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WCC ASIA DESK

Summary Narrative Report - 2003

INTRODUCTION

The World Council of Churches' Asia Desk serves Churches, the National Council of Churches and the Regional Ecumenical Organisation in Asia and other ecumenical partners to develop their diakonal work, and to maintain relationships with the WCC constituency and other related bodies.

In 2003, the WCC Asia Desk implemented the third phase of its three-year plan started in 2001. In addition to the regular programmes, the Asia Desk was involved in a range of programmes and other WCC relationships and initiatives.

WCC DIAKONIA AND SOLIDARITY TEAM: MANDATES

The aim of the Diakonia & Solidarity team is to empower marginalised groups in their struggles for dignity and sustainable communities. The Team works towards this aim by attempting to strengthen ecumenical co-operation and witness in diakonia and solidarity, and to nurture just relationships within the ecumenical family.

With this overall aim, the team's activities are directed towards four specific objectives:

- ***Sustaining Relationships for Solidarity and Witness*** among member churches, regional ecumenical organisations and ecumenical development agencies for common witness, particularly in the area of diakonia and solidarity;
- ***Creating Spaces for Analysis and Reflection*** on ecumenical diakonia and development at the national, regional and global levels;
- ***Building Capacities*** of member churches and partner organisations to use sustainable and holistic methodologies in their diakonal ministries;
- ***Developing a Coherent and Holistic Approach to Meet Human Needs*** that integrates relief, rehabilitation, development and reconciliation.

The structure of the WCC Diakonia and Solidarity Team consists of seven regional desks, an 'Uprooted People's' programme desk, and a specialised finance and reporting assistant. The Team works in close co-ordination with other WCC teams and programme offices, particularly with the Church and Ecumenical Relations Office, DOV Coordination Office, the International Affairs Team, the Inter-religious Dialogue Office, Scholarship Programme, Health Mission Desk, Ecumenical Education and Formation programme, etc. The WCC/LWF humanitarian emergency office, ACT-Action by Churches Together, and ECLOF-the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund, collaborate closely with the WCC Diakonia and Solidarity Team. The main partners of the Diakonia and Solidarity Team are churches, ecumenical organisations and agencies, but also secular NGOs and structures. The Team fosters relationships between churches and ecumenical agencies, and encourage co-ordination and co-operation among the latter. The Team initiates and supports lasting regional and international partnerships and networks among all who share a common vision of human dignity. The D&S Team co-ordinate and co-operate closely with Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs) in each region to ensure coherence and an appropriate division of labour.

WCC ASIA DESK PRIORITIES IN 2003

The WCC Asia Desk gave priority in 2003 to:

- Capacity building
- Co-ordination of ecumenical sharing of resources
- Diakonal and development assistance
- Upholding regional perspectives
- Round Tables for ecumenical sharing of resources
- Strengthen relationships with member churches and ecumenical councils in the region
- Special attention to churches in marginalised countries
- Accompanying and supporting churches in conflict situations
- Promoting Dignity of Children in marginalised situations

1. SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

The WCC Asia Desk worked in a variety of ways to facilitate WCC relations with its constituency and to strengthen the involvement of Asian churches in the work of WCC work during the year 2003.

1.1 WCC General Secretary's visit to Asia

The General Secretary Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser visited WCC member churches and ecumenical councils in 5 Asian countries (India, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Pakistan) during the year. The Asia Desk in collaborations with the member churches and councils in respective countries (except Pakistan) organised the programmes and visits and the Asia Secretary accompanied the General Secretary in four countries. The visits and programmes included meetings with heads of churches, addressing public ecumenical gatherings, gathering of women and youth groups, meetings with inter faith leaders and groups, visits and meetings with heads of states, etc.

1.2 WCC relations with member churches and related ecumenical organisations

During 2003, the WCC Asia Secretary visited several member churches and NCCs and met with a wide range of church and ecumenical representatives throughout Asia. The events organised by the Desk during the year can be highlighted as important moments of exchange with the representatives of member churches and other communities.

1.3 Co-operation with REO - Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

Asia Desk maintains close co-operation and co-ordination with the regional ecumenical organisation Christian Conference of Asia and continues to co-ordinate WCC's relations with CCA and programmatic involvement. A joint liaison group functions for WCC-CCA relations and programmes which is being coordinated by CER Office and the Asia Desk. The CCA has decided that the Asia Secretary be an ex-officio member of the CCA General Committee and he serves in the CCA General Committee on behalf of WCC.

1.4 Increased presence of WCC in the Region

Asia Desk took a special interest to promote WCC concerns and programmes in Asia region. The presence of WCC in the region has been enhanced through various measures undertaken by the Desk such as transmitting the DOV message, shared the feed back received from churches and ecumenical bodies in the region within the house about various programmes of WCC in the region.

1.5 Asia Desk Programmes and related events in 2003

January	Consultation of Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia (EETA),	Bangkok, Thailand
January	South Asia Ecumenical Partnership preparation and South	Dhaka, Bangladesh

	Asian NCC General Secretaries' Meeting.	
January	Visit to Chandragona, Chittagong Hill Tracts	Bangladesh
January	Dan Mission Consultation on Witness and Service	Liselund, Denmark
February	WCC General Secretary's official visit to India (Madras) and Laos	India, Laos
March	WCC General Secretary's official visit to Myanmar and Thailand	Myanmar, Thailand
March March	South Asia Ecumenical Partnership Forum Meeting Ecumenical Partners' Meeting on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka	Colombo, India
March	CASA India Round Table	Haryana, India
March	Visit of Chinese Religious Affairs Bureau officials and Amity Staff to WCC	Geneva
April	Visit of China Christian Council (CCC) leaders to WCC Seminar on the Church in China (with CER)	Geneva
May	Visit of 13 Korean Church leaders to WCC and Switzerland (WARC & Asia Desk)	Geneva
June	Visit of 21 Korean Students and Theological teachers to WCC, Geneva	Geneva
June	WCC- CCA Liaison Group Meeting (CER & Asia Desk)	Jakarta, Indonesia
June	CCA Joint Programme Committee meetings	Cipayung, Indonesia
July	Indonesia Round Table Core Group Meeting	New York, USA
September	Consultation on Christian Marriage Acts in South Asian countries and its negative impacts on religious minorities. (Asia Desk, NCCs in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka)	Colombo, Sri Lanka
September	REO General Secretaries meeting (represented CCA)	Bossey, Switzerland
September	Consultation of WCC-REO and Ecumenical Agencies,	Bossey, Switzerland
September	NCC Philippines Round Table Meeting	Manila, Philippines
October	MCC RT Core Group Meeting	Utrecht, Netherlands
October	CCDB RT Core Group Meeting	Utrecht, Netherlands
November	CCA –WCC Interfaith Consultation on HIV AIDS	Bangkok, Thailand
November	Asia Regional Group Meeting	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
November	Training in Organisational and Financial Management	Bangkok, Thailand

2. CREATING SPACE FOR ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

This programmatic area foci are on **creating space for reflection, analysis, mediation and action** on ecumenical diakonia and development at the national, regional and global levels.

2.1 Asia Regional Group

The Asia Regional Group (ARG) of the World Council of Churches met in Kuala Lumpur (at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Kuala Lumpur) Malaysia from 24 to 28 November 2003. It included ARG members and representatives of Asian Churches from 16 countries in Asia and ecumenical partners from Europe and North America. The main areas of discussion included:

- Analysis of Emerging 'Geo-political' Trends in Asia
- Reflections on 'Diakonia and Justice
- National Situation Analyses
- The Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement
- The WCC Decade to Overcome Violence which will have a focus on Asia in 2005

- Ecumenical Development Co-operation and Asia Policies of Ecumenical Partners
- Discussion on Ecumenical Theological Education in Asia
- Review of WCC Asia desks programme proposals for 2004 and identification of programme priorities and strategies for the year 2005
- Other WCC involvement in Asia

2.2 Dialogue and Consultation

The aim of this programme is to strengthen dialogue and consultation on issues of concern to the Asian churches, including cross-cultural exchange and exposure; dialogue on issues related to prophetic diakonia, advocacy on peace, reconciliation, sustainable communities and strengthening of civil society in countries affected with the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, minority persecution, transitional economies and societies that are shifting from socialism to a market economy. The Asia Desk facilitated/assisted several opportunities to enter into meaningful dialogue and consultation with Asian churches on issues affecting their life and witness in the Asian region. Small financial contributions were also made available for the following consultations:

- A **Seminar on the 'Church in China Today'** was organised jointly by the Asia Desk and the CER in conjunction with the visit of a delegation from China Christian Council and the Three Self Patriotic Movement in China to the WCC in April 2003.
- The Asia Desk in collaboration with ecumenical partners facilitated the **visit of a delegation from the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Peoples' Republic of China** to Norway, Germany and Switzerland, helping them to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Churches and governments in these countries as part of a learning process in understanding the role of Churches in social development.
- Asia Desk organised the **visit of a five member delegation from Myanmar to the WCC** and arranged meetings with various teams in the house for them to gain more insight into the ecumenical movement. During the same visit, the delegation visited Cambodia and Laos as was arranged by the Asia Desk and also attended a meeting of the Mekong Church leaders in Chiangmai, Thailand.
- Asia Desk along with the Health Mission Desk of WCC sponsored an Asia Regional Consultation organised by the CCA, to work out an inter-faith **Action plan to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS** in Asia. This consultation was held in Thailand from 20 – 24 November, in which more than 100 participants from various religious communities in Asia participated.
- A solidarity grant was given to **Nepal Christian Council** for organising a consultation on Justice and Peace which ultimately led to the setting up of a programme desk on Justice and Peace.
- Supported consultations on **Christian Marriage Acts in Pakistan and Bangladesh**

These activities had the common purpose to foster dialogue between Asian churches and other ecumenical organisations and partners within and outside the region.

2.3 Situation Analysis and Country Updates

The Asia Desk produced and published following Situation Analysis and Country updates during the year:

- Emerging Geo-political Trends in Asia
- Indonesia After Reformasi
- Country Situation Update: Laos
- Country Situation Update: Myanmar
- Country Situation Update: Thailand

2.4 Co-ordination of Round Tables and Partnership Programmes for Ecumenical Sharing

In 2003, the WCC Asia Desk continued to facilitate and co-ordinate Round Table Programmes and ecumenical sharing mechanisms of following ecumenical and church related bodies:

1. Amity Foundation (China) Round Table
2. Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)
3. Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)
4. East Timor Round Table (Ecumenical Partnership for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor - EPPRET)
5. Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programme (MEPP)
6. Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC)
7. National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)
8. PGI (Indonesia) Round Table
9. South Asia Ecumenical partnership Programme (SAEPP)

The following Round Tables and Round Table Core Groups met in 2003:

- SAEPP Forum meeting, March 2003, Colombo.
- NCC Philippines, RT, Manila, September 2003
- PGI Core Group, September 2003
- MCC, RT Core Group, Utrecht, October 2003
- CCDB, RT Core Group, Utrecht, October 2003
- Amity Round Table, December 2003
- MEPP Round Table, December 2003

Details of each Round Tables and Ecumenical Sharing Mechanisms facilitated by the Asia Desk are given in the following chart:

Amity Foundation, China	<p>In 1986 the WCC re-established programmatic co-operation with the churches in People's Republic of China after almost 45 years of Chinese isolation from the rest of the ecumenical movement. Through the establishment of the Amity Foundation by the China Christian Council with its separate board for decision-making, Amity Foundation has demonstrated its ecumenical spirit and vision on behalf of the churches and people of China. The ecumenical family and some other Churches in the USA support its core activities. Its major activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency relief and rehabilitation;• Long-term development training;• Gender development;• Work with the differently baled, orphans and the elderly. <p>The Core budget of Amity Foundation (China) has been co-ordinated by the Asia desk for several years. But in a changing context of the priorities and preferences of the Northern ecumenical partners, it has become difficult to continue the co-ordination of bilateral arrangements and funding mechanisms and the partners have suggested to have a more appropriate mechanism in which all partners, or at least most partners, could be present to discuss Amity's programmes and budget proposals.</p> <p>As an outcome of the above, the Asia Desk convened a meeting of ecumenical partners from Europe, North America, Australia and Hong Kong which was held in Geneva on December 8-9, 2003. 37 participants representing various ecumenical agencies and Chinese Churches including senior Amity Staff attended the meeting. The meeting unanimously decided to set up a formal Round Table (RT) mechanism to be co-ordinated by the WCC Asia Desk. An annual Work Plan for the</p>
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	<p>year 2004 and a three year budget were presented by the Amity Foundation. A Core Group which will meet in early 2004 to follow-up the RT decisions was formed. It was decided to enhance potentials of the Amity staff in the areas of organisational management and financial planning and management in the coming years.</p>
<p>Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)</p>	<p>The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) is the successor organisation of the Bangladesh Ecumenical Relief and Rehabilitation Services launched by the WCC in 1972. The CCDB since its inception work for the poor and marginalised people of Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in Asia. The work of CCDB has spread to several districts in the country, including the Hill Tracts where the Pahari and Adivasi communities live. The major thrusts of CCDB programmes are: Food Security, Poverty Alleviation, Sustainable Development, Gender Justice, Peace and Harmony, Good Governance, Enhancement of Human and Organisational Potential, Promotion of Community Based Action for Health, HIV/AIDS Prevention Care, Environment conservation, Disaster Preparedness and Response, Regeneration of Adhivasi and Pahari Culture and Identity and Promotion of Local and Regional Co-operation.</p> <p>CCDB has an annual budget of about U.S. \$ 1 million and most of the grants pledged at the Round Table (RT) are channelled to CCDB directly by the partners.</p> <p>The Asia Desk has been coordinating the resource sharing for CCDB through an RT since 1985. The Round Table, held in Utrecht in October 2003, initiated an Organisational Assessment (OA) of CCDB with the assistance of external resource persons. The findings of the OA were discussed at the last Core Group meeting and follow-up actions were decided upon. Based on the recommendations and findings of the OA and on further discussions of the RT Core Group, a change process has been initiated by CCDB Commission and Senior Management Team.</p>
<p>Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)</p>	<p>The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is a fellowship of churches and national councils of churches in 18 countries in Asia and Australia and New Zealand. The CCA Round Table, co-ordinated by the Asia Desk ever since its beginning, facilitates the resource sharing mechanism of the ecumenical partners and the Asian churches and it helps CCA in its mission to strengthen Asian ecumenical movement, to be concerned with the spiritual enrichment and unity of the churches in Asia. The CCA Round Table provides an ecumenical platform where the activities/programmes and the core budget of the CCA are discussed. Full information on all aspects of CCA's work is shared at Round Table meetings. A new general committee and officers was elected in the last General Assembly held in June 2000. Important issues and programmes in Asian countries addressed by CCA include wider ecumenism, mission in a pluralistic context, diverse identities, gender and development issues, human rights, migrant workers, refugees and internally displaced people, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, violence, terrorism, war, militarisation, conflict transformation, spirituality, Asian theologies, ecumenical leadership, ecumenical formation and fullness of life for all.</p>

<p>CASA, India</p>	<p>Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) is the social development arm of the WCC and NCCI member churches in India. Since its inception CASA has served the poor and marginalised people in India. The Core Programme of CASA is a strategic intervention in the process of empowerment and societal change. It has two strategic components –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, Human Potential Development (HPD) and • People's Action for Transformation (PAT). <p>The present programme covers 4,844 villages, which are spread over 12 states of India. The programme plan (Forward Plan) for the period 1992-2002 came to an end in December 2002. It is in this context that CASA initiated a process for developing an effective Plan of Action (PLA) for the next decade. The ongoing process of Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP), articulation of state and area perspective and strategy, proposed</p> <p>Internal review and dialogue with the churches and other stakeholders are aimed at providing valuable inputs for planning for the next decade. The process of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation (GLP) followed by the Government of India has unleashed a process of further marginalisation of the poor. In this situation CASA plans a new set of strategies and a changed approach that is essential for a meaningful empowerment process to be followed by CASA.</p> <p>Although CASA RT was initiated by WCC and is still listed here as a WCC Round Table, the relationship between WCC and CASA has not been good. WCC was not present in CASA Round Table for 7 years from 1995 –2001. In 2002 a new Director of CASA, Mr Sushant Agarwal was appointed and relations with WCC have been improving. As an outcome of this CASA re-established its relations with WCC and WCC Asia Secretary was requested to be present at the last RT meeting in early 2003. WCC Asia Desk still channels some funds from donors to CASA.</p>
<p>Ecumenical Partnership for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor (EPRRET)</p>	<p>After ACT International announced its withdrawal from the support to YASONA, the social development department of the IPTL, the East Timor Protestant Church, the IPTL, requested WCC to facilitate a resource sharing mechanism to assist YASONA and IPTL to continue their programmes and projects. The Asia Desk organised a meeting in 2002 of the church leaders from East Timor, YASONA representatives and ecumenical partners. As a result this East Timor Round Table mechanism was established. A need assessment of YASONA was conducted in 2003 with the assistance of three ecumenical partners (CWS Australia, CWS USA and UCN Netherlands) and with the assistance of the ACT Asia Appeals Officer. The report of the assessment team was circulated and the dates for the next meeting EPRET will be fixed soon.</p>
<p>Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programme</p>	<p>With its roots in the 'Ecumenical Forum on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (VLC)' which was formerly the Indochina Round Table (the resource sharing mechanisms for the ecumenical family's involvement in Indochina since 1994), the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programme</p>

(MEPP)	<p>(MEPP) aims to accommodate and address the concerns in the greater Mekong sub-region of six countries - Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand and China (Yunan Province). This new programme has been initiated by the WCC and CCA in collaboration with churches in these countries. The main objectives of MEPP are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance theological reflection and discussion on social issues of churches in the Mekong sub-region • To raise awareness and capability of churches to pursue a holistic ministry • To develop human resources of churches and people in the region • To enhance mutual co-operation and networking of churches and related organisations in the Mekong sub-region <p>The funds received as part of the earlier VLC Forum programme arrangement have been used for various programmes during the year and the following grants have been made in 2003:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the visit of the General Secretary to Laos on February 26, a donation for Ten Units of hospital beds was given to a recently built hospital in Vientiane, which takes care of Buddhist monks. • A special grant was given to 2 students from the Evangelical Church in Vietnam to continue their studies at the Theoloji Seminary in Malaysia. • A grant was provided for a vacation Bible School training programme organised by the Cao Lanh Church at the Don Thap Province in Vietnam in which about 150 students attended. • Fees for the special auditing of the Kampuchea Christian Council accounts for the years 1999-2002 were paid. <p>On December 10-11 a Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programme (MEPP) Consultation took place in Geneva, in which church leaders from the Mekong sub-region and ecumenical partners attended. A Comprehensive Proposal for the years 2004-2006 was presented at the MEPP meeting. The following issues were prioritised for the next three year, 2004-2006:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV/AIDS Concerns; • Cross-border Migration and Human Rights Concerns; • Capacity Building; • Inter-religious Co-operation; • Social Development missions of Churches <p>Through MEPP, it is expected that the churches in the Mekong sub-region will be equipped to undertake wider responsibilities in Church and society. An action plan was adopted to train church leaders to provide better and effective implementation of activities while carrying out the churches' mission. The Asia Desk provided travel grants for the participants from the Mekong region and also arranged their board and lodging.</p>
Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC)	<p>After decades of long self-imposed isolation, Myanmar remains a closed door society to the rest of the world due to the policies of the former socialist totalitarian regime and the present authoritarian military regime. The people and churches of Myanmar continue to suffer greatly from the difficult living conditions. The Myanmar Council of Churches Round Table aims to:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a comprehensive ecumenical programme under the auspices of the churches in Myanmar; • serve as a platform of Myanmar churches for solidarity, sharing and support; • enable the churches in Myanmar to carry out their Christian mission and witness. <p>While the MCC is deeply engaged in awareness-raising, training and ecumenical formation programmes within Myanmar, their programmes also seek to provide the member churches with opportunities for wider exposure, enabling training and a clearer grasp of issues for prospective ecumenical leaders, both lay and ordained. Training is also provided in practical skills, such as drilling of tube-wells, water conservation and protection of the environment. A programme for differently-abled people in handicrafts, flower arrangement and other skills which could offer income-generation possibilities are also taught. A wide range of activities aim to improve levels of education, literacy; leadership skills, awareness about the serious problem of HIV/AIDS.</p> <p>The funds generated through the Round Table (RT) help MCC to undertake various programmes. A meeting of the Core Group of the RT was held in Utrecht, Netherlands on October 21-22, 2003 where the current and future activities of MCC were discussed. The Budget for 2004 was approved by the Core Group. The next Myanmar Round Table will be in November 2004 in Yangon.</p>
National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)	<p>The NCCP Round Table came into being at the time of the churches' struggle against the dictatorial regime of Marcos. From the very beginning, the programmes, supported through a RT, focussed on peace initiatives, concern for political reforms, a new interpretation of mission and evangelism, the churches' involvement with human rights and environmental concerns. These programmes continue to constitute the major thrust of NCCP activities. Financial accountability and the issue of ownership of NCCP by the member churches has been under question for the past several years and discussions were prolonged as several matters remain unclassified. Although the NCCP has undergone a programmatic restructuring and is now under new leadership, several partners are still questioning the political involvement of NCCP as a national co-ordinating body of Churches. This has eventually led to the withdrawal of some ecumenical partners as they are not convinced of supporting a council which is not inclusive.</p> <p>As most partners for various reasons decided not to continue their support to NCCP and although three remaining partners were willing to continue their support for NCCP even without a RT mechanism, it was decided in the last meeting of the NCCP RT in September 2003 to wind it up. However the Asia Desk was requested to convene and co-ordinate the NCCP Partners' Forum from time to time to express the ecumenical family's solidarity to the churches in the Philippines.</p>
PGI Crisis Centre, Indonesia	<p>Since the fall of Suharto regime in 1998, Indonesia continues to face socio-economic and political crisis and religious conflicts. Thousands of people have been killed in the religious conflicts and religious violence in several parts of the country. With power now divided between a</p>

	<p>diminished presidency, and a military prepared now to take a political back seat, Indonesia continues to wrestle with the social and political instability, economic crisis and religious conflict. Churches in Indonesia are in the middle of these conflicts. The Crisis Centre of PGI plays the role of actualising the position of PGI member churches, which are scattered throughout most parts of the country. Based on observations of the social-political reality, particularly the tendency towards the politicisation of religion, sharpening ethnic conflict, frequent bombings, violence and various other destructive disputes among the society, the present crisis in Indonesia will not be solved in the near future. Therefore the PGI Crisis Centre programme plans have the following emphases and involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitoring the situation ➤ Analysis and interpretation of the situation ➤ Peace education ➤ Peace and conflict resolution ➤ Inter-religious dialogue and co-operation in peace making ➤ Training of Peace Core Activists <p>In May 2002, an office for the Crisis Centre was set up and staff were recruited. A database of conflict situations in Indonesia has been developed and it is kept up-to date through the compilation of current written materials, as well as of reports of visits to conflict areas and interviews with people involved. In early 2003, the Centre organised workshops and training on Empowering Reconciliation and Peace to follow on from ones carried out in 2002. Such events help to empower regional Crisis Centres, such as the ones in Ambon and Central Sulawesi, and provide opportunity for local capacity building in the areas of mediation and conflict resolution.</p> <p>Unfortunately, staff changes and lack of qualified staff have meant that the function of the Crisis Centre has been affected. The Core Group of the RT met in 2003 and expressed its dissatisfaction with the current situation at the Crisis Centre. It was decided not to disburse the funds from WCC to PGI unless proper expertise / human resources were recruited to administer the Crisis Centre. A proper evaluation of the C.C is necessary to assess the need and capabilities of the Centre and its function. At the end of 2003 however a new Executive Director has been recruited to head the centre and its activities.</p>
<p>South Asian Ecumenical Partnership Programme (SEAPP)</p>	<p>SAEPP is an outcome of the ecumenical response to the needs of the churches in South Asia. It was initiated by the Asia Desk in collaboration with CCA to assist and accompany WCC and CCA member churches through five South Asian NCCs. SAEPP aims to promote co-ordination, and co-operation and closer linkages among South Asian churches and NCCs with ecumenical partners from Northern countries, CCA and WCC.</p> <p>Twelve ecumenical partners are accompanying five South Asian NCCs in this programme.</p> <p>The four specific areas of programmes within the SAEPP framework are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Ecumenical Agenda for Combating HIV / AIDS in South Asia • Capacity Building/ Human Resource Development • Equipping Churches in their mission for Peace and Reconciliation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting Churches to nurture Inter-religious co-operation <p>The SAEPP Forum met in March 2003 in Colombo. A Core Group composed of two representatives of NCCs, two ecumenical agencies, CCA and WCC assess the progress of the programme implementation on annual basis.</p>
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2.5 Co-ordination of Multilateral Sharing

