NEWS 2012

“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together”

~ Desmund Tutu
At the time of writing this editorial, Tunis was bidding farewell to its great opposition leader Shukri Bouleid, and the people of Tunisia started a new uprising for freedom, Democracy and people’s rights. Wherever we look, we find people rising up towards democracy, reform and good governance in the Arab World.

FDCD has been active in 2012, walking with the youth and women on the road to peacebuilding, reconciliation dialogue and equal citizenship. Although Lebanon did not witness an uprising and somehow was not much affected by the so-called “the Arab Spring” and its consequences, the country was to a certain extent moved by the developments in the region. Tensions became high amidst worries of a relapse into civil war. Conflicts were dominant, the influx of Syrian refugees made the Lebanese become more alert to an unstable future. In addition, conflict among political parties affected people’s relationship to each other and the economy suffered a great deal as a result.

In the midst of all of that, the board members of FDCD, along with staff, friends and partners worked in solidarity with each other to achieve FDCD’s objectives and vision as much as possible.

Remembering the Lebanese civil war, FDCD said “No more to war”. To spread this message, youth rode on their bikes from the south to the north. During the International Work and Study Camp, FDCD brought youth from Lebanon, the region and other parts of the world to reflect together on the role of youth in the Arab uprising. Together, we identified how youth can engage their talents and capacities to enable change and make use of the media to ensure transformation and to see how dialogue could be a tool in peacebuilding.

FDCD could not but get involved in addressing the question of citizenship in a complex and troubled Middle East society. It brought together active civil society youth leaders and empowered them to be active in their local context.

In all, it was a year full of action, walking with the people of the region on the road to freedom democracy, reform and citizenship, based around the motto of Desmond Tutu, “My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.”
According to our participants, the Lebanese context consists of a very diverse society where religious affiliation and sectarianism play a major role in social dynamics. To facilitate interreligious understanding, FDCD has launched a project entitled “Towards Peacebuilding in a Lebanese Context”, focusing on young religious students from different confessions around the country. These future religious leaders got together on 4 occasions in 2012. During the first encounter, 18 representatives from 5 different religious institutions gathered in Broumana. By the second time they met in line with this project, participants began to take things into their own hands, taking initiative to contribute their own experiences, thoughts and ideas in a workshop on shared understanding of human respect. Responding to the participants’ requests, we visited three different areas in the north of Lebanon to experience the religious history of the Maronites in the Valley of Qadisha. In Tripoli, we visited the souks of the City of Tripoli as well as several mosques. We stopped to end our second day for a joint prayer, Muslims and Christians, inside the mosque. On the last day we visited the historical Orthodox convent in Balamand where we gathered, in a church this time to understand more about the importance of land, faith and education in the life of humans. Last but not least, this project was closed with an Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan, during which participants gave speeches and engaged in a lively discussion on peaceful coexistence.

The Abaad Foundation with the collaboration of FDCD in partnership with OXFAM, organized a regional round table in Beirut in November 2012. For this, Religious Leaders from all around the Arab world representing different confessions and religions came together to agree on supporting the civil society in the region in building a society that is free from violence. The main concern that was discussed by them was about the protection of women and providing channels of assistance to women in need of help. This round table created an opportunity to raise a voice and plan for future steps in respecting human rights and non-violent domestic environment.
The uprising in the Arab World made me rethink of my life, values and responsibilities. I am so happy to be in this workshop on citizenship in which I have acquired is great concept of what is citizenship and which also equipped me with skills and the capacity to share that within my community and the country I live in”.

FDCD involvement on the issue of citizenship took a greater role following the uprising and changes taking place in the Arab World. In its agenda for the coming years, FDCD is aiming at constructing an alternative Arab-based understanding of Citizenship and Human Rights.

The program started with a gathering of 5 consultants from Lebanon, Syria and Egypt who prepared a Training Manual, each in their own field of expertise. Six months later, the Manual was tested with 10 people from different Arab counties for two days. After the feedbacks, the Manual was re-written, and FDCD gathered 30 participants from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq in a 5-day TOT where they were trained on how to use the Manual.

