kharoub herb into a paste and to preserve it for future use in her family. As she grappled with her own family's trials and tribulations Leila started thinking of Kharoub paste as a source of income. The process of making the Kharoub paste needs high efforts of collecting, grinding, and cooking. These efforts are now wanting by many in the community as 'modern life'

imposes its own demands and requirements. Four years ago she sets herself the task of launching her Kharoub Paste project which proved to be a turning point in her life and that of her family. In her own words, Leila describes her project:

"In the beginning I started making Kharoub paste and selling it to my close neighbors. As I made some profit from local sales, I decided to expand sales to surrounding villages. DSPR/ICC Jerusalem and West Bank helped me out with buying a grinding equipment that facilitated making Carob paste enormously. I am pleased to say that I can now produce high quality paste. The grinding equipment also helped me increase my Income by 40%. I look forward to buying a second grinding machine, this time to produce tomato paste. I am in for the business, so concludes Leila, with a broad smile."

On a historical note about the Carob tree, It is said that the pods of the Carob tree sustained John the Baptist while he was praying in the desert. Hence It also known as St. John's bread.



About Kharoub:

Carob is the roasted and finely ground pulp of the carob fruit. To obtain carob, the ripe fruits are cleaned, broken open and crushed. After the stalks and seeds are removed, the pulp is dried, roasted for longer shelf life, and then ground. Well sealed, carob thus keeps for several years. Carob contains hardly any sodium and fat, but a high proportion of dietary fiber. Together with the natural sugar it contains, it provides a lot of energy with relatively few calories (255 kcal per 100 g). It also contains β -carotene and valuable minerals such as calcium and iron. Unlike cocoa, carob is also free of stimulating substances such as theobromine and caffeine. And last but not least, carob has a positive effect on digestion due to its high fiber and starch content.



Leila is making Kharoub

Central Committee

Dr. Audeh Quawas

Chairman - Central Committee
Member at Large
(Greek Orthodox)

Mr. Ghassan Mustaklem

ICC - West Bank
Alternate - Member at Large
(Greek Orthodox)

Mr. George Hazou

Member at Large
(Oriental Orthodox)

Dr. Jean Salamian

Alternate - Member at Large
(Oriental Orthodox)

Mrs. Claudette Habeschi

Member at Large
(Roman Catholic)

Mr. Sami Manneh

Alternate - Member at Large
(Roman Catholic)

Bishop Sani Azar

Member at Large
(Lutheran)

Mr. Bassam Dawani

Alternate - Member at Large
(Anglican)

Mrs. Rima Khleif

ICCI-Alternate Delegate
(Lutheran)

Mr. Farah Geraisy

Chairman - ICCI Nazareth Area Committee
(Greek Orthodox)

Dr. Suhail Madbak

NECCRW/Gaza Delegate
(Greek Orthodox)

Mr. Suhail Tarazi

NECCRW/Gaza Alternate Delegate
(Greek Orthodox)

Dr. Ghazi Msharbash

NECCRW/Jordan Delegate
(Anglican)

Father Salem Al-Madanat

NECCRW/Jordan Alternative Delegate
(Oriental Orthodox)

Mrs. Leila Dagher

Vice Chairperson - JCC/Lebanon Delegate
(Presbyterian)

Mr. Edward Asmar

Chairman - JCC/Lebanon Area Committee
JCC/Lebanon Alternate
(Oriental Orthodox)

Mrs. Sandra Khoury

ICC-Delegate
(Roman Catholic)

Mrs. Elham Salameh

ICC-Alternate Delegate
(Oriental Orthodox)

