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Local Partner(s): Department for Services to Palestinian

Refugees/DSPR

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Evaluation year: 2005

Conducted by: Randa Hilal Nassar and Allan Armstrong Country: Israel, Palestinian Territories, Jordan and Lebanon

Region: Middle East Theme/DAC sector:

SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

Title of Evaluation Report: DSPR Evaluation

Background:

DSPR works among Palestinian refugees in the Palestinian Territories, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan. The organisation has been working since the Palestinian refugee problem first started in 1948 as locally formed Area Committees. In 1951 they created a formal regional organisational umbrella, with a central office to which 6 Area committees were affiliated. Egypt left in 1980. DSPR was registered in Cyprus in 1970 and became then part of Middle East Council of Churches in 1974.

Purpose/ Objective:

With the political development in the last Intifada partners and DSPR found it very important to have a wide-ranging review and assessment of:

- 1. Programs and activities by Area.
- 2. Structural, strategic and administrative components, which should lead to recommendations for DSPR's future role and activities.

Methodology:

During a 20 days period in March 2005 the team visited all 5 Area committees. They carried out interviews and had focus-group discussions with program participants, key stakeholders, and other actors. They also reviewed documentation. Preliminary evaluation findings were presented and discussed at an extended Central Committee meeting in April 2005.

The report presents issue by issue. Findings and recommendations are presented under each headline. Since the evaluation is a wide ranging review covering so many issues it is impossible to give a very short summary of the findings and recommendations. Refer to the evaluator's summary.

Key Findings:

See report



Recommendations:

See report

Comments from Norwegian Church Aid:

NCA has been lead agency among the partners to DSPR and was involved in formulating the terms of reference/TOR. We also participated in the presentation of the findings to the Central Committee in April. Each Area Committee has used the report in their next 3 year plan and has made a number of changes in their program. Main focus has been on concentration and a clearer focus.

DSPR EVALUATION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION A. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

Evaluation Terms of Reference: This Evaluation aimed to provide a wide-ranging review and assessment of firstly, DSPR programs and activities by Area; secondly, of DSPR structural, strategic and administrative components; and to offer recommendations for DSPR's future role and activities. Political instability-Insecurity, strategic processes recently undertaken by DSPR, reducing funding and the recent Gaza evaluation (May 2004) were important considerations

Evaluation Methodology: The main evaluation tasks were conducted over a 20-day period (5th-24th March), involving short visits to all five Area Committees, interviews and focus group discussions with program participants, key stakeholders and other actors, plus review of documentation. Preliminary evaluation findings were presented and discussed at an extended Central Committee meeting (6-7th April) The evaluation team is deeply grateful for the arrangements made by DSPR staff at Central and Area Officer; and for the time provided by staff, Committee members, community leaders and members, and other informants.

Limitations: Given DSPR's uniqueness and complexity, the geographic spread and differing context of programs, together with the wide scope of evaluation, then the limited time possible permitted only a `rapid appraisal' rather than intensive assessment. Uneven documentation across DSPR including the means of assessing coverage, and actual-versus-planned outputs, also presented constraints. Many DSPR stakeholders are already fully aware of many issues addressed here so observations tend to restate what appears to be common knowledge.

2. DSPR in its Context

`DSPR' emerged *ad-hoc* from 1948 as locally formed groups and Area Committees responded to the first wave of Palestinian refugees. In 1951, the creation of NECCRW provided a formal regional organisational `umbrella' with central office to which six Area Committees affiliated (Egypt left in 1980). DSPR was registered in Cyprus in 1970 and became part of MECC in 1974.

DSPR's raison d'etre persists. Continuing conflict, recurring emergencies and repeated displacement together with natural population growth of Palestinians has meant the refugee issue and related concerns has not only been unresolved but continued to grow over this period.

The vision of DSPR is based on *diakonia* applied to sustain the efforts of Palestinians to lead dignified lives and to strengthen their communities. Services are rendered on the basis of need; refugee youth, women and children have been the priority focus groups throughout, but other marginalized categories have also been assisted. The DSPR program has evolved from earlier relief distribution (still required for new emergencies) to service delivery and development. The special identity and traditions of DSPR set it apart from most voluntary agencies working with the Palestinians. It remains a distinctive ecumenical joint endeavour of international and local churches. DSPR has evolved differently in each Area throughout its lifetime.

SECTION 2: PROGRAMS

3. DSPR West-Bank/Jerusalem, NECC- ICC:

DSPR WB programs comprise three main elements: community development programs, rural development programs and emergency projects. Their budget totals around 450,000US\$. Some programs were newly introduced while others were continuation of previous years.

ICC works in the West Bank/Jerusalem, where Palestinians are living under occupation and since 2000, suffering an emergency situation of severe hardship and repression, a situation in which poverty and unemployment has risen sharply. More than one-quarter of the population are refugees, some of whom still live in 19 refugee camps spread across the West Bank.

3.1 Capacity Building Program

ICC's community development approach takes the form of capacity-building of local communities, Since 2000, ICC has implemented 3 projects: a women's center in Beitkahel village, a Child Center in Aroub Refugee Camp and a center for special needs in Al-Amari Refugee camp.

Assessment and Findings:

The ICC program is relevant to the needs of the local community as it responds to the high demand for capacity-building of CBOs and to the ongoing emergency situation. However, it lacks relevance to the highest priority target groups of women and youth.

ICC's strategic plan prioritizes women's and youth empowerment. However, although a women's empowerment project was implemented between 2000-2002 in one remote village, a clear shift towards children's programs was observed. This may have arisen partly due to the difficulties faced in the village in dealing with gender issues.

Regarding quality of the programs, the capacity building of the CBO conducted by ICC was inadequate, although other activities implemented were conducted to a high standard, such as many extra-curricular activities in Al-Aroub, and infrastructure rehabilitation tasks in Al-Amari. In Al-Amari RC, ICC had to withdraw after implementing a series of infrastructure improvements but without undertaking any capacity-building of the CBO, nor developing or carrying through any plan of withdrawal built on achieving an expanded local capacity.

ICC uses technical tools to ensure participation of target groups in the planning process, such as conducting needs assessment before commencement of programs, as well as area selection according to set criteria, problem analysis and setting objectives through use of problem trees. However, its interventions are not sufficiently focused on ICC-selected target groups nor on the primary objective of CBO capacity-building. This can also result in selecting projects or intervention according to convenience or donor priorities rather than according to priorities of ICC based on target groups needs. For instance; ICC conducted problem analysis for both youth and children, and problems were identified clearly, the child club project was still selected despite greater pressing needs from youth and even according to the ICC strategic plan which prioritized women and youth target groups.

Recommendations:

ICC is encouraged maintain its focus on its previously selected target groups - women and youth - and promote their empowerment through prioritizing capacity-building of CBOs, as well as to continue work in refugee camps.

CBO capacity-building can be enhanced by increasing the target group participation in the planning of the capacity building aiming at promoting gradual self-reliance and sustainability leading to the ICC's withdrawal. Clear plans, including exit strategies, need to be developed at the start of the project, and revised in a participatory way.

It is strongly recommended that ICC develop more active networking with other specialized NGOs, CSOs and UNRWA in implementation, referrals and use of services. Such engagement can enhance the quality of the program and provide specialized assistance in dealing with selected target groups of women and youth.

3.2 Rural Development:

Rural development elements include the construction and rehabilitation of water cisterns, land reclamation and small-scale physical infra-structure. These elements were undertaken for many years by ICC in various localities of the West Bank.

Assessments and Findings:

Construction of water cisterns and carrying out land reclamation projects are of high relevance to different local communities for Palestinians in the WB living under occupation. Although programs were implemented to a high technical standard, participation of the target groups is achieved at the individual rather than the community level. Impact would be enhanced by increasing target group participation in the planning phase.

Small scale physical infrastructure has been carried out over a long period by ICC and still is, although at a much reduced scale. Many larger actors with greater resources now operate in this field such as UNDP, KFW, and PA-related bodies, such as PECDAR. Though ICC projects were also carried out to a high technical standard including innovative ways of implementation that has reduced unit cost, some of the projects were implemented primarily at individual level rather than community level, which appears less relevant. These projects have been more effective in emergency for the job creation opportunities provided but in a more stable situation a more deliberate developmental approach needs to be adopted

Recommendations:

- Scarcity of resources justifies a continuing priority to ICC involvement in water cistern and land reclamation for communities in rural areas under occupation. Continuing and, if possible, enhancing such activities is important. ICC would benefit from strengthening its developmental rather than technical approach to these interventions.
- ICC should also explore ways to include infrastructure within a development context, eg
 developing schools/classrooms where girls will specifically benefit with outcomes primarily
 gauged in terms of reduction in drop-outs rather than floorspace constructed

3.3 Emergency Program

ICC has responded to the devastated socio-economic situation of Palestinians from September 2000, by launching emergency programs that involved distribution of food packages to poor families in isolated areas, as well as providing job creation opportunities for the unemployed in communities under siege through carrying out small scale physical infrastructure projects. This emergency component has thus become a major element of the ICC program, accounting for over 33% of total expenditure on average, and contributing significantly to administrative costs. Once this phase ends, greater pressure will be felt by the core program.

Overall Recommendations for ICC Programs:

- o Increasing the quality of the programs and finding a competitive edge is essential to justify and sustain ICC's presence in a highly competitive arena.
- o Modifying the approach by enhancing the capacity-building of CBOs as the central element in program interventions (as opposed to technical or activity focus).
- A change of approach and objectives in both emergency and development projects is advised in order to stress more of a community-wide developmental approach (as opposed to individualized benefits) is advisable.
- ICC would also benefit from conducting simple cost-efficiency and effectiveness calculations in designing and implementing projects throughout to ensure maximum impact for a given input of resources.
- o Although already identified in ICC's strategic plan, it is recommended that ICC re-prioritize youth empowerment for both genders in programs and specifically for those in the camps.
- Seeking joint ventures with other potential actors, such as UNRWA and other specialized NGOs and be part of PNGO sectoral networks would maximize the output and outcomes of the programs.

4. DSPR Israel, ICCI:

Palestinians living in Israel confront many challenges such as land confiscation, discrimination and denial of basic rights. Although there are no refugee camps in Israel, there are many displaced Palestinians, and unrecognized villages are denied basic services. The focus of ICCI-Nazareth has been in the area of land reclamation, community development, educational support, women empowerment and advocacy.

In the previous three years, the ICC projects have included projects for infrastructure, youth leadership, girls drop-outs, interfaith exchanges for youth, Arab-Jewish dialog, documentation on Palestinian displaced - all with a budget of less than 100,000US\$, three-quarters of which is used for administration.

Assessment and Findings:

The main observation is that ICCI is spreading its very limited budget too thinly, running 6-7 very small projects annually on different themes and locations, with a budget of less than 30,000\$. These projects fall within the same categories as those implemented a decade earlier but with much higher budgets. Although ICCI perceives the necessity of maintaining earlier links with the local community, this lack of focus inevitably disperses efforts and limits ICCI's scope to achieve meaningful change. Although some projects implemented are relevant to target groups needs, the minimal support offered only scratches the surface with negligible effect. On the other hand; other specialized NGOs have emerged in similar fields but with much greater resources.

On the positive side, the initiative of promoting dialogue for Palestinian equal rights among Israeli lawyers conducted in 2004 was deemed successful. Despite limited staff resources (which number only 1.5) ICCI has made worthwhile networking efforts as a founder member of PNGO-network (Ittijah) comprising 70 Arab-Israeli NGOs.

Recommendations:

It is highly recommended that ICCI focuses and prioritizes one or two interventions over time rather than many small, that could lead to projects exerting a more substantial effect. The result could be multiplied by networking with other related specialized NGOs.

The program priorities are for ICCI to decide however optimizing the minimal resources available dictates the necessity of a more focused and strategic approach. As Palestinians in Israel are

adversely affected by discriminatory policies of the Israeli government, recent ICCI initiatives to highlight and advocate for the rights of Palestinians appear promising, although active efforts should be taken to collaborate with other specialised CSOs. In addition, it was noted that Palestinian youth suffer high unemployment rates, education drop-outs and are also the main victims of resulting violence, so awareness programs and so-called interfaith programs which may foster positive change could also be of a high priority. ICCI need to review the scope to reprioritize its Revolving Loan Fund to support vocational training rather than higher education. Since funds are so limited, any investment in infrastructure is unlikely to be effective

ICCI is best placed among all DSPR areas to seek to generate its own income. It already achieves this through its loans program, although this needs to be fully self-sustaining (8.1). However it has a unique opportunity to tap local resources through various events and activities that should be utilized with the support of the Area Committee members.

5. DSPR Jordan, NECCRW:

Jordan itself has the highest number of refugees among DSPR Areas. The DSPR Jordan programs (NECCRW) operate within three main fields: Vocational Training; Community Development and Health program. NECC works in the 15 main refugee camps, including the 10 ones formally recognized by UNRWA, as well as in the unrecognized ones and heavily populated refugee areas. Their existing centers of vocational training and clinics are located away from other services and in marginalized communities. NECCCRW operates with an annual budget of around 170,000US\$.

5.1 Vocational Training Programs

5.1.1 Women Vocational Training Centers

DSPR Jordan runs vocational training centers for women providing one-year training in sewing in 5 refugee camps - Souf, Talbieh, Irbid, Houson and Gaza. A hairdressing and beautician training also runs in Houson camp, and another such course is planned in Gaza, after the sewing training there closes. These centers have begun operation since between 1965 to 1987. The centers provide non-formal training and are accredited by the Ministry of Social Development.

Assessment and Findings:

Most women trainees met (in the focus group in Houson camp), are enrolled in the center for income generation after graduation. This expectation is relevant to the high unemployment rates, and resulting poverty levels, prevalent in Jordan and especially in the refugee camps.

Houson and Irbid are located near to the textile industrial zone, most graduates have succeeded in obtaining employment in this profession (according to trainer and trainees¹) and trainees' dropout rates are minimal, especially after the introduction of industrial sewing machines to Houson. Thus vocational training offered in these centers is considered relevant to target group needs.

On the other hand; the decline in the number of graduates for Gaza camp, Souf and Talbieh reflects reduced enrollment and increased drop-out rates in these programs. This may partly reflect declining income generation opportunities and relevance of such training to target group needs. The market for sewing skills is traditional and the local textile industry is declining². Training in these centers has been provided over many years which have saturated the local market; new economic areas have emerged yet related new vocational training needs have not been assessed.

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¹ No data was found on graduates, as no surveys in this regard were conducted.

² Except for the Industrial zones that has special arrangements.

A new course, hairdressing, started in Houson with 42 women participating, confirms this and highlights the fact that vocational training, but not necessarily sewing, is highly relevant to the target groups. A positive advantage of the DSPR centers is that training is in the non-formal sector graduating semi-skilled workers. In addition; there is no academic or age-related entry requirement compared to similar run training by other bodies.

Training in the centers is practically-oriented, aiming at developing the practical skills needed as well as providing basic related knowledge. DSPR has started to integrate training through production within the training course by winning a contract to produce uniforms at Houson center. However there is no systemized arrangement for practical (on-the-job) training of trainees in the marketplace before graduation through placement or actual employment.

Social barriers against women's participation in training and work are strong, so trained women would benefit from developing a support system to assist them in such situations, perhaps using the center alumni as well as adding components to the training itself. Additional assertiveness elements are needed for trainees to start their own work or enter the market. Although women identified their needs to have their own machines for self-employment after graduation, NECC does not use its revolving loan funds to support this linkage, nor provides an entrepreneurial training supplement, nor is links to business development centers available.

The efficiency of training centers could be increased. Machinery and premises could be utilized for afternoon courses or other economic activities. Trainees cover 5% of their training cost. NECC has identified measures to increase cost effectiveness and already succeeded in reducing the cost of training per trainee. There are no methods used to ensure participation of target groups such as needs assessment or evaluation of satisfaction of trainees, although the courses' flexibility adds to their participation in the content of training. The lack of Management Information System for VT deeply affects such participation.

5.1.2 Vocational Training Aid:

Vocational training is considered a key need for Palestinian youth of both genders. As a means of supporting the neediest trainees to continue their training, DSPR provides grants for deserving cases serving around 30-40 trainees annually within a budget of around 3,000 US\$. This program contradicts with the loan program operated for university students. To enhance program coherence and impact, DSPR Jordan could extend loans rather than grants to VT trainees.

5.1.3 Efficient models of VT in Jordan:

There are other models implemented for VT for youth in Jordan that NECC can benefit from to fulfill their aim of targeting youth for vocational training without requiring investment in structures or institutions. Models such as NGO training in MoL VTCs using their 38 well-equipped VTCs spread all over Jordan with qualified trainers, training in 34 vocations, with minimum cost and without investment. YMCA also adopted a model of arranging training using UNRWA training centres. Several NGOs also pioneer training in new skills areas are ready to cooperate with DSPR Jordan.

Vocational Training Recommendations:

Based on the importance of vocational training for women and the unemployed and to ensure better quality and relevance of programs relevant to the needs of the target groups and the market, the following recommendations are offered:

- A survey to follow-up the situation of graduates over the previous years is recommended
- Other vocational training fields should be investigated as proper training needs assessment needs to be conducted.

- Develop links with micro-credit programs that provide loans for women start-up programs, in order to link DSPR graduates to these opportunities.
- Incorporate training within the market place in the training course to establish better linkages.
- Additional contract production work possibilities should be explored.
- Fuller usage of the center in the afternoon by trainees or graduates to be investigated.
- Seek ways to provide support services for trained women.
- Increase local and sector-networking with VT related institutes.
- Annually measured indicators should be set, measured and reported upon as part of Management Information System for VT should be incorporated.
- Increase capacities to provide quality control and management of VT.
- Give the opportunity of providing vocational training for unemployed youth which should be further investigated perhaps using models identified or similar innovative ones.

5.2 Community Development Program

5.2.1 Awareness and Empowerment Programs:

NECC has recently developed a program using trained volunteers working across 15 refugee camps to conduct (or organize in coordination with specialized organizations) different awareness and empowerment sessions for the local community. Topics covered are health, environment, nutrition, child development, special needs and economic related fields. Volunteers are trained by the specialist who leads the program as a part-time Co-ordinator.

Assessment and Findings:

Although women constitute half of society, their participation in its development is still limited, women also suffer from violence and denial of rights. Hence an awareness program on these issues is important. Problems are aggravated due to the adverse economic and environmental situation in the camps, and sometimes buried under it. Awareness sessions conducted by NECC are mostly attended by housewives, who prioritize topics related to the economic status of the families. Gender and legal sessions however interested younger women.

Youth suffer from unemployment and its consequences such as delinquency and drugs, these issues are covered in the awareness sessions. Although the program is relevant to certain problems faced by youth, it is unable to assist in addressing a key root cause unemployment, although plans for 2005 concentrate on entrepreneurial and leadership skills.

Regarding the quality of the program, the modality of this intervention is a best practice, as it provides spread, good grassroots outreach with quality control. The program is also highly cost-effective. However the intervention is limited to awareness only. Educators mentioned that they are stifled by this limitation and they are challenged on many fronts from participants to take issues further in terms of more concrete actions. While the variable participation in sessions (20-100) may reflect varying relevance and interest of specific courses, this also raises the question on the quality of empowerment offered and whether it leads change or empowerment.

The type of educators, system used and the involvement of community institutions ensures high participation of the target groups in the planning processes, but the program remains limited in scope which limits its benefit and impact.

5.2.2 Computer Centers:

Three computer centers are initiated with support from NECC, equipped and assisted in running at the initial stage and then handed over to the local committee (community organisation based in the refugee camp).

Assessment and Findings:

The Gaza computer center visited is self-sustaining through paid courses. 90 trainees are enrolled at any one time offering various programs on the basis of three daily shifts. The center even generates some surplus income for the local committee. Women, youth and school children are the main beneficiaries. Bearing in mind the special conditions of the Gaza camp – not recognized as citizens - and the attendant high unemployment and poverty, such a center is relevant to the needs of the target groups. It provides them with means to access employment opportunities. The center is used for other community activities such as literacy courses, training of trainers courses, and has been supported by other donors and contracted by EU and different NGOs to carry courses.

The Gaza Camp Computer center is considered a best practice model, as support of the DSPR-Jordan enabled community development through enhancing their capacities to better serve their community through launching a relevant and sustainable service

5.2.3 Other Community Development Initiatives:

DSPR Jordan is studying possibilities and seeking funds to initiate handicapped or children centers. Part of their plan is to support such centers with equipment and furniture. NECC plans is to establish kindergartens, nurseries, or child centers instead of the women VT centers in the refugee camps and run them on at least partial or full self-financing basis.

There is a risk that launching new ventures to new target groups spreads NECC's efforts too thinly with the minimum resources available. It adds another target group to current ones and runs the risk of spreading resources yet without having significant impact

Recommendations on Community Development Programs:

Enhance the awareness-empowerment program to achieve best practice in the outcome as well as in the modality of work, outreach, participation and cost effectiveness, by expanding beyond awareness through adding a referral system to specialized services offered by other NGOs, such as VT, micro-credit, legal counseling, family counseling and others. In addition continue to enhance the quality of women and youth empowerment sessions conducted.

Computer centers model are considered a best practice by the DSPR, that could be replicated in other camps in Jordan as well as in other DSPR Areas, and extended beyond computers. The generic model is actually that of enabling a CBO through enhancing their capacity to better serve their community through assisting them develop a relevant and sustainable service. It is recommended that other community development initiatives be pursued in the same direction, rather than the plans currently being considered.

5.3 Health Care

5.3.1 Health Clinics:

NECC has been running two clinics up until July 2004, one in Gaza Camp and the other in Madaba. The Gaza clinic was privatized in July 2004, by handing it over to the two specialist doctors working there.

Findings:

Clinics in Gaza camp and Madaba provides services at affordable level to the special population of the Gaza who are unregistered refugees, suffering high unemployment and poverty. Health Services target mainly women and children whom are the main victims of poverty. Accordingly health services in the two camps are highly relevant to the needs of the target groups.

Gaza Camp clinic continued providing the services through new efficient ways, as they have increased the fees to a limited extent, but these remain reasonable and competitive with other NGO clinics, while retaining patients (at an average of 750 per month). Such a model, assuming it continues, is an effective one that enables NECC to serves their target group, retaining their presence in the community as health service providers yet while minimizing the financial burden. Hence the privatization of Gaza Clinic and its continued operation is a good practice in terms of effective utilization of resources.

Madaba clinic is a Mother and Child Health (MCH) clinic serving over 8,000 patients annually, with a wide spread of activity to meet the community needs. The cost recovery of the clinics had reached 62% by 2004, covered by service charges, with the addition of a speech therapy service. Although highly cost effective and offering an essential service, the facility is not fully utilized, as only operates till 14:00pm each day.

5.3.2 Health Education:

Health education is conducted through the awareness sessions conducted in 15 different locations, including registered and unregistered camps, as well as different zones heavily populated with refugees. 575 women in 2004 participated in 17 workshops. The program also includes environmental awareness covering benefited 3,700 families in 2004 through 12 conducted workshops.

The program is conducted through a commendable model of awareness and empowerment. Such work strengthens preventive health measures, and addresses a variety of issues. Nevertheless awareness is generic and not necessarily carried out by specialists.

Health Program Recommendations:

Sustaining the Gaza clinic model - providing a needed service to the target group with full cost recovery - is important. The clinic could be further developed through strengthening the clinics competitive advantage, ensuring the current win-win situation remains. Various suggestions are made to encourage this.

Health and environment education could be further focused towards behavioral changes, by concentrating on certain issues that have greater impact and relevance. Increases impact could be achieved by more intensive use of the clinics (following the DSPR-Gaza Strip clinic model). Madaba clinic could be more fully utilized in afternoons through health activities or as a community center.

Overall Recommendations for DSPR Jordan, NECCCRW:

Focusing on youth empowerment for both genders offers a positive combination of various elements NECC presently works on, as well as addressing the emerging need of high unemployment and poverty in the refugee camps. Youth empowerment could be promoted through a holistic approach that relates awareness to vocational training and employment opportunities through micro-finance initiatives. Such a model could be built on available resources, and extensive networking, without heavy investment in machines or buildings, using efficient available models.

The community development involvement can also be continued and strengthened, through enhancing women's and youth empowerment programs seeking to achieve change. This can be promoted through capacity building of CBOs with a focus on youth and women and replication of best practices such as computer model. It is recommended to increase networking with related NGOs to increase benefit of the community development program through the referral system, as well as to maximize the outcome of the programs.

Overall NECC's annual plan and budget shows a long list of individual activities, some with minimal budget. Although there are many needs to be addressed, NECCRW can best contribute by withdrawing from all minor or marginal activities and concentrating on the priority areas of vocational training, health and empowerment.

6. DSPR Lebanon, JCC:

DSPR Lebanon's programs operate mainly in the area of vocational training, mostly for women, with the extension to operate as community center in Sabra.

6.1 Sabra Community Center

Although the Center was established in 1950 by JCC, the women's committee in Sabra and Shatila refugee camp have been running it since 2000. The center operates VT for women in hairdressing and beautician training, Kindergarten (3 classes), awareness program for the community, computer training, and languages, literacy and tutorial classes.

Assessment and Findings:

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are disadvantaged, confined to their camps and denied opportunities for further education, and employment. Thus the high demand for the two hairdressing courses run each year (each of 6 months' duration), together with the high employment rate of the Palestinian refugee women graduates (70%), reflects the relevance of vocational training programs provided.

Sabra community center provides a special tutoring program for school drop-outs, with two shifts running serving over 30 students annually. Literacy classes are run to address this need with the participation of around 8-10 beneficiaries, to overcome overcrowded classes at UNRWA schools and the long years of war in Lebanon effect.

The relevance of all other programs in the community center is reflected in the high number of participants, the double shifts which have been organized and the intensive utilization of time and space to serve the target groups. Relevance is continually assessed by the center's management. A major additional advantage is the center's unique location in downtown Beirut in Sabra refugee camp and very close to Shatila refugee camp.

Management of the center appears energetic, competent, and responsive to the needs of its target group and community. It has undergone various training provided through UNRWA, and continues to receive capacity-building and ongoing follow-up from UNRWA. Sabra Center is a successful mode of implementation through partnership with a CBO. JCC provides the location, equipment and some modest annual subsidy, while the CBO itself runs the center.

The quality of the training is assessed as high. Vocational training is relevant to market needs, highly practical and directly providing a marketable service (as a salon). Graduates are also linked to loans providers to encourage self-employment. The quality of the program is continuously checked and skills upgraded. Continual monitoring of the market is achieved by regular follow-up of graduates.

Sabra Center runs with a high level of efficiency, providing two VT courses per year instead of one, and maximizing the number of trainees as well as participants in other activities. It exhibits high cost-effectiveness, as all the center's cost is covered except for management which is supported through JCC's contribution. The only constraint to quality is the lack of physical space so any future possibilities to increase the space while maintaining program quality should be encouraged.

The structure of the Women's Committee is running the center ensures high participation of target groups in the planning process, as the executive committee comprises women elected from the refugee camps. The center is also accessible to and regularly approached by community, while home visits regularly conducted ensure additional participation.

Recommendations:

SABRA Community Center is a good model of best practice, with regard to linking to the community, high utilization of available resources and linking VT with the market. This model can be duplicated in other DSPR-areas, its VT system, drop-out programs and community involvement models could be implemented elsewhere.

It is recommended to incorporate in future JCC plans the need for increased space, enhancement of infrastructure, and relevant equipment of the center. In the meantime the kindergarten should be assessed and necessary measures taken, although management is aware of the problem and has already planned some actions.

6.2 Women Vocational Training Center-Sidon:

Started in 1950, this women's vocational training center is situated outside the refugee camps but accessible to Palestinian refugees. Hairdressing and beautician training as well as secretarial course are provided to young refugee women.

Assessment and Findings:

Training in the center is of high relevance to Palestinian women refugees. According to the trainers, 70% and 60% of graduates in hairdressing and secretarial courses respectively find employment within 6 months of graduation. According to trainees, training in the center enjoys a good reputation and they keep in contact with former graduates now working within the profession. Training enables women to find employment opportunities despite restrictions. The fact that training is non-formal allowing more flexible criteria for acceptance of trainees adds to its relevance. Nevertheless, the drop in graduate numbers for hairdressing by one-third from 2003 to 2004 has to be monitored.

Although space is reasonable, the lack of computers is a constraint to the quality of the training. The center is also underutilized as it only runs for half-days without afternoon activities. However; awareness sessions are periodically provided for women by another NGO. The lack of management in the center is the major constraint - affecting the continual monitoring of the market, networking, quality control and utilization of the center. Participation of the target group is minimal. The training that could include certain items and topics upon need and request.

Recommendations:

To capitalize on the relevance of the training and to increase quality and participation of the target groups, JCC must solve the management issue of Sidon center. There are various options that JCC could consider.

6.3 Computer and Electronic School, Beirut:

JCC was among the first organizations to start electronic training in Radio and TV repair in 1964. The course is two years which includes a combination of two nine-month diplomas Radio and TV and electronics. In 2000 computer maintenance training was started, and in 2003 it was merged with first year electronics. The course is officially accredited by the government.

Assessment and Findings:

Low relevance of the program to the needs of the target group is indicated through the low number of trainees enrolled in the course. In the first year there are now only 9, one of whom is repeating the class. None is in the second year for 2004-5. There has been a continued reduction in trainee numbers in recent years from over 40 in both years to less than 10, despite various measures taken, the latest is moving it to Musaitbeh (a school) and lowering the acceptance level.

The same training course has been running for over 40 years. Although electronics is a fast-growing field, the center's linkage to the market is weak. The structure of the course is problematic. As VT is aimed at upgrading skills, yet all basic skills are obtained in the first year including skills that might lead to private and non-formal sector employment. The second year includes general information that does not lead directly to better employment. Computer maintenance training needs high-tech skills and continuous linkage with the market. The private sector itself is usually involved in such training which is more market-driven. Lowering the level of acceptance of applicants to 7th grade raises a major question mark regarding the quality of the graduate and his ability to enter the market, as well as the training itself.

The electronic program is therefore currently struggling to maintain any appeal to new applicants seeking to enhance their employment prospects, its relevance to its target group, and its competitive edge.

Recommendations:

A serious decision must be taken soon regarding the electronic-computer training. There are various options included to be considered. In any option a professional management is required either partly or fully.

6.4 JCC Academic School Beirut/ Musaitbeh:

The JCC school was founded in 1950 and was supported until 1992 by the DSPR, then the school became the responsibility of the JCC committee alone (in other words, a continuing separate venture not officially recognized by DSPR).

Assessment and Findings:

A major continuing decline in student enrollment has occurred from 400 in 1987/88 to 90 in 2004/05 scholastic year. Accordingly the cost per student is now high, not covered by fees and even fees appear to be collected very irregularly. JCC, especially the Ex. Secretary has continually been active to mobilize the extra funding needed. The Lebanese Ministry of Education has newly opened 13 new schools in nearby locations. The changed facts on the ground require a complete re-assessment of the continuing justification for the school. Continuing to support a failing concern continues to demand a high investment of time and effort.

Recommendations:

All available signs indicate that the school is fighting a losing battle to survive and that its role is now adequately served by others. An early decision must be made by the Area Committee. If, against advice, a decision is made to continue the school, various options can be considered.

6.5 Agriculture Training Center- Tyre:

The center is an agriculture project that trains and provides income generation opportunities for men and women, revived in 1999. Successful local fundraising attracted aid to develop the farm.

Assessment and Findings:

Tyre is an agricultural area that needs considerable skilled and semi-skilled labour input. This is coupled with the fact that the training provides a chance for unemployed youth to work in the informal sector, without work permits, which is relevant to the needs of youth in the camps.

Training is practically-oriented through a productive farm that produces and sells its output to the market, and training is non-formal with no entry level requested so allows youth, women and agronomists to train, Quality control of the training is missing, since no other specialist or supervisor is involved, and linkages to the market are weak. An added value is the cost recovery of the farm from fees and production and the low expenses it attains.

Recommendations:

To ensure the continuing relevance and quality of this promising program the following steps are recommended:

- Increase the relevance of the training by developing better linkages to the market
- Better utilization of the farm to maximize the target group benefit as well as costeffectiveness.
- The quality of training can also be improved through various measures.
- JCC is encouraged to explore opportunities for joining forces with other specialized organizations, and to specialize in practical provision that would require less control.
- Develop links to loan providers that could assist in enabling graduates to become selfemployed.
- Integrate business skills training and entrepreneurial training into the agricultural training.
- Different ideas such as using farm as an incubator for graduates is needed to allow them, through intermediate stages, a better chance of entering the market.

Overall Recommendations for DSPR Lebanon, JCC:

The context in which DSPR Lebanon is working, the complicated status in which Palestinian refugees live suggests that quality vocational training for women and youth that leads to employment or self-generation is relevant to their needs. JCC clearly has a continuing role to play in this sector although this role needs to evolve.

JCC is encouraged to make difficult decisions regarding programs which have limited relevance to the needs of its target groups. Correspondingly it is recommended to increase the quality of programs that are relevant, making use of the best practice in Sabra, through various means including:

- Increase market relevance of programs
- Improve quality control
- Link-up with micro-credit programs
- Integrate entrepreneurial skills into training
- interlink with other VT NGOs as a means of improving the quality of training,
- Increase relevant networking with other NGOs, UNRWA,
- Improve utilization and cost-effectiveness (including comparing different programs)
- Management of Vocational Training should be improved locally and centrally.
- Integrate operational VT Management Information Systems

7. DSPR Gaza, NECCCRW:

DSPR/Gaza has recently undergone a comprehensive evaluation that reviewed in details all its programs as part of a European Commission-supported project, so this Evaluation was not intended to duplicate this work. However DSPR Gaza was briefly reviewed in order to provide a

complete overview of DSPR and to identify best practice that from which other areas could benefit.

The Gaza area program has three components: primary health care, vocational training and community development. Gaza has by far the largest DSPR program in terms of coverage, operation and budget. Under primary health care, three 3 clinics are operated in heavily populated areas, including MCH and awareness programs. Vocational training is offered for over 300 trainees annually for youth of both genders. Other economic activities are supported such as a sewing co-operative.

In summary the EU project evaluation noted that the core program components of Health and Vocational Training were carried out to a high professional standard and highly relevant in emergency situation and the increased poverty experienced in Gaza. While the community development element was not carried out due to various reasons, the evaluators agreed with the decision made by the DSPR to drop these activities at the very earliest stages, and to concentrate on the core business.

DSPR Gaza is working under an emergency situation. The population experiencing poverty has rose to around 75% of the total in 2002, with adverse impacts on health and education. Providing these services thus became a basic need. Refugees in Gaza strip are one million or over 70% of the population. In such a context, DSPR Gaza has been providing programs at a high relevance to its target groups, as well as being active in responding to emergency needed.

Best Practices identified relevant to other Areas:

- Clinics are also used to serve as Community Centers
- Health awareness is pro-active, with high outreach and using innovative techniques
- Quality control for programs is carried out for both vocational training and health programs.
- Active networking occurs at both local and sectoral level.
- Vocational training is interlinked to the market as well as using monitoring techniques for VT
- Programs are flexible to address changing needs: the best example is where clinics have been moved, on several occasions, from one area to another less served one

Overall the Gaza program concentrates its efforts heavily on two priority sectors (youth-vocational training, and women-health) supplemented by relief. Operating in these focus areas at scale ensures greater impact and cost-effectiveness of the interventions and has allowed the program to develop expertise and build a strong reputation. Significantly, despite a budget exceeding all other Areas, Gaza program activities are also the most geographically concentrated, not widely spread as in most other Areas, thereby simplifying program management.

8. Other Program Components

8.1 Revolving Loan Funds

Revolving loan funds have featured in DSPR since the early years. Only Lebanon no longer offers loans due to the effects of civil war. In ICCI, loans are the leading activity. The book value of Revolving Funds across DSPR is substantial - \$4.1 million (38% with banks), although at best 75-80% may be recoverable and available for relending.

Most loans (>90%) are for higher education. Loans have had a major impact over time, supporting over 1,000 students per year though recently averaging around 600. Small business loans are offered in Israel, Jordan, West Bank; the latter is the only Area to offer housing rehabilitation loans. Earlier loan schemes for livestock, and sewage have ended. Loans are offered to refugees and non-refugees, from poorer families including Christians. Loan policies vary from one Area to

another. Loan ceilings are \$750 for education (renewable) and \$3,000 for business, housing, with repayment terms from 10-20 months (excluding grace period).

Assessment and Recommendations

No standard monitoring system operates hence problems of assessing performance. A marked recent tightening in loan administration by Areas has occurred - greater use of guarantors, imposing administrative fees (2-5%), engaging legal assistance to pursue defaulters. Loan fund performance has suffered due to prevailing conditions in West Bank and Gaza, in recent years, and Lebanon earlier, and also to a less disciplined, businesslike approach. Recommendations:

- 1. Suggestions to pool loan funds either to operate centrally or invest in higher-yielding avenues, even if use restrictions were lifted, would meet resistance from the Areas involved. Some discontinued, unrestricted funds are now used for program support (ICCI, Jordan.
- 2. A minimum standard of monitoring for revolving loan funds needs to be established, to generate regular management data including conventional indicators of performance
- 3. DSPR and individual Areas are encouraged to review loan policy and targeting in terms of overall program objectives and coherence. Practical possibilities for refocusing educational and small business loans to link with the vocational training priority should be actively explored. This can expand coverage and address the key unemployment issue
- 4. To ensure the future continuation of loan schemes, a more sustainable approach needs to be promoted throughout. A disciplined and businesslike approach to recovery of outstanding loans is critical as is the need to strive progressively to cover the full costs of loan operation, without subsidy. This may entail increasing fees. Even JCC Lebanon can review its loan files and discuss with local legal advisors the possibilities for seeking recovery, at no cost.

8.2 Advocacy

DSPR's potential for engagement beyond mere service delivery has long been recognized exploiting its ecumenical status and Christian identity within the Holy Land, its presence across the region, and network of international partners. DSPR operates at four levels: local, national, regional, and international levels. However its engagement in advocacy to date has been modest, primarily facilitating the efforts of others (`partnership-in-advocacy') through hosting, briefing, arranging exposure visits for partners from abroad; exchange visits to partners; maintaining ongoing communication including issuing messages; participating in networks, fora, seminars, conferences organized by others and internationally.

Some Areas have begun taking more pro-active advocacy initiatives. ICCI now organizes formal dialogue between Israeli and Arab advocates, Lebanon has entered into partnership with local human rights organizations. Partly prompted by partner pressure, DSPR has been struggling to move its advocacy involvement to a new level enabling it to operate enable a more deliberate, pro-active rather than reactive program. However a draft Advocacy Plan presented in 2003 has not progressed, although an advocacy consultation group involving two partner representatives will be activated in 2005 to develop the plan further

Assessment

It easy to underestimate DSPR's advocacy contribution to date but the continuity and scale of DSPR's involvement (through visitors alone) has been significant. In recent years DSPR has been the only ecumenical address in Jerusalem (in the absence of WCC, or MECC). However both partners and individuals in DSPR expect it to be more active in advocacy at this critical time, especially to assert the rights of refugees. Other press for a still wider role, to reflect the injustice of Israeli occupation, land grabbing, the concerns of the Christian community.

The draft DSPR Advocacy Plan stresses two elements - Palestinian refugees, and the indigenous Christian community - and seeks to reflect these grassroots voices on burning refugee and

related issues impacting their daily lives. The approach is primarily a communication strategy to utilize a network of grassroots contact points to relay views to outside partners, with Central Office serving as a focal point. It seeks to exploit DSPR strengths (at grassroots, and international levels). However, this gives less attention to how DSPR would strengthen its role at lower levels, especially local and national, where action and impact may be more tangible – though here DSPR is only one actor among many. Some role in educating and engaging the Christian community can be envisaged. More important, DSPR needs to define how it would link with other actors, specifically churches and CROs, CSOs and even the authorities. The current facilitating role DSPR performs (enabling visits) should also be more clearly recognized as a valuable supporting instrument contributing to the overall strategy.

There is frustration that a clearer advocacy role has not emerged, probably for several reasons:

- Accepted role: church leaders question DSPR's right to engage in advocacy, regarding this as a prerogative of churches or MECC, though this may neglect the refugee perspective. Some Areas are sensitive; some partners suggest other organizations are better equipped.
- Capacity: DSPR now has very limited staff capacity at any level. At central level, this relies on the efforts of the Ex. Secretary occasionally supplemented by a volunteer.
- Humanitarian priorities: ongoing emergency, especially in Gaza, West Bank, makes longerterm issues lower priority. An unrecognized division of labour may operate whereby the service delivery role of DSPR and others frees specialist actors to address advocacy.

Recommendations

Without addressing DSPR's recognized authority to engage in advocacy, DSPR will struggle both to define and operationalize a satisfactory advocacy program. Given DSPR's long humanitarian tradition and limited capacity, it is unrealistic for DSPR to reposition itself to give advocacy priority, as some suggest. However, DSPR needs to evolve and also exploit some of its advantages. Recommendations are therefore deliberately modest:

- 1. CC must agree DSPR's legitimate scope of action and conclude a realistic advocacy strategy; plus ensure a minimum Area commitment at least to channel information regularly.
- 2. Given limited capacity, Areas need to engage more deliberately with other actors (CROs, networks) promoting advocacy around key themes. If ACs can re-engage DSPR's Christian volunteer engagement, a communication-advocacy role is one promising field of action.
- 3. Additional capacity would emerge from appointing a program manager, releasing the DSPR Ex. Secretary to expand his advocacy role; by renewing the partner volunteer (or intern) role in CO on an ongoing basis; by systematically facilitating visits by journalists, CSO communicators, visitors and using information produced. Participating or supporting networks or advocacy partners in Areas may yield better results than DSPR itself trying to do more single-handedly.

9. Cross Sectional Issues for all programs 9.1 Target Groups of DSPR

All DSPR areas run a variety of projects that, collectively targeting a large number of focus groups, working in various sectors; serving variety of areas, within a limited budget, excluding Gaza. This disparity is partly due to continuing the legacy of inherited programs which, despite major reductions, have continued to be run although they have become almost invisible in some cases.

Therefore further focusing is strongly recommended in terms of target groups, sectors, areas in response to prevailing needs which, with the limited resources available to DSPR, may achieve more meaningful outcomes. Greater focusing will encourage greater professionalism in work and specialization in serving certain target groups within certain fields.

Recommendations

DSPR needs to make a major immediate effort to focus on a limited number of target groups across its programs. Accordingly they would need to prioritize certain sectors and fields of work, and to withdraw from those projects that are not relevant to the target groups selected.

The program workgroup at the workshop conducted as part of the CC meetings in Amman on 7th of April (which included Ex. Secretaries of all Areas) prioritized women, youth and children as their unified target groups, also ensuring gender balance. The group also prioritized sectors and fields as follows: Education: School drop-outs only, Vocational Training, Health, Capacity Building of CBOs, Awareness-Empowerment; Environment (which includes land and water). The Group decided that projects related to Infrastructure, Special Needs (Handicapped), Nurseries, and Individual Relief (except when a donor specifies or in emergency situations) should be dropped.

Based on these screening, it is highly recommended that each Area reviews its existing target groups and try to identify exactly which categories of youth, women or children with whom they are or would work. Focusing done would require further revision of all projects and programs by each Area to ensure compatibility in terms of selected target group and field of operation. This would also seek to ensure relevance, quality and gender balance of programming based on area-by-area evaluation of programs. It is also recommended to revise the program structure and headings in accordance with the revision of programs.

9.2 Implementation Strategies Modalities and Networking

DSPR Areas continue engage in charitable or relief modes outside emergency situations where this continues to be justified³. Although DSPR has taken a previous decision to reduce or end this involvement it remains. Many DSPR projects however tend to reflect a service delivery approach and some of which quite efficiently, while others have reduced it.

However, DSPR has also taken some steps to adapt implementation strategies and modalities, as a means to overcome decreasing funding or reflect change within the local context these include:

- Service delivery through a volunteer network
- o Cost-effective service delivery as in Madaba Clinic that achieved over 60% coverage.
- o Partnership in serving the target groups as in Sabra
- o Some best practices are in capacity building (CB), as in the computer center in Jordan.
- o Handing over to employees, or actual privatization, as Gaza clinic in Jordan.
- Some advocacy initiatives are promising, such as ICCI advocate dialogue initiative.
- o Professional service delivery meeting needs (such as in Gaza).

DSPR is a member of important network at national levels, Nevertheless; this representation is less reflected at sectoral or community level, nor are project managers or co-ordinators necessarily involved in the networking. However there are some positive experiences in networking - for planning and working in synergy, for service delivery, for enhancing output /outcome, and for lobbying and advocacy.

Recommendations

Participatory recommendations of the workgroup:

The workshop workgroup recognized that conducting lobbying and advocacy on behalf of DSPR's target group is important and could be enhanced by adding sectoral- and target group-related advocacy. Participants also agreed that service delivery has to be cost-effective and that all related programs to be reviewed by each Area Committee for serious decision and action.

³ Emergency involvement is still justified as in WB-GS from 2000.

They all agreed that relief or charitable components not related to emergencies should be stopped, and several have dropped them from their programs. They all identified the need to continue their work on capacity-building programs and service delivery that are enhanced, focused and strengthened to become best practices with improved sustainability.

Further Recommendations: Participation of target groups in the planning processes is acknowledged as essential for effective development yet this remains weak within the DSPR, except for limited examples. Areas and programs are encouraged to address this element more deliberately in all programs. With regard to networking, each Area and program should identify other NGOs, UNRWA's different related bodies, internal structures in camps and other bodies on the sectoral and community levels to work with at all levels.

9.3 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Process

DSPR has undergone system and capacity building processes at the level of Executive Secretaries and Area Committees regarding PME and reporting for all Areas. As a result, each Area has developed its own Logframes, Plan of actions and MandE indicators and reporting formats. But although a unified reporting format is, as a result of this process, available and sometimes used, it is not used systematically for periodic monitoring and reporting which means a key tool for assessing progress is not being exploited.

It was noted that although PPM formats have clearly identified activities and outputs, and have related outputs and super goals to indicators, formats are based on input, activity and output model, with no apparent link to outcomes, but rather to the super goal at the macro level. The absence of the outcome level which is target group-based, weakens the monitoring tool. It is unable to asses whether the target group participants are better off after receiving the service than they were before. Measurement of outcomes indicators at defined time intervals – annually, end of project phases can help enhancing project responsiveness.

Despite strategic planning in 1997-9 and subsequent revision as part of PME training, there has been no deliberate review of outcome of achievement. In addition, planning for new projects did not necessarily follow the framework indicated by strategic plans, or prioritized target groups, but rather worked on new ideas to appeal to donors or to respond to needs newly perceived needs.

Recommendations

It is highly recommended to activate the use of formats as tools for Monitoring and Evaluation, and to revise them to include missing elements and the outcome level. The full use of such tools could be achieved through the next participatory strategic planning process, involving all staff, as it can extend to the planning matrices and reporting, as well as to the indicators and reporting mechanisms.

9.4 Gender Analysis

The status of women in DSPR's working region is affected by dominant discriminatory cultural beliefs that limits women's access to resources, opportunities and policy- and decision-making levels. This status is reflected in violence against women that is accepted by the community and the law. The participation of women in the labour force is low.

Although women are targeted in all areas, women constitute a major target groups in certain areas and some programs are mostly directed towards women, but gender awareness is not integrated into ongoing programs and gender empowerment is not part of aims and goals. Planning and working for gender equity within the DSPR programs has varied according to type of programs and quality of the program. Some setbacks in terms of promoting gender equity have occurred in certain cases.

For vocational training program, the quality programs that lead to employment are assisting women to income generation opportunities and hence to improved economic and general status. Community development initiatives promoting women committees is another means of enabling women and providing them with access to resources, while MCH clinics and health programs address women's special needs that, in emergency, is neglected and, in development, it is not necessarily prioritized.

In DSPR itself, a certain gender balance is achieved and in some Areas more women are employed than men. However this is not reflected qualitatively in the programs as a strategy for changes to be adopted is not present in policies and programs.

Recommendations

- Include measures to ensure quality and quantity gender targeting in all areas of DSPR, and within all programs.
- Enhance the quality of vocational training programs for women to ensure better access to employment, income generation and hence resources and Integrate awareness sessions within the training programs for better sustaining of her roles and rights.
- Capacity-building is focused on women's committees rather than only supporting certain activities.
- Active networking is undertaken with other gender-related organizations would enable DSPR to meet the challenges of addressing gender issues in a conservative society.
- Raising gender awareness and integrating of gender-related elements into project planning on the DSPR policy making level of Ex Secretaries and AC members is essential. Gender awareness is also of importance to staff members involved in implementing projects so requires training.

SECTION C: ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

10. Institutional Background and Parameters

10.1 Origins, Ownership and Status

DSPR's origins influence the organisation fifty years later. Firstly, "the organisation was originally built upon a foundation of hastily-organized local committees with a series of additions added layer on layer". Each Area Committee is a separate legally constituted, thus independent, entity. Despite their constitutional acceptance of a superior role for the Central Committee, Areas have an ambivalent relationship with DSPR. The different and confusing labels of DSPR area 'branches' reflects their pre-DSPR history and legal registration. DSPR Central Office is also constrained by its dependence on the ICC legal umbrella for its role in Jerusalem.

Secondly, the DSPR superstructure has also changed over time. An established DSPR (as NEECPR) became part of MECC in 1974 (`a child changing step-parents'). MECC changed how it handles DSPR structurally (now as a special unit) and both DSPR and Area constitutions have also changed allowing MECC's expanding family of member churches greater direct influence. DSPR was an important forerunner of ecumenical co-operation in the Middle East.

10.2 Structure

DSPR remains a complex three-tier structure of independent organizations with a fourth, highly influential sphere, the MECC church families, exercising major indirect influence. Essentially, DSPR is a confederation of autonomous organizations. Even at the Area base, this federation is now highly unequal – Gaza's program far exceeds all others combined. Its characteristics are:

- Vertical lines of authority (responsibility-accountability) are weak for BOTH governance (committees) and executive (staff) strands. CC, CO authority is limited constitutionally by the autonomy of Areas, operationally by the increasingly limited scope for financial leverage and practically, by the CC reliance on voluntary involvement, meeting briefly only twice a year.
- There has been no rationalization or integration of this structure over time. It now appears cumbersome for an operation of this now-modest scale. Structurally it faces similar issues to those confronting other multilateral organizations. The organisational sum tends to be less than its separate individual parts.
- Although DSPR is a CRO, the role of its Church family `owners' introduces certain complications. The churches monopolize appointments to DSPR governance which can blur the accountability of appointees, and thus DSPR, by creating dual or parallel lines of responsibility. In MECC, DSPR is integral but separate. Even in functional terms, supervision of the DSPR Ex Sec is the administrative responsibility of MECC's Gen. Secretary and the programmatic responsibility of the Central Committee.

DSPR is a `structural paradox'. The decentralized structure can be strength in fostering local `ownership' and in responding to local challenges. Yet it is also a weakness, requiring continued clarification of roles and responsibilities, challenging efforts at harmonisation and responsiveness to change. Centralized decision-making and follow-up appears to be difficult.

10.3 Mandate

The relevance and scope of DSPR Mandate focused on enabling Palestinian refugees to secure and develop their socio-economic cultural and human needs, and potential has been raised repeatedly, specifically the proposal to widen this mandate to include `the needy', whether refugees or not. Certