

WCC ASIA DESK Summary Narrative Report 2001

1. 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 diaconal work, and to maintain relationships with the WCC constituency.

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

1.1. WCC Regional Relations Team: mandate and services

Within the WCC, the Regional Relations & Ecumenical Sharing Team (RRES) is responsible for regional relations, ecumenical diakonia, and resource sharing and development co-operation. The mandate and tasks of the team, approved by the WCC Central Committee include:

- To foster partnership and just relationships with churches, REOs and ecumenical agencies in all regions;
- To facilitate the sharing of spiritual, material, cultural and other resources among churches and partners;
- To promote dignity and sustainable life in community by nurturing reflection and common action;
- To enable sustainable human development, capacity building and ecumenical diakonia with the churches.

The structure of the WCC Regional Relations and Ecumenical Sharing Team (RRES) consists of seven regional desks and a specialised finance and reporting assistant. The RRES team works in close co-ordination with other WCC staff teams, and in particular with the International Relations Team, and the Church and Ecumenical Relations Team. The WCC/LWF humanitarian emergency office, ACT-Action by Churches Together, and ECLOF, the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund, collaborate closely with the WCC Regional Relations Team.

1.2. WCC Asia Desk priorities 2001

The WCC Asia Desk gave priority in 2001 to:

- Capacity building,
- Co-ordination of ecumenical sharing of resources
- Diaconal and development
- Upholding regional perspectives
- Round tables
- Strengthen relationships with member churches and councils in the region
- Special attention to churches in marginalised countries
- Accompanying and supporting churches in conflict situations

2. PROMOTION OF REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN ECUMENICAL RESPONSES IN THE REGION

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 WCC work during the year.

2.1. WCC relations with member churches and related ecumenical organizations

During 2001, the staff of the WCC Asia Desk met with a range of church and ecumenical representatives throughout Asia. The following events can be highlighted as important moments of exchange with the representatives of member churches and other communities:

- ❖ Christian Conference of Asia Programme Committee Meeting in Bangkok (February)
- ❖ Visited Church of Christ in Thailand with Ms. Genevieve Jacques, Director of Cluster on Relations (February)
- ❖ Visited Socialist Republic of Vietnam and met with the leadership of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (February)
- ❖ Accompanied WCC General Secretary during his official visit to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (March)
- ❖ Capacity Building Programme of South Asian NCCs, Colombo, Sri Lanka, (March)
- ❖ CCDB -Bangladesh Round Table, Stuttgart, (April)
- ❖ Indonesia NCC (PGI) Round Table, Geneva (May)
- ❖ Observing Asia Sunday at WCC Chapel (May)
- ❖ Myanmar Council of Churches Round Table Core Group, Copenhagen, (June)
- ❖ Asia Forum meeting of CTBI, London (June)
- ❖ Asia Regional Group Meeting, Colombo, Sri Lanka (July)
- ❖ Christian Conference of Asia Round Table, Hong Kong (November)
- ❖ WCC/CCA Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia Ecumenical Forum Meeting, Hong Kong (November)
- ❖ Asia Regional Consultation on Affirming Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children, Bangkok, (November)
- ❖ Asian NCC's Round Table Capacity Building Training, Bangkok, (December)

2.2. Asia Regional Group

The Asia Regional Group (ARG) met in Colombo, Sri Lanka from July 15 – 21, 2001. Forty-one delegates participated. They included ARG members and representatives of Asian churches from 18 countries in Asia and ecumenical partners from Europe and the North America. The programme included the following basic components: (a) a daily common worship and Bible study; (b) a presentation of an overview of "geo-political trends in Asia"; (c) the presentation and discussion of the report of the Asia Secretary that included an analysis of issues, a description of activities and references to the decisions and actions of previous meetings related to the work of the ARG; (d) a presentation and a panel discussion on "missiological" issues and challenges to the Ecumenical Movement"; (e) a panel discussion on the situation in Sri Lanka; (f) a large amount of time has been allocated to receiving and discussing "country situation analyses"; (g) two panel presentations and discussions on "Peace, Reconciliation and Security in Asia"; (h) a panel presentation on Asia Priorities and Concerns of Ecumenical Partners. (i) workshop sessions on Asian issues and priorities; and (j) plenary sessions that discussed reports and priorities.

