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WCC ASIA DESK Summary Narrative Report 2002

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 diakonal work, and to maintain relationships with the WCC constituency and other related bodies.

In 2002, 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 programmes and other WCC relationships and initiatives.

1.1 WCC Regional Relations Team: mandate and services

Within the WCC, the Regional Relations & Ecumenical Sharing Team, or RRES, (since 2003 the name of the team is Diakonia and Solidarity) 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 2002

The WCC Asia Desk gave priority in 2002 to:

- Capacity building
- Co-ordination of ecumenical sharing of resources
- Diakonal and development
- Upholding regional perspectives
- Round Tables for ecumenical sharing of resources
- 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 organisations

During 2002, the staff of the WCC Asia Desk met with a wide 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:

- Meetings with NCC Bangladesh, Church of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Baptist Church (January)
- Preparatory meeting for Capacity Building Programmes in South Asian NCCs:2002-2003 (January)
- Meetings with NCC Singapore (January)
- Meetings with IPTL and preparation for (EPPRET) Ecumenical Partnership Programmes for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor Round Table (January, East Timor)
- ACT: Asia Consultation (January, Indonesia)
- WCC/CCA and Indochina Church Leaders meeting for preparation for the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programmes (MEPP) & Preparation for WCC G.S. visit to Indochina in 2003 (February)
- Discussions with CCA G.S. & Staff on WCC Asia Desk Programmes (February)
- Meetings with Korean Ecumenical Development Agencies (KSSA, KCCD) and NCC Korea (February)
- CCDB Round Table Core Group Meeting (March, Geneva)
- WCC-CCA Strategic Planning meeting and preparation for SAEPP and HIV /AIDS Programmes (March, Geneva)
- Indonesia Round Table / PGI Crisis Centre Planning Meeting (April)
- WCC – CCA Liaison Group Meeting (CER & Asia Desk) (May)
- Asia Sunday celebration at the Chapel of Ecumenical Centre (WCC): Focus on EAST TIMOR (May)
- Meeting of Ecumenical Network of Amity (China) Partners – ENAP, on China (June, Ireland)
- ARG Core Group Meeting (June, Bangkok)
- Asian Network of Dignity of Children Programme – Planning of WCC-CCA joint programmes in 2002- 2003 at Sub-regional and National level (June, Bangkok)
- WCC -CCA Consultation on Churches' Mission in combating HIV / AIDS (CCA, WCC Health Mission & Asia Desks (July, Sri Lanka)
- WCC - CCA Consultation on 'Towards Social and Human Development in South Asia: Ecumenical Response' (July, Sri Lanka)
- Asia Plenary at the WCC Central Committee (August)
- Ecumenical Partners' Consultation on SAEPP (September, Geneva)
- Visit to North Korea with ACT staff team (September, Pyongyang, North Korea)
- Preparatory Meeting with CCC for capacity building programmes in China : 2003-2005 (September, Shanghai, China)
- Formation of Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia (EETA) (October)
- Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) Round Table Meeting (October)
- Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) Round Table Meeting (October, Dhaka)
- NCC Philippines Round Table (December, Geneva)
- Ecumenical Partnership for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor (EPRRET) Round Table (December, Geneva)

- Ecumenical Partners' Consultation on Ecumenical Development Co-operation in Sri Lanka (December, Geneva)

2.2. Asia Regional Group

The Core Group of the ARG was held in Bangkok on 22-23 June 2002. The Core Group reviewed the programmes of the Asia Desk for the year 2002-2003 based on the mandate and decisions of the RRES Advisory Group meeting held in South Africa. Analysis of socio-political and ecumenical situation in the Mekong Sub-regional countries was one of the main items of the agenda. The Core Group made plans for the Consultations on Social and Human Development in South Asia and a Consultation of Ecumenical Partners and South Asian Church leaders on Ecumenical Partnership in South Asia. Other decisions of the Core Group meeting included the initiative of the creation of East Timor Round Table, Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programme (MEPP), and a South Asia Ecumenical Partnership Programme (SAEPP). The Core Group reviewed the viability and effectiveness of the existing Round Tables in Asia. A panel of members of the Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia was selected and focus countries for Capacity Building programmes over the next three years were identified. The need for an assessment on ecumenical development co-operation was emphasised and a Consultation on this was proposed.

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.

- Asia Desk organised several consultations during this year in Geneva for which travel grants, board and lodging expenses were provided by Asia Desk. Consultations organised by partners in Asia were supported from through grants.
- The All India Sunday School Association organised a consultation which aimed to bring together Christian Educational Organisations in India to work on a common relevant Christian education curriculum. This programme was held in Hyderabad, India.
- On January 15-16, 2002 a meeting of General Secretaries of NCCs in South Asia was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. At this meeting country reports were shared and priorities for future plans to work together in the sub-continent were made. A Consultation of theological educators and representatives of theological institutions in India was organised by the National Council of Churches in India in Nagpur and small solidarity grant was provided by the Asia Desk.
- A consultation of East Timor Church leaders and ecumenical partners on Ecumenical Partnership for Reconciliation and reconstruction was organised by the Asia Desk in collaboration with ACT and ecumenical development agencies and mission boards from Europe and North America, in which 16 people attended. The main objective of this meeting was to highlight the needs and priorities of the marginalised and vulnerable sections of East Timorese and their aspirations to reconstruct the new nation emerged from conflicts and destruction.
- Travel grants have been provided for church leaders from Japan, India, Sri Lanka and CCA Hong Kong to attend dialogue and consultations at WCC and with European ecumenical partners. Asia desk facilitated these travels which enabled them to attend important meetings.
- Asia Desk organised a Consultation of Philippine church leaders and Ecumenical partners from Europe and North America, which was held in Geneva in December 2002. Travel grants for church leaders from the Philippines and other costs related board and lodging have also been provided for the NCC Philippines Partners Meeting in which 14 participants attended.

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. As it is mandated the Asia Desk provided a liaison between the two organisations and also participated CCA programmes. A WCC-CCA Liaison Meeting took place in May in Taiwan. In several areas of programmes of CCA 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 WCC programmes in Asia.

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.

2.6 South Asian Ecumenical Partnership Programme (SAEPP)

The Asia Desk of the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia organised a Consultation on Social and Human Development in South Asia. The first part of the Consultation focussed on the Church's Role in Combating HIV / AIDS in South Asia. These consultations were held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 22 to 27 July 2002. As a follow up to the Colombo Consultation, a meeting of Ecumenical Partners, South Asian Church leaders, CCA and WCC was held in Geneva on 4-5 September 2002. It was agreed that a South Asia Ecumenical Partnership Programme (SAEPP) initiated by the WCC and CCA should be launched in co-operation with the South Asian NCCs, its co-ordinating body the South Asian Council of Churches (SACC), ecumenical development agencies and churches from the North as part of the global ecumenical family's commitment to developing decentralised capacities for sharing and solidarity. The aims of SAEPP are as follows:

- To promote co-ordination and co-operation and closer linkages among Churches, NCCs, ecumenical partners in South Asia region, to facilitate a more effective ecumenical response to the pressing issues and needs.
- The SAEPP will focus on four programmatic areas for joint involvement of the South Asian NCCs, Churches, ecumenical partners and churches from North, CCA and WCC.

The objectives of the SAEPP are:

- To assist CCA - WCC member churches in the region to establish/ develop and implement appropriate programmes in four areas (see below).
- To foster capacity building and human resource development programmes with the churches, and NCCs in the region
- To promote church/ ecumenical involvement in initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation
- To promote positive inter-church and inter religious relations and a better understanding of the ecumenical movement and organisations in the region. In other words, the revival of the ecumenical co-operation and involvement through a joint ecumenical partnership programme in the South Asia region.

The four specific areas of programmes within the SAEPP framework are:

- An Ecumenical Agenda for Combating HIV / AIDS in South Asia
- Capacity Building/ Human Resource Development
- Equipping Churches in their mission for Peace and Reconciliation

- Assisting Churches to nurture Inter-religious co-operation

3. CO-ORDINATION FOR ECUMENICAL SHARING AND SOLIDARITY

3.1 Round Table Programmes

In 2002, the WCC Asia Desk continued to facilitate and co-ordinate Round Table Programmes and ecumenical sharing mechanisms of following ecumenical and church related bodies:

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

The following Round Tables and Round Table Core Groups met in 2002:

Ecumenical Network of Amity Partners (ENAP)

A meeting of ENAP was held in Dublin, Ireland on June 11-12, 2002. Sixteen participants - partners from China and the European donor agencies were present along with Amity Foundation staff who presented an overview of China's social and economic development followed by highlights of Amity's projects and vision for the future. The Amity Foundation has requested WCC Asia desk to convene a RT meeting on behalf of Amity Foundation from 2003 to which ENAP has agreed.

CCDB Round Table

A Core Group Meeting of the CCDB Round Table, hosted by the WCC Asia Desk, was held in Geneva in March 21-22, 2002 ahead of the 14th CCDB Round Table Meeting, held in Dhaka on October 27-29, 2002. A significant feature of this RT Meeting was that a long-term perspective plan (2003-2014), along with a four year programme plan (2003-2007) of CCDB. The RTM also approved, the proposal on plan and estimate of the construction of the long awaited HOPE Centre. The Asia Desk assisted in the search process for selecting a new Executive Director for CCDB. Mr Sushant Adhikari, who had served as Director since 1972, passed away in February 2002. The new Director, Mr Jayanta Adhikari, was appointed in June 2002 after a thorough search process undertaken by the CCDB Committee and assisted by the WCC Asia Secretary, the WCC Pacific Secretary and a CCA Executive Secretary, ensuring transparency in this search and selection process.

Myanmar Round Table

A round table meeting was held on October 23 –24, 2002 in Yangon, Myanmar. At this meeting the forward plans and programmes for the years, 2003- 2004 were presented. A paper called "An Insight from the Inside" on the overall situation in Myanmar was presented and the responses of the churches in Myanmar were highlighted. The next MCC Round Table meeting is scheduled for October/November 2004 in Yangon

NCC Philippines Partners Meeting

During this meeting of NCCP partners, held in Geneva in December 2002, where a report from NCCP and also the financial statements for the years 2000-2001 were given, it was decided to reconvene the Round Table process with the next Round Table scheduled for September 2003.

Ecumenical Partnership for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor (EPRET)

This first meeting of EPRET met in Geneva in December. The meeting discussed the transition of support for the IPTL and YASONA from ACT to other ecumenical partners should be achieved.

