What a wonderful and fruitful 2009 FDCD has had! It has been like a beehive with the numerous encounters and events with youth, women and people on the grassroots level and NGOs. FDCD has completed its mini-development project in Syria in November 2009 and has had creative programs as mentioned in brief in this newsletter.

FDCD envisions ‘life in abundance’ based on justice, equality, human dignity, social responsibility and dialogue. We seek to transform that vision into a reality by creating and spreading a culture of peace and justice through our diverse encounters, conferences and workshops locally, regionally and internationally.

In 2009, FDCD has witnessed the bitter-sweet farewell of our colleagues Tonnie Choueiri and Nizar Ghanem. But as the cycle of life goes, we’ve also welcomed a new FDCD team that has given FDCD new insights and approaches: Jean Paul Chami for the peace and conflict resolution program, Pamela Abi Nader for the trauma and women in dialogue project, Sara Sibai for the youth work and Nisrine Ajab for the peace journalism project.

We thank the FDCD Board for their accompaniment and assistance, FDCD partners and friends for their support, and the staff for their endeavors, commitment and loyalty to FDCD’s mission.

Rev. Riad Jarjour
President

Peace Journalism... 1 & 2.. FDCD achieved the goal

FDCD achieved the goal of spreading the concept of Peace Journalism among young journalists living and working in countries suffering from conflicts, FDCD sought to alter Journalists thinking and writing methods from war journalism that is vastly spread in their countries into Peace Journalism which is almost a new concept in the region.

FDCD, in collaboration with the Norwegian Embassy in Beirut and Development & Peace in Canada, organized two workshops on Peace Journalism which brought together journalists from Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon. In the first workshop, from May 15 till May 19, many prominent Lebanese journalists and lecturers gave presentations about the status of the media in Lebanon, and there were also contributions from Iraqi and Palestinian experts who talked about the media situation in their countries. ... to be continued on page 3

Lebanese Iraqi Youth Exchange

During February 2009, 22 Iraqi and Lebanese young activists, engaged with different nongovernmental organizations, gathered at Garden Hotel in Brummana and were part of a 6-day workshop organized by FDCD on Conflict Resolution and Intersectarian Violence.

The workshop turned out to be a great learning journey for all. The participants learned about the dynamics of conflicts and acquired new tools for analyzing and addressing them nonviolently like mediation, reconciliation and theatre.

One of the highlights of the workshop was when Ziad, a participant from Baghdad, shared with the group the tragic story of losing his wife and child during a bombing which took place recently. On the last day, Ziad said: “the connections and the new friendships that I made in this workshop helped me return to the positive person I used to be.”
Advocacy Workshop for Iraqi NGOs

Between 24 and 31 of May 2009, FDCD hosted a capacity building training for Iraqi NGOs at Garden hotel in Brummana. This workshop was part of a series of trainings, which started in 2006 and aim at building up the capacities of the Iraqi civil society on topics such as NGO management, conflict resolution through nonviolent alternatives like mediation, negotiation and dialogue.

2009’s topic was advocacy for peace in Iraq. During this workshop, the participating NGOs learned about conflict resolution, cooperative planning and advocacy and they even put together their initial ideas for an advocacy campaign that was implemented in Iraq during the last 5 months of 2009 and funded by FDCD. The participants were getting to know each other and breaking ice through fun and interactive cooperative games facilitated by the trainers. Since one of the main objectives of this training was a joint project to be designed and implemented by the participants, creating a community and team spirit was necessary for this goal to be reached.

The participants came from different parts of Iraq and represented NGOs working on such topics as education, women’s and children’s rights, conflict resolution and nonviolence.

Two trainings in Sulaymaniyah-Iraq

Between the 20th and the 25th of November 2009 FDCD, in collaboration with the Iraqi INSAN association, organized two workshops. The first one aimed at developing the capacities of Iraqi NGOs on communication, reporting and networking skills. The participants showed great interest in the topics and took the assignments and exercises very seriously and spent considerable time in preparing their presentations even some stayed late at night to finish them. The general atmosphere prevailing during the workshop was positive. This workshop was facilitated by Mr. Ali Chahine who shared his rich experience and provided tools and solutions to the participants in order for them to better develop their skills and their processes within their respective NGOs.

The second workshop hosted the youth of FDCD’s Iraqi partner NGOs who received a training on moderation skills in order to be able to conduct several dialogue sessions under the advocacy for peace campaigns which are run by their respective organizations. This workshop was facilitated by Ms. Roaa El Medeni and Mr. Jean-Paul Chami who helped the participants develop their communication skills, public speaking and facilitation of group work. According to the participants, there was an overall increase in their self-confidence, and in their ability to face an audience. They also requested hosting additional activities in the future and to do so them closer to the center and the south region.
4th Lebanese-Iraqi Youth Exchange Advocacy for Conflict Resolution

“Reaching a goal requires taking baby steps,” is what one of the participants concluded from the high ropes walking activity in the 4th Lebanese-Iraqi Youth Exchange workshop on Advocacy for Conflict Resolution organized by FDCD, Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue. The 6-day residential workshop was held at MFDCL Eco-Lodge & Youth Hostel in Ramlieh, Aley for 27 participants, 15 of which were Iraqis and 12 of which were Lebanese, from 14-19 August, 2009. The participants from Iraq were youth representing NGOs that have been working with FDCD throughout the 4-year Iraq Project. The participants from Lebanon were mostly students active in civil society. The aim was for the Iraqi participants to take these tools, skills, and knowledge back to their organizations and play an active role in advocacy campaigns in Iraq; on the other hand, the Lebanese participants were to transfer some of their acquired knowledge and skills to groups in their close communities of family, friends, colleagues, co-workers, NGO members and volunteers, etc. FDCD plans to follow-up with the participants after the workshop as a constant encouragement and backbone to support them in passing on the torch. The workshop empowered Iraqi and Lebanese youth to transcend boundaries set by prejudice and conflict and learn from each others’ experiences and perspectives through peer to peer inter-cultural exchange of information. The evenings witnessed the transformation of heated debates of the day into poetic, musical and cultural gatherings.

Monitoring trip to Iraq

Between the 10th and the 14th of October 2009, FDCD’s Iraq Project Coordinator, Mr. Jean-Paul Chami, carried out a monitoring trip to Sulaymaniyah in north Iraq in order to meet with FDCD’s partner NGOs and help them monitor the progress of their respective advocacy for peace campaigns. The discussions and presentations revolved around the progress of the advocacy project, what has been achieved and some of the difficulties that they have been facing. They shared some of the fears and concerns they had along with suggestions in order to have better involvement of their volunteers and youth in their advocacy-related activities. This was the first trip to Iraq carried by one of FDCD’s local Lebanese staff and it surely helped the staff member understand the Iraqi context better as well as to build more ties with friends and partners in Iraq.
Peace Journalism...
1 & 2. FDCD achieved the goal

The event was vastly covered in newspapers, magazines, radio stations and TV shows.

After the first workshop, FDCD gathered the participants again in another workshop within the period of October 19 till October 23, 2009.

In that workshop, 20 participants had the chance to learn how to implement “Peace Journalism” by benefiting from the experience of Professor Jake Lynch, who is one of the pioneers in this field.

In order to evaluate the impact of the first workshop, FDCD asked the participants to prepare a report about what changed in their work in the period between the two workshops, and the results were more than expected, where all the participants talked enthusiastically about the positive changes in their perspectives in covering news and even on the personal level. One of the chief examples was Robert Gemayel, a Lebanese Christian journalist who talked about his special experience with the Palestinian guy who was with them in Sabra and Shatila refugee camp during the first workshop, and how they became friends despite the black history between Christians and Palestinians in Lebanon.

On the other hand, there was a high level of harmony between the participants who ended up becoming friends from the first workshop, and very close ones after the second.

This was the first step towards spreading the concept of Peace Journalism. Although it was very important to start this step in countries full of conflict, it would have little significance if we do not continue on this path through sustainability and follow-up. On this basis, FDCD is looking forward towards enlarging this movement through establishing a school for Peace Journalism, and this is what most of the participants asked for and are enthusiastic to work on. One of them, Jaafar Sadaka from Palestine, suggested establishing a committee called “Journalists for Civil Peace”, in such a way to include all the Arab countries and to work on several issues such as:

1- Organizing workshops for journalists to develop their ability on writing balanced reports.
2- Release a website that contains an electronic newspaper that covers the news of the Arab countries, concentrating on the conflict cases according to the concepts of Peace Journalism.

Jaafar put a plan of how this committee would be and how the participants can work together in order to help this project succeed, and he sent it to all the participants who are excited to apply it.
Youth Committee 2009-2010

Perhaps the greatest struggle of all organizations is to create sustainable change. Maybe that’s the main critique against the typical three to seven-day workshops; however, workshops do plant the seeds of change in the minds of participants, and it is up to them to water that seed by acquiring new knowledge and skills for sustainable growth. FDCD is on a continuous journey towards sustainable change by spreading a culture of peace and understanding. We believe our largest investment is in the diverse youth participants of our different workshops held over time. A lot of them want to be part of this emerging culture of peace and justice, but once they leave a workshop, their cultural and political surroundings tend to pull them back into the status quo. FDCD has therefore sought to create a space for our youth participants to be a part of initiating and implementing new ways of interaction and service to the community. This space is what we called the Youth Committee. The idea began in 2008, and was re-launched again in Nov. 2009, where youth participants of previous FDCD workshops were invited for the Youth Committee Inauguration dinner. The inaugural dinner aimed at introducing the Youth Committee to new participants, and re-joining those who were in the Youth Committee in 2008, with a new approach and methodology. This new approach constituted implementing self-initiated projects that adhered to the members’ talents, passions and interests, within the framework of FDCD.

Youth Committee Training Camp

The most powerful aspect of residential workshops is the inevitable deep interaction amongst the participants that creates genuine bonds and connections. Although the youth committee members had all attended FDCD workshops and were integrated in FDCD culture, they had yet to form deep bonds amongst themselves. Therefore, we held a 2-day YC training camp, the aims of which were to build trust among the youth committee members, some of which were new to the committee and others were already familiar with last year’s YC, to provide the members with initial training on teamwork and strategic planning, and to provide the YC members with a comfortable, safe and familiar space for them to brainstorm and share their ideas on potential community-based projects and internal activities and trainings. The camp was held on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 19th and 20th, 2009, at Notre Dame du Puits in Jal El-Dib. The days consisted of forming the group into a team and envisioning the committee in the future and what they want it to look like, inside out. One of the exercises was also to describe FDCD using the metaphor of a car. Interestingly, they had great insight into what FDCD is, and their car images were used during FDCD’s internal assessment in Feb. 2010. The members decided on two main pillars: the internal activities and learning circles that would be held amongst them, and the external projects they would come up with to serve the community and spread a culture of peace, justice & understanding. The evenings filled with games, dancing, Tai-boo sessions, and deep discussions on sensitive issues.
Religion and State National Conference

The Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue, in cooperation with the Lutheran Church’s Dar-An Nadwa in Bethlehem and the Olaf Palme Swedish Association, organized a conference on Religion and State on the 20th and the 21st of November, 2009, at the Commodore Hotel in Hamra, Beirut. The conference, gathering 82 participants including politicians, ministers, government officials, judges, community and religious leaders, journalists, intellectuals, women, youth leaders, and NGOs from different sectors, was one of a series of four (two were held in Egypt and Jordan, and one will be held in Palestine). A regional conference will further be held in 2010 in Istanbul, in order to discuss the results of this year’s national dialogues on a regional level.

FDCD’s President, reverend Riad Jarjour, initiated the first session by questioning the possibility of achieving a separation between religion and state in the Arab world. “The only solution to this old crisis would be the substitution of the confessional identity with the national identity,” declared Professor Emile Iskandar, as he spoke of the relationship between religion and the sectarian system in Lebanon. Minister Khaled Kabbani further explained that the abolition of sectarianism in the country could be a solution to the current political situation; however, it could also become a dilemma should the Lebanese confessions lack safety nets guaranteeing their survival on the political scene. Moreover, the conference focused on the relationship between religion and state from the Muslim and Christian perspectives; elaborating the Christian approach, Dr Mouchir Aoun affirmed that there was a clear separation between the state and Christianity, as the religion grew independently from civil affairs. In parallel, Sayyed Hani Fahes tackled the Muslim approach, and asserted that the state’s attempt to base governance on religion was a problematic issue. During another session focusing on the ambiguous issue of identity in Lebanon, Dr Melhem Khalaf described the concept of civil society, and highlighted its role in promoting civil peace. The conference ended with a series of recommendations for the abolition of political sectarianism and the promotion of a civil state; in addition, it was followed by lively debates on the issues tackled, showing how sensitive and critical the issue of separation between religion and state is in the Arab world. Indeed, although many of the participants advocated a separation between religion and state, the majority of people in the Middle East hold on to their religiosity and few would be ready to give it up for the sake of having a secular government. Therefore, more workshops should be organized in the attempt to come up with good principles, which in turn could contribute to the reformation of the ruling systems in the Arab countries without the influence of religion.
International Work and Study Camp 2009 “Bringing Youth Together for Peace”

Saydnaya in Syria and Dhour Ch-weir in Lebanon hosted a special event: “The International Work and Study Camp 2009” from July 3rd to July 13th. This annual event stems from the belief in the role of youth around the world in paving the way for peace and understanding through dialogue and openness to personal transformation. This camp was implemented in collaboration with the Norwegian Embassy in Lebanon, the Mennonite Central Committee MCC, and Danmission Denmark. 36 participants from 9 countries (Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Denmark, Myanmar, USA, Norway, and UK) aged between 21 and 25 coming from different regions, religions, and political views within their countries. Activities in the camp included discussions with guest speakers, exercises, role-play and games, cultural evenings, prayer in a mosque, mass in a church, and tending to the center’s gardens as a team. Friendships were built, walls were broken down, tools for dialogue and conflict resolution were gained. These are some of what the participants got in the camp.

Rebecca from USA said: “This experience made me realize how necessary it is to have more dialogues, in my case particularly, between Americans and Middle Easterners, because we have certain gaps in perception that are even wider than I’d realized. Yet we also share so much in common, which many of us also don’t realize. Hope to be able to facilitate such dialogue in the future”.

From her side, Haifa from Denmark considered that the camp changed her on a deeper level than she can describe, and said: “The safe environment that was created allowed for many expressions and impressions; Many false assumptions were exposed, and new connections and friendships were created. Shayma from Egypt discovered a new face of the Shiite sect and knew that all her information about the Druze was incorrect, and thus, she decided to read again about them.

The camp assured the real need for bringing together youth from different parties in order to remove all misunderstandings between communities. It was covered in two local newspapers, El Mustaqbal and Annahar, as well as in participants’ personal blogs and their Facebook pages.
Training in Cyprus

Under its program “Instilling Listening Skills and Group Problem Solving” at schools, two representatives from FDCD, Ms. Samiha Shaaban and Mr. Jean-Paul Chami, travelled to Cyprus in April 2009 and took part in the initial immersion training of Lebanese trainers on Peace Education. This training was facilitated by Ms. Valerie Dovie and endowed the participants with necessary skills to better equip them to become future teacher trainers in Peace Education.

Later on, Shaaban and Chami conducted trainings at different schools in Lebanon and transmitted the acquired knowledge and skills to the participating teachers.

Chami considered that one of the most essential things he learned in that workshop was the importance of having moment’s reflection in the classroom to allow for absorbing the newly acquired knowledge and skills, as the saying goes: “we do not learn from experience, we learn from reflections on experience”.

From her side, Shaaban said that she would definitely use many of the skills that she learned in her dialogue and conflict resolution trainings when back to FDCD. “I feel that I have changed my perspective regarding many of the information I already had. It was inspiring and exceeded my expectations”.

Trauma... Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Trauma: we face it when stress reaches it’s ultimate, but how can we recognize it? What can we do when we are subjected to trauma? How can we deal with a traumatized person?

FDCD tried to answer all these questions by organizing a training workshop for NGO members under the topic of Trauma and breaking the cycle of violence.

The training took place in Garden Hotel in Broummana from October 30th till November 1st 2009, and gathered 24 participants that face a lot of trauma cases in their work, like social activists who work in organizations and Palestinian refugee camps, Red Cross members, nurses, doctors, etc...

The privilege of the training was that the participants and the trainees have never attended any trauma training before, although they are exposed to trauma cases in their day – to – day work and are rarely able to identify it as such.

To the participants, trauma isn’t something strange anymore, and now they are capable to identify traumatized cases correctly, deal with it in the right way, and transfer it to professionals.
MCC Training in Canada

In September 2009, FDCD was invited by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to send Tonnie Choueiri to attend training on Results-based management in Winnipeg, Canada. This training was sponsored by CIDA and participants were from Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon. It was a memorable experience to visit Winnipeg, and get to know MCC more profoundly. Aside from all the useful tools she gained for writing proposals, evaluating our initiatives and reporting on them, we also got an insight into the way MCC works. For example, we learned that a lot of the funds of MCC come from donations, or from the profits generated by their thrift shops (second-hand shops), their relief sales, and the sale of blankets carefully sewn by volunteers. We learned that volunteers lovingly pack the relief kits sent to war zones and natural disasters. Tours were organized for us to visit the Mennonite Heritage museum, a Mennonite Church, and many of MCC’s initiatives. We thank MCC and CIDA for this wonderful opportunity, and I hope we will be able to transmit to others, through our projects, the spirit of MCC.

Danish dialogue ambassador visits Lebanon

The Danish actor/author Flemming Jensen has been appointed by Danmission in Denmark as a volunteer to promote Christian-Muslim understanding in Lebanon and in Denmark. He visited Lebanon from March 22nd to 27th, visiting leading Muslims and Christians. These visits were organized by FDCD through Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour.

Investigative Journalism in Jordan

Capacity building is one of the essential aspects that empower staff members in any field. Building on this, FDCD encourages its staff to share in all possible beneficial training sessions. In November 2009, FDCD facilitated in sending one of its members, Nisrine Ajab to a Conference on Investigative Journalism, organized by ARIJ in Amman, Jordan. Nisrine, who is a Journalist, benefited a lot from this conference where she had the chance to attend intensive sessions on investigative journalism presented by very prominent figures in the field like Tim Sebastian, who was a staff at BBC. In addition, she attended sessions on CAR (computer assisting reporting). She also had the chance to meet Arab Journalists from different nationalities, and visit historical places in Jordan like the Dead Sea.

This conference added to Nisrine’s experience in investigative journalism which is a very important basis for peace journalism. This will definitely add value to her work as a Coordinator of the “Peace Journalism” project at FDCD.
Development as conflict prevention

FDCD achieved a two-year program on mini development projects in Syria with the objective of meeting the basic human needs of the most vulnerable sectors (groups) in four rural areas in Syria: to transform the quality of relationships between the public and the authorities for the purpose of preventing inter-communal tension and violent conflicts; and to manifest this new/transformed relationship in development projects designed, implemented, and sustained by the community itself.

Following the training for community workers in the area of development, committees were established to help in four projects in Saydnaya, Mar Moussa monastery, Qiryateen Center and the village of Sadad.

The project has achieved its objectives and by the end of the two years there has been change in the quantity and quality of relationships in the four targeted communities. This has been more evident in Sadad and Qiryateen than in Saydnaya and Mar Moussa. It is evident that the work which was done had a role in reducing tensions between the different faith communities and cultures in these regions. The project has stimulated more interaction among the different religious and political groups in the area and created very good and positive dynamics. FDCD’s role here was to realize this fact and empower these communities by supporting them to assume this vital role. Moreover, the poor communities in these areas benefited a lot from this intervention on the economic level.

Capacity building in Thailand

Right before heading to Iraq for the implementation of the Sulaymaniyyah workshop, Jean-Paul Chami headed to Thailand to take part in a training on scenario building for NGOs as a managerial tool for assessing future challenges, social media, and on dialogue for peaceful change. The workshop was a five-day practical, skills oriented methodology for dealing more effectively with conflict/dispute/diversity management based on experiential learning in small groups. A special focus was given to mediation skills through step by step coaching and simulations. The training took place in two locations: Bangkok and Patayya. It was organized by OIKOSNET (“A global network of Christian laity and retreat centers, academies and movements of social concern for inclusive, just, participatory and sustainable community) of which FDCD is a member. Jean-Paul got the chance to visit Mahindol University host to one of the few Peace Centers in East Asia.
**Team-Building in Broumana**

The FDCD team headed to Broumana on March 20th for a fun day of strategic planning, team-building, and a division of tasks. We came back with renewed energy and inspiration to continue!

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**FDCD Staff Member in Costa Rica**

Staff, trainers and organizers can only give from what they know and have of knowledge, skills and paradigms. Amidst all the buzz of workshops, seminars and trainings, FDCD never forgets that the success of the things we organize and give to the community are dependent on the staff’s capacity building and development as a group and as individuals with their unique talents and passions. In Nov. 2009, one of the newest staff members, Sara Sibai, who began working with FDCD as full-time in Oct. 2009, was the only person from Lebanon to go to the conference in Costa Rica organized by Religions for Peace Global Youth Network and sponsored by the Arias Foundation and the UN mandated University for Peace, entitled the ‘Inauguration of the Global Youth Campaign on Disarmament for Shared Security’. The international conference was held in Costa Rica because it’s the only country that has had complete disarmament since 1948. President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and a leading figure in the disarmament was the first to sign the petition for global disarmament on the first day of the conference. The campaign had 3 overarching goals: abolishing nuclear weapons; stop the proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons, in particular small arms, landmines, and cluster bombs; reduce military expenditure and advance the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The conference was divided between different workshops on raising awareness, using the Media, and advocacy and lobbying by engaging parliamentarians, the UN & mayors, along with panel discussions that gave depth to each of the 3 goals of the conference, and regional groupings and discussions on how to implement the campaign locally, regionally, and internationally. Following the conference, Sara visited the UN mandated University for Peace, the vice rector of which was one of the panelists during the conference. Along with the touch of the snakes and the smell of the rainforests of Costa Rica, Sara returned with the plan to work on this global campaign in partnership with other organizations in Lebanon.
**Partners**

FDCD thanks its partners who enabled it to carry on its projects and programs to develop as an NGO addressing its work in civil society. FDCD’s partners are:

a) Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace - CCODP

b) The Norwegian Embassy in Beirut

c) Danmission

d) Mennonite central committee

e) The United Church of Christ - UCC

f) The Presbyterian Church (USA)

g) World Association for Christian Communication - WACC

h) The Middle East Lay Training Center

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