



2019 A YEAR IN REVIEW



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط

The Middle East Council of Churches

MECC

the Ecumenical Memory of
the Middle East and a
Platform of Continuous
Striving

Challenges & Achievements

Spreading the Ecumenical
Spirit in the Middle East

Together, at the Service of Human Dignity

Between Syria, Lebanon,
Jordan and the Holy Land

Media and Communication

The Promotion of the
Ecumenical Mission

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WELCOME LETTER

“You are the salt of the earth” Matthew 5:13

Dear Friends and Partners,

Many are the talks about Christians in the Middle East, and many are the hermeneutics related to their presence and significance, as well as to their mission and continued existence. We surely do not lack interpretations, articles nor words. When we are asked to be guided by the words of Jesus Christ: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt is degenerated, what can it be seasoned with? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot?” (Matthew 5:13)

All threats of wars, violence, forced migration, displacement, poverty and pandemics, looming over us, not only seriously endanger our existence but also our presence in the Middle East. However, the main danger that threatens our being, the reason of our existence, and the meaning of our presence is what exactly the Lord Jesus warned us about when he said, “But if salt is degenerated (deteriorated), what can it be seasoned with? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot?” Should we be reminded of the effects of the salt in order for us to apprehend the reason of our existence in this world?

Each one of us knows what gifts (i.e. Salt) he has been bestowed upon by the Holy Spirit at his Holy Baptism, also what mission he is entrusted by God as an active member of the Body of Christ, the Church. Each and every one of us knows what to contribute to the world in which we are living preventing it from decay, deterioration and eventual decease.

Woe to us if we are deteriorated losing the flavor bestowed upon us, for we will be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet; and blessed will we be, if we season humanity, creation and all the earth with our presence (salt), giving them a completely new significance. Based on this existential truth tightly linked to our faith and just as the salt of the earth, members of the General Secretariat of the Middle East Council of Churches along with the departments and



offices devotedly focused their efforts on different processes that reflect the gifts of the Holy Spirit, ensuring complementarity between the theological, ecumenical and social-diaconal fields all throughout the year 2019.

This Process embraced several projects such as from launching the “Kairos Middle East Towards Churches Global Compact” process, adopting public policies that safeguard human dignity, raising the voice of the Council in international platforms and forums, focusing on building dialogue and peace, and fighting violence and hate speech, to supporting refugees, serving the oppressed, helping the poorest, providing communities with spiritual counseling, to healing traumas caused by wars and embracing the youth from the East and West with an ecumenical spirit, bound with faith and hope in the International Ecumenical Youth Meeting hosted in Beirut... and last but not least, the tireless work of the council echoed throughout the year, reflecting the council’s mission, objectives and aspirations which would have not been possible without the effective communication between the council, churches, partners and the whole world.

So, to every person, who was a grain of salt dedicating himself / herself to the Council through the skills bestowed upon him by the Lord, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Sincerely,

Dr. Souraya Bechealany

Secretary General | Middle East Council of Churches

ABOUT MECC.

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

VISION

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

VALUES

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

APPROACHES

- Partnership
- Sustainability
- Advocacy
- Empowerment
- Professionalism



MISSION

The Council's mission is to work towards the unification of visions, perspectives and attitudes among Eastern churches, especially on issues related to Christian presence and witness in the Middle East.

The Council's mission is seen today as being a bridge: A bridge between Eastern Christians: to remove prejudices and barriers between churches, the MECC brings together most Christians and churches in the Middle East. It provides them the adequate space to come together, pray, reflect, analyze, speak with a common voice, and act and witness together.

A bridge between Christians and peoples of other religions in the region: to reinforce and develop organized dialogue and partnerships with people of good will aimed at strengthening and deepening friendship and peace for the good of humanity.

A bridge between the Middle Eastern churches and churches around the world: to connect Christians and churches in the region and their brothers and sisters in Christ elsewhere.



MEMBER CHURCHES.

WE ARE PRESENT IN:



LEBANON



SYRIA



JORDAN



IRAQ



PALESTINE



CYPRUS



EGYPT



IRAN

Oriental Orthodox Churches (3):

- Coptic Orthodox Church
- Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East
- Armenian Apostolic Church - Catholicosate of Cilicia

Orthodox (chalcedonian) churches (4):

- Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria and All Africa
- Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East
- Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem
- Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus

Evangelical churches (13):

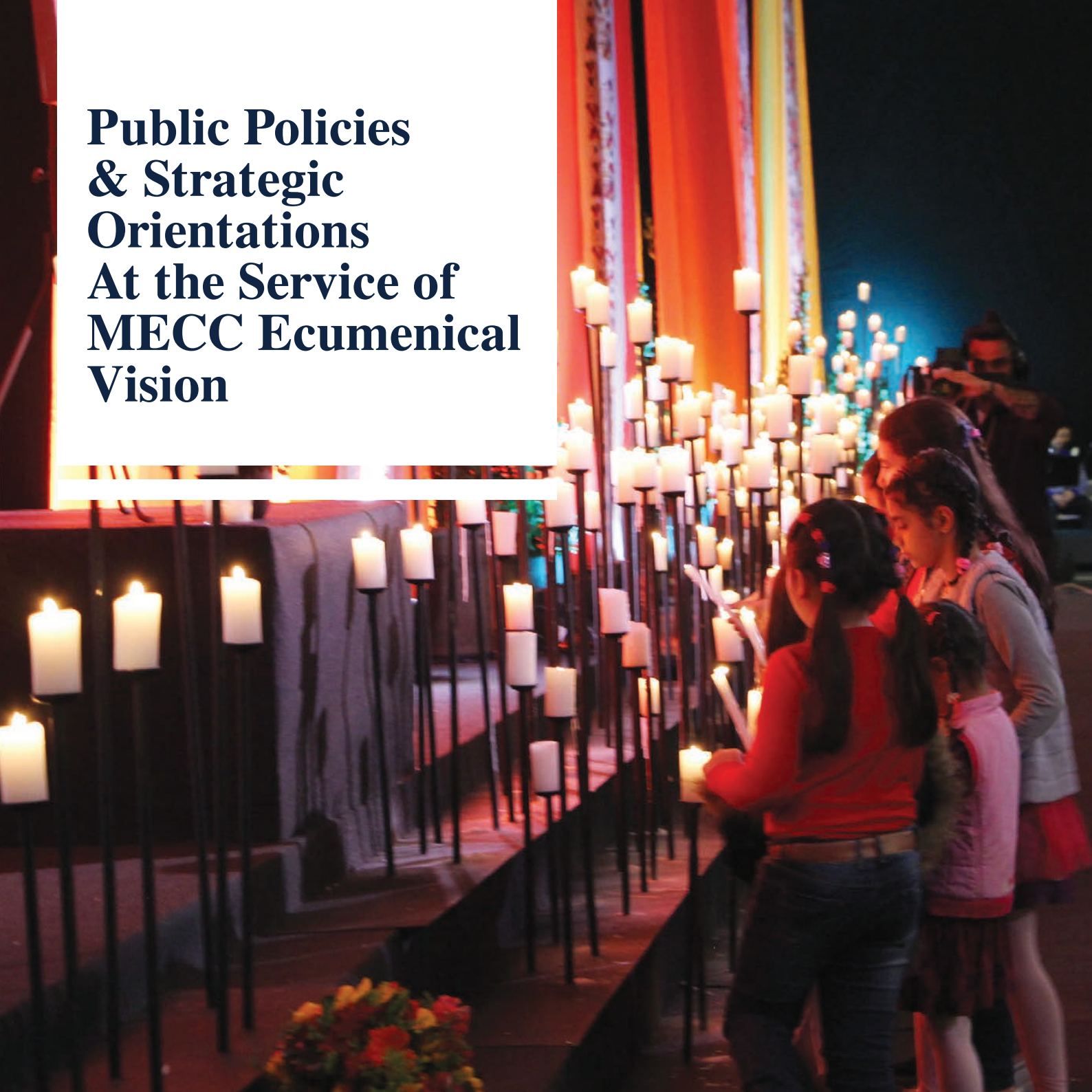
- Evangelical Synod of the Nile
- Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East
- National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
- National Evangelical Union of Lebanon
- Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- National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

Catholic churches (7):

- Maronite Syriac Church of Antioch
- Greek Catholic Melkite Church
- Chaldean Catholic Church of Babylon
- Syrian Catholic Church of Antioch
- Coptic Catholic Church
- Armenian Catholic Church
- Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem



**Public Policies
& Strategic
Orientations
At the Service of
MECC Ecumenical
Vision**





MECC- remains true to its mission as a fervor attendant of Ecumenism Memory and a Dialogue of Love. In 2020, MECC enters its forty-six years and despite complex geopolitical circumstances, and global, regional & local challenges it is determined to continuing and leading the theological & ecumenical reflection & promotion in the Middle-East, a mission that mainly consists of strengthening the foundations of ecumenical education, communication and networking, and developing dialogue and just peace initiatives. MECC shall continue to sustain its Ecumenical, Humanitarian & Development efforts towards helping the most vulnerable meet their basic needs & rights. In fact, such efforts are made possible thanks to the continuous confidence and generous contributions from Member Churches, Ecumenical and other Global Partners; MECC recognizes the key role played by partners in pursuing and achieving noble objectives that aim at upholding mankind and the earth as God's valuable creations.

Responding to protracted crisis in the Middle-East and to the multi-layered internal & external challenges, did not deter MECC's ecumenical resolve to become a strategic enabler and a public policies influencer in the ecumenical and public spheres. Today, MECC defined its own Theory of Change and the new strategy sets the foundations for an integrated horizontal approach that could create & optimize synergies between Ecumenism and Humanitarian/Development Nexus and also between Departments, Affiliates, Sectors, Projects & Activities. This end-goal depends on a strong active leadership, and carrying out instrumental organizational development that nurtures a culture of innovation, governance & strategic planning and on setting the foundation for a sustainable financial resources & mechanisms. A new path has also been shaped for the way MECC plans & uses communication; there is a resolve to move towards a "communication for development" approach combined with the science & power of data in order to have a sustainable & measureable impact, creating constructive narratives and enforcing positive perception and behavioral change, based on solid theological & ecumenical foundations and principles of human dignity. Moreover, the Middle East Council of Churches' decision to consolidate its regional ecumenical reach is paramount and is committed to making "Churches Voices" heard in all regional & international forums. Taking part, along with our partners, in new dynamics based on "partnership in citizenship" that embrace diversity could only strengthen the apostolic mission of Christians, witness and constructive role in the Middle-East. Such dynamics could also pave the way for a cross-cultural fertilization and a "thought transference" of values despite ideological and religious differences.

MECC recognizes the toll of the COVID 19 Pandemic on the whole of humanity, advanced economies and developing nations alike. This pandemic is bringing new theological & ecumenical challenges and proved the fragility of many governance systems and the frail resilience of most socio-economic models. This novel threat is dreadfully fueling tensions among greater economies; moral bearings, ethics and human rights are being continuously challenged. Additionally, vast digital transformation is forced on all of us and disruptions at all levels & sectors are becoming greater by the day; new technologies are changing the way we communicate, work and interact.

MECC with its ecumenical partners, is reflecting on this new turning point in the history of humankind, and feels it has a prophetic & moral obligation to adapt swiftly, look into our future normal, innovate and transform itself to contribute towards a new model- a Catalyst for Change- that helps societies regain back their resilience and, equally important, evolve into viable communities that steer away from consumerism and greedy individualism, communities that work to reinforce the values that matter most for the Common and Greater Good.