“Innovative and interactive training techniques”.. "Networking"... "Rich diversity of trainer backgrounds and styles"... "The training guide"... Participants' preferred benefit from the workshop was as diverse as their national and occupational backgrounds; a sure sign of success in a workshop designed to help them raise awareness and appreciation of diversity. Participants had the opportunity to share their stories and experiences on what citizenship means to them and how they practice it. They cleared several misunderstandings about the concept, and realized the crucial urgency of developing it in their communities, starting with children in schools and among youth especially in countries witnessing sectarian tensions.

Participants were highly motivated and went back to their countries with a mandate to conduct sub national workshops. It was decided to have two workshops in each of Syria, Egypt, Iraq and one in Lebanon and Jordan.

In 2013, FDCD will gather all the feedback from all trainings and will adjust the Manual depending on all the remarks that participants from the different countries bring forth.

The Manual will be printed in its final version and it will be a Reference in the Arab World on the issue of Citizenship.

Many people contributed to the development of the manual

FDCD Fundraising Dinner

The youth committee of the FDCD initiated this fundraising dinner, in one way to have fellowship and bring together youth who have participated in FDCD work and activities in the last few years, for follow up, getting acquainted, sharing their experience and stories, hopes and aspirations for FDCD and how they can help in achieving its vision. On the other hand, it was an opportunity to fundraise for a small project to assist a poor and marginalized village in South Lebanon.

The event was beautiful, enriching and a good occasion to end up 2012 and receive the new near.
To explain the International Work and Study Camp effect on the 33 youth participant from 12 MENA, European, African and American countries one needs to start from its last day: participants were crying, asking for extension of the camp for few more days. Compare this to the first day, when they all were paired in rooms from different countries, languages, culture and religions, where tensions were high, and some of the youth asked for the rooms to be rearranged so they could share with people from their own countries. Two roommates came complaining, and the answer was: start to know the other now!

Then Agnete Holm the trainer paired them up two by two, asking them to: Walk and Talk. Here starts their learning… Anna Katherine from Denmark summarized the camp by saying: “I have learnt that assumptions are ruining the possibilities of having wonderful experiences with different people. The camp has taught me to cherish diversity with a passion!” while Iselin from the Norway says: “You don’t understand it before you are there… the camp makes you a new enlightened person…”

When coming to the diverse sessions that the youth were involved in, Dana from Iraq says that he has learnt for the first time about the Druze, and he needed the practical tools to support him with his work in Kurdistan.

The tears that were shed expressed what many have said and experienced of coming together in one soul and spirit to share and get to know the other, destroying the negative pre-assumptions and walking through the path of building bridges making it an unforgettable experience full of a new enlightenment.

Even working hard can be a lot of fun, as these participants demonstrate. Team work and mutual trust are all that’s needed for good results.
Listen, because I am Madagascar, Iraq (Kurdistan), Lebanon, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Syria, Palestine, America, Sudan, Iran, Egypt. Listen, because I am young and old and full of life. Listen, because I am full of faith in something, in my God, my dream, our future. Listen, because I am different from you and you have much to learn. And I promise that I will listen to you because in the deepest rooms of our hearts we are also the same.

We have gathered together youth from 12 different countries, cultures, religions, languages and traditions at the International Work and Study Camp to learn about dialogue and peacebuilding. We have been transformed and we want that this transformation does not stop with us but that it lives through us and through you as we all carry this message to our homes, offices, and our places of worship.

We have been gathered for 10 days in dialogue and in that short time we have begun the process of taking down the barriers that have been built between us over thousands of years of history. It does not mean that differences do not exist. We have differences but we have come to believe that we must try to understand these differences, and we have been inspired to leave behind our assumptions, our stereotypes, and our fears. We are young and passionate with the promise to continue to build bridges from living stones of mutual respect, acceptance, love, freedom and security. But we need your help.

We ask that when you gather at fancy tables to discuss the future of our countries and our world, when you gather in kitchens and cafes to organize the revolutions, when faithful gather before you to better understand the word of God, that you remember us...

Listen now, and remember me when you sit and speak of my freedom and my rights. Remember that I have stood before you and asked from the depth of me that you try to know yourself, your humanity and the humanity of others. Remember that I have asked you to accept and respect your neighbors with all their differences because a person is either your brother or sister in faith or your equal in humanity. Real dialogue begins with a sincere desire to understand each other, a willingness to see our common values and the courage to push our boundaries and deal with differences in a positive way.