The participants at the meeting resolved to support IPTL and YASONA through the Partnership of EPRET and it was decided the next EPPRET meeting will be in Dili on 30th Sep. - 1st Oct. 2003.

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

<p>Amity Foundation China</p>	<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> <p>Emergency relief and rehabilitation; Long-term development training; Gender development; Work with the differently baled, orphans and the elderly.</p> <p>From 2003, Asia Desk will convene a regular Round Table on behalf of the Amity Foundation.</p>
<p>Christian Conference of Asia</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. 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>
<p>CCDB Bangladesh</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.</p>

	<p>Major CCDB activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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> <p>Disaster preparedness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The inter-relationship between emergencies, rehabilitation and development. <p>At the Round Table Meeting in 2002 the proposal on plan and estimate of the construction of the long awaited HOPE Centre was, in principle, approved. The training centre will serve the needs of CCDB's own staff and reference groups, including other NGOs receiving training there as well as the needs of the churches in Bangladesh.</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>The year 2002 has been a significant one for CASA. Amongst other activities CASA continued its post-disaster rehabilitation and capacity building programmes in the cyclone-affected villages of Orissa, the flood-hit regions of West Bengal and the earthquake-devastated districts of Gujarat.</p>

	<p>Although CASA is a WCC initiated Round Table and is still listed here as a WCC Round Table, the relationship between WCC and CASA has not been good. WCC has not been present in CASA Round Tables for the past several years. In 2002 a new Director of CASA, Mr Sushant Agarwal was appointed and relations with WCC have been improving.</p>
<p>Ecumenical Partnership for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor (EPRET)</p>	<p>ACT has been working in East Timor in conjunction with the IPTL and YASONA since 1999. After the creation of the nation of East Timor in May 2002, a meeting was held in December 2002 to decide on the next step for providing support to the ecumenical movement in East Timor. It was decided to set up a partnership to support YASONA and IPTL which will be called the Ecumenical Partnership and Reconciliation and Reconstruction in East Timor (EPRET). Its next meeting will be in September 2003.</p>
<p>Myanmar</p>	<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> <p>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</p>
<p>Philippines</p>	<p>The NCC-Philippines Round Table came into being at the 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> <p>During the meeting of the partners of NCCP which was held in Geneva from 3-6 December 2002, it was reported that the NCCP managed to regain its credibility and prestige as an institution which has a clear agenda for transformation. The prioritisation process of NCCP in 2001-</p>

	<p>2002 has led to the following programmatic approach: Unit for Ecumenical Education and Nurture, Unit for Christian Unity and Ecumenical Relations and Faith, Witness and Service. The Round Table process is to be reconvened and is scheduled to be held in Manila, Philippines on September 25-26, 2003</p>
<p>PGI Crisis Centre Indonesia</p>	<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 co-operation in peace making ➤ Training of Peace Core Activists <p>The setting up of the office for the Crisis Centre, including the necessary equipment as well as recruiting staff has been done during May 2002. The development of a data base on conflict situations in Indonesia has been undertaken by collecting available written materials in various journals, news papers, as well as visits to the conflict areas and interviewing people who were involved in the conflict. The Centre organised workshops and training on Empowering Reconciliation and Peace, which have been carried out in 2002. The Centre also helped to empower the existing regional Crisis Centres, such as the one in Ambon and Central Sulawesi to provide local capacity building in mediation or conflict resolution. A quarterly bulletin is being published to describe the activities of the Centre as well as to give news on the current situations in Indonesia.</p>
<p>Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia Forum</p>	<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 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</p>

	<p>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 in 1992.</p> <p>Through the work of the VLC Forum and CCA contacts with churches work in Indochina was established in the changed political climate which finally culminated in the founding of the Kampuchea Christian Council in 1998. In 2001, 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. The fund balance of the VLC forum was used for programmes in 2002.</p> <p>In June 2002, a meeting was held in Siemreap, Cambodia on the theme “Enhancing Mission and Ecumenism in Indochina” with 22 representatives from churches in Laos Vietnam and Cambodia and ecumenical partners from the North attended. The participants of this consultation shared their perspectives on doing mission within the political, economic, social and cultural context of Indochina.</p> <p>A new partnership of 6 countries, including Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, in the Mekong sub-region has been initiated by the WCC Asia Desk. A Consultation the ‘Mekong Ecumenical Partnership’ will be held in 2003.</p>
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3.2 Co-ordination 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 co-operation and expressing solidarity with churches in different parts of the world. During 2002 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. From among the proposals received by the Asia Desk, ecumenical partners selected thirteen projects from Asia. The following ecumenical partners supported these projects: the Presbyterian Hunger Fund, KHK Germany, Stichtung Rotterdam, Week of Compassion USA.