The MECC Executive Committee meeting

“Whoever trusts in God is not ashamed” (Psalm 70:1)

The Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches held its third meeting at the headquarters of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Atchana-Bikfaya, in Lebanon, on 22-23 January 2019. It was headed by His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church and president of the Council for the Eastern Orthodox family, His Beatitude Cardinal Mar Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon for Chaldeans and president of the Council for the Catholic family, Right Rev. Dr. Habib Badr, president of the National Evangelical Union of Lebanon and president of the Council for the Evangelical family, and His Beatitude Youhanna X Yazigi, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and president of the Council for the Orthodox family, who apologized for not attending the meeting due to health conditions. On the first day, prior to the launching of the executive committee work, after the opening prayer and the remembrance of Coptic Orthodox Bishop Bishoy of Damietta and Kafr El-Sheikh, a theological-ecumenical conference entitled “Just Ask for Justice” (Deuteronomy 20:16-18) was held. It was moderated by the Director of the Higher Institute of Religious Studies at St. Joseph University father Edgard El-Haybe where the following speakers intervened:

Prof. Daniel Ayouch, professor at the University of Balamand lectured on “Justice and Equity - A Written and Theological Approach”, Rev. Pastor Najlaa Kassab president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches & Director of the Christian Education Department at the National Evangelic Synod of Syria and Lebanon made an intervention on “Justice- Church and ecumenical approach”, and Dr. Melhem Khalaf President of the Farah Al-Atta Foundation tackled “The Concept of Moderation - Legal and Civil Approach”,

The meeting thus called the members to approve the agenda, ratify the previous Executive Committee meeting’s minutes held at the Antonine University in Baabda, Lebanon, on 25-26 January 2018, and read the letter of the Lebanese MP Neemat Efreem addressed to the Executive Committee, calling the Council to pray for initiatives of peace and stability in the Middle East. Dr. Souraya Bechealany, Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, presented her report which focused on:

1. Preparing the vision, mission and objectives of the council and defining the policies that guide its work and programs.
2. Launching the Theological & Ecumenical Department, and the Communication and Public Relations Department.
3. Improving the relief service, including it within the circle of Diakonia and updating the strategy of the Palestinian refugees’ services.
4. Launching the archiving and documentation process.
5. Stimulating the representation of MECC in the international, regional and local communities and forums.
6. Following-up on administrative and financial policies and procedures in context of the institutionalization of the council.
7. Drawing-up a sustainable funding plan to fortify the council and to strengthen its financial capabilities.

After discussing Dr. Bechealany’s report, the executive committee approved and endorsed the report of the secretary general. The committee also agreed on the Anglican family’s nomination of the reverend Refaat Fekri Said, president of the synod of the Evangelical Nile in Egypt to be the Associate Secretary General of the council on behalf of the Evangelical Church family.

The first day ended with an ecumenical prayer service on the occasion of the week of prayer for the unity of churches with the participation of His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius Youssef III Younan, Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church, His Beatitude Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, His Excellency Joseph Spiteri, Apostolic Nuncio to Lebanon as well as a number of bishops, pastors, priests, nuns and a number of believers from different churches, in the church of St. Severios the great at the headquarter of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East.

On the second day, the executive committee reviewed the reports of the MECC Theological and Ecumenical Department, the Communication and Public Relations Department, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), and the financial report of the council. The committee approved the reports and invited all departments to proceed with their tasks according to the presented program.



The committee stressed on the following:

First, participants raised their prayers for the return to normalcy in the constitutional institutions in Lebanon especially regarding the formation of the Government, the establishment of peace in Syria and a safe and dignified return for the displaced to their homeland, the reestablishment of peace and security in Iraq and the return of its uprooted sons to their homeland, the establishment of the Palestinian State according to international resolutions and the return of refugees preserving their national identity. Participants rejected the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, supported Jordan's stability, and praised the opening of the Christ Cathedral as well as the Al-Fatah Al-Alim Mosque in Egypt which was an indication of national unity. The committee called as well for the intensification of dialogue efforts towards the unification of the island of Cyprus.

Second, participants called the international community and the Arab world to put to use all connections and references to release the kidnapped bishops Yohana Ibrahim and Boulos Yaziji, as well as all the kidnapped priests and secularists. The participants also condemned all forms of extremism and terrorism and hoped for a cooperation among churches and Islamic authorities, to develop a rational religious discourse built on the values of love, peace, social justice and dialogue, and to develop a roadmap for collaboration in the formulation of the identity within civil states that respect pluralism and diversity.

Third, the participants deplored the unjust and vicious attack led by one of the Zionist institutions on the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Occupied Palestine.

The Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) ended thanking his Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II—Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church for generously hosting the meeting. The participants finally thanked the Lord Jesus for uniting them in love, and renewed their hope in the Lord who is “the source of all hope and consolation”. They confirmed that they are confident, that He is guiding their work so they can continue their common testimony for the God of love, mercy and peace. They also declared that they stand in solidarity with the sons and daughters of the Eastern Churches, who bear martyrdom to the Lord Jesus amid the challenges, because “whoever trusts in God is not ashamed” (Psalm 70: 1).

“Pope Francis Received a Delegation from the Middle East Council of Churches

Dr. Bechealany: “The world awaits a prophetic voice in the face of rising waves of populism, racism, nationalism and extremism”

The cause of Christian presence in the Middle East is now in the hands of the Vatican after His Holiness Pope Francis held a 40-minute meeting at the Vatican with MECC Secretary General Dr. Souraya Bechealany who headed a delegation that included Rev. Fr Gaby Hachem director of MECC Theological and Ecumenical Department, Fr. Roupheal Zougheib National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Lebanon, and Mr Ziad El Sayegh MECC Policies and Communication Advisor. During the meeting, they all discussed the situation of Christians in the Middle East region.

Dr. Bechealany presented the history of MECC and its ecumenical mission to the Pope, thanking him for launching exceptional initiatives to strengthen ecumenical work and support witness to Jesus Christ as a servant of human dignity. Dr. Bechealany also stressed the substantiality of the “Kairos Middle East Towards Churches Global Compact” (KCGC) process, which carries with it a filial convergence with the Pope’s vision and his apostolic positions at this extremely delicate period in the history of the Middle East and the world. The Secretary General asked the Pope for his Apostolic Blessing, pledging to complete the process of KCGC before the next General Assembly. Moreover, the Secretary General emphasized that Christians are not a minority and are not in need of any protection adding that by their testimony, they are building bridges with their partners from all religions in the region and the world.



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MECC Partners' Meeting: Towards Policies for Human Dignity

MECC Partners met on May 6 and 7, 2019 in the Dhour Chweir Evangelical Conference Center – Lebanon. The meeting gathered representatives from the four ecclesiastical families, the Executive Committee members, diplomats and MECC partners from all around the world as well as active members of local and international humanitarian organizations.

His Beatitude Cardinal Mar Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon for Chaldeans and President of the Middle East Council of Churches for the Catholic Family, addressed a letter read by Auxiliary Bishop Robert Saeed Jarjis during the opening session. In the letter, he gave his blessings to MECC and all the participants and insisted that “Now, more than ever, the Churches of the Middle East need to unify their vision especially regarding the Christian presence in the region”. He also added that “Partners will play the role of the mediator between Christians and churches in the region and their brothers and sisters in Christ everywhere in the world”.

Reverend Dr Habib Badr: “Our mission is to defeat Hell”

After the opening session, a panel discussion also entitled “Towards Policies for Human Dignity” has been held. It involved Rev. Dr Habib Badr, President of the MECC Evangelical Family, and Mr. Ziad El Sayegh, MECC Policies and Communication Advisor, and was moderated by Father Rouphael Zgheib, National Director of the Lebanese Missionary Pontifical Society. Rev. Badr took the floor first, stating that “Our mission is to defeat Hell guided by the example Jesus Christ has set for us”. “Hell is not only limited to death, it is everywhere: in poverty, war, suffering, and illness”, he highlighted.

Tveit: “Hundreds of millions of Christians from all around the world are paying attention to what happens in this region in particular”

In his speech, delivered by Ms Carla Khijoyan World Council of Churches' programme executive for the Middle East, Rev Dr Olav Tveit WCC General Secretary stated that “Hundreds of millions of Christians from all around the world are paying attention to



what happens in the Middle East region and commend the efforts made to establish just peace”.

Tveit also praised MECC for choosing a theme focusing on human dignity, for this year's partners' meeting. He considered that human dignity is “an intellectual bridge between the worldly language used by media outlets and the theological language adopted by churches”.

Dr Souraya Bechealany: MECC is at the service of life

During her speech, Dr Souraya Bechealany, MECC Secretary General stated that “Despite all the painful experiences, 2018 ended with a sign of hope”. She added that this meeting will reflect faith and hope through all the achievements made by MECC between May 2018 and April 2019, to be at the service of life.

Bechealany put forth MECC action plan and defined the 4 strategic axes as follows:

- 1- Strengthen relations between Christians by promoting ecumenical initiatives and common witness and by being at the service of marginalized communities.
- 2- Establish interchurch dialogue and take prophetic stands on regional issues and developments.
- 3- Improving communication between Christians and their partners in the different Middle Eastern societies. Promoting dialogue and cooperation between Christians and Muslims for the sake of inclusive citizenship, social justice, and human rights.
- 4- Make use of social media to promote the ecumenical spirit, and of education and communication to influence public opinion on the regional and international scales.

The Secretary General also talked about the different activities undertaken by MECC departments before giving the floor to each department to present its report, its achievements, and future projects. Then, the departments' directors and the partners discussed future projects and ways to support them.

“Kairos Middle East Towards Churches Global Compact Comes to Life

During the Partners' meeting, “Kairos Middle East Towards Churches Global Compact” process was presented by Fr Gaby Hachem, Director of the MECC Theological and Ecumenical Department, Mr. Ziad El Sayegh, MECC Policies and Communication Advisor and Fr Rouphael Zougheib, National Director of the Lebanese Missionary Pontifical Society. This project is a rescue initiative targeting Christians in the Middle East whose future has become threatened. It highlights the role played by churches to preserve identities, serve the Christian mission, and promote the living-together with Muslims. This initiative aims at strengthening cooperation between the Middle East Council of Churches and churches from all around the world in order to draft a white paper tackling the main issues in the region. The draft white paper is supposed to include recommendations, after several studies that will be conducted in 4 stages, in 8 countries among which Arab Gulf states.

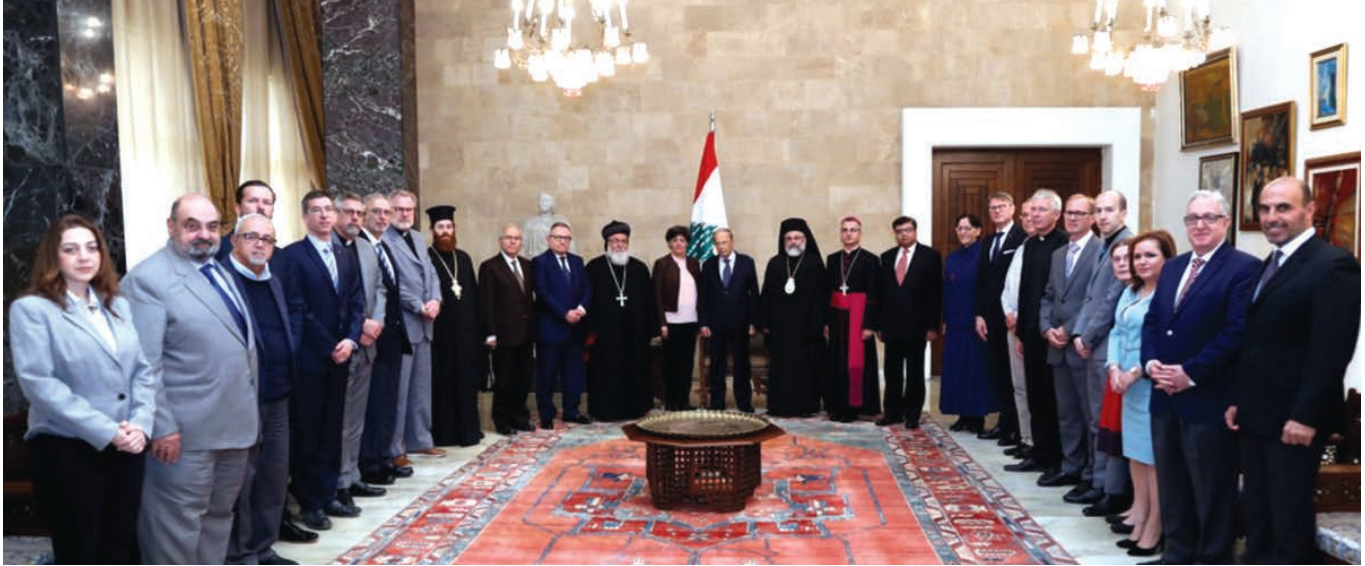


Father Gaby Hachem

During this panel, Father Gaby Hachem showcased the importance of renewing the Church's approach to humanitarian relief, stating that it should transcend human rights to focus on Christian anthropology which considers that every human being is created in the image of Christ. Hachem explained that the document will open the way for all churches to search together for solutions to Christian problems, stressing that the biggest challenge is to convince churches to abide by a unified document. “This project is an attempt to reach a prophetic position in order to serve the people and help them make their decisions,” Hachem added.

Rudelmar: “Failing to change the churches course of action will lead to a disaster”

During his intervention, Mr. Rudelmar Bueno De Faria, ACT Alliance General Secretary, stated that all international organizations, among which the UN, are facing a dilemma due to the rapidly changing environment in the Middle East. He deplored the absence of collaboration between churches which according to him, stay silent before the violations of human dignity. He insisted that “the intersection of religious fundamentalism with political and economic fundamentalism creates a dilemma” and that “churches are part of the problem”. Rudelmar warned that “Failing to change the churches' course of action will lead to a disaster that will mainly be detrimental to the most underprivileged groups”.



President Aoun to MECC Delegation: “Peace on Paper is Useless if People Have No Faith in it”

Aoun: “Lebanon Would Never Survive with Half a Million Palestinian Refugees and 1.6 million Syrian Refugees”

“Lebanon would never survive with half a million Palestinian refugees and 1.6 million Syrian refugees because its demography will completely change”, said the Lebanese President General Michel Aoun during a meeting held on May 9-2019 at the presidential palace, with a large group of MECC Delegates and Partners at the conclusion of their annual meeting.

President Aoun emphasized his constant pursuit to strengthen the Christian presence in the East, backing the efforts of MECC in the same direction. Aoun stressed that “even if governments establish peace among themselves, war can be renewed among people”. He considered “peace on paper to be useless if people have no faith in it, pointing out that “Israel has built a wall around Jerusalem and at the border, because it believes that it protects it”.

Aoun called on the MECC to help the Lebanese government resolve the Syrians refugees’ issue “by persuading Western countries to accept the refugees return to their countries as soon as possible, after Lebanon’s population density has reached 600 people per square kilometer, which is usually an urban density not a country density”. President Aoun pointed out that “Israel has declared that the Palestinian refugees would remain where they are” and warned against the negative effects of the economic, security and educational presence of refugees on Lebanon, which he can no longer afford”.

Furthermore, President Aoun declared that “the problem is complicated in relation to Lebanon and the Arab countries because of the US decision to annex Jerusalem to Israel, and to declare Israel a Jewish state, a national homeland for the Jews, which decision we consider racist”. “Over time, Israel has expelled Christians and Muslims, thus greatly threatening peace,” he added.

As for the Christian presence in the East, President Aoun pointed out that although Christians had become a minority in the East, they lived in peace in the past. However, “With the invasion of terrorism, they have become the least minority, and this is very unfortunate.”

Dr. Souraya Bechealany made a speech, saying that the delegation which includes bishops, priests, monks and laymen, came to support MECC’s plans and projects and to come out with a global compact for church policies that would affect local and international decisions, in view of preaching human values and protecting human dignity and freedoms in the region and the world.

World Conference on Xenophobia, Racist and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration at the Vatican



Fear of the other, racism, populist nationalism and what has come to be known as xenophobia in the context of global migration all led to a new crisis that adds to the crises of the world today. This was the topic and the title of the conference organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the World Council of Churches in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity between the 18th and 20th of September 2019 in Rome.

The Middle East Council of Churches was represented by Mr Ziad Sayegh, MECC Policies and Communication advisor, who stated in his speech that “Jesus Christ did not discriminate among people; his choice of Apostles was based on equality and diversity (cultural & social). 12 Apostles Christianised the old world, and never considered themselves a minority group nor ever felt the need to take shelter under someone’s wings.” He added that “Jesus, along with his early Apostles, created 2 paradigm shifts: The first is that they brought down the social foundations of classicism, there are no minority nor a majority group, therefore underscoring the equality of humanity before God. The second, was the shift from reliance and dependency”.

MECC visits His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III in Jordan



His Beatitude Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine and Jordan, received Dr. Souraya Bechealany, MECC Secretary General, at the Patriarchate headquarters in Jordan.

During the visit, the Secretary General briefed His Beatitude on MECC current projects and progress, as well as its future activities. Moreover, the two parties discussed the work of MECC office in Jordan and the role of the council in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Meeting with Cardinal Sako in Ankawa- Iraq



During a visit to Iraq on June 9, 2019, a MECC delegation met with Patriarch Raphael Sako at the patriarchal summer headquarters in Ankawa – Erbil and examined ways to encourage Christians to stay in the region and communicate.

The participants also discussed the Youth Leadership Training, the Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling Program and methods to strengthen the role of MECC in Iraq.



Global Conference of Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi

The Middle East Council of Churches participated in the Global Conference of Human Fraternity on February 4, 2019 in Abu Dhabi, represented by Dr Souraya Bechealany, MECC Secretary General. The conference was held in conjunction with the historical visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, Pope of Peace, to the UAE and the Human Fraternity Meeting with His Eminence Dr Ahmad Al Tayyeb, chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders and Grand Imam of Al Azhar Al Sharif, Imam of Moderation. In her statement, Bechealany declared: "We believe in the extreme importance of this initiative, for similar meetings between religious leaders lead to a change in extremist and intolerant mindsets". MECC believes in such effective and valuable initiatives, which are much appreciated. We would like to thank Dr Sultan Faisal Al Remeithi, the new Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Elders for his warm invitation and constant support and interest in shedding light on MECC's ecumenical message.

MECC Presidents' Meeting Discussed Strategies to Face Various Challenges



The MECC Presidents' meeting, called for by the Secretary General Dr. Souraya Bechealany was held at the Patriarchal Monastery of Saint Elias Shwayya, graciously received by his Beatitude Patriarch John X.

Along with His Beatitude Youhanna X Yazigi, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and MECC President of the Council for the Orthodox Family, the meeting was attended by His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Cardinal Mar Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon for Chaldeans and MECC President for the Catholic Family, and Right Reverend Dr. Habib Badr, President of the National Evangelical Union of Lebanon and MECC President Council for the Evangelical Family.

The meeting was also attended by members of the Council's Strategic Support Group, namely, His Excellency Bishop Paul Sayah, Dr. Jean Salmanian and Dr. Michel Abs.

The participants discussed issues relating to the Christian presence in the Middle East, and ways of facing the various challenges, to protect the dignity of the human being in the Middle East and to consolidate the concept of citizenship in the region. The Secretary General outlined the strategies that the Council will adopt to achieve this, through an integrated project based on a unified vision among all ecclesial families. Moreover, The Presidents were briefed on the financial and administrative measures taken by the General Secretariat to enhance MECC's capabilities at the theological, humanitarian and communication level.

The participants also decided on the venue and date of the next General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches and the Executive Committee meeting in 2020.

MECC Visits the Orthodox Archbishop, the Maronite Bishop, and the Theological School in Cyprus

A delegation from the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) visited His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus and discussed with him the importance of restoring MECC's effective role in advocating for the causes of Christians in the Middle East at all levels.

His Beatitude Chrysostomos gave his blessings to Dr Bechealany and MECC delegation and offered them guidance on how to better serve mankind and uphold peace in the region. He also stressed on the importance of Cyprus' role in building bridges with Europe, and thus contributing to a wider cooperation. Furthermore, the delegation met with His Eminence Youssef Soueif, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus. During the meeting, both parties agreed on further collaboration between the Maronite Church of Cyprus and MECC, especially regarding common ecumenical concerns.

The visit to Cyprus also included a stop at the Theological School of the Church of Cyprus, which resulted in an agreement on further coordination and scholarly collaboration with MECC.



With the His Eminence Youssef Soueif, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus



With His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos II



Visiting the Theological Institute, with Dean Fr Kyprianos Kountouris

MECC at the 6th Annual Assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace

"The Role of Religions in Promoting Tolerance" - 10 December 2019

The Middle East Council of Churches, represented by Dr Souraya Bechealany, the council's Secretary General, participated in the sixth annual Assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. In her speech, Dr Bechealany thanked His Eminence Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah and the UAE for the warm invitation. She commended this groundbreaking initiative adding that "This event is taking place after an unprecedented meeting between His Holiness Pope Francis and Dr Ahmed Al Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar, on this good land, during which they signed the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together and inaugurated the cornerstone for a church and mosque".

Bechealany went on to say: "Allow me to highlight a fundamental principle in the Christian faith recorded in the Holy Gospel: when Jesus Christ meets a Samaritan woman at the well, he tells her "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... but in spirit and truth". Religious monuments are the common heritage of all civilizations, religions and races. They constitute the heritage of all humanity. They represent our common civilization as human beings and what our ancestors left us. Protecting them lies at the heart of preserving our humanity, our human history, and our Arab and global history. This legacy is a mixture of civilizations: whoever touches it, harms theirself, their ancestors, and their humanity. And whoever preserves and restores it, upholds humanity and worships God, because by honoring people they honor, love and praise God."

MECC in the Consortium for Inclusive Citizenship and Diversity

The Middle East Council of Churches had participated in the meetings of "Wellton Park" initiative, and the "Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies", and "Adyan" Foundation; represented by the General Secretary Dr. Souraya Bechaalany, Father Gaby Hashem as Director of the Theological and Ecumenical Department, accompanied also by the Policy and Communication Advisor Ziad Al Sayegh, they joined the Consortium Working Group held in Abu Dhabi to discuss the

Charter for Inclusive Citizenship and Diversity in the Arab Countries that will be launched in 2020.

On the occasion, the delegation had a special meeting with the President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, who focused on interfaith dialogue and the role of citizenship fostering diversity, as well as ways of cooperation between the council and the forum to promote a culture of dialogue and preserve human dignity.



in Abu Dhabi September 9, 2019

MECC at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Middle East Commission (EMOK)



The Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches accepted the invitation of the Evangelical Middle East Commission (EMOK) to participate in its annual meeting that was held in Berlin on 11 September 2019. During the event, she gave a speech in which she presented the strategies adopted by MECC to strengthen Christian presence in the Middle east, as well as its activities and ecumenical relief services. She also put forward ways of cooperation with various partners from the Western church in order to support the churches in the Middle East region, which is the birthplace of Jesus Christ and cradle of Christianity.

The Crucial Role of Local Faith Actors Delivering the Global Compact on Refugees

A Conference at the American University of Beirut (AUB)



A conference entitled “ The Crucial Role of Local Faith Actors Delivering the Global Compact on Refugees” was held on Tuesday, June 18, 2019 at the Issam Fares Institute - American University of Beirut. The conference emphasized the role of local faith actors in addressing the refugee crisis in host countries. It also highlighted the need to support these key players to enable them to continue their work aiming at easing the burden of the crisis on host communities especially in Lebanon which is one of the main host countries. The conference also aimed at finding common ground to deal with more than 65 million refugees around the world, including millions of displaced persons.