Executive Director



Central Office

Dr. Bernard Sabella



Gaza

Dr. Issa Tarazi



Jerusalem & WestBank

Mr. Ramzi Zanani'ri



Jordan

Mr. Fares Swais



Lebanon

Mrs. Sylvia Haddad



Galilee Israel

Mr. Hussam Elias

Central Office

The Central Office of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches is the executive arm of the Central Committee (Board) of the Department. Decisions, recommendations and regulations adopted by the Central Committee are followed up by the Central Office and its Staff Members. During 2020 we continued with this role and aimed, despite the pandemic, to facilitate cooperation across all Areas of DSPR. The Chairperson of the Central Committee, Dr. Audeh Quawas, was continuously in contact via virtual and zoom meetings and followed up on developments taking place throughout DSPR during the year of the pandemic. We picked up, both in 2019 and 2020, the issue of branding of the organization as one unit and offered the Areas help in financial and budgeting overview, programmatic development, communication support beside the regular logistical input in preparation for the virtual meetings we have had during the year of the pandemic. We were attentive in our work to DSPR Strategic Plan 2021-2027 and weighed in planning bi-annual Central Committee meetings on issues pertaining to corporate identity, reform and the de facto role of Central Office. Besides administrative issues such as duration of service for board members and executive directors across DSPR, gender and age considered, were also brought to the attention of the Central Committee for deliberation and further action. The Areas represented by their delegates and Executive Directors in Central Committee meetings repeatedly stressed the important role of the Central Office and committed to support the budget of the Central Office acknowledging the contributions that the office and its various staff members give to all Areas of DSPR. We continued with our regular contact with our partners and there were ongoing discussions on issues of mutual concern, particularly as these relate to the role of Central Office, general vs. bilateral funding with each of the Areas, relations with MECC and Advocacy work, among others. We are pleased to report that our relationships with MECC have been clarified acknowledging that DSPR is an integral part of the MECC while at the same time maintaining our autonomy considering the mandate and history of our Department. The Executive Secretary of the Central Office attends the Staff meetings of MECC and participates, together with the Chairperson of the Central Committee, in meetings hosted by MECC. We continue to have ongoing contact with the Secretary General of MECC and attest to a relationship that is wholistic and in keeping with the rights of Palestinian refugees and the role of DSPR as an ecumenical Christian witness to the continuing plight of Palestinian refugees. In 2020 Central Office initiated, with the help of some of our partners, a series of webinars in which timely issues were brought to the attention of the participants. Not only DSPR work was discussed but regional issues with focus on current developments pertaining to the virus, the Lebanon port blast, the election of a new Secretary General of MECC, the conditions of refugees and women at a time of great crisis and challenge were covered. Our communication specialist shared the recordings of these webinars and kept up our social media links and websites updated. Besides she was active with sending out newsletters and updates on developments in DSPR. We remain at Central Office the hub for DSPR and appreciate the support, visits, virtual meetings and online discussions and exchanges that we have had with our partners and friends especially during the pandemic year. Wishing all safety and good health.

Dr. Bernard Sabella
Executive Secretary

Mrs. Hanan Tuzjman
Assistant

Mr. George Stephan
Finance Manager
Internal Auditor Ac's

Mr. Sami Khoury
Program Manager

View of Jerusalem from the church of the redeemer



Advocacy Work

Advocacy continues to be a top priority and an important component in DSPR. The advocacy in the last year has primarily focused on Humanitarian activity particularly were the refugees, the marginalized and the people most in need are concerned. We remain committed in DSPR to empowering the communities we serve across the Five Areas to speak up and advocate for their rights. Their advocacy efforts and activities will be communicated regularly to our partners, policy makers, stakeholders both at the local, regional, and international levels.

We in DSPR together with our partners from around the globe namely ACT for Peace Australia, CWS of New Zealand, Embrace the Middle East in the United Kingdom, ACT Church of Sweden, Bread for the World with other partners have worked tirelessly towards improvement advocacy in our fieldwork and to our partners. Conscious of the need to highlight the voices of refugees, marginalized and most in need populations, we have adopted an Advocacy Strategy -2020 2023 for DSPR that includes an action plan. the invaluable support of our Partner Advocacy Working Group was highlighted during an Advocacy related Workshop in December to all DSPR constituencies .

Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, our part-time Advocacy Officer has not continued her engagement with us for 2021. Given expected support for the position from our partners, we are in the process of hiring a new part-time Advocacy Officer. We are also exploring the possibility of receiving a secondment that will help with Advocacy work centrally and towards all of DSPR areas.

Employees at DSPR

	<i>Gaza Area</i>	<i>Galilee Area</i>	<i>Westbank Area</i>	<i>Jordan Area</i>	<i>Lebanon Area</i>	<i>Central Office to Areas</i>	<i>All Areas</i>
fulltime	78	1	4	13	31	3	130
parttime	51	3	1	0	57	4	84
men	57	2	2	4	30	3	98
women	72	2	3	9	58	1	145
<i>Employees total</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>243</i>

Partner & MECC

We are overwhelmed and heartfully thankful for the support and the friendship of our friends, partners and supporters

DSPR is a Department of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC).

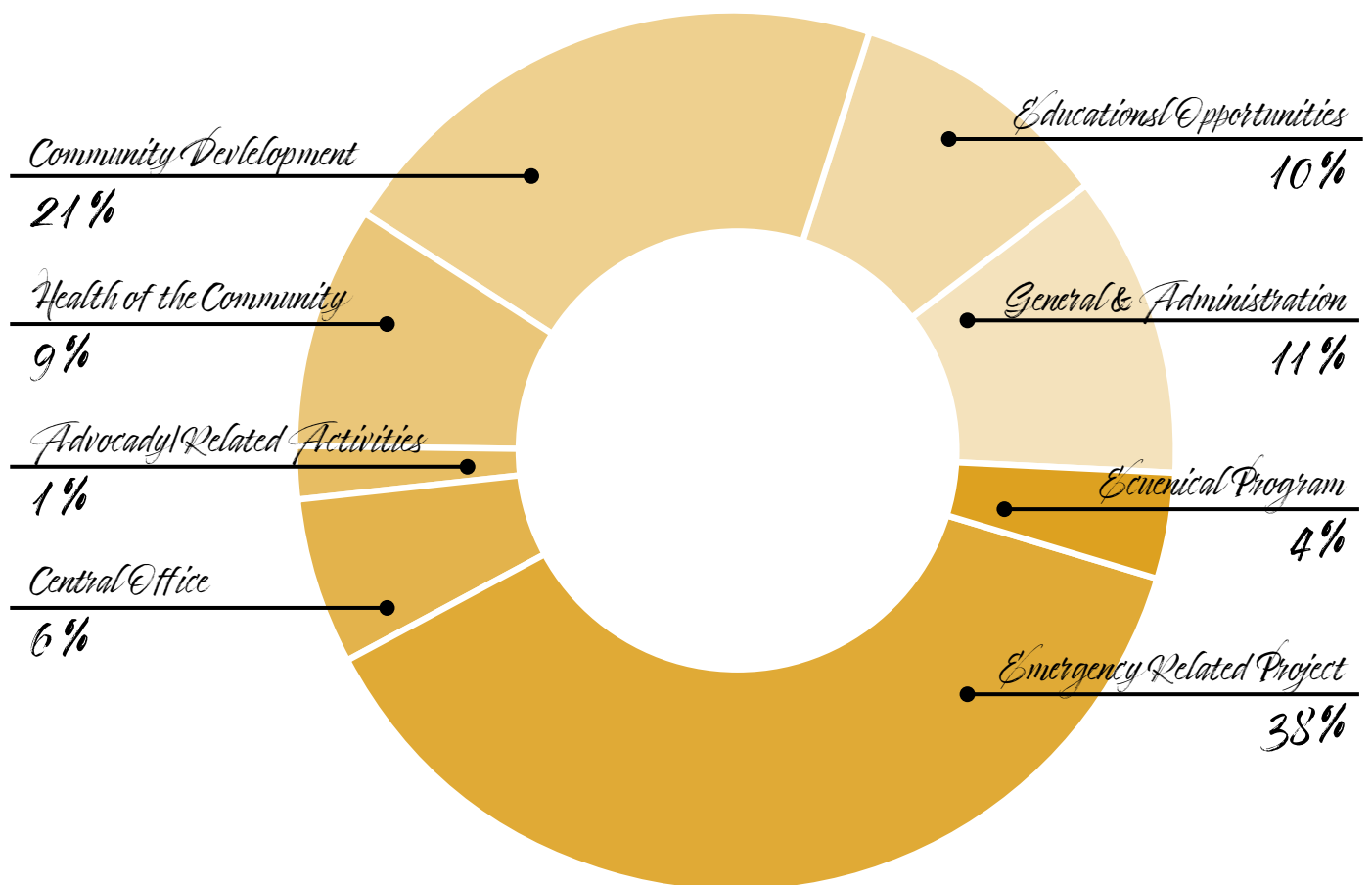
Act Alliance
Act Church of Sweden
Act for Peace Australia
Amos Trust
Anera
Anglican B. Mis. Australia
Brot für die Welt
Caritas Jerusalem
Caritas France (Secours – Catholique)
CNEWA
CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE
Christian Aid
Christian World Service - New Zealand
Church of Scotland
Church in Wales
Dan Church Aid
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Edukans
Embassy of Ireland - Jordan
Embrace the Middle East
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Evangelisches Verwaltungsamt
Federal Republic of Germany
Finn Church Aid
General Board of Global Ministries
German Speaking Evangelical Church Beirut
GIZ
Global Ministries - United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
ICCO Cooperation
Icelandic Church Aid