Multilateral sharing includes the channelling of financial and other resources to churches and related organisations in the regions, with the twin purpose of strengthening their capacity to respond to the challenges facing them and supporting their common witness in society. Through the multilateral sharing mechanism the supporting agencies and the project implementers share opportunities for ecumenical co-operation and expressing solidarity with churches in different parts of the world. During 2003 the Asia Desk facilitated multilateral sharing mechanism for the following programmes and projects in various Asian countries with the assistance of churches and agencies in the North.

Sunday School Programme, Bangladesh

This is an ongoing programme of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha (BBCS). BBCS congregations are scattered all over the country. Children from ages 4 to 15 years from 327 churches in 9 regions are attending Sunday Schools and this programme helps BBCS to provide a sound Christian education to children, enabling them to grow up with Christian values and principles living as Christian children in a society where Islam is the major religion: only about 0.03 percent of Bangladesh's 128 million people. The Sunday school programme is an important mission of the BBCS, as children of Christian communities in rural areas often are unable to study the Bible and the Christian faith. The Sunday school programme is implemented by devoted teachers, whose training is part of the general Sunday School programme of BBCS. A curriculum has been developed and several training materials have been translated into the *Bangla* language. This was highly appreciated. In 2003 two new books have been printed. Residential camps have been organised by the 9 regional Baptist Church Sangha which helped to develop deeper fellowship among these children from various parts of the country.

Students' Centre for Spirituality and Culture, Kithu Sadana, Sri Lanka

Under the auspices of the Anglican Diocese of Colombo a Student Centre was built on the premises of the Cathedral in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This centre caters to a long felt need for a common meeting place for university students, academic staff, students of private technical institutions and youth. The programmes of the Centre include prayer services, bible studies, counselling services, lectures and seminars, library services, recreational services, cafeteria services, etc., all of which are aimed at promoting the spirituality and well-being of young people in the Christian community in Colombo and surrounding areas. The overall aim of the programmes of the Centre focus on primarily spirituality and cultural concerns. In 2003 the work of the centre has been reorganised, infrastructure has been improved and more systematic programmes have been carried out with the financial contribution received through WCC.

Spiritual Programme - Cambodian Christian Women's Association

In January 2002 the Cambodian Christian Women's Association (CCWA) became the Women's Desk of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC). The regular programmes of CCWA in the previous years have been organised by the Women's Desk in 2003 which include: Women's Spirituality and Empowerment Seminar, Women's Participation in Sunday School Teachers' Training, Women's Spirituality and Human Rights in Daily Life, Women's Spirituality, Health and Ecology Spiritual Retreat with Kampuchea Christian Council, an Echo meeting of the Women's Spirituality and Empowerment at Kom Pong cham Province, Women's Spirituality and Basic Facilitation Skills, and Evaluation of Women's Spirituality

Implementation. These programmes/seminars involved women from local churches and enabled the participants to deal with issues such as discovering and sharing the potentials of women; identifying problems of women in their homes, church and society in Cambodia; defining gender and patriarchy; demonstrating basic facilitation and leadership skills. As an integral part of Kampuchea Christian Council, the Women's Desk acknowledged its responsibility to train teachers for Sunday Schools. Youth leaders from local churches attended these seminars and workshops which enabled them to apply simple methods of teaching Sunday School, make and follow lesson plans and be able to conform them into a curriculum. Full reports on all activities can be obtained from the Asia Desk.

Vocational Training –Cambodia Christian Women's Association (CCWA)

Sewing and weaving training for young unemployed women in Cambodia has been going on under the auspices of the CCWA for the past several years. As the CCWA has now become the Women's Desk of Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC), these projects have been implemented by the KCC Women's Desk since 2003. Young women of poor families from rural areas have been recruited by the Women's Desk from rural areas and they are given training in sewing and tailoring. Each year two batches of these trainings are organised. The new classes started in September 2003 and will continue until March 2004. The class room has been renovated and the loom machine repaired. Three wooden loom machines are newly installed. The work shop building has been renovated which makes it more conducive for practical training. Students who undergo these training courses will get jobs in garment factories and some often find self employment in their rural settings.

Abayasram, Care for Mentally Retarded Women

Founded on Christian faith and values, an ecumenical charitable trust *Abayasram* (Shelter and Care for the marginalized) project was started in 1998 with the primary objective of giving free residential care and rehabilitation to homeless, mentally retarded women, abandoned by their families, wandering on the streets. About 2% of the population in India, especially in rural areas, suffers from mental disorders and many are unaware of treatment possibilities. As gender discrimination prevails in Indian society, the mental health of women is less attended to. The attitude of family members towards mentally retarded women is often to get rid of them. Fits caused by epilepsy are considered a possession of an evil spirit in rural societies. Due to lack of care given to such women, they beg and live on the streets where they are often exploited. Rehabilitation to these vagrant women in rural areas like Kanakapura and Devanahalli in Karnataka State has become a priority for *Abayasram*. 19 women are being sheltered and treated now. These residents of Abaysram Rehabilitation Centre are picked up from the streets by staff of *Abayasram* or brought there by the local police. A resident social worker is responsible for behavioural therapy, personnel hygiene, food, counselling, personality development and spiritual growth. A visiting physician gives physical care and treatment.