The Middle East Council of Churches was represented during the event by Ziad El Sayegh, MECC Policies and Communication Advisor. During a panel discussion, Mr Sayegh stated that “The Global Compact on Refugees is built on the obligation to respect human dignity, establish peace in society and implement justice. These are fundamental values in all religions”. “It is disappointing to see that we are still stuck in a loop of suicidal political choices, instead of adopting public policies based on respecting human dignity and endeavoring to lighten the burden of human misery”, he said.

Speaking of extremism, Ziad El Sayegh pointed out that “today, across the world, and in the Middle East, there is a rise of nationalist extremism and xenophobia”. He insisted that “the far-right may have not succeeded in monopolizing the elections in Europe, but right-wing parties made a significant progress that reached 3%, which is a considerable threat”. He finally added “We must not go into the executioner/victim logic, because both refugees and host communities are tormented by this crisis”.

The Middle East Council of Churches in Egypt



From the 19th till the 22nd of December 2019, a delegation from the Middle East Council of Churches visited His Holiness Pope Tawadros II Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark at the papal headquarters in Cairo. Dr. Bechealany thanked His Holiness for his constant support for MECC and briefed him on the steps taken to relaunch the Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East (ATIME), after His Holiness gave her his blessings when she had visited him one year ago. They also discussed the reestablishment and operationalization of the Theological and Ecumenical Department (TED) that has started implementing various programs that promote the ecumenical spirit, most importantly the preparation of the “Kairos Middle East Towards Churches Global Compact” white paper.

His Holiness Pope Tawadros II emphasized that this white paper should precisely take into account others’ opinions and their positive understanding of its content. The delegation continued its tour and visited Rev. Dr Andrea Zaki, President of the Evangelical Church in Egypt, His Beatitude Patriarch Ibrahim Ishaq, Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria, at the patriarchal headquarters in Cairo as well as His Eminence Bishop Mounir Hanna, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East.

At the end of its visit, the delegation met with His Eminence Bishop Krikor Augustine Koussa, Catholic Armenian Bishop of Alexandria, at the diocese in Cairo, and discussed with him the historical role of Armenians in Egypt as well as the status of the Armenian Church and its effective role in MECC.

MECC SG in Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy:

Christians of the Middle East are not minorities and don't need protections



The MECC, represented by its Secretary General Dr. Souraya Bechealany, participated in the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy which was held in Bologna on October 3, 2019, under the motto "Freedom of Religion or Belief as a Pillar of Democracy".

The opening ceremony was launched with a speech by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz, followed by a letter by the MECC Secretary General Dr. Souraya Bechealany, addressed to participants from around 30 countries, including politicians and activists in the human rights, freedom of religion and belief, and interfaith dialogue...

The Secretary General during the conference, claimed that "Policy makers and Religious leaders are together partners to protect the human dignity". Moreover, she stressed on the importance of the Christian role in the East. "Christians of the Middle East are not minorities and don't need protections. Together with the International community we will deploy efforts to save the freedom of religion as a Pillar of democracy". "It is time to be convinced that no peace without justice. It is time to tackle the root causes of the religious intolerance", Dr. Bechealany added.

MECC in the international meeting Peace with No Borders, Sant Egidio Madrid

The MECC, represented by Co-Secretary General Michael Spiro, participated in the 33rd international meeting entitled "Peace with No Borders", convening in Madrid- Spain, from September 15 to 17, 2019. The meeting, which was organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Archdiocese of Madrid, gathered more than 400 religious personalities from 60 countries

of five continents and thousands of pilgrims. The organizers sought to promote an open dialogue between representatives of the world's major religions, intellectual leaders and representatives of civil society, with the conviction that today more than ever, religions are called to work together for peace, conflict prevention and dialogue to rebuild human fraternity, in a divided world, with the increasing exclusionary nationalisms, xenophobic and violent rhetoric.



MECC Participated in the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, in Washington



The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), represented by Rev. Dr Habib Badr, President of the National Evangelical Union in Lebanon and of the MECC Evangelical Family, participated in the "Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom" conference, which was organized by the US Department of State from the 15th to 18th of July 2019 at its headquarters in Washington DC. Rev. Dr Badr made a plea during all his meetings, particularly when he met with Bishop Phillip Mounstephen, the Anglican Primate of Truro, for MECC to be considered as the main interlocutor and reference when discussing any issues related to the Christians of the Middle East, or when making decisions regarding their present and future presence.

In the same context, Rev. Dr. Badr stated during an interview with Al Hurra TV that "persecutions around the world against all religions, especially Christians, have reached an unacceptable level".



MECC Attended FELM International Consultation Workshop



The Middle East Council of Churches represented by its director of “Diakonia” department Mr. Samer Laham attended the International consultation workshop from May 15 to 19, 2019, at the invitation of Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission “FELM” which celebrates the 160th anniversary of its founding. The main objective of the workshop was to review the FELM strategic plan from 2017 to 2022 with 26 partners from different countries. The program was based on interactive workshops that divided participants by continents, regions and topics. In this context, MECC shared its mission and vision as well as its values through open plenary discussions. Its participation was very effective and positive in all the working groups and opened the door to strengthen the relationship with FELM in the future. In turn, FELM expressed its high appreciation of its partnership with MECC which began two years ago, and emphasized on the common values and objectives that should be invested more in the future.

MECC Signed an Ecumenical Memorandum of Understanding in Geneva for the Sake of Peace and Justice in the Middle East and the Whole World



At the invitation of Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, the World Council of Churches’ general secretary, Dr. Souraya Bechealany, MECC secretary general, participated in many ecumenical meetings held between the 2nd and 4th of July 2019 at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Geneva.

The meetings gathered the general secretaries of regional ecumenical organizations (REOs) and aimed at identifying and discussing common concerns such as peace in the Middle East, climate justice, racism, and the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. In addition, the participants set joint action plans in order to strengthen cooperation and communication between them. Furthermore, the organizations signed a joint memorandum of understanding in which they agreed that “the ecumenical movement is one, that it is rooted in the churches and that it is wider than the ecumenical bodies they represent”. Moreover, they affirmed that “their relationship is one of partnership based on their common faith and commitment”, and agreed to establish a group comprised of the general secretaries of the organizations for “the purpose of mutual sharing, joint reflection and action.” The group is expected to meet once a year at the invitation of the WCC general secretary.

Spreading the ecumenical spirit in the Middle East:

CHALLENGES & ACHIEVEMENTS

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The Theological and Ecumenical Department (TED) has mainly focused during 2019 on conducting studies and reflection to spread the ecumenical spirit and raise theological awareness in the Diakonia and Communication Departments.

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KAIROS Middle East: Towards Churches Global Compact



The main project of the year was undoubtedly elaborating with a group of experts, an ecumenical document on the theological meaning of the Christian Presence in the Middle East, while taking into consideration the geopolitical context. This document is entitled "KAIROS Middle East: Towards Churches Global Compact". By coming to light, the project posed several challenges such as confronting the actual critical political and economic situation in the Middle East, involving various international ecumenical partners from different countries & churches as well as securing the required funds for the project.

As for the expected results, they can mainly be summarized in one sentence:

Issuing a unique common statement by the churches about the theological meaning of the Christian Presence in the ME based on a reading of the past, with the aim of reaching a common vision on the present & the future of Christian witness.

Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling

The main motive that led to the launching of the Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling program was the fact that many Church ministers were deeply affected by the political & social violence during the different wars in the region. Add to this the need to build an ecumenical network among ministers to help them assist the population through the same trauma healing process.

The main challenges faced during this program are:

- Engaging professional psychotherapists and experienced spiritual counselors to bring them together forming one dynamic team
- Committing the trainees on the regional level & ensuring ecumenical, spiritual & human cohesion
- Convincing Church leaders of the objectives of the program and the criteria adopted to choose the adequate candidates

The expected results are as follows:

- Empowering affected ministers & training them on how to resist traumas & violent shocks
- Building an ecumenical network & establishing practical collaboration in order to face crises caused by wars, violence, and life's hardships.

Achievements in 2018-2019 & impacts on beneficiaries

- Supporting ministers from local churches in Lebanon and Iraq and engaging them in the Trauma Healing & Spiritual Counseling process
- Building an ecumenical network and establishing sustainable communication







Ministers Leadership Training

Church Ministers need advanced & soft skills training as well as technical support to improve their ministry & service. For that reason, the TED department decided to launch this program despite the several challenges that it has faced such as persuading ministers to attend and commit to the different training sessions despite their busy schedules and other pastoral responsibilities (time, mobility, availability). Collecting the required funds and finding committed experts eager to fulfill this mission were also challenging tasks. By organizing the leadership training, the TED department expected church ministers to:

- Benefit from the skills acquired during the training and improve their lives, ministry, communication skills, and collaboration.
- Transfer acquired abilities to believers and train & empower them.

Youth Ecumenical Program

Gathering, training and empowering young people as well as consolidating the ecumenical network in order to improve youth service and communication within churches have always been urgently needed to promote the young spirit in the Church and provide it with future perspectives. The program aimed at gathering thousands of young people committed to church life from different countries and motivating them to serve their churches and countries even more actively.

This gathering's objective was to provide young people with an opportunity to live a particular ecumenical experience by meeting, discussing, developing & sharing experiences with each other which was a great way to spread the ecumenical spirit.



Interfaith Relations

This program fulfills the need to ensure the representation of members churches in international regional & local interreligious platforms. It also creates a space where it is possible to meet persons from different religions who have other beliefs & share with them faith experiences which allows participants to get to know each other better. This contributes to building bridges between believers belonging to different religions and launching joint projects to confront hate speeches, violent actions, and discrimination in the different sectors of social & political life. The main challenge faced during this program was mainly promoting an inclusive concept of citizenship to better achieve coexistence and collaboration and uphold human rights. The expected results can be summarized as such:

- Establishing an interfaith network among believers to strengthen solidarity and improve peaceful coexistence.
- Train religious & young leaders in the interfaith field & empower them to help them fulfill their missions.

Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East (ATIME)

Gathering different theological schools and institutes, improving theological reflection, learning, and pastoral collaboration between member churches and establishing an ecumenical network between deans, teachers & students are all required to ensure sustainable cooperation between theological institutes and faculties from Middle Eastern countries and churches as well as strengthen ecumenical relations and promote ecumenical witness. For that reason, the Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East (ATIME) was relaunched with the blessing of their Holinesses, Beatitudes and Eminences the heads of the Middle Eastern churches. The ATIME relaunch took place at the invitation of the Middle East Council of Churches that gathers four ecclesiastical families (Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical and Catholic families) from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Irak.

The Theological and Ecumenical Department (TED) strived to make this project possible. The Association gathered for the first time on 17 May 2019 at St Augustin center in Lebanon, after having suspended its activities for 10 years. The members of the association i.e. 18 deans, directors and representatives of several institutes and faculties have all participated in the meeting. The executive secretariat, which includes representatives from all the ecclesiastical families, was elected.

The relaunch of ATIME reflects the importance of joint ecumenical work in theological education to promote the common mission and consolidate fraternal relations. It also highlights the importance of a unified ecumenical vision that aims at fulfilling the needs of churches in the Middle East during this critical phase of history, through cooperation in these three fields: education, research, and care.