Sunday School Programme in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, a Muslim majority country in Asia has only about 0.03 percent Christians of the total population of 128 million people in the country. Although Christianity was introduced in the East Bengal part of the undivided India in 1798, the minority Christians in this country is still struggling for upbringing of their children with Christian nurturing and faith formation due to various restrictions and lack of facilities. The Sunday school training programme, which has been implemented during the past years by the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, provides children in the churches with a sound Christian education, enabling them to grow up in Christian values and principles and thus contribute to the building of a strong and participatory society. As Christians are only a microscopic minority, Bangladesh Sunday school programme is an important mission and Christian education is essential not to loose or deviate from their ancestors’ faith. Children of the Christian communities in rural areas are often unable to study the Bible as they do not have any facilities to go elsewhere for this as their families are poor and illiterate. In this situation, the Sunday school programmes in rural areas are valuable as it provides great opportunities for Christian education for children. BBCS Sunday school programme is being implemented through its member congregations that are scattered in various

parts of the country co-ordinated under eight regional administrative units of the Baptist Church Committee. There are 170 Sunday schools functioning in these eight districts and the regional committees organise camps at regional and central level for children. The Christian Education Committee of BBCS prepares teaching materials and conduct examinations. This is an on going programme of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha and the contribution in 2002 made possible BBCS to implement this ongoing programme in 2002.

Cambodian Christian Women's Association Spiritual Programme

The Cambodian Christian Women's Association (CCWA) is a Christian organisation, which is the women's desk of the Kampuchea Christian Council in Cambodia. KCC's women's' desk works towards the goal of strengthening women groups at local congregations. This particular programme aims to develop the spirituality of women in order to help them become leaders and servants in the church and society, through developing their biblical knowledge and understanding, increasing their motivation to take leadership roles, and building a community of women for support and fellowship. CCWA selects the women from among their active membership in Phnom Penh and the provinces. Three workshops were planned during the last year, for training 15 women leaders who will then train other women at the local level in the future. This programme is under the responsibility of the CCWA director and executive board, which will make regular, visits to the different congregations to encourage the women to become active and use their skills. CCWA also carries out several other programmes like Weaving and Tailoring Programmes for young women from rural areas. These programmes help women in the rural areas to generate income and become financially independent. The contributions in 2002 enabled the implementation of several of these programmes.

Abayashram, Care for Mentally Retarded Women

Founded on Christian faith and values, an ecumenical charitable trust *ABYASRAM's* (Shelter and Care for the marginalised) programme was started in 1998 with a primary objective to give free residential care and rehabilitation for the homeless mentally retarded women abandoned by poor families and as a result wandering on the streets. Abayashram, a local women's initiative has been responding to the alarming rate of increase of mental illness especially among women. A large number of young women are being persecuted and become mentally ill balanced persons. Abayasram provides shelter and care for these mentally ill and vagrant women. About 2% of the population in India, especially in rural areas, is suffering from mental disorders and many are unaware about treatment. As gender discrimination prevails on women, mental health is less attended. Mentally ill women in the family do not get much attention; the attitude of the family members is to get rid of a mentally retarded woman from the family. Fits caused by epilepsy are considered to be a possession of the evil spirit as per the traditional misbelieve among the uneducated rural folks. Due to lack of care given to such women, they find as last resorts to beg and live on the streets and are being exploited. Rehabilitation to these vagrant women becomes the priority for the *Abaysram*. The programme was started in a rural village community in Karnataka state. Within one year nineteen vagrant women have been rescued and sheltered. All inmates are picked up from the streets by staff of *Abayasram* or brought by the local police. An investigation to trace the families is undertaken. 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. Some expenses are met through local donations and the grants which have been given in 2002 made it possible to continue this on going programme.

National Christian Council in Nepal

Nepal is the world's only Hindu kingdom, and Christians in that country are a minority. Christianity is not officially recognised as a religion in the country and constitutional restrictions to believe in one's religious faith hinder the activities of church and related organisations. Through the initiative of the South Asian Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), certain ecumenical activities have begun during the past four years. Despite opposition from the authorities, the number of Christians has increased; today there are more than 300,000 Christians and more than 500 churches (congregations) throughout the country. But multiplicity of

denominations and competition by overseas missionaries adding more confusion and fragmentation among the Christians in Nepal. The RRES/Asia desk's Asia Regional Group meeting in 1996 was held in Nepal, and support for some of these ecumenical activities had subsequently been provided. CCA has invited Nepalese church leaders to attend programmes in different Asian countries, and has organised programmes in Nepal. The Nepal Christian Council was formed in 1999 to co-ordinate ecumenical activities. NCCN is closely working with the NCCs in neighbouring South Asian countries and South Asian Church leaders from India and Bangladesh to provide solidarity support for NCC. The NCC tries to help various churches and denominations in their ecumenical formation and leadership development, for which fund is needed and which will enable NCC to take up a number of issues and activities pertinent to the life and witness of the churches in Nepal. The country is facing political turmoil and conflicts and violence. For sometime, Nepal has been under emergency rule due to the ongoing Maoist Insurgency and counter insurgency operations by the military. Due to this volatile political situations and social conflicts it has been difficult to carry out programmes on time during the year 2002.

Institutional Strengthening and Ecumenical Formation of NCCs.

The South Asian Council of Churches (SACC) founded in 1994 is a Forum of five National Councils of Churches (NCCs) – Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, and Nepal - which aims institutional strengthening of weaker NCCs in five South Asian Countries, develop potential human resources in churches and NCCs in respective countries through training programmes, exchange and exposure visits. In the context of South Asia emerging as an area of colossal human development and religious intolerance due to Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist fundamentalism and extremism, the churches and ecumenical movement in South Asian have been facing serious crisis in human resource development in Churches and NCCs. The SACC has been organising leadership development and ecumenical formation training for young people from five South Asian countries since 1996. Several exchange programmes between South Asian NCCs have been organised through the co-ordination of SACC. The member NCCs share most of the expenses of these programmes, however, the Asia Desk has been supporting SACC with a small annual grant from 1996 -1999 through the third party project funds. Since 2001 the Asia Desk supports the leadership development programmes of South Asian NCCs. In 2002 the South Asian NCCs focused on training programmes and exchange visits of people from the five countries.