Deaf and Blind School in Jaffna, Sri Lanka

The Church of Ceylon has initiated the reconstruction of the Nuffield School for the Deaf and Blind in Kaithadi, which has not been functional for many years. The peace negotiations and the relatively war-free atmosphere in the conflict-affected Jaffna region in Sri Lanka, gave an impetus for the Church of Ceylon to undertake the mission of reopening the school. This school was the first institute opened for handicapped children in the North of Sri Lanka. The school was damaged in earlier fighting between the government forces and the LTTE through extensive shelling and bombing. The children had to be evacuated and the school was closed. In May 2003 the school was reopened and the necessary repairs have been carried out on some of the buildings essential for classes. Since then, 169 children have been able to be admitted to the school, a number expected to grow when other displaced people return to the North.

Lay Training of Lao Evangelical Church

Laos is Asia's least known and least developed country, and is one of the last five remaining communist countries in the world. Laos Evangelical Church (LEC), the only Protestant church officially recognised by the Government, has about 350 parishes and congregations with a membership of about 100,000 members scattered in 18 provinces, mostly in rural areas. The LEC has only 60 trained pastors and most congregations are headed by lay leaders. LEC's Bible school was taken over by the government during the Communist revolution in 1975 and has not been returned to the Church, although several Church buildings taken over earlier have been returned during the past 10 years. As theological training for pastors is not permitted by the government, LEC has initiated a special training programme to develop leadership of the lay leaders who are providing leadership in local congregations. A group of selected lay leaders from rural congregations come to the capital city, Vientiane, stay alternating weeks every month to undergo training at the headquarters. Lay leaders who have undergone training now provide leadership at their local congregations in the absence of trained pastors. This has been an ongoing programme of LEC for the past 3 years.

English Training of Church Workers in China

The Church in the People's Republic of China is growing fast. More than 15 million Christians are now members of the China Christian Council (CCC). A large number of theological graduates graduate from various theological seminaries in the country every year. However, only very few of them can communicate in English, which has resulted in a lack of ecumenical exposure and participation in international ecumenical programmes by Chinese Christians. The CCC has initiated programmes to improve the English language skills of pastors and prospective church leaders at the provincial and national levels through regular English language training and arranged exchange visits to English speaking countries for short stays. China is the most populated country in the world and still operates with a communist ideological framework. The church in China was kept from international exposure and ecumenical experiences and it is therefore important that Chinese Christians are ecumenically oriented and participate at regional and international ecumenical events. In order to achieve this goal, more systematic efforts need to be developed. CCC's efforts in this direction by providing language training skills for better communication was supported by the WCC Asia Desk during 2003.

Apna Ghar Women's Shelter, Pakistan

"Apna Ghar", a half way home for women and children in difficult circumstances, was opened by the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) to provide safe shelter for persecuted women. Violence against women is a common issue in Pakistani society and has become a major area of concern in recent years. As more information about its impact has become available, it is evident that violence against women appears to be on the increase. Young women are being lured and brought to cities from rural areas, forced into prostitution and in the end they are abandoned on the streets. The *Apna Ghar* provides shelter for these persecuted women and educates them about their fundamental and legal rights. The length of stay at the shelter varies from a few days to three months. The women in Apna Ghar live under stress because of abuse in their lives. To help them requires special training, skills and understanding. Therefore, CLAAS and *Apna Ghar* staff are sensitised on gender issues and are trained in stress and conflict management and family counselling. Most of the non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights focus mainly on immediate relief for victims, but there are very few who actually work for the rehabilitation and counselling of survivors of violence. Apna Ghar's mission is unique in their way of addressing the problems of these persecuted women in Pakistani society. Funds for this project only arrived and were disbursed in December 2003 but as it is an ongoing project, the contribution will be used for regular activities in the early part of 2004.

Care for Protection of Mistreated Children in Cambodia

Sok Sabay is a non governmental organisation that works to help the social conditions of marginalised and mistreated children in Cambodia. Sok Sabay's main programmes are Rehabilitation and Long Term Education of children who have undergone severe abuse. The small staff of Sok Sabay is managed by Ms. Marie Cammal, a missionary nurse with 15 years of experience in South East Asia refugee camps amongst Lao, Khmer, Vietnamese and Karen refugees. Guided by her personal motivation and compassion for the poor and marginalised along with her extensive experience in social work, Marie launched the centre in 1996. Sok Sabay provides vocational training for the rescued and rehabilitated children and helps them to stand on their own feet in the long run. After years of nurturing at Sok Sabay, these young adults, with employment skills, have come a long way from the desperation of their childhood. In 2003 three girls belonging to the first group of children who were rescued and sheltered, found good jobs. They are a witness to Sok Sabay's effective mission among mistreated and marginalised children in Cambodian society. The Shelter has the capacity for 40 and currently cares for 30 boys and girls ranging from 6 month old infants to 18 year olds. Funds for this project arrived only in December 2003 but, as this is an ongoing project the funds transferred will be used in early 2004.

Promotion of Livelihood Education for Development and Grassroots Empowerment

Promotion of Livelihood Education for Development and Grassroots' Empowerment (PLEDGE) works with relegated people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, in the southern part of Bangladesh. PLEDGE works on areas such as developing the skills of landless rural people through rendering need-based support services in the form of training, functional education, social mobilisation on water and sanitation, community forestry, vegetable gardening, locally appropriate income generating activities. PLEDGE promotes economic development through providing technical support packages including development education. PLEDGE involves rural/urban unemployed poor adolescents in income generating enterprises to improve their social and economic status and helps establish infrastructures for community services such as health care, occupational and vocational skill training and credit. Funds for this project arrived only in December 2003, but as it is an ongoing project, the funds will be used for activities in 2004.

Income Generation for Bangladesh Rural Women

Dehergati Matri Mangol Samaj Seba Samity (DMMSSS), a Christian Women's organisation, was founded in a rural District of Barisal in Bangladesh in 1985. It carries out its programmes in various areas to help underprivileged and marginalised women in rural areas, which are mostly poverty stricken. The work of DMMSSS is focussed on raising awareness concerning the adverse socio-economic conditions of life, educating women in literacy, health care and helping them to develop income generating projects, implementing programmes for child welfare, improving water and sanitation conditions and organising women's groups for developing their own funds to use revolving loans for income generation. Present activities include training in the following activities: income generating self employment projects, small cottage industries, poultry farming, health and nutrition, sanitation and environment improvement, kitchen gardening, etc. There are 250 active members in this women's organisation and they are the implementers and beneficiaries of the work of DMMSSS. Funds for this project arrived only in December 2003 but, as it is an ongoing project, activities will be carried out in 2004.

3. BUILDING CAPACITIES

It is important to facilitate the building of capacities of member churches and partner organisations to use sustainable and holistic methodologies in their diakonal ministries. Several activities have been implemented during the year 2003 in Asian countries to enhance human and organisational development, with view to strengthening the future leadership of the ecumenical movement and churches in the Asian region. The capacity building programmes work in three areas

1. Leadership development to encourage churches to be prophetic in their efforts to bring about a just and caring society.
2. Organisational development / renewal of churches and ecumenical organisations to increase their efficiency in working within given constraints and requirements of the ecumenical movement
3. Development of capacity building materials to inform and equip churches in their training programmes.

3.1 Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia (EETA)

The Asia Desk jointly with the CCA initiated an Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia. The aim of EETA is to provide assistance and expertise to WCC and CCA member churches in their capacity building/leadership development programmes which will help ecumenical formation and building up of more efficient leadership in ecumenical councils and churches in Asia. Several of these resource persons have been taking leadership in organising training in countries such as Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh, East Timor, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and other sub-regional and regional level training in organisational management development.

3.2 Capacity Building Programmes implemented in Asia in 2002

Planned Activities		Programmes implemented
1.	Organisational Management Training for Asian Church leaders and NCC Staff	In view of the growing involvement of the churches in social development and their interest in improving concepts and administrative capacities of Asian churches, the Asia Desk in collaboration with the Christian Conference of Asia, organised a Training in Organisational and Financial Management from December 1 to 9, 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand which 30 participants attended .
2.	Capacity Building Training for Church Leaders in Nepal	Two Capacity Building Programmes were organised in Nepal with the assistance of three members of EETA; from 21-30 April, October 24-28 and 27-30 December 2003. Altogether 80 Church leaders from various districts in Nepal attended.
3	Capacity Development Training for South Asian Church Leaders	A leadership development training for church leaders from South Asian countries was organised by the Asia Desk with the assistance of two EETA members at the Ecumenical Christian Centre in Bangalore, India from November 22 to 29, 2003. 25 participants from the five South Asian countries attended the training.
4.	Human and Organisational Potential Enhancement Training in North East Asia	This training programme was scheduled to take place in Seoul, Korea in mid 2003, but was postponed due to the wide spread of SARS in some of the Northeast Asian countries. The programme was finally held from 21-25 February 2004 in Seoul,

		Korea. The CCA and three members of EETA from East Asia provided leadership in organising this workshop. 25 participants from CCA/WCC Member Councils and Churches and church related organisations in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong attended. The main objectives of this programme was to assist in developing the capacity of current and prospective leaders of churches and National Council of Churches and ecumenical organisations in the Northeast Asia sub region to strengthen their human and organisational management skills.
5.	Ecumenical Development Education Training in the Philippines	Three five day training programmes with a focus on 'Ecumenical Development Education' were organised to build up the capacities of selected young people from various dioceses of <i>Iglesia Filipina Independiente</i> . These trainings were held between the period of April 21 to June 8, 2003, and were facilitated by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. A total of 61 youth attended these training programmes.
6.	Leadership Development of Indigenous Church leaders in Malaysia	A leadership development training for church leaders from the indigenous communities in Sarawak and Saba regions of Malaysia was planned to be held in December 2003 through the co-ordination of Council of Churches in Malaysia, but the programme was rescheduled for the last week of May 2004.

4. DEVELOPING A COHERENT AND HOLISTIC APPROACH

4.1 Solidarity and Holistic Advocacy

This programme aims to facilitate reflection and action on ecumenical diakonia and sustainable communities in the Asia region in close collaboration/co-ordination with churches and ecumenical bodies by enabling solidarity support to marginalised groups and communities in their struggle to protect and promote human dignity and peace with justice.

The Asia Desk provided the grants to the following programmes during 2003 as well as travel grants for exposure visits:

- **Consultation on Christian Marriage Acts:** A Consultation to facilitate a process of advocacy against an outdated Christian Marriage Act (more than a century old Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872 originally introduced by the British government during the colonial era) still prevailing in Pakistan and Bangladesh, was organised by the Asia Desk in collaboration with five South Asian NCCs, which was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in September 2003. Twenty Church leaders, jurists, social activities and representatives of women's groups attended this consultation and made plans to draft new proposals to be submitted to the governments in Bangladesh and Pakistan to replace the Marriage Act.
- **Inter-Religious Peace Foundation:** A solidarity grant was made available to support a project of the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation in Sri Lanka to work on a project - "Towards a Culture of Peace and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka Through Skills of Conflict Management". The main thrust of this project was to enhance the capacity of religious, academic, community and

grass root level religious leaders, along with key actors in institutions of governance and authority in the task of prevention, mitigation and crisis management.

- **Consultation on Disappearances – Healing and Reconciliation:** The Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong organised a consultation on the theme “Disappearances – Healing and Reconciliation.” This meeting was co-hosted by the families of “disappeared people” in Asia. A group of participants from families of the victims and representatives of community and human rights organisations gathered for five days to share experiences and reflections on their lives and the ways to deal with these difficult issues which confront their local situations due to police/military excesses. A solidarity grant was allocated for preparation, travel, lodging, communication and other incidental expenses.
- **World Social Forum:** A small contribution was allocated to set up the local ecumenical co-ordination office in Bombay for the World Social Forum preparations. The Asia Desk co-ordinated the liaison work between WCC, NCCI and CASA for local arrangements.
- **Travel grants:** Travel grants were provided for a member of The United Theological College in Bangalore from the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church in connection with his doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh. A travel grant was provided to a representative of the Caribbean Churches to attend a meeting in Korea on peace on the request of National Council of Churches in the Philippines. The Asia Desk also provided financial support for a journalist from Church of South India who attended the WCC Central Committee Meeting in Geneva.

4.2 Solidarity Support to Women’s Local Initiatives

The overall objective of this programme aims to enable women in different Asian countries to carry out small programmes to improve their situation in different areas through training and development of skills for organising and mobilising on women’s issues, empowerment and equality, awareness-building as well as technical skills. It has become more and more evident that women constitute an overwhelming majority of the poor in most Asian countries. The role of women in the economic and social sector needs to be identified. The Asia Desk during the year supported several women’s groups, which are trying to assist women in self-employment and social and human development.

During 2003 following programmes/projects initiated by various women's local initiatives in Asia have been supported:

- **The Garden of Mercy Foundation in Taipei, Taiwan** initiated by the local Church women's Group together with other Christian communities established a hospice where homeless and terminal patients with HIV/AIDS can receive physical, spiritual and emotional care. A grant was allocated to facilitate the implementation of this programme.
- **Lace Making Factory of CSI Kanyakumari Diocese:** A grant has been allocated to the Kanyakumari Diocese of the Church of South India to modernise the Lace Making Factory which provides employment to rural and tribal women. This Lace factory was started mainly to assist rural women who were in financial and social distress. During the last several decades, the diocese has opened several centres in tribal populated areas in Tamil Nadu. The objectives are to expand Lace making as a cottage industry which will be beneficial for tribal women and to supply the tribal women with bobbins, pillows and other materials enabling them to work and generate income. The Asia Desk supported the establishment of an additional training centre, and the process of opening a central showroom.
- **Income Generation Projects in Barisal, Bangladesh:** Income generating programmes such as goat raising, poultry farming, vegetable gardening and fish cultivation among rural women by *Dehergati Matri Mangal Samaj Seby Samity* in Bangladesh was supported through a grant which helped rural women in the Barisal area in their efforts for sustainable development of their livelihood.
- **Indigenous Women and Children Rehabilitation in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, India:** A grant has been given to the Holy Child Hood Society for Indigenous Women and Children Rehabilitation in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, India.

- **Women's Empowerment Programmes in the Philippines:** Three Women's Empowerment Programmes, organised by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines was supported with grants from the Asia Desk in 2003. A Leadership Training for the Women of the Philippine Independent Church (WOPIC) for the Visayas Region was held in Cebu with the participation of 50 women. A leadership development training of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches was held at Central Philippine University, Iloilo City, attended by 47 people (30 females and 17 males). A Leadership Camp of the Iglesia Unida Ekumenical was held in Naga City. These programmes were supported with grants from the Asia Desk as part of its local women's initiative programmes.

4.3 Programme on Promoting Dignity of Children

The programme to promote dignity of children with an aim to empower churches in their ministry with children, especially to find ways to advocate for the rights of children and also to develop an appropriate regional approach to promote the dignity of the marginalised children, was implemented in Asia through regular information sharing, networking with church related organisations working on children's rights, assisting the continued strengthening of the Asian 'Dignity of Children' ecumenical network of organisations working on this issue and involving the Asian REO, CCA through its programme unit Faith, Mission and Unity. The Asia Desk is assisted with this programme by an intern, Ms Ruth Lee, who is seconded by the Asia Team of Christian Aid, UK.

The main activities in 2003 were:

- supporting and strengthening the '**Dignity of Children' National Networks in Asia**' particularly through information and resource sharing, such as the International Labour Organisation's facilitation of the 'World Day Against Children Labour' and other UN/NGO advocacy days on children's issues. Information was also shared on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) process and contact with the NGO Group on the CRC.
- The Asia Desk began work on a **mapping project** which aims to create a resource for networking between churches already working with children and for those interested in establishing work with children
- The preparations for the **Inter-Regional Consultation** (postponed from mid-2003), held in Mumbai, India from 20-25 January 2004, were finalised in 2003. The main aims of this Consultation were to facilitate the sharing of experiences between regions and to evolve strategies to equip church-related organisations, institutions and children to address the issues of globalisation and its effects on children and street children, in particular in their respective contexts in Asian countries. This meeting was attended by 47 participants.
- As part of the ecumenical involvement in the World Social Forum, the Asia Desk on behalf of the Diakonia and Solidarity Team facilitated a **Seminar at the WSF on the topic: 'Building an Alternative World: Affirming the Dignity of Children'** which was held on 19 January 2004. Five speakers, one each from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faith backgrounds, spoke of how religious communities can be involved and work together towards building an alternative world, upholding the dignity of children, in the midst of globalisation. The inter-faith perspective gave much insight and depth to the seminar.
- In 2003, the WCC became a member of the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) and, particularly through the Asia Desk, has begun to make more contact with NGOs working with children's rights internationally. WCC Asia Desk has had observational representation at several NGO Group meetings on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has increased its observance of the CRC process in order to share this information with member churches and networks.

4.4 Gender and Diakonia

The Asia Desk contributed to the conceptual framework and planning discussion of a Justice and Diakonia Study, which is co-ordinated at the Diakonia Team level with the support of an intern. At the Asian Regional Group meeting, the subject of Diakonia and Justice was discussed and papers written from an Asian perspective contributed to the concrete conceptualisation of the

study as a joint initiative with the Justice, Peace and Creation Team. In November 2003, a letter and discussion questions were developed and sent to over 150 partners in all areas of the world by the D & S Team and the Asia Desk selected 30 person/ organisations to assist this initiative. Most of the organisations and persons approached by the Team from Asia contributed to this study process. The partners are requested to send reflections from local discussions about the important integration of justice and diaconal work. The preliminary responses will be drafted and shared at the May 2004 meeting of the Commission of the Churches on Diaconia and Development. These results and reflections will be compiled and published by September 2004 as a resource for diaconal work.