International Ecumenical Relations

Needs

- Exchange of experience among Christians from different parts of the world as well as support & solidarity between West & East

Challenges

- Lack of global ecumenical interest and open mindedness

Results

- Sustainable ecumenical relations & communication
- Exchange of testimonies of faith, challenges & common interests

Achievements in 2018-2019 & impacts on beneficiaries

- Encouraging ecumenical visits and strengthening cooperation

Eco-Theology and care for creation

This program focuses on improving eco-theology & reflection, developing this ideology in member churches, and training them on its philosophy and programs.

The main challenge is the scarce information on the subject and the lack of churches' commitment. However, the TED is establishing an ecological database for the region and focusing on training and daily practice of eco-theology and care for creation.



List of partners based on programs

Partner's Name	Sector
Fadi Krekor Foundation Father's House for all Nations	Kairos Middle East Towards Churches Global Compact (KCGC)
Ev. Lutheran Ch / USA	Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling (TH&SC)
Danmission	TH&SC (Follow up sessions)
Bread for the World	Leadership Training
Missio - Achen	KCGC
Danmission	KCGC
Church of Sweden	-

Between Syria, Lebanon and Jordan:

TOGETHER, AT THE SERVICE OF HUMAN DIGNITY

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Nine years after the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the country is still bleeding and the scale, severity, and complexity of the needs across Syria remain overwhelming. Despite all the efforts made by the Syrian government and all humanitarian actors on the ground, it is still extremely hard to cover the needs of affected people at all levels for essential basic services are widely lacking, including health, food, education, water and sanitation. In fact, it is estimated that over 85% of Syria population are living under the line of poverty!

Based on the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview issued by the United Nations (UN) and its humanitarian partners in Syria, 11.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, 6.2 million people are internally displaced within the country, 5.7 million people are registered as refugees in neighboring countries and 8.7 million people are in need of early recovery and livelihood support. Moreover, 2.1 million children are out of school and 1.3 million are at risk of dropping out.

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From Syria, we move to Lebanon that remains at the forefront of the humanitarian response after showing serious commitment to support people who have been displaced due to the war in the neighboring country. However, the decline in assistance provided to Lebanon and its already limited resources are aggravating the insecure living conditions of refugees.

The Government of Lebanon estimates that in 2018, the country hosted 1.5 million Syrian refugees including around 1 million registered with the UNHCR; half of them are children below 18 years old, along with 31,502 Palestine refugees from Syria. Based on the statistics published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), one-third of the Lebanese population is currently considered poor.

As for Jordan, it has provided refuge to more than 1.3 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees, including 655,500 refugees registered with UNHCR, who face increasing vulnerability as their savings, assets and resources are long exhausted. Around 141,000 of these refugees live in camps, while the remaining have settled in urban and rural areas. The Syrian crisis has added strain on the country's economy and infrastructure and has put pressure on all sectors including education, health, housing, water, and electricity supply.

The present political scenarios in the region and the evolving economic crisis especially in Lebanon as well as its direct impact on the humanitarian work in Syria, represent today a major challenge for the council's humanitarian programs and for their continuity. Also, the difference between the exchange rate adopted by the banks and the rate in the market decreases the actual value of aid. Moreover, the lack of security and instability in some regions in Syria where MECC has several programs (especially in the South), also represents a major challenge causing a delay in the implementation of activities, since protecting beneficiaries and staff is a priority.



“ Achievements in 2019 & Impacts on Beneficiaries ”

- New partners joined MECC to support ERS programs due to their trust in MECC’s performance and accountability.
- Increase of the funding provided by some partners compared to previous years.
- Launch of new programs in new sectors.
- Development of the department’s human capital (improvement in the performance, new skilled staff joined MECC)
- Positive cooperation and strengthened partnerships with MECC member churches through tripartite and multilateral agreements between MECC, donors and local churches.
- Positive impact on beneficiaries, which is reflected in their testimonies and their evaluation of programs.

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During 56318, 2019 people benefited from MECC Ecumenial Relief Services (ERS)

Sector/ Country	Syria	Lebanon	Jordan
Basic needs such as food rations and health supplies	7572 Families	330 Families	210 Families
Educational programs for out-of-school students Tuition fees support program Remedial courses	4374 Families 62 Teachers	403 Families 40 Teachers	
Livelihood and early recovery programs	972	773	
Health care programs	100	1310 Medical Cosultations	
Health awareness for women	260	506	
WASH: rehabilitation of sanitary infrastructure in schools & hospitals/ health & environmental awareness	4038 Families 370 Teachers	890	
Protection / Psychosocial support	400	1453	



FROM THE HEART!

The impact of MECC programs can be measured not only through the number of beneficiaries but rather through their testimonies. The below testimonies reflect how MECC humanitarian programs, in Lebanon and Syria, made a difference in the lives of different beneficiaries:

“ My daughter is completely paralyzed. I take care of her on a permanent basis as she is still a little baby. She also suffers from acute anemia. The main motive for participating in the health awareness sessions for women was to learn the best ways to take care of my daughter and make sure she is getting proper nutrition. However, the skills that I acquired during the training exceeded my expectations as I learned the basics of first aid which is crucial to deal with any risk or accident she might be exposed to. **(MECC Syria).** ”

“ Health sector

I reached a point where I had no money left. I was left with no other option but to stop the cancer treatment, which negatively affected my mental health until I received help from MECC. Thank you is the least I can say to MECC to show my appreciation for everything it has done for me. **(MECC Syria).** ”

“ I heard of the basic nurse aid program through my friends, so I decided to join the training. I highly benefited from the sessions as they focused on many illnesses I had not heard of. I did not know about their negative effects nor how to prevent or treat them in case one of my family members got sick. The sessions on dealing with the elderly were also very beneficial. I thank all the trainers who taught me a lot. Special thanks go to MECC! **(MECC Lebanon).** ”



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Livelihood and early recovery

I am very grateful for MECC for making my dream come true. I have opened my own dairy production shop where I can practice the profession that I love. If I am ever defeated at the hands of cancer, I will not worry about my family as I know quite well that, if I die, my wife will be able to support herself and provide for our children by continuing to work in this shop. *(MECC Syria)*

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My participation in the cash-for-work program is an important opportunity provided by MECC to earn money to support my family and buy medication for my wife. Every day, I go to work filled with enthusiasm knowing that I am going to make the residents of our city happy and relieved to see it clean. The inhabitants of the city are very happy with our work. They always support us by offering us cold water and welcoming us. Some of them are now committed to throwing garbage in the specified location. *(MECC Syria)*

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Education sector

It was almost impossible for me to go back to school if not for the aid provided by MECC. I am extremely happy to attend the remedial classes. The teachers are very cooperative as they explain the lessons clearly. They never hesitate to repeat the information many times until all of us understand the lesson. *(MECC Syria)*

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At first, we did not want to go to school because we thought that the program would be very complicated and scary as attending school was totally new to us. Thanks to MECC, I can now read and write! We enjoyed some classes more than others, especially English and music The playground is a relief we cannot find anywhere else; we now have friends! I am now looking forward to enrolling in a public school in the future *(Educational program for out-of-school students/ Lebanon).*

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Basic needs program

For a long time, I have not received any in-kind ration. In fact, I am in acute need of basic items of daily life such as hygiene supplies and blankets. By receiving these relief items, I could save some money to buy food and medications. I thank all who take care of us, Thank you MECC”. (MECC Syria)

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It is very difficult to depend on assistance to survive; especially if you used to have a comfortable life. However, the respectful treatment I experienced when receiving the kit made it easier for me to accept my current situation. (MECC Syria)

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Psychological support program

I am from Iraq. I am married and have 2 children. I came to Lebanon in 2014. I had cancer and even though I got treatment and recovered, I was extremely weak and anxious about a relapse. My family was supporting and encouraging me at home, but I needed another form of encouragement. During the psychological support sessions, I found hope again as I got support from the team who were sharing the same concerns. I could open up to them, without fear, or hesitation. It gave me motive to live and stop being haunted by the idea of death and illness. I really thank the team for their understanding and support. I learned many useful skills. The wool handiwork helped me forget my problems and face the difficulties that I was constantly encountering. I really needed this new source of hope. (MECC Lebanon).

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Wash sector

I would like to thank MECC for rehabilitating WASH facilities in our school. We have been suffering for a long time because of the very bad condition of toilets, which made students, in many cases; avoid using the school bathrooms exposing themselves to many diseases. (MECC Syria)

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Analytical Reports and Research Papers Issued during 2019

Diakonia / ERS department has issued the following studies in 2019:

- Livelihood & Employment in Syria (A new study under review)
- Humanitarian Situation report in Syria (A study conducted in March 2019 and being updated periodically)
- Emergency response and preparedness plan for Syria and Lebanon established in coordination with ACT Alliance.





Lessons learned for future programs:

- Necessity to endorse and approve all MECC policies and procedures to be able to use them as a reference upon conducting assessment of MECC performance by new partners.
- Invest more in MECC through high quality trainings to fulfill the needs and requirements based on international standards.
- Discussing ways and tools to guarantee the sustainability of MECC programs according to the real needs of beneficiaries and based on donor-oriented policies in terms of targeted sectors or areas.
- Better implementation of tripartite agreements concluded with member churches (i.e. between MECC, partners and member churches).
- Necessity to secure sustainable funding to preserve the human capital of the council and avoid excessive reliance on unstable funding.
- Strengthen coordination among the different departments within the council especially between those working in the humanitarian field (MECC & DSPR).

The return of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR)

Following a Common Understanding



The DSPR Central Committee Meeting in Istanbul

One of the main highlights of 2019 was the strengthening of the collaboration and communication between the Middle East Council of Church and the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, after many years of interruption due to the tough times the council has gone through. Thanks to the intensive efforts made by both parties, the relationship finally went back to normal. The whole process was overseen by the Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches who cooperated with the executive secretary and the chairperson of the Department. These two senior executives now attend all MECC key meetings. Moreover, communication was established between the DSPR Communication Specialist and the director of the MECC Communication Department.

The launch of this new phase was possible thanks to a common understanding that was reached through a joint document determining and clarifying the relationship between the council and DSPR. This document was the result of the intensive work done by both Dr. Audeh Qawas, the executive secretary of DSPR and Dr. Ziad Sayegh, MECC Policies and Communication advisor. It was first submitted to the Presidents of the Middle East Council of Churches who endorsed it giving their blessings. Then, DSPR Central Committee unanimously approved it during its second bi-annual meeting that was held in November 2019 in Turkey and



attended by Dr. Souraya Bechealany MECC Secretary General. There are over 5 million Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East in over 60 refugee camps recognized by UNRWA. DSPR has outreach in 23 of these camps and operates outside of these camps based on a specific framework. The mandate of DSPR remains that of serving Palestinian Refugees. A Strategic Plan (2017 – 2021) was set in 2017 and included five main objectives:

- Help ensure healthy lives for Palestinian refugees and the displaced.
- Help sustain Palestinian refugees economically.
- Empower communities to help them fulfill their needs and guarantee the rights of their members.
- Advocate for the rights and needs of refugees and displaced groups.
- Ensure that DSPR remains a robust learning organization that is financially sustainable.

When DSPR set its strategic plan for 2017-2021 after consulting with the General Secretariat of MECC, it became clear that it had to develop an advocacy plan to lift the restrictions that deprive Palestinian refugees of their natural rights. DSPR was entrusted with the task of implementing this plan in Jerusalem and West Bank.

DSPR/MECC was instrumental in starting the ACT Palestine Forum. When the crisis in Syria escalated, it was one of the active founding members of the ACT Syria Lebanon Jordan Forum. Moreover, DSPR hosts ACT meetings in the premises of the Central Office in Jerusalem and the regional coordinator of ACT Alliance is based and works from there.