We ask that you practice true dialogue in your daily lives and work by seeking equally to understand and be understood, that as much as you speak, you try to listen more. By practicing this form of dialogue we have realized that despite the differences born in the traditions of 12 different countries, we have common values, fears, hopes and demands.

Listen now, and remember your children and mine when you speak of good and equal education and healthcare for all. Remember your beliefs and mine when you speak of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, gender and ethnic equality. As you make political decisions, don’t base them on religious opinions or personal benefits. Remember us. When you publish articles and pictures in your newspapers, remember that we have stood before you and demanded that you tell the truth. We demand a media and government that does not hide or manipulate the people. Let your words reflect the reality and your own humanity because it is only from truth that we may begin to know each other and build again.

Help us to work for social justice and against persecution and oppression.

In 2006, the second year of this camp, a war broke out between Israel and Lebanon and the participants had to return to their countries. The experience of having a war begin at the start of our training for Peacebuilding and Dialogue helped to shape the form that this camp has taken while the new conflicts and struggles that surround us today remind us of the depth of our barriers and the importance of this work. Our surroundings continue to inspire our passion and belief in this work as we seek a common future in which diversity is seen as a gift.

Listen now, because we are closer than you think and in this changing world we need each other more every day. Look into my eyes and remember me, because I am a piece of the heart of God and we belong to each other. All my love, anger, fear, passion and hunger is as real as yours.
Responsible Youth Journalism

“I have never expected that in my diverse country we are able to discuss different topics, especially the religious and political one in such a freedom and mutual respect”. “This training, widen my horizon and enlightened my knowledge on the importance of responsibility in our future work as Journalists”.

The Responsible youth journalism project is a practical and theoretical workshop that aims to gather young journalists and people from different majors that are involved in social media. These workshops developed the idea of the responsibility and the objectivity of journalism and media channels in building and sustaining peace in sensitive societies.

As an outcome of that project, participants committed together in editing and spreading the Responsible Media Charter that will inspire a big network of young journalist in Lebanon.

With a high motivation and an active spirit of 25 participants, this project will be developed during the year 2013 to build up a bigger community of Responsible Journalists in Lebanon.

Cycle for Peace

One of the most popular sports activities in Lebanon, riding bicycles became more than sports movement. In 2012, a community of cyclists had a main goal of spreading awareness for the respect of cyclists and the use of bicycles for daily transportation. FDCD used the motivation of cyclists over the country to mobilize them for a cause: spreading the message of peace on the day of remembrance of the civil war in Lebanon. To do this, they cycled 194 km from Tyr to Tripoli over two days, passing through historically significant locations where the wounds of the Lebanese civil war are still meaningful for the society. The convoy of seventy cyclists was followed by a well decorated bus with Lebanese Flags, partly as logistical support for the cyclists, but also to represent the incident that triggered the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Cyclists moved from the south to the north while spreading the message of peace and asking people to sign on a Lebanese flag as a personal commitment for not going back to civil war or violent conflict.

As requested by most of the participants, this event will become a yearly cycle for peace event.
Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) has been called “an emotional needle-free version of acupuncture”. It is based on the discovery that imbalances in the body’s energy system caused by distressing events have profound effects on physical and emotional health.

EFT looks a bit strange! However once you understand the logic behind this simple technique, the process makes sense. Imbalances are corrected by tapping on certain acupuncture points while you tune into the problem and name accompanying thoughts and emotions. This usually leads to relief and change that is more rapid than talk therapy.

EFT has been successfully used in thousands of cases covering a range of emotional, health and performance issues such as stress, trauma, anxiety, depression, sport score enhancement, insomnia, compulsions, weight loss, pain, phobias, etc. Research studies continue to demonstrate its efficacy. The basic form is easy to learn and safe for use by lay persons and even children.

FDCD saw the need of introducing this technique to the Lebanese society by training 23 experts in psychology especially after the uprisings in the region. Participants were trained on two levels, during sessions that lasted three day each. At the end they submitted an exam that can now allow them to get an official certificate.

This couldn’t happen without the support of MCC who sponsored this project and Ms. Carolyn Yoder who was the trainer.

Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR)

With the support of MCC Lebanon and GIZ, FDCD offered two seminars on Strategies for Trauma, specifically on Understanding War Trauma: Skills for Helping for Lebanese and Syrian participants in the fall of 2012.