Training of Trainers and National Animators of Student Christian Movement in Asia

The Student Christian movements in several Asian countries have been enabling the growth of dynamic leadership in ecumenical movements, churches and society. There is a decline in the work among ecumenical formation ministry among students in the recent times and as a result the ecumenical movement has weakened in several Asian countries and not producing leaders like it used to be. It is important in this context to develop creative and constructive student leadership, which could effectively respond to situations and provide leadership in social transformation. Acquiring leadership qualities and skills in life of service in all aspects of life, reassessing and re-discovering relevant ecumenical, biblical and theological vision for effective mission in the church, searching for new ways of solidarity based network and student action for alternatives are priorities for Asian student Christian movement. Several Asian Christian student movements need to build up their capacities for which systematic training is needed. Training of Trainers and National Animators of Student Christian movement in Asia is important and certain activities have been supported in 2002, including a programme of WSCF Asia Pacific – SET programme.

Integrated Children Education Programme (ICEP), Bangladesh

The Christian community in Bangladesh with a population of around 400,000 is the smallest minority religious group in Bangladesh out of the 128 million people in the country. These Christians are poor, backward and living in a vulnerable situation in rural areas in the country. Their poor living condition in rural areas is the main hindrance for their advancement and educational betterment. The Social, Health, Education and Development (SHED) Board,

Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, considers education as an important part of its principle activities to help these poor and marginalised in the majority Islamic country. Several congregations have infrastructure for pre-primary or primary schools, which were started by Baptist missionaries decades ago. The children of poor communities of all faiths depend on these schools. Due to unusual increase in educational expenses, local churches are not in a position to continue their support to run these schools. As a result of it some of these schools are now either closed or about to be closed due to lack of fund. There are 63 of these schools pre- and primary schools under the management of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha located in nine remote districts in the country. All schools have adequate school premises provided by local congregations. They are located in the most food insecure poor areas. Many of the schools serve the aboriginal communities. Children of age ranging from 4 to 8+ years, in grade 1 to 3, are involved in this pre and primary education. Most of these children belong to extremely poor families. A total of 3,150 children (average 50 children per school) are beneficiaries of this educational programme.

Training on Conflict Transformation and Building Just-Peace in Asia

The Just Peace Centre Project of DAGA, Hong Kong aims to train and support grassroots initiatives of peacemaking and conflict transformation in order to strengthen such initiatives and seek lessons from them for improving the global movement for peace. The short-term goal is to research and document local grassroots initiatives of peacemaking and conflict transformation. As peace workers need to be equipped with all the skills and knowledge in order to be able to tackle problems effectively, adequate skills need to be developed within local communities who have lived with conflict for decades or centuries, to put into understanding how such conflicts have been managed among them? This project structured in 3 phases – planning, training and follows up helped several action groups in conflict situation or people involved in peacemaking and conflict transformation.

Centre for the Protection of Mistreated Children

The Association Sok Sabay has initiated this ongoing project for the protection, care and medical, therapeutic and psychological follow-up of young girls and adolescents who have been mistreated and abused sexually. It has taken actions to improve legislation and to inform teachers, social workers and doctors, working towards establishing appropriate policies for the protection of these children. 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 as well providing as dental follow-up. Sok Sabay operates a three-storey (each floor 72 m²) Chinese condominium in central Phnom Penh to provide shelter for child victims of various types of abuse. Originally set up to welcome 15 children aged between 12 and 15, the centre currently houses 30 children who are arriving at younger and younger ages. In addition, Sok Sabay helps approximately 100 children still living with their families. Those working at the centre include three local staff, a female expatriate volunteer who comes daily to assist the co-ordinator, a local male volunteer in charge of logistical problems, and a guard in charge of security and the screening of people coming to the centre. Objectives are to provide young/adolescent girls who have been victims of sexual abuse or exposed to any kind of slavery with a home in which to live and study for up to three years. To give these children the best self-defence abilities possible, as well as personal, emotional and social competencies, and sufficient and appropriate knowledge to enable them to gain control over their lives and become responsible women with an active role in society. The annual budget of Sok Sabay for 2002 is USD 122,029. Sok Sabay is sponsored by private institutions (40 percent), organisations (30 percent) and membership contributions by private donors (30 percent). The grant provided by the Asia Desk helped them to meet part of their need to continue this important ministry among the vulnerable children in a war torn, impoverished country – Cambodia.

Training of Human Rights Defenders in Rural Areas

The Asian Human Rights Commission with headquarters in Hong Kong has a network in 20 countries in Asia is concentrating human rights training in various countries in Asia. As part of AHRC's programme to give training for human rights activists and defenders from rural villages,

training was organised in India. The village folks in many Indian states are living in a situation of human rights violations by upper caste landlords and police officials. Quite often they live with fear psychosis and also with a fatalistic approach in life thinking that nothing can be changed in their lives as everything is god given. In this situation, the training of human rights defenders from rural areas, especially those who work among the poor and marginalised victims of blatant human rights violations in society is an important task. The AHRC, in collaboration with national level net works in India organised this three day training programmes for human rights activists/ defenders in Madras which was helpful to equip them to be effective crusaders in their struggle for human rights and human dignity. The training was conducted with the assistance and expertise provided by the international staff trainer of AHRC.

Rural Pastor's Training Programme in East Timor

The training of pastors of the Protestant Church of East Timor is an urgent need as most congregations of IPTL are not assisted by any pastors. The congregations are scattered throughout the country and the actual number of pastors is not sufficient to cater the needs of all the congregations. Following the referendum in East Timor for independence from Indonesia in August 1999, nearly 300,000 people were forced to leave the country and among them were half the members of the protestant church of East Timor and 22 of its 34 pastors also left the country at that time. A year and a half later some pastors have returned to the country. The IPTL that now takes up the task of rebuilding a community of faith and making its contribution to the building of a new nation is therefore a very different one than during the Indonesian occupation. With 14 pastors and 48 lay preachers, it serves some 75 congregations scattered throughout the country. But the most urgent task is to train lay preachers and evangelists to undertake responsibilities in rural parishes and congregations. In order to equip a group of lay leaders and pastors for these new responsibilities, IPTL, established a pastors' training programme. A group of about 35 students from rural areas gather in Dili for one week of intensive training every month. During the other three weeks they will work in the rural congregations and agricultural farms, read and write their assignments for next months' session. This training course has started by the middle of 2001 and the present batch will continue until middle of 2003. The resource persons come from the Artha Wacana University, Kupang, Indonesia and a missionary couple sponsored by the Uniting Church of Netherlands who is based in Dili. Every week, the course needs expenses for the board, lodging and travel expenses of 35 students, travel expenses of resource persons as well as their board and lodging, course materials, etc. The grant provided by Asia Desk helped IPTL to meet part of the expenses of this training programme.

Work among women in difficult situations in Lahore, Pakistan

This programme was initiated by the Women's Department of the Church of Pakistan's Diocese of Raiwind to help women in difficult situations. The Women's Department has long been carrying out a diakonal role as part of the outreach programmes of the diocese. The focus has been in the area of rehabilitation, capacity building, education and awareness building. The work has been done in the rural areas among women of slum dwellers. Efforts were made to build employment skills and inform women about their legal rights. Out of these women, a large number is caught up in prostitution in Lahore; some are Christians from rural areas. They have been forced into this situation due to their extremely difficult economic circumstances. The programme of the diocese provides rehabilitation assistance of these women and also provides health care and awareness on HIV/AIDS. This programme has been going on for the past three years and the contribution channelled by the Asia Desk in 2002 allowed the implementation of this programme.

Vocational Training for Dalit Women in Tamil Nadu

The Dalits are considered as untouchable communities in India; hence they are discriminated in social life. 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. The Tamil Nadu Christian Council's vocational training project for Dalit women is job oriented training in leather stitching. The main benefactors of this scheme are impoverished young women from the Dalit communities in rural areas of Tamil Nadu State in India. Young Dalit women are being trained to find jobs in leather tanneries and factories located in rural areas in Vellore and

Dharmapuri Districts. Although the government provides non-formal vocational training in selected areas, because of the vastness of the problem many rural areas have not been covered and the target group chosen for this project consists of young women from the families of small and marginalised labourers and tannery workers in Tamil Nadu state of India. Over a three year period, six groups of 120 young women will be trained. The training is planned to be practical rather than theoretical, and the syllabus has been worked out accordingly. The long experience of the Tamilnad Christian Council, Economic Life Committee in rural development work and its good infrastructure greatly helped to facilitate the implementation of the project. The grant channelled by Asia Desk helped to meet part of the expenses of this project.

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 2002.

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. 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.

4.1 Capacity Building Programmes implemented in Asia in 2002

Planned Activities		Programmes implemented	Assessment
1.	Capacity Building Programme, NCC Bangladesh	Three workshops on the leadership development of pastors and church workers have been organised under the auspices of NCCB in 2002. 75 people from different churches in Khulna and Jessore districts in the Southern part of Bangladesh participated.	This helped to enhancing the capacity of local pastors in their ministry of the churches. Capacity building in local churches is of great importance and further workshops are planned.
2.	Leadership Development Training for Pastors and Lay Preachers in East Timor	Three week-long training programmes organised in Dili for lay preachers and pastors from rural areas of East Timor. Each training attended by 45 participants.	In the absence of trained pastors in most congregations, this programme made an impact to provide lay leadership in congregations
3	Development of Youth leaders in Sri Lanka	Youth leadership formation training programme was organised. 40 youth leaders from 8 denominations from	

		various parts of the country attended this 5 day training.	
4.	Ecumenical leadership training for pastors in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia	In the context of denominational identity is being entrenched in church ministry which causes conflicts at local level, this programme aimed to strengthen commitment to ecumenical partnership and inter church relations.	
5.	Development Training for church leaders in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia , facilitated by Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)	This training programme focussed on leadership and organisational development at the local level, which helped to enhance and deepen the participants' understanding on leadership values and norms from biblical and theological perspectives.	Indochinese countries have remained closed door societies for decades and Churches in these counties lost opportunities. Equipping the Church leaders with leadership development and skills of organisational practice need to be continued.
6.	Capacity enhancement of NCC Sri Lanka staff	Capacity enhancement of the new staff of the National Council of Churches of Sri Lanka was organised through various programmes.	
7.	Second-line leadership training	A training programme for second-line leaders of the South Asian NCCs was supposed to take place in November 2001 was organised in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 11 – 16 March 2002. 20 representatives from NCCs in Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh participated in this 6 day training programme. The emphasis of this training was on leadership formation in the changing regional and global contexts.	This programme helped the participants to understand the emerging realities and respond to it from a faith perspective.
8.	Training for provincial church leaders in China	Grants were transferred to CCC in 2001 and 2002 but no reports about the implementation of this programme have been provided.	

5. PROMOTION OF PROPHETIC DIAKONIA AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

5.1 Solidarity and Holistic Advocacy

This programme aims to implement effective and co-ordinated 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 marginalised groups and communities in their struggle to protect and promote human dignity and peace with justice.

During 2002 the following grants were made by WCC Asia Desk:

- travel grants following requests for exposure visits of church leaders from Indonesia, Sri Lanka and East Timor.
- solidarity grants for a student from Bangladesh studying at AILM, Manila and for CLAAS (Centre for Legal Aid Assistance & Settlement) in Lahore, Pakistan a human rights organisation working in Pakistan to provide legal aid to Christians who have been implicated in trial cases under the blasphemy law and to the Asian Human Rights Commission.
- a small grant assisted Vichara, a think tank and Youth training institute of the Church of South India, to organise a training programme for Dalit Christian youth.
- a grant for the WCC/CCA Consultation on “An Ecumenical Agenda to combat HIV/AIDS in South Asia” took place on July 24 –26, 2002 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- travel expenses of 20 youth representatives from Church of South India (CSI) Synod to attend a South Asia Youth Consultation on Peace with Justice held in Colombo Sri Lanka in May 2002.
- a grant for exchange visit of East Timor Protestant Church, IPTL moderator to Portugal to attend the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Portugal
- a grant was made for Documentation for Action Groups in Asia’s ongoing programme in the area of peace and conflict resolution
- a grant for a Council of Churches in Malaysia initiated programme to promote communal harmony and inter-religious co-operation.

Full reports on all these activities can be obtained from Asia Desk.

5.2 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 the year 2002 in Bangladesh, programmes were implemented by a women’s organisation, **Dhatri Mongal**, working with oppressed and underprivileged women at the grass root level in Borisal District. In India, leadership training programmes of young women have been implemented by the **Student Christian Movement** of India to develop critical, creative and constructive leadership, which can effectively respond to situations with relevance and provide continuous critique for social transformation. In Indonesia the **General Synod of Churches in North and Central Sulawesi** implemented vocational skill training programmes through its Crisis Centre. a **Church of Christ of Thailand** project for children of HIV/AIDS affected parents and

children who are at risk of sexual abuse and drug addiction within the Pattaya area has been financially assisted by Asia Desk. The **Committee for Asian Women (CAW)** is an organisation which receives designated funds from United Church of Canada through the WCC Asia Desk. **Apana Ghar**, in Pakistan, is a special project of CLAAS (**Centre for Legal Aid Assistance & Settlement**), which provides legal assistance and protection for Christian women who have become victims of violence in Pakistan. The Asia Desk supported this project with a solidarity grant. **The Church of South India, Kanyakumari Diocese**, in Tamil Nadu, and **the Christian Conference of Asia's (CCA) Faith, Mission and Unity Cluster** organised, with help of a grant from WCC Asia Desk, a leadership development workshop for women which was held in Nagercoil in July 2002.

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 main activities in 2002 were:

- The follow-up of the Asia regional consultation held in 2001 and organised by the Asia Desk was implemented in 2002 in collaboration with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA):
- A consultation of the national co-ordinators of the Asian Ecumenical Network of Dignity of Children Programme was held in Bangkok in June 2002 organised by the Asia Desk and CCA;
- National Consultations were organised in collaboration with NCCs in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and Sri Lanka during the year 2002 through the co-ordination and facilitation of CCA/FMU. These Consultations helped churches and NCCs in respective countries to empower churches to promote the concerns and programmes on Dignity of Children.

5.4 Gender and Diakonia

The Asia Desk contributed to the conceptual framework and planning discussion of the gender and diakonia study, which is co-ordinated at the RRES Team level. Asia Desk initiated a preparatory discussion with CCA in 2002 to organise a regional consultation on Gender and Diakonia in 2003.

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 2002 the RRES Team approved and granted supports to the following projects and programmes from Asia which include a wide range of activities.

1. *Survey on Migrants from the Mekong Sub-region in Thailand*

The Mekong sub-region is composed of 6 countries – Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and China. The situation in Myanmar compels many young people to leave their country and take asylum the neighbouring Thailand. The political situation in Vietnam and the economic backwardness in Cambodia and Laos also force people to leave their respective countries and cross borders. The proposed project aims at conducting a survey and study on the magnitude of the problems of migrant workers in Thailand. The outcome of the survey will help the Mekong sub-region churches to determine the nature of their future mission among the migrant workers. The study will be used for advocacy among policy makers. The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) volunteers and students from the CCT universities will assist the project co-ordinators in the process of the survey.

2. South Asian Ecumenical Partnership (SAEPP)

South Asia one of the most diverse regions on the planet is fast emerging as the most deprived region in the world. Human deprivation in South Asia is colossal in scale. Various problems that are confronting South Asian societies such as conflicts, violence, wide spread of HIV AIDS, Growing religious fundamentalism, lack of human resources to lead the churches and ecumenical movement, etc. need to be addressed by the Churches which are living as minorities in South Asian Contexts. In this situation, WCC Asia Desk in collaborations with South Asian Councils of Churches will organise a meeting of South Asian Churches / NCC representatives, Ecumenical Development Agencies to initiate ecumenical partnership programmes in five South Asian countries. This partnership programme will focus on the following four key areas:

- Facilitating the meeting of South Asian Church leaders and ecumenical partners from Europe and North America to initiate the Ecumenical Partnership Programmes
- Strengthening the relationships between South Asian Churches and Northern ecumenical partners
- Identifying the ways in which future co-operation and joint ecumenical partnership programmes can be established with long term programme planning and implementation.
- Ensuring the participation of Northern ecumenical partners in programmatic involvement of Churches and NCCs in South Asia, especially in the field of Peace and Conflict Resolution, Inter religious co-operation, Combating HIV AIDS, Capacity Building of churches and ecumenical councils

3. Formation of EDAN (Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network) in Asia

The aim of this project is to build a network of disabled persons as part of the ecumenical commitment. Asia Desk has been approached at the Cartigny Meeting of EDAN to help in co-operation with CCA and the EDAN consultant to promote the concern of differently able people in Asia. As most Asian churches are not concerned about the issue of people living with disabilities due to cultural and social reasons, serious preparation needs to be done for ensuring proper participation of people who will be able to undertake the follow-up on national level. A Consultation of disabled persons working with churches and ecumenical organisations in Asian countries will be organised in February 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand with the assistance of the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Christian Conference of Asia. The consultation will aim to work out plans and strategies to mobilise the Asian churches to promote the concern of differently abled people and promote equality and justice for this people through a network. The programme will be monitored by the EDAN Advisory Group and CCA.

4. Nursing Training for Rural Young Women. Vetticode, India

The proposed project is aiming to provide nursing training to young rural women. A large number of young rural women are unemployed in Indian villages. The St. Thomas Mission Hospital has permission from the government and the Technical Course Studies Board to start paramedical courses. Three year training courses will be conducted and in each batch there will be 60 female students for a nursing course and 20 students for dental technician course. St. Thomas Hospital has the physical infrastructure but additional resources is needed for scholarships for students, tuition fee, board and lodging, exposure programmes, visitations, uniforms. The project will be monitored and evaluated by the Executive Committee of the St. Mission Hospital.

5. Study Consultation on Christian Marriage Acts in Islamic Countries

The proposed Study Consultation will assist Christians in Pakistan and Bangladesh to learn from the experiences of the initiatives taken by their neighbouring countries to promote legal rights for Christian women. To facilitate a study process of the existing Christian Marriage Acts in Pakistan and Bangladesh, which are predominantly Islamic countries, it is important to assist Christian women and to establish their rights through legal measures and constitutional guarantees. A meeting of representatives from NCCs of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India and legal experts from these countries will be convened. Based on the study which will result from this consultation NCC Pakistan and NCC Bangladesh will draft a proposal for a new Christian

Marriage Act to be submitted to their respective government. They will also mobilise public opinion and influence the government. Equipping the minority Christian communities to overcome discrimination is an important issue. A concrete programme will be worked out to initiate an advocacy campaign to protect the legal rights of Christian women in the majority Islamic societies of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

6. *Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia and Curriculum Development (EETA)*

The Asia Desk, in co-operation with CCA has initiated a leadership development/capacity building programme. The aim of this initiative is to bring together the members of the Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia (EETA) for a workshop to identify the focus of the capacity building programmes in 24 Asian countries. To assess the needs and priorities in the field of human and organisation potential enhancement will be undertaken in the next three years. To develop a curriculum for various training programmes at the local and national level. The goals are to provide the Asian churches and ecumenical councils with assistance and expertise of the EETA and to organise systematic capacity building programmes. To assist the ecumenical formation process and to develop future leadership in churches and ecumenical councils.

7. *Promoting Peace and Reconciliation in war-torn Jaffna Peninsula in Sri Lanka*

To research about conflict situations, its causes, continuation and resolution will be the aims of this programme. It is planned to organise workshops and conferences on conflict resolution and reconciliation; to publish papers on conflict and peace issues and to develop spirituality as well as provide a counselling service for those traumatised due to war.

The Church of Ceylon was established in the year 1845. The Diocese of Colombo covers more than two third of the country including the Northern, Eastern, Southern and the up-country regions. The Diocese has from the early days been involved in the spiritual, social and human development of all the people. The planned programme will be implemented by the Anglican Church under the chairmanship of the Archdeacon of Jaffna but it will be ecumenical in nature. The Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India, The Methodist Church, The Salvation Army and religious leaders of other faiths, the Roman Catholic Church and peace and human rights movement will also be involved. The issue of peace enabling and reconciling amongst the people of Sri Lanka must become part of life in Sri Lanka and counselling services for those traumatised by war will be an important part of this programme. Educating people to build peace and reconciliation will be an activity with a long term objective.