Gaza Strip: The Challenges

More than 2 million people are living in Gaza under blockade. This deeply worsens economic and social conditions; the rate of unemployment reached 60%; among women this percentage is even higher. Close to 80% of the population is aid-dependent, and even incapable of fulfilling its basic daily needs. Water is undrinkable and untreated sewage flows into the Mediterranean while pollution endangers most of the beaches. The sporadic fighting that continuously takes place exposes children and the general population to trauma. The UN has already stated that Gaza could become uninhabitable by 2020.

The health care program launched by DSPR includes three primary health clinics, a vocational training that targets hundreds of youngsters, both men and women, and psychosocial activities that tend to the trauma of hundreds of families.

Jerusalem and the West Bank

Due to the separation wall, the hundreds of checkpoints, and the spread of illegal Israeli settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank, the communities living close to the wall are in self-preservation mode. Therefore, DSPR and MECC try to establish agricultural infrastructure such as roads and water cisterns and focus on empowering women to help them manage profitable enterprises.

Galilee

The inequalities that the Arab Palestinian community is suffering from, after the adoption of the Jewish nation-state law, have

led to increasing disparities across the society. Therefore, DSPR launches activities and programs in Galilee which aim at healing the communities. It brings together teachers in order to raise awareness on the religious and cultural heritage of each community. It also organizes different activities that would help stop violence and trains young students on leadership and on communication with others from different communities.

Jordan

Jordan faces insurmountable economic and social challenges with the arrival of over 1.5 million Syrian refugees, in addition to the 2 million Palestinian refugees that were already living in the country. Thus, DSPR Jordan organizes a variety of health care activities including the establishment of 2 primary health clinics. It also organizes vocational trainings, offers business development opportunities aimed particularly at helping young women, and develops psychosocial programs while creating self-help groups composed of women in the Palestinian refugee camps.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, the situation is similar to that in Jordan; economic conditions have become quite difficult. The arrival of the Syrian refugees has exhausted the resources of the society and the state. The Palestinian refugees are enclosed in their camps and separated from the rest of the society whether in employment, schooling or in other areas of public life.

DSPR/MECC Lebanon is actively present in these refugee communities whether in communal centers, kindergartens, schools, or agricultural centers. In fact, it provides those communities with vocational training as well as trainings on honey making and rural work in agricultural centers located in Tyr.





MECC DSPR Employees Statistics

DSPR AC's	Total of Employees			Gender		Education				Volunteers
	Full Time	Part Time	Total	F	M	High B.A. & Above	Medium Diplome	Tawjih	Lower	
GAZA	86	24	110	47	63	67	28	8	7	12
WEST BANK	2	4	6	4	2	5	-	1	-	-
JORDAN	15	1	16	11	5	7	2	6	1	80
LEBANON	30	54	84	54	30	57	20	4	3	-
NAZARETH	1	3	4	2	2	4	-	-	-	-
CENTRAL OFFICE	3	1	4	1	3	3	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	137	87	224	119	105	143	51	19	11	92
PERCENTAGES	61%	39%	100%	53%	47%	64%	23%	8%	5%	



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW SUMMARY 2019-2020 FOR ONGOING PROGRAMS

	Requested Budget	Committed Approved Revised Budgets	Requested Budget	Expected Income to be Received for Ongoing Programs	Expected Deficit on Requested Budget	Committed Approved Revised Budgets
Year	2019	May CC Meeting	2020	2020	2020	2020
Area Committee						
GAZA	1,470,578.00	1,194,000.00	1,487,450.00	1,127,600.00	(359,850.00)	1,194,000.00
WEST BANK	260,000.00	208,000.00	290,000.00	191,020.00	(98,980.00)	208,000.00
NAZARETH	193,000.00	144,000.00	307,500.00	192,580.00	(114,920.00)	192,580.00
LEBANON	332,660.00	155,000.00	374,997.00	153,400.00	221,597.00)	155,000.00
JORDAN	135,000.00	58,000.00	135,000.00	13,560.00	(121,440.00)	58,000.00
CENTRAL OFFICE	225,150.00	192,410.00	225,150.00	128,800.00	(96,350.00)	192,410.00
MEETING & CB						
TOTAL REQUESTED & APPROVED BUDGETS 2019/2020	2,616,388.00	1,951,410.00	2,820,097.00	1,806,960.00	(1,013,137.00)	1,999,990.00

MEDIA AT THE SERVICE OF HUMANKIND, COMMUNICATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE ECUMENICAL MISSION

“

The Communication and Public Relations Department launched its activities at the beginning of 2019 guided by a strategy that revolved around one main idea: “Media that serves humankind”, while using all available communication tools to promote the ecumenical mission. This strategic vision was set and updated after a period of structural institutionalisation that took place during the last 3 months of 2018.

In order to keep our promise, we have accomplished the mission and achieved the objectives we have set ourselves during 2019, through more than 150 traditional media platforms that included newspapers, Radio and Tv. In addition, our mission has targeted around 3 million people through MECC’s website and social media platforms

Guided by the same vision, we have written more than 850 news that were posted on different Arab, Western, local and international media platforms, in order to promote MECC’s ecumenical mission through its different theological and Diakonia departments. These news also aimed at shedding light on the General Secretariat’s efforts in supporting the human dignity of every human being regardless of denomination or religion.

”



2019, A Strategic Vision in Numbers

In order to achieve the main objective of our strategic vision which is to promote the common ecumenical vision among churches and to expand their areas of cooperation, we have posted hundreds of news about the Middle Eastern churches on the council's media platforms, making these information easily accessible to our united Church. We are seeking to open up practical prospects for communication about the Christian presence in the present and the future, in the Middle East region.



The Priority Mission and the Translation of Objectives

In order to accomplish the mission we have set in the 2019 action plan, media and communication directors were appointed in the Council's offices in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Cyprus and Iraq. We have also worked to build a network with the most prominent journalists and decision makers in religious and secular media outlets. Our success was evident through the media plan we have set for the International Ecumenical Youth Meeting that took place in Lebanon, in March 2019. Thanks to our media partnerships, this event was covered live, every day by more than 15 local and international TV channels that even included Islamic channels. It was also covered by more than 100 Arab and Western media platforms.

Regarding networking between media and communication offices and coordinators in patriarchates and churches, we have started completing this task by preparing a technical scientific survey to determine communication mechanisms, and consult media coordinators on new ways of cooperation and on urgent media and communication needs as well as challenges faced on social media platforms.

Regarding communication with media directors of partner institutions in ecumenical work, Marianne Ejdersten, World Council of Churches' (WCC) director of communication, has visited MECC headquarters in Beirut during October 2019. At the end of her visit, she invited the Communication and Public Relations Department team and the Archives team to visit the WCC headquarters in Geneva in February 2020 in order to exchange experiences, undergo a training and learn lessons from each other.



Achievements Based on the Priorities Set in the Action Plan

- Republishing the “Al-Muntada” magazine in a soft and hard copy, in Arabic and English. Two issues were published during 2019 and included theological and knowledge content; that is what makes the magazine a platform for intellectual interaction that portrays the objectives and activities of the Council's departments, General Secretariat and partners from all around the world.
- Building a new website instead of updating the old one because the costs of the two projects were more or less equal. The Council's website was launched in Arabic and English with a new modern design.
- Launching the preparation of a documentary about the Council, its history, objectives, mission, activities and vision for the future as well as a concise version in collaboration with Father Charles Sawaya – a director - and SAT 7 which will provide the council with technical and human support.
- Adding 2 new parts to the monthly overview - the Middle East socioeconomic situation and the Churches activities - in English and Arabic and sending the overview to more than 1000 email addresses of member churches and international partners.
- The strategic vision of the Council that revolves around building bridges with other religions through its Communication and Public Relations Department was reflected through the participation of the council in a workshop organized by the UNHCR in Jordan, for faith-based Christian and Muslim institutions. The aim of the workshop was to draw up a joint roadmap focused on protecting the human dignity of refugees and displaced people, and countering hate speech and xenophobia.
- The transition from covering the news of MECC departments through written news only to photo reports that are published on the council's website due to the noticeable interaction with “ videos ”especially on social media platforms.

“

Challenges and future perspectives

The department was able to carry out the task of re-emphasizing the ecumenical mission of the council and demonstrating its leadership and historical role in building bridges and human service.

”

“

Relaunching the Communication and Public Relations Department was a main pillar of the process that aimed at strengthening the Council's presence on various media platforms and at facing the challenges of new media tools and social media.

”

WEBSITE NUMBER OF VISITS:

5,567+



TWITTER FOLLOWERS

600+



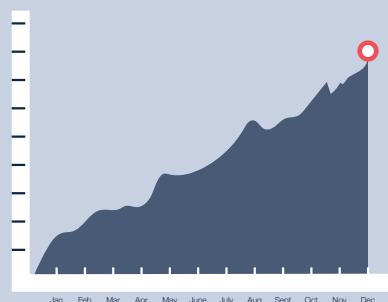


MECC FACEBOOK PAGE INSIGHTS

JANUARY 2019 - DECEMBER 2019

FOLLOWERS 
18,671

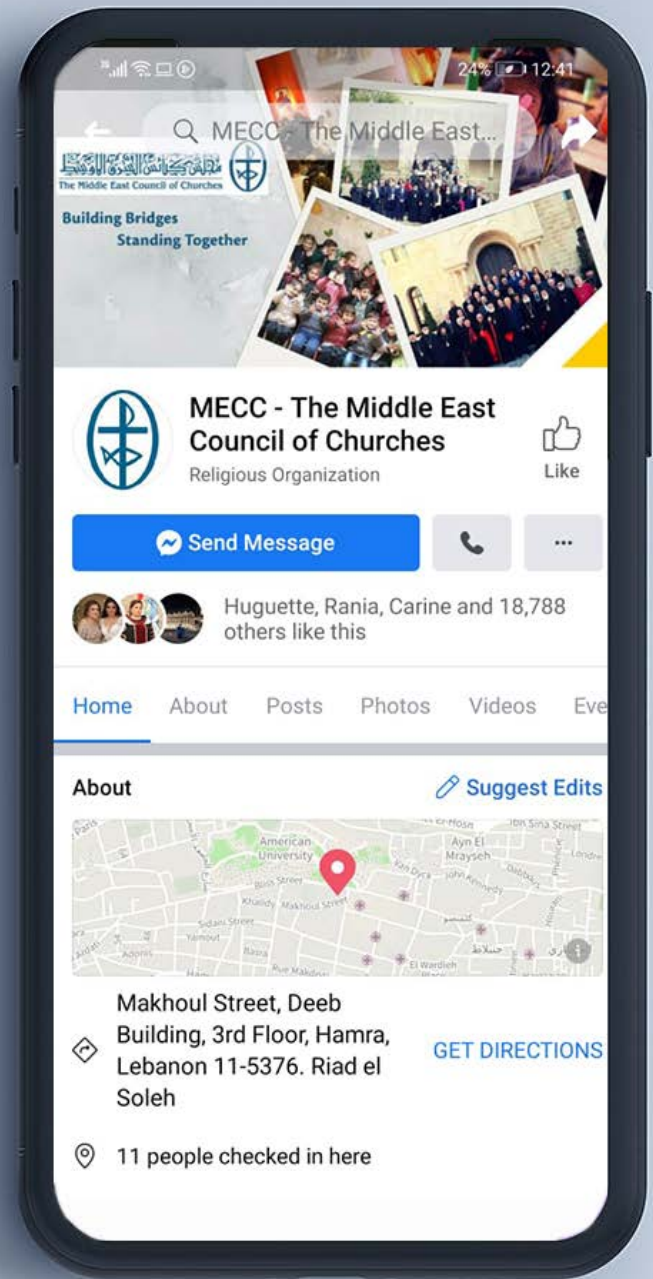
INTERACTIONS
35,560+



NUMBER OF POSTS
900+

FANS

 **WOMEN** 33%  **MEN** 66%



In the same context and in order to complete this process, the Department's work during 2020 and beyond will focus on the influence and lobbying strategy to leave a positive impact on the public sphere that is negatively affected by violence, incitement and hate speech. This goal revolves around the Council's fixed position in public policies regionally and internationally, but it also poses several challenges such as:

- 1- Transition to media work that protects human dignity, based on Christian principles and values.
- 2- Systematic and continuous prompting to achieve social justice and foster the culture of dialogue leading to peace.
- 3- Developing communication mechanisms between the Communication and Public Relations Department and media and communication coordinators in the churches, as well as creating incentives for networking, professional complementarity, and effective and constructive communication.
- 4- Ensuring sustainable funding for the development of the department professionally and technically, starting with its influential and structural role, beyond the stereotypes of religious media platforms that only cover pastoral activities news.

Achievements

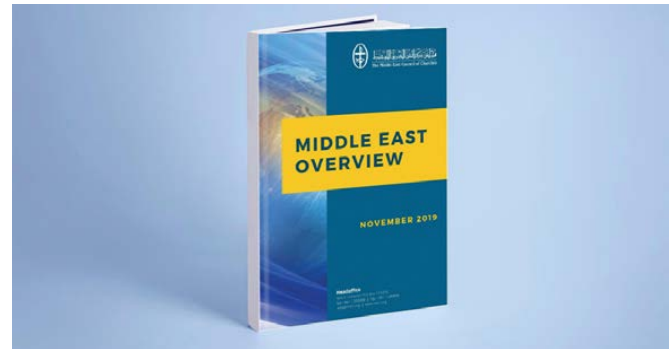
The New Website/ September 2019



2018 Annual Report Issued in February 2019



Monthly overview An Overview of the Middle East: 12 overviews in English and Arabic



Al-Muntada:

- 1- First issue in May 2019
- 2- Second issue in September 2019



Booklet Entitled "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" Issued in December 2019





2020's vision and objectives

“

Media Unity at the Service of the Ecumenical Spirit, Communication at the service of Human Dignity

The second stage of the vision and goals will be completed during 2020 under the title “ Media Unity at the service of the Ecumenical Spirit, Communication at the service of human dignity “. It will focus on the role played by the Communication and Public Relations Department in terms of networking, lobbying and influence. Not to mention its role in highlighting the success of and challenges faced by Christians in the Middle East and the Arab world through coordination with non-ecclesiastical written, audio, and electronic media, as well as shedding light on successful initiatives, projects and innovations that serve human dignity.

”

Priorities:

- Prepare for the Assembly General meeting, expected to be held in September.
- Organize a conference in February in Egypt, that will be hosted and supported by His Holiness Pope Tawadros. The conference will be entitled “Communication and Media at the service of Human Dignity”. It will be attended by media coordinators from MECC Member Churches, specialists and experts in media and communication, as well as the communication directors of our international partners (such as the World Council of Churches, Danmission...).

The conference's main objective is to ensure a unified vision and discourse in order to promote the partnership between Middle Eastern churches and adopt an inductive and visionary approach concerning Christian presence in the Middle East and relationships with other religions.

- Organize a workshop with several Lebanese and Arab experts aimed at drawing a vision that will determine the form of cooperation with the council, through a clear media plan.

This plan will be based on the council's strategies in addressing major Middle East issues and will be set in parallel with the “Kairos Toward Churches Global Compact” white paper.

- Establish a coordination mechanism for the financing of the department's projects in coordination with the MECC Project Management Office.
- Begin preparation for a small documentary series entitled “Churches of the Middle East”, in coordination with the member churches. Each video will highlight the history of a church, its roots, traditions, architecture, music, and theological characteristics.
- Develop “Al-Muntada” magazine to become an electronic monthly magazine financed by monthly subscriptions.
- Update the Churches guidebook that was previously published by the Middle East Council of Churches and publish an electronic copy in Arabic and English.
- Prepare a guide for the terminology and linguistic standards used in the correspondence, reports and publications issued by the Council.
- Create an ecumenical and specialized news website separate from the Middle East Council of Churches' website.



A MISSION TO SAVE THE HERITAGE OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

“

Safeguarding and preserving the legacy of the Middle East Council of Churches such as the reports of seminars, meetings, conferences, youth seminars, research, studies as of 1974, was not only a necessity, but a duty and a task. In fact, planning future actions in the light of the past, learning from experiences, taking new and wise decisions, or implementing decisions previously made, is impossible without awareness of the past and its lessons.

Therefore, saving, keeping, and transmitting the legacy of MECC to future generations, was the main purpose of this project.

In February 2018, the project aiming to archive all MECC files and documents was launched after two attempts that had preceded this initiative. The first took place, in 2015, based on a paper entitled “MECC’s 40 Years: Archive and History” while the second attempt was made in 2017, by MECC Secretary General Fr. Michel Jalkh who in his “Concept note” defined the purpose of the project as follows: “recognizing the vital necessity of historical books, files, and archives for understanding the past and for documenting the present to guide future actions”.

At the beginning of Dr Souraya’s mandate as MECC Secretary General, the files were scattered around the 3rd and 6th floor. There were between 2500 and 3000 files related to different fields: administration, finance, human resources, departments’ projects, Inter-Church Network for Development and Relief (ICNDR), DSPR, Diakonia, Christian Education, Christian-Muslim dialogue, ATIME, administrative files from MECC regional offices (Cyprus, Egypt, Syria and Jordan).

”



The classification of those files and documents is now almost done.

They are classified into 3 main categories:

1- Administrative documents that include:

Human resources, social security documents (CNSS), administrative and historical documents of the council, legal and official documents of the council, historical files, documents related to the mandates of different secretaries general, documents from general assemblies and executive committee meetings, documents related to the relations of MECC with its partners and member churches, documents from partners' meetings.

The total number of well-listed and organized files in this first category is 250.

2- Finance documents:

The total number of chronologically classified files (per year) in this second category is 300.

3- Documents related to the current and previous departments' projects:

These files and documents cover the work of each department including: Diakonia, ICNDR, DSP, Christian education, Christian-Muslim dialogue, Faith and Unity.

The total number of files included in this third category is 120.

How was the work organized and advanced?

I- Classification, and division of work according to themes

- a- Paper documents according to their titles
- b- Books: MECC publications, Journals, periodicals, booklets, magazines
- c- Classification of different types of communication tools: photos, audio tapes, videotapes, slides...

They were also classified according to:

- a- General historical background of Lebanon: Sequences from the Lebanese Civil war era.
- b- History of the Middle East Region namely the Israeli-Palestinian

war/ Or documents witnessing Christian presence in the Middle East.

- c- Documents related to MECC and its activities.

II- Classification of the documents in separate files and arranging them in boxes according to:

Example:

Core Program: Christian- Muslim Dialogue

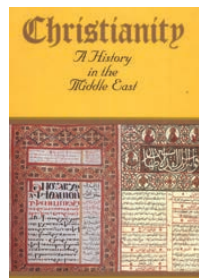
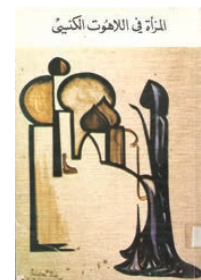
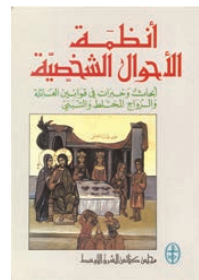
The files of Lebanese Forum on Christian - Muslim Dialogue and the Arab Forum for Christian Muslim Dialogue are classified in this box.

15 boxes are arranged under sub-title: The Arab Forum for Christian Muslim Dialogue (Five boxes)

III- Listing: it is only at this stage of work that listing could begin: The content of each file is listed inside the box, while the core program is listed on the box.

IV- An Excel Sheet will allow to save the content of the documents and facilitate the research process.

In conclusion, we can confirm that the first stage of the archiving project includes almost 650 files covering the entire history of the MECC.



Complementarity of Activities and Programs with Policies and Communication Strategies

Setting a sustainable vision and structure has emerged in an attempt to formulate public policies that are in interaction with or in anticipation of events, while securing an array of allies and partners supporting this vision and structure, starting from the Council's Members Churches. Hence, the structural link between public policies shifting from reaction to action, and communication strategies shifting from marketing to influence; and there lies the essence of the Good News of the Gospel.

The tasks undertaken by the Policies and Communication Advisor consisted of the following:

- a- Helping the General Secretariat set a vision and take a position on the challenges faced by people in the Arab world and the Middle East in general, and the Christian community in particular, by adopting an objective geopolitical approach guided by theology in order to consolidate the institutional positioning.
- b- Contributing to the realignment of relationships between the Middle East Council of Churches and its partners such as donors and churches, on the basis of the partnership in responsibility principle, while taking into consideration funding concerns.
- c- Contributing to the institutional restructuring of MECC, especially by providing support to the Project Management Office, to ensure that the whole process is consistent with sustainable policies. Also contribute to the preparation and organization of MECC's regular and annual meetings, for example by helping the council draft its 2020-2023 Strategy document.
- d- Contributing to the relaunching and effective accompaniment of the Communication and Public Relations Department in

order to promote MECC's presence on media and social media platforms, and not only showcase the departments' work, programs and activities but also set the basis for networking and lobbying to receive support from MECC's old and new partners.

- e- Representing the Middle East Council of Churches in local, regional, and international conferences, forums and meetings while contributing, through an interactive approach, to the preparation of and practical follow up on these events that should be considered as sustainable ecumenical initiatives.
- f- Actively collaborating with the Theological and Ecumenical Department to organize the "Kairos Middle East toward Global Churches Compact" process.

The work methodology adopted to achieve these tasks is based on the following:

- 1- Periodic follow up to ensure alignment between the objectives and the results.
- 2- Closely accompanying the Communication and Public Relations Department and the Project Management Office in order to ensure the proper implementation of the strategy.
- 3- Locating weaknesses and dysfunctions in the institutional structure and suggesting tools and policies to fix them.
- 4- Evaluating the indicators of institutional alignment between the Council's public policies, its activities, and programs, through a strategic plan based on these three components.

As for the objectives that are expected to be achieved, they can be summarized as follows:

- 1- Attempt to move from an action plan based on several separated activities to a plan based on a comprehensive institutional policy.
- 2- Attempt to link the comprehensive institutional policy to the spirituality and missionary dimension of the Middle East Council of Churches' work.
- 3- Consolidate the principles of planning and evaluation, inspired by the vision of the founding fathers, the presidents and the member churches.
- 4- Attempt to transform the reactive approach adopted to address crises despite their urgency, to a proactive approach based on taking initiatives; this approach would combine the ability to face these crises with the ability to prevent and avoid them.
- 5- Attempt to increase the number of partners committed to the founding principles of the Middle East Council of Churches



A Delegation from the Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs visited the MECC Head Office in Beirut on Tuesday July 9. received by MECC Policies and Communication Advisor Ziad El Sayegh and MECC Director of the Communication and Public Relations Department Huguette Salameh. The Danish delegation, formed by Freedom of Religion or Belief Ambassador Mr. Michael Suhr, Special Advisor Mr. Nis Gellert and Ms. Mathilde Silje Helø from the Royal Danish Embassy in Beirut

and make them allies that believe in the Council's vision, while also expanding the list of donors.

- 6- Attempt to prove the importance of setting a three-year or five-year plan rather than that setting a yearly plan.
- 7- Align the flexible advanced institutional structure, designed by the Secretary General, with the policies' requirements, in a manner that would ensure sustainability and development.

Ongoing projects and Achievements

- 1- Prepare for the "Towards Churches Global Compact" process in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, for it to be modified and relaunched by the MECC Theological and Ecumenical Department and then, follow up on the process.
- 2- Launch a media and communication strategy and follow up on its implementation, jointly with the director of the Communication and Public Relations Department.
- 3- Complete the readjustment of the institutional relationship between the Middle East Council of Churches and the Department for the Service of Palestinian Refugees.
- 4- Attempt to restore the relationship between the General Secretariat and the MECC office in Jordan.
- 5- Create a communication process with the international community (Switzerland, Bulgaria, European Union, Poland, Hungary, United States of America, England) and with the United Nations agencies (UNDP – UNHCR). The objective is for MECC to regain its influence and representation in the policy-making field, while preserving its relationships with churches and religious institutions.
- 6- Deepen reflection on the "Inclusive Citizenship Charter" in collaboration with Adyan Foundation, Wilton Park, Muslim Council of Elders and Forum Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies.

- 7- Launch a process that focuses on the role played by faith-based organizations, regionally and internationally, in addressing the refugees and displaced people crisis in collaboration with the UNHCR.

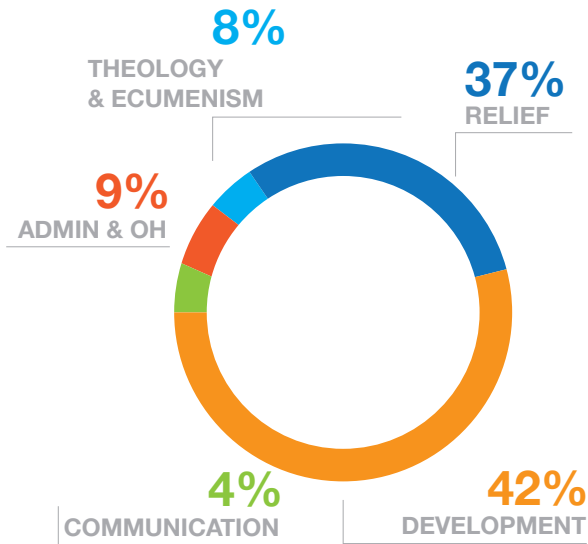
Participated for the first time in the first Global Refugee Forum that took place in Geneva.

- 8- Actively participated in the "100 years after the Paris Peace Conference" organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Paris, on the rapprochement between the East and the West in the ecclesial and human fight for peace and dignity.
- 9- Contribute to the drafting of the General Secretariat's statements on the crises in Syria, Lebanon, Occupied Palestine and Iraq.
- 10- Followed up on the preparation of the MECC 2020-2023 Strategy in cooperation with the Project Management Office.
- 11- Media presence: Present the "Kairos Middle East: Towards Churches Global Compact" process in local, regional, and international forums.

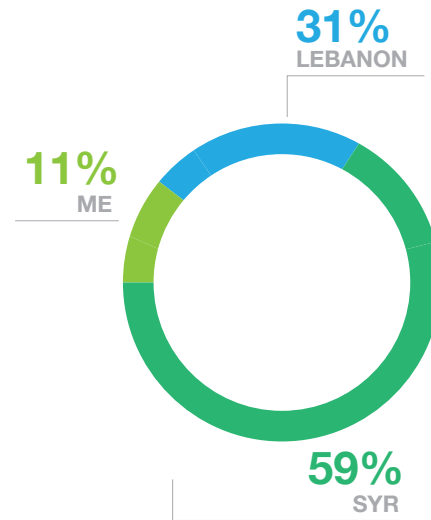
Conclusion and Prospects

- Shifting from an activity-based approach to a policy-based one, which means aligning the vision of the Council with concrete actions in order to optimize the productivity and effectiveness of the course of action.
- Developing prophetic policy options that align with the Middle East Council of Churches' identity and noble ecumenical mission
- Establishing a general policy and continuous communication process, that highlight the importance of institutional stability despite the considerable emerging difficulties, especially the financial ones.

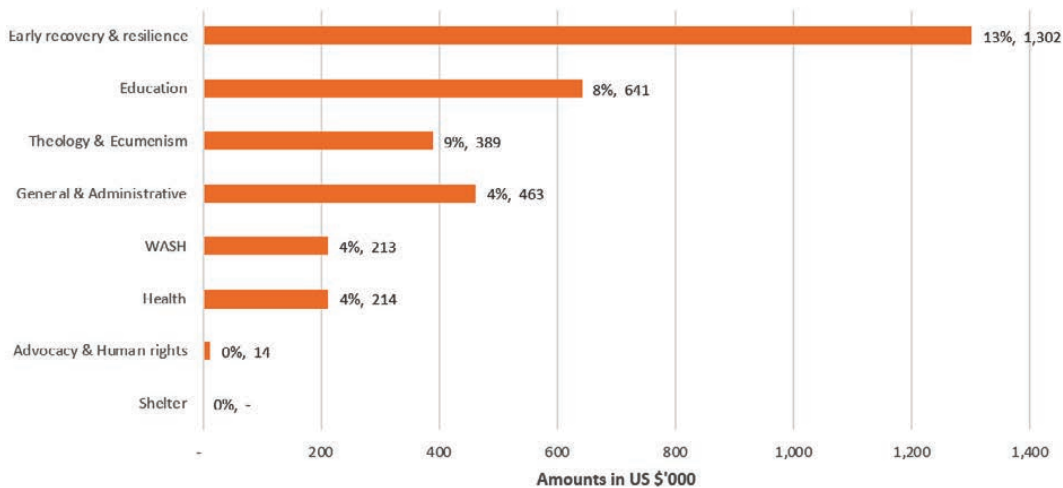
MECC 2019 SPENDING BREAKDOWN



SPENDING BREAKDOWN 2019 by geographic area

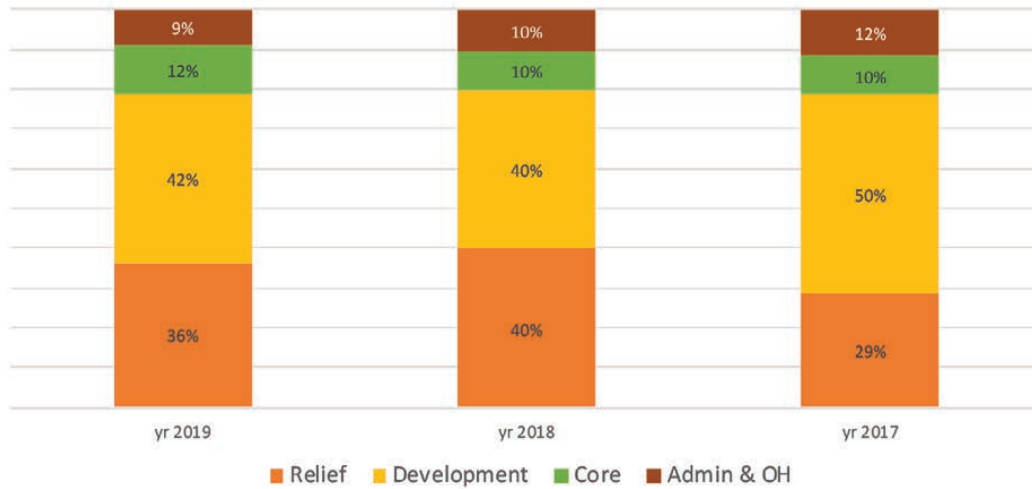


PROGRAM SPENDING BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR

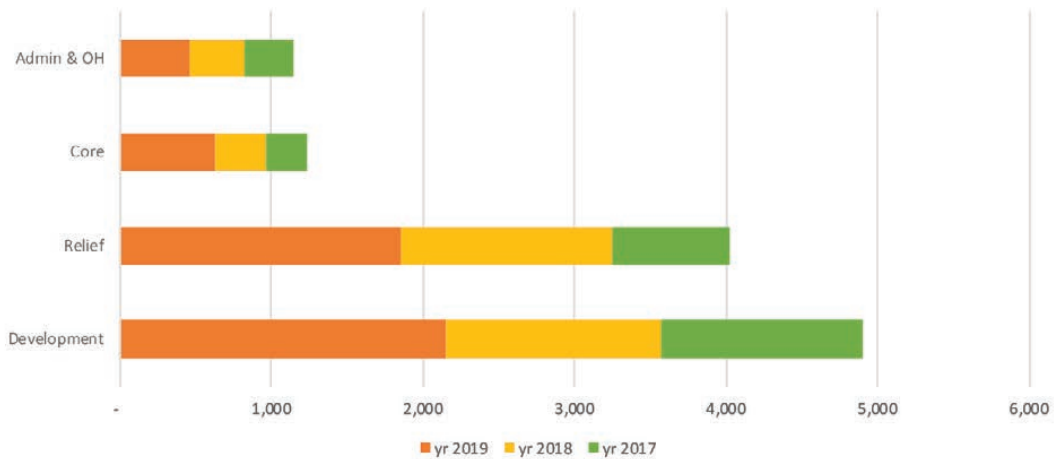




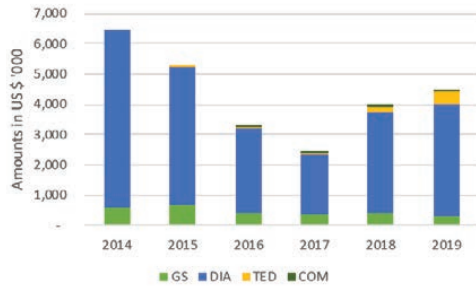
EXPENDITURE COMPOSITON BY CATEGORY (2017 - 2019)



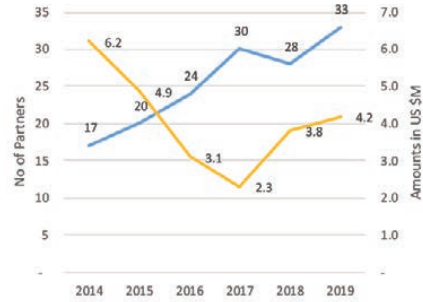
EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY IN US \$'000 (2017 - 2019)



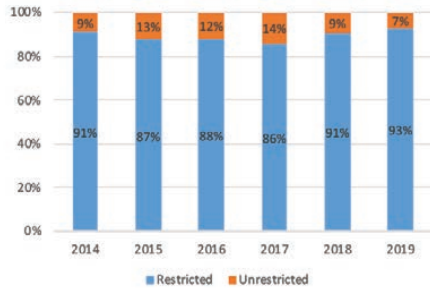
FUNDING BY DEPARTMENT



NO OF PARTNERS VS. TOTAL FUNDING



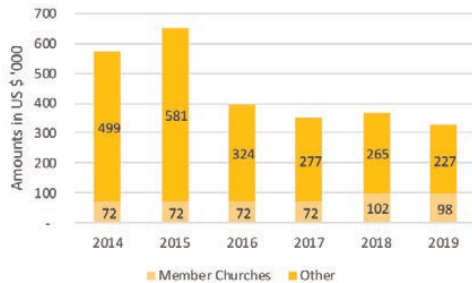
% COMPOSITION OF FUNDING



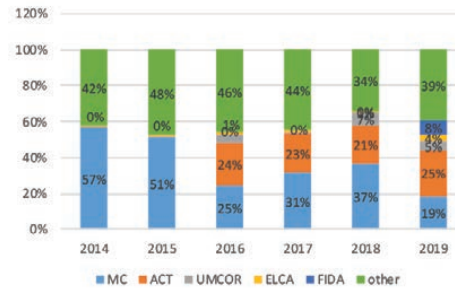
NO OF PARTNERS VS. AVERAGE INCOME /PARTNER



UNRESTRICTED CONTRIBUTIONS - BREAKDOWN



TOP 5 - 2019 FUNDING PARTNERS



OUR PARTNERS





Building Bridges Standing Together نتواصل ونتكاتف



www.mecc.org

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