The ARG identified following priorities for future involvement of WCC and other members of the ecumenical family:

- Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development
- Peace and Reconciliation
- HIV/ AIDS Concerns and role of Churches
- Growing Religious Fundamentalism and inter-religious conflicts
- Capacity Building of Churches and Leadership Development
- Struggle for democratisation and good governance

- Globalisation and its negative impact
- Refugees, migrants and internally displaced people
- Religious freedom and minority rights

2.3. Dialogue and Consultation

Churches in Asia have been enjoying their ecumenical common vocation and solidarity within the ecumenical dialogue for many years. The aim of this programme is to promote dialogue and consultation on issues of concern to the Asian churches, including cross-cultural exchange and exposure visits, inter-faith dialogue, peace and reconciliation, conflict resolution, human rights issues and strengthening of civil society. Asia Desk provided support to churches and ecumenical groups in different Asian countries, for example support was extended to the Philippines to organise an awareness building programme, to India for a programme of social action groups' annual study conference on globalisation and its negative impacts, facilitated a Chinese delegation's visit and dialogue in Europe, organised a Consultation of Indonesian church leaders and ecumenical partners in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand; support to the Asian Resource Foundation in Bangkok's Consultation on Peace and Religion; sponsored Asian students and church representatives to attend conferences and consultations. All these activities had the common purpose to foster dialogue between Asian churches and other ecumenical organisations and partners within and outside the region.

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

Asia Desk maintained a close co-operation and co-ordination with the regional ecumenical organisation Christian Conference of Asia. The new CCA General Secretary was invited to WCC in May 2001. As it is mandated the Asia Desk provided a liaison between the two organisations and also participated CCA programmes. The WCC-CCA liaison group meeting was, but was postpone to May 2002. In several areas of programmes of WCC in Asia, the Asia Desk played a key role in its planning and facilitation, for example, the WCC-CCA VLC Forum meeting, Consultation on Dignity of Children, and requests for grants for programmes, etc. The Asia Desk acted as a liaison between CCA and several other WCC desks and teams for implementing organising programmes in Asia. The Asia Sunday was observed at WCC Chapel in co-ordination with Asia Task Force and the CCA General Secretary was the preacher.

2.5. 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 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. Asia launching of the DOV was implemented in collaboration with CCA and this resulted in observing Asia Sunday 2001 based on the theme 'Cultivating a Culture of Peace and Reconciliation'. This promoted WCC's visibility in the region in 2001 in an unprecedented way.

2.6. WCC General Secretary's Visit to Asia

The Asia Desk played a major role in coordination with the Asia Task Force to organise the visit of the WCC General Secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser to Asia. He visited Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in 2001. In Bangladesh the programme included visits to WCC member churches, National Council of Churches in Bangladesh, visits to rural and indigenous communities, development projects, meeting with the President of the Republic, Roman Catholic Church, addressing ecumenical gatherings, gathering of academicians and secular NGO representatives, etc. All those programmes helped to uphold WCC's concerns and programmes in a Muslim majority country where Christians are a microscopic minority. A special attempt he made to emphasis church unity in Bangladesh during the visit, especially the effort to bridge the longstanding division between a WCC member church in the country and the NCC Bangladesh found visible signs of results.

In Sri Lanka, Dr. Raiser visited the conflict-affected Jaffana Peninsula, met with the government officials, Buddhist leaders, Roman Catholic Church, addressed public meetings, etc.

3. CO-ORDINATION FOR ECUMENICAL SHARING AND SOLIDARITY

3.1. Round Table Programmes

In 2001, the WCC Asia Desk coordinated Round Table Programmes and ecumenical sharing mechanisms of following ecumenical and church related bodies:

- Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Hong Kong
- Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), Bangladesh
- Amity Foundation of China Christian Council, People's Republic of China
- PGI Crisis Centre/ Communion of Churches in Indonesia, Indonesia
- Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), India
- Myanmar Council of Churches, Myanmar
- National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Philippines
- Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia Ecumenical Forum

The CASA Round Table meetings are being co-ordinated by CASA executive committee. WCC Asia Desk coordinates the funds of non-participating Round Table members' contributions to CASA. Two new Round Tables, NCC Sri Lanka and East Timor Protestant Church, have been initiated in 2001, which would start in 2002.