International Medical Corps (IMC)
Kairos Canada
Kerk in Actie
Lutheran World Relief
Mennoite Central Committee (MCC)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
Ministry of health palestine
National Council of Churches in Australia
NECEF Sabeel Canada
Norwegian Church Aid
Pontifical Mission of Palestine
Porticus Foundation
Presbyterian Church
Representation Office of the Federal Republic of Germany Ramallah
Save the Children
Secours Catholique Caritas France
St. Patricks Cathedral Dublin
Svenska Missionskyrkan
Terre Des Hommes TDH
The CCFD - Terre Solidaire
The Finish Ev. Lutheran Mission (FELM)
UMCOR
Unicef
United Church of Canada Kairos
United Palestinian Appeal (UPA)
Welfare Association
World Council of Churches
World Vision

Financial Overview 2020

	USD
<i>Educational Opportunities</i>	<i>405.618</i>
DSPR Gaza	230.131
DSPR Jordan	29.735
DSPR Lebanon	145.752
<i>Community Development</i>	<i>809.870</i>
DSPR Gaza	18.591
DSPR West Bank	74.154
DSPR Jordan	235.510
DSPR Lebanon	376.759
DSPR Nazareth	104.856
<i>Health of the Community</i>	<i>333.025</i>
DSPR Gaza	319.935
DSPR Jordan	13.090
<i>Advocacy / Related Activities</i>	<i>44.071</i>
DSPR Gaza	
DSPR Nazareth	25.558
DSPR West Bank	18.513
<i>Special Projects / Emergency Related</i>	<i>1.483.608</i>
DSPR Gaza	1.31.132
DSPR Jordan	180.862
DSPR Lebanon	271.614
<i>Ecumenical Program DSPR Gaza</i>	<i>153.845</i>
<i>General & Administration Areas</i>	<i>425.968</i>
DSPR Gaza	127.973
DSPR West Bank	65.083
DSPR Jordan	48.547
DSPR Lebanon	139.512
DSPR Nazareth	44.853
<i>General & Administration Central Office</i>	<i>228.748</i>
<i>Total Program Expenses</i>	<i>3.884.753</i>

Program expenses 2020



improving the lives of palestinians across the Middle East

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