Forty-two humanitarian and psycho-social workers as well as professional psychologists participated in the training. Canadian war trauma consultant, Dr. Dawn Penner, focused on two levels of intervention: psychological first aid and individual psycho-social support.

Seminar topics included the psycho-social impact of traumatic war events, vicarious trauma, the normal progression of psychological responses to traumatic events, providing ongoing psycho-social support, and identifying those who need specialized service for psychological issues. Participants were appreciative of the emphasis on worker well-being and the opportunity to practice self-care exercises.
“We have lost our home, we ran away from the fighting, and here we are in a village strange to us, but we were welcomed as guests we were offered, blankets, heater and food, but also the village received us with a smile and offered us shelter and its people made us feel at home, thanks God for that”. This was Sumaya, mother of the four children who ran away from the fighting in the area of Homs seeking refuge in Humaira village on the road between Damascus and Homs.

Since the beginning of the uprising in the Arab World and fighting that started in Syria, FDCD responded to the humanitarian needs of the thousands of people who become internally displaced as a result of the violence.

In Syria, FDCD focused most of its humanitarian aid in the Kalamoun area, where more than 80,000 persons took refuge in Nabek, Deir Attieh, Humaira, and other villages. These internally displaced people, (IDP's)took refuge in schools, Mosques, Homes, Shops and farms. They were welcomed by the people of these towns, and FDCD through the charity associations in Nabek and Deir Attieh offered people, food, hygiene items, blanket, heaters and most important milk for children. FDCD extended its relief efforts to sub-regions in Homs and Aleppo and made humble efforts to ease the suffering of the IDP's and shoulder them and assist in any way that make them live in dignity, in the midst of their pain and the horrible situation they are in. FDCD is grateful to Danmission, Mennonite Central Committee, Finn Church Aid and the United Church of Christ that made it possible to assist the thousands of IDPs in shelters, and keep them warm in a cold winter, provide milk for children and food to survive. We were among them feeling their pain, healing their wounds and enabling them to live as God's people in dignity and humanity.
In a very unique experience, I had the opportunity during the month May and June to join the SPI at the Eastern Mennonite University. In this program we were gathered as peace actors and civil activists from all around the world to share our experiences and learn new skills and scientific techniques in an interactive academic atmosphere. In this training I followed several courses related to our work in the Lebanese context, I highlight two important outcomes, the first one is related to the interaction between the participants, where we were sharing our experiences and benefiting from lesson learned acquired through the work of peacemakers in Africa, America, The Arab world and America. The second outcome is related to the different topic that we were working on, especially The Reconciliation and Forgiveness and the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR), these approaches might be so effective in building and sustaining peace our post-war society. SPI is a lifetime experience, where you live in a peaceful society to learn how to build peace from other peacemakers.

-Maher Btaiche
FDCC has MOVED

After 8 years at the office in Badaro, FDCD has moved to a new location in Furn El Chebbak:
Furn El Chebbak - Facing Lebanese University (Faculty of Arts) | Al-Azarieh Bldg - 4th Floor

The team

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Special Thanks

We would like to take this opportunity to thank once again our trusted partners for their continued support of FDCD:

Danmission Denmark
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Finn Church Aid Finland
Mennonite Central Committee USA
Presbyterian Church USA
The Royal Norwegian Embassy Beirut
The Embassy of Denmark Beirut
United Church of Christ and the Disciples USA
...and others

Also, FDCD is thankful to the Board for their support in 2012.

This newsletter contains contributions by: Dr. Riad Jarjour, Linda Macktaby, Maher Btaiche, Pamela Abi Nader.
Editing and Layout by Mona Ahmed.
About Us

Founded in 2004, FDCD represents the collective vision, mission and history of the Urban Rural Mission program's work in the MENA region. As such, the program looks back at over 20 years of history of community organizing, leadership training, spiritual reflection and response to marginalization and dehumanization.

Based in Beirut, Lebanon, with a regional outlook, FDCD responds to humanitarian needs and facilitates encounters and exchange among different sectors of society. In this way, various actors of society become versed in identifying and dismantling stereotypes while getting a better understanding of the Other. When applying this in their real lives, these individuals help FDCD work towards achieving its overall mission and vision.

Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue (FDCD)

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