The following Round Tables and Round Table Core Groups met in 2001:

- *CCA Round Table* was held in Hong Kong on 5-7 November 2001. CCA programmes and budgets for the next three years (2002-2004) was presented and discussed. The Round Table partners pledged an annual contribution of U.S.\$ 1 million to CCA.
- *CCDB Round Table Core Group* meeting was held in Stuttgart, Germany on 4-6 April 2001. BfdW hosted the Core Group meeting. The Budget presented at the full Round Table meeting in 2000 was reviewed and proposals for the HOPE training Centre was discussed.
- *MCC Round Table Core Group meeting* was held in Copenhagen, Denmark on June 11-12, 2001.
- *PGI Crisis Centre-Indonesia Round Table*: The new Round Table initiated as an outcome of the proposal of the Strategic Meeting on Indonesia, which was held in September 2000 in Utrecht, Netherlands met first time on 8-9 May 2001 in Geneva, in which 14 ecumenical partners from Europe and North America participated and contributed to the budget of PGI Crisis Centre.
- *NCC Sri Lanka Round Table Preparatory Meeting*: A preparatory meeting, dialogue between ecumenical partners and leadership of Sri Lankan churches was held in Colombo on 20 July 2001. It was decided to convene a full Round Table meeting in 2002.

Details of each Round Table are given in the following chart:

ROUND TABLES IN ASIA			
ASA009	Christian Conference of Asia	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 coordinated by the Asia Desk ever	

		<p>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. 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 the Round Table meetings. A new general committee and officers have been elected in the last General Assembly held in June 2000. Important issues and programmes in Asian countries which are addressed by CCA are 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>	
BD7504	CCDB Bangladesh	<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 marginalized people of Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in Asia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Major CCDB activities include: ➤ People-managed savings and credit programmes, ➤ Work with ethnic/indigenous communities, ➤ Training traditional birth attendants, ➤ Women's development programmes, ➤ Human and Organisational Potential Enhancement <p>All on the basis of the concept and framework of People's Participatory Planning Programme. Out of their work have come many stories of local initiatives by village groups. Currently CCDB is strongly emphasising its gender awareness-raising programme.</p> <p>Other matters of concern in this flood-prone country include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Disaster preparedness; ➤ The inter-relationship between emergencies, rehabilitation and development. 	
CN 9400	Amity Foundation China	<p>In 1986 the WCC re-established programmatic cooperation 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</p>	

		<p>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 Asia Desk coordinates the core budget support of major ecumenical partners.</p>	
ID0003	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 diminished presidency, and a military prepared for now to take apolitical back seat, Indonesia continued to wrestle with the social and political instability, economic crisis and religious conflicts. Churches in Indonesia are now in the middle of these conflicts. The Crisis Centre of PGI is meant to play the role to actualise the position of PGI member churches, which are scattered in most parts of the country. Based on profound observations into the social-political reality, particularly the tendency of politicisation of religion, the sharpening ethnic conflicts, frequent bombings and violence and various destructive disputes among the society the present crisis in Indonesia will not be solved in the near future. Therefore the PGI Crisis Centre programme is planned with following emphasis and programmatic 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 cooperation in peace making ➤ Training of Peace Core Activists <p>As an outcome of the RT discussions, an advocacy/ lobbying group to promote the peace and reconciliation efforts at the international level through UN, EU, etc. also are functioning through the coordination of a RT partner Uniting Churches of Netherlands.</p>	

IN7411	CASA India	<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 marginalized 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 is coming 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>	
MM0005	Myanmar	<p>After decades long self imposed isolation, Myanmar remained as a closed door society from the rest of the world through the policies of the former socialist totalitarian regime and 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 promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Capacity-building and ecumenical formation; ➤ Long-term development programmes; ➤ Mission and evangelism; ➤ Theological education, including opportunities for exposure overseas; ➤ Programmes for participation by young people and women 	
PH8300	Philippines	The NCC-Philippines Round Table came into being at the	

		<p>time of the churches' struggle against the dictatorial regime of Marcos. From the beginning its programme on peace initiatives and concern for political reform, a new interpretation of mission and evangelism, and the churches' involvement with human rights and environmental concerns have constituted the major thrusts of NCCP activities. The programmes on peace initiatives in the country, environmental concerns and gender development have been very much welcomed by the churches both inside and outside of the country. Financial accountability and the issue of ownership of NCCP by the member churches have occupied a large part of the RT discussions in the recent past. NCCP had undergone a programmatic restructuring and as a result staff structure was modified in recent times. The NCCP General Assembly held in 2001 made decisions for more resource generations from member churches in the coming years and this will help NCCP to face challenges to the reducing income for the Core budget of the council.</p>	
ASA028	Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia Forum	<p>The Ecumenical Forum on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – formerly called the Indochina Round Table has been the resource sharing mechanism for the ecumenical family's involvement in Indochina especially through Asia desk's involvement in Indochina. The emphasis has moved from</p> <p>material aid to concern for peace and reconciliation and ensuring local churches' participation. The WCC continued operating in Cambodia until 1994. Subsequently only HEKS, Church World Service and Witness and Lutheran World Service continued to work on long-term development programmes in the country. Efforts were made to build up the unity and capacity of the young Cambodian churches in the face of an inrush of outside churches and missionaries in the wake of the Paris Peace Agreement. Through the work of the VLC Forum and CCA contacts with churches in Indochina was established in the changed political climate and this work finally culminated in the founding of the Kampuchea Christian Council in 1998. In the light of this development, it was decided to wind up the existing structure of the Forum, as its mandate was different at the time it was established. The Asia Desk convened a full meeting of the Forum in November 2001 with the participation of the Churches from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It was decided to wind up the present Forum and find out alternative resource sharing mechanism to continue the partnership with Churches in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. On the requests of CCA and Churches in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, it was decided in the Forum meeting that CCA and Churches in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia will have to make new proposals to find out new ways of partnership with</p>	

		churches in Indochina countries and based on that the Asia Desk will convene a meeting of the ecumenical partners by the end of 2002 to discuss and establish ecumenical sharing of resources to build up the ecumenical movement in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.	
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3.2. Dialogue and Consultation

Churches in Asia have been involved in their ecumenical common vocation within the framework of ecumenical dialogue and consultations for many years. The aim of this programme is to promote dialogue and consultation on issues of concern to the Asian churches, including cross-cultural exchange and exposure, inter-faith dialogue, peace and reconciliation, conflict resolution, human rights issues and strengthening of civil society.

Through various programmes and in close collaboration with partners in the region, Asia Desk offered space for dialogue, reflection and common actions. Initiative for peace building in Asian countries has been a priority during recent years and consultations with ecumenical partners in the region also played an important part in these tasks.

Asia Desk provided support to different Asian countries, for example to the Philippines to organise an awareness building programme, to India for a programme on social action; meetings and consultations took place in Geneva, for example for Indonesian church leaders meetings with ecumenical partners from Europe and North America. A grant to the Asian Resource Foundation in Bangkok allowed them to organize an inter-religious consultation. Several travel grants for members of the ecumenical family made possible for church leaders to attend important ecumenical consultations in Asia and Europe. All these activities had the common purpose to foster dialogue between Asian churches and other ecumenical organisations/ partners and strengthen their efforts to cope up with realities in a changing world full of conflicts. Full Reports can be obtained from Asia Desk.

3.3. Coordination of Multilateral Sharing

Multilateral sharing included the channelling of financial and other resources to churches and related organisations in the regions, with twin purposes 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 cooperation and expressing solidarity with churches in different parts of the world. During 2001 the Asia Desk facilitated the multilateral sharing for the benefit of following programmes and projects in various Asian countries with the assistance of churches and agencies in the North.

- *Educational Assistance to poor students in Bangladesh:*

The National Council of Churches in Bangladesh implemented this project. In Bangladesh members of the Christian community are often poor and young people have a vulnerable position in a predominantly Islamic society. In most of the educational institutions Christian students are few and especially girls are sometimes tempted to leave the Christian community. Education is considered a valuable investment for Christian youth and as many parents cannot afford higher education for their children. NCC provided education subsidies to students.

- *Cambodian Christian Women's Spiritual Programme, Phnom Penh, Cambodia:*

The Cambodian Christian Women's Association (CCWA) initiated this programme to develop spirituality of women in order to become leaders in the church. The programme helped them to

develop Biblical knowledge and understanding and to increase the motivation of women to participate in church and society and to build a community of women for support and fellowship.

- *National Christian Council in Nepal:*

Christians are a tiny minority in Nepal, the only Hindu Kingdom in the world. Through the initiative of the CCA, certain ecumenical activities have been started since four years ago in Nepal. Despite opposition from the rulers, the number of Christian believers has increased in Nepal over the years and there are over 300,000 Christians in Nepal today. Since 1999, a National Christian Council has been formed in Nepal to coordinate ecumenical activities. NCC Nepal takes up a number of issues pertinent to the life and witness of the churches in Nepal and some of those programmes have been supported through Asia Desk's multilateral sharing scheme.

- *Work amongst Prostitutes in Lahore, Pakistan:*

A large number of women caught up in prostitution in Lahore, some of them are Christians from rural areas. They have been forced into this situation due to their extremely difficult economic circumstances. The programme initiated by the Women's Department of the Church of Pakistan's Diocese of Raiwand made efforts to build up employment skills for women. And also through this programme the diocese provided health care and awareness on HIV/AIDS.

- *Installation of Community Latrines and Washing Platforms at Koppa Rag-Pickers' Colony: Mysore, India*

The colony of rag pickers in Koppa, Mysore District, in India is one of the most neglected slum communities in Karnataka State. Besides picking up waste plastics and other rags to sell to a plastic-recycling unit, the community as a whole begs for a living; even the children have been forced into begging, to attract people's sympathy. A few families have built simple houses with the help of the government, but about 40 families still live in small tents made of plastic rags and other waste material. The most crucial problem of this community is their health and hygienic situation. As the need for community latrines and washing platforms with soakage pits for wastewater has become urgent, a local community organisation took the initiative of the construction of sanitation facilities. The Asia Desk supported this project.

- *Care for Prostituted Children, Cambodia:*

An organisation Sok Sabay in Cambodia has initiated this project for the protection, care and medical, therapeutic and psychological follow-up of young girls and adolescents who have been abused sexually. It has established close partnership links with local structures, notably the Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights and health institutions such as the Pasteur Institute in relation to tracking down sexually transmitted diseases and the HIV/AIDS virus. Originally set up to welcome 15 children aged between 12 and 15, the centre currently houses 30 children who have been rescued from brothels. In addition, Sok Sabay helps approximately 100 children still living with their families. Supported was extended to this project in 2001.

- *Sri Lanka Special Fund:*

The Sri Lanka Special Fund has been initiated by Asia Desk to provide small funds to organisations for peace and reconciliation activities and provide emergency aid to displaced people. Presbyterian Hunger Program has funded this initiative in the year 2000 and made it possible to give support for the work of the churches in Sri Lanka in their ministry to displaced people. Support was extended to the NCC Sri Lanka's rehabilitation programme and CSI Jaffna diocese programme among war victims and their families. The fund for 2001 received only at the end of 2001, nevertheless ongoing projects, which need assistance, will be supported.

- *Regional Women Workers' programme, Thailand:*

Working through its active network of women's groups in 13 Asian countries, the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) seeks to protect the rights of women workers, particularly grassroots women, and to combat the effects of globalising practices on this vulnerable sector of the population. CAW programmes have been implemented at national, sub-regional/regional level with special emphasis on strengthening women workers groups, capacity building, consciousness raising, supporting advocacy and campaigns related to the impact of globalisation on the women workers, etc. Asia Desk has been arranging support to this programme for the past several years. In 2001 also, assistance was given to CAW.

- *Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation programme of ProTEG :*

While seeking to prevent and remedy the causes of displacement of thousands of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, ProTEG, an organisation for the Protection of Tamils of Eelam from Genocide and other violations of Human Rights, provided relief and rehabilitation of those displaced and to promoted initiatives towards peace and reconciliation. The work of ProTEG focussed on awareness raising, special consultation with human rights activists and professionals, offering protection to those Tamils who were arrested, detained or badly treated, skill training for the refugees. Support was extended to this programme.

4. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CHURCHES AND ECUMENICAL ORGANISATIONS IN ASIA

The need for capacity building and leadership training in Asia for churches, NCCs and other ecumenical organisations has been recognised and several activities have been implemented during the year 2001.

These capacity building programmes are implemented in Asian countries to enhance the human and organisational development, where the ecumenical movement and churches need to strengthen human resources for future leadership.

Leadership development training workshops for local church leaders have been implemented in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. In Pakistan 4 training programmes have been organised; in Sri Lanka, training for youth, management training for NCC SL staff, training for staff of the Finance dept, etc. were organised. A second-line leadership development training programme with 35 representatives of the South Asian Council of Churches and staff of National Council of Churches in five South Asian countries was organised, to deepen mutual understanding and explore common ground for working together and strengthen the position of the churches in the region. A series of workshops emphasising ecumenical formation for local church leaders in the People's Republic of China have been implemented under the auspices of the China Christian Council and the Nanjing theological seminary. An ecumenical formation-training programme was organised in Hong Kong for Church leaders from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

4.1. Capacity Building Programmes implemented in Asia in 2001

Planned Activities		Programmes implemented	Assessment
1.	Capacity Building Programme, NCC Bangladesh	Two workshops have been organised during the year 2001 in Dhaka. Participants from different denominations of the churches in Bangladesh attended, in each workshop 30 participants attended.	<i>This helped to enhance the capacity of NCCB member churches, which has not been attended for long time</i>
2.	Leadership Training for Provincial Church leaders in China	The CCC organised 2 workshops train the provincial church leaders. This programme was organised in collaboration with the theological seminary in Nanjing.	<i>This programme needs to be continued with wider participation</i>
3	Leadership Development Training for Pastors and Lay Preachers in East Timor	3 Weeklong training programmes organised in Dili for lay preachers and pastors from rural areas of East Timor. Each training attended by 35 participants	<i>In the absence of trained pastors in most congregations, this programme made an impact to provide lay leadership in congregations.</i>
4.	Leadership Training Workshop, Myanmar	A Leadership Development workshop for church leaders was organised in December in Yangon, Myanmar; The MCC staff has undergone a training on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation with the assistance of MDF	<i>External assistance for Resource persons is needed.</i>
5.	Ecumenical Formation Training, Nepal	This programme has been postponed to early 2002 as the country has been in emergency rule imposed by the Govt. and meetings cannot be held.	<i>Churches in Nepal and NCC Nepal need external assistance to organise this programme in future systematically.</i>
6.	Second-line leadership training for South Asian NCCs - SACC (South Asian Christian Council), Sri Lanka	This programme was held in Sri Lanka, March 20-24,2001.30 Participants from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, attended	<i>This programme was organised in collaboration with EEF team and a special curriculum needs to be developed.</i>
7.	Leadership Training Workshop for youth;	NCC Sri Lanka organised a youth leadership training programme in October in which 40 participants attended; A management and	<i>This programme proved effective.</i>

	Management and Organisational Capacity Building training, Sri Lanka	organisational Capacity Building training workshop was organised in which all NCCS Staff and Executive Committee members of NCC Sri Lanka participated; the Finance department of the council has undergone a training on Finance monitoring and management	
8.	Leadership Training and Ecumenical formation Programme, Pakistan	4 Ecumenical Leadership Training programmes were held in 4 provinces of Pakistan in Aug and Sept. 2001, 40 participants attended at each training	<i>More systematic planning needs to be introduced in future</i>
9.	Leadership Training & Ecumenical Formation Training for Church leaders from Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia	This training programme was held on Oct.29-Nov.3 in Hong Kong. 18 Church leaders from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia attended.	<i>Follow-up needs to be done.</i>
10	Capacity Building Programme for Round Table Partners in Asia	With an aim to strengthen the organisational and staff capacities of RT partners in the region, Asia Desk in collaboration with MDF organised a capacity building programme with special focus on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. This programme was held in Bangkok from 10-16 December 2001	Well appreciated by participants and requested follow-up programmes at national level.

5. PROMOTION OF PROPHETIC DIAKONIA AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

5.1. Solidarity and Holistic Advocacy

This programme aims to implement effective and coordinated approaches to address the issues related to the life and witness of the churches and other ecumenical organisations and the expression of solidarity have been sought through many different activities over the past years. Asia Desk tries to link churches and related agencies through common witness and action and accompanies churches and communities in the implementation of their tasks.

Asia Desk extended solidarity support through various donors to churches and ecumenical groups in many Asian countries. The purpose of this activity is to enable solidarity support to

marginalized groups and communities in their struggle to protect and promote human dignity and peace with justice. Special grants have been extended to students from Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Solidarity has been expressed towards NCC Pakistan, during the difficult situation after the event in September and a counselling workshop has also held in Pakistan with the solidarity support from Asia Desk. The Asian Human Rights Commission has initiated a programme on the disappearance cases in Sri Lanka and this project was supported with a small grant. Small grants have helped in India for a rural Sunday school training assistance and to hold a youth consultation. A travel grant to a NCC Indonesia staff to undergo training. Grant was given to the Christian Conference of Asia Ecumenical Educators' Network. In Nepal an Ecumenical Formation Seminar has been organized with the support. Full reports on all these activities can be obtained from Asia Desk.

5.2. Solidarity Support to Women's Local Initiatives

The overall objectives of this programme has the thrusts 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. These programmes included in 2001 empowerment of women in Asian countries; training and income generating projects which will enable them to enhance their dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence.

It became evident more and more 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. Their empowerment needs to be improved as well as their social status needs to be promoted. Gender sensitivity programmes need to be planned and implemented by women to develop their own issues and concerns. The Asia Desk during the year supported several women's groups, which are working with this emphasis.

Asia Desk assisted several local women's initiatives with small grants in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Cambodia during the year 2001, initiatives which ranged from a human resource development programme for a women's group in Bangladesh, an income generating project of a rural women's organisation in Barisal, Bangladesh, a women's programme of the roman Catholic Diocese in Marthandam, Tamil Nadu for hygiene and rural sanitation, a programme to give care and treatment for homeless and mentally retarded women in Karnataka State, a project of the Church of Christ in Thailand for children of young women affected with HIV /AIDS in Pattaya, Thailand .

5.3. 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, net working with church related Organisations working on Children's rights, assisting the formation of the Asian ecumenical net work of organisations working on this issue and involving the Asian REO, CCA through its programme unit Faith, Mission and Unity.

- The Desk assisted the formation of a network of church related organisations, working for the marginalized children in Asian countries;
- Organised a Asia Regional Consultation on Affirming Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children with participation of Asian Church leaders and representatives of organisations working with marginalised children. This Consultation was held in Bangkok from 9 -15 November 2001.
- Asia Desk in collaboration with the CCA, assisted the process of establishing sub-regional networks in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

5.4. Gender and Diakonia

The Asia Desk contributed to the conceptual framework of and planning discussion of the gender and diakonia study, which is coordinated at the RRES Team level. Asia Desk initiated a preparatory discussion with CCA was in 2001 to organise a regional consultation on Gender and Diakonia

5.5. Strategic Initiative Fund - (SIF)

The Strategic Initiative Fund of WCC enables the RRES team to respond to strategic, emerging solidarity needs of churches and ecumenical partners in different countries in Asia. In 2001 the RRES Team approved and granted supports to the following projects and programmes from Asia -- Bangladesh, India, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Laos and the Philippines. These projects/programmes are focussing a wide range of activities such as peace building initiatives, capacity building, economic development, health care, research work on the ecumenical history in Asia and creating a network for the dignity of children, etc..

- *Capacity Building of Young Tribal Women in Nursing Training :*

The Nursing Training Programme initiated by the Christian Hospital in Chandragona provides a job oriented course for young tribal women. This is one of the few possibilities for girls of the small Christian community for training and education, which is much needed in an Islamic country like Bangladesh where Christians are only 0.3% of the total 130 million people. The training in Nursing and Midwifery will help young Christian tribal girls to find jobs in future and build up their carrier and life in a poor country like Bangladesh, where job opportunities are very limited. (USD 15,000)

- *Building a Culture of Peace in Violence affected Villages, India :*

The Ecumenical Development Centre, a registered charitable society, working for harmony and co-existence among people of different caste, religion and political ideologies is taking the lead in implementing the programme of promoting a culture of peace in violence affected villages in Northern part of Kerala where communal riots have affected the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims . The implementation of this programme included peace education training for young people in most affected areas; organise peace marches (*Santhiyathra*) in violence affected areas such as Kannoor, Kazarkode and Pathanamthitta districts; build peace corps in campus/colleges/schools; organise inter-religious groups for peace making. Study materials and brochures to promote peace and reconciliation were produced. Seminars and training sessions for leaders and schools and college teachers were held.(USD 5,000)

- *Capacity Building for Unemployed Dalit Women:*

The Tamil Nadu Christian Council's Economic Life Committee, which had previous experience in successfully implementing rural development programmes, initiated a new project of providing special skills for unemployed young Dalit women. The women of Dalit communities are the most vulnerable in society, as they are deprived of education and opportunity for learning any skills to earn their livelihood. This programme is a job-oriented training in leather stitching. The main beneficiaries of this scheme are impoverished young women from the Dalit communities in rural areas of Tamil Nadu State in India. After completing the training young Dalit women are able to find jobs in leather tanneries and factories located in rural areas in Vellore and Dharmapuri Districts. Over a three year period, six batches of 120 young women will be trained. (USD 12,000)

- *Affirming Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children :*

In order to promote the concerns on promoting dignity of children and establishing regional ecumenical net works of organisations that are involved in the area of promoting the dignity of Children and Rights of Children is one of the programmes of the RRES Team of WCC. The RRES Team through its Regional Desks has taken the initiatives to bring together the regional networks in different regions. In Asia, the Asia Desk in collaboration with the Regional Ecumenical Organisation, Christian Conference Asia has initiated this task of forming a net-work. A Consultation on “Affirming Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children” took place in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2001 with the participation of church related organisations that are involved in this work. Thirty representatives from various Asian countries met together for 5 days and formed a regional ecumenical network which will help addressing the concerns of Children from a Christian perspective in future. (USD 20,000)

- *Vichara Study Research Institute :*

Vichara, formed by a collective of academics and activists as a think tank to assist the ecumenical community in India existed until recently as an informal organisation. The members of Vichara from various denominations (CSI, Orthodox , Jacobite, Mar Thoma, Roman Catholic, Lutheran Churches,) in India are engaged in systematic studies and reflections through a national Forum. The setting up of this ecumenical study research institute aims to be engaged in: systematic and serious studies and reflections on contemporary issues; organise training for young people to enhance their capacities and capabilities to and to build up a healthy vibrant civil society; organise consultations, studies, brain-storming exercises on development, good governance, globalisation and related subjects; conduct research, documentation and dissemination on the micro and macro issues affecting people. (USD 15,000)

- *Research on Asian Ecumenical History:*

This project aims to produce a written history of Asian Ecumenical Movement. The aim is to illustrate thematically the diversity of contributions and perspectives to the development of the Asian ecumenical movement and to highlight major ecumenical concerns in Asia including: missionary movement, theology and culture, dialogue, human rights, development and service, youth and students, women and gender, church and state, people's movements, environment, relations with the Roman Catholic church, secular movements and civil society groups and responses to globalisation, etc. The goal is to educate Christians and others of good will about the ecumenical movement in Asia by providing an accurate, interested and reflective resource, written from the perspective of various 'actors' within the ecumenical movement. As an outcome of this attempt, a well written Asian ecumenical history will be produced and which could be widely used in Asia as a resource book - in theological seminaries, by pastors, Christian educators, and youth and student movements. (USD 15,000)

- *Vocational Training for Widows (war victims) and Young People in Jaffna:*

Sri Lanka is torn apart by ethnic conflicts for many years and the Jaffna peninsula in Sri Lanka has been affected by civil war since 1983. The goals and objectives of the vocational training centres are to provide basic training; to enable war widows and young women to find self employment and income generating for their families which will enable them to grow in their ability to face the challenges. People in the areas of Vanni, Vavuniya, and Jaffna are badly affected by the ethnic conflict. With the escalating inflation level in Sri Lanka, the people who live in the war zones live in extreme poverty. As the bread winners of families died in the war, which has been going on for the past 20 years, most families are led by mothers. The Jaffna Diocese of CSI will set up five training centres. Each centre will give vocational training for 30 women two times a year. This will help them to get jobs or find self employment through small co-operatives in villages which will help them to earn a minimum income for their living. (USD 12,000)

- *Banking and Economic Development Activity in Two Rural Lao Village:*

The aims and purpose of this activity is to help the villagers in six Lao villages to provide skills in economic development, development of partnerships and developing independent financial institutions. The proposed programme is implemented in two villages to start with. These two villages are flooded yearly as they are close to the Mekong river. There is no electricity or telephones in these villages. The initial development work which has been done in each case, are small, fairly easy project that the villagers choose. From there, the work with villagers, is to develop a 10-year vision and then develop renewable six-month work plans. In each case, how to keep more children in the village after they are grown up has been focused on. Establishment of cottage industry groups within each village Women's Association also ahs been planned. An income generating pilot programme with women in two villages provide loans to support village based cottage industry products. By applying a compulsory and voluntary savings component to the loans, the project enables women to participate in this project and to pull on these additional savings fund to engage in other economic activities, as in small commerce, animal husbandry and small vegetable gardens. (USD 10,000)

- *Training to Equip Marginalized Philippine Communities with Basic Health Care Skills in Traditional/ indigenous Medicine:*

The Philippine Centre for Traditional and Asian Medicine Inc. (PC-TAM) is the spin-off organisation of the successful programme on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and acupuncture. In 1992, 14 health workers and professionals were sent to the Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine for a three-month intensive course on basic acupuncture. On their return to the Philippines the 14 scholars actively practised acupuncture in areas where health services were non-existent or lacking, particularly in the provinces of Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte and North Cotabato in Mindanao, Samar in the Visayas and the Cordillera region and provinces in Luzon. Aims of this programme are to provide trainers' training in three regions to improve skills. The island of Mindanao is home to Christians, Muslims and Lumads. It is one of the most neglected areas in the Philippines in terms of development and in particular, in providing health care service. (USD 15,000)

- *Building Bridges for Peace in Sri Lanka:*

Sri Lanka, a plural society comprising a unity of diverse and distinctive nationalities, comprised of linguistic, religious and cultural communities and traditions, each with a history of habitation and co-existence, including the Sinhalese and Tamils, as well as Moslem communities. While the Sinhala language and Buddhism constitute the major tradition of the majority community, all other communities are heirs to distinctive historical traditions, which have enriched and contributed in the making of Sri Lanka. In this situation, the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation plans to play a catalytic role in arresting these negative destructive developments and trends in Sri Lankan society through building bridges of mutual trust, understanding and respect among different religious and ethnic groups in the country. The IRPF organised workshops and the expected outcome of training the volunteers and peace activists from Tamil, Sinhala ethnic groups through Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim leaders at the local level, will help to bring basic changes in attitudes, values and behaviour patterns among people and promote ethnic and religious tolerance within the communities. (USD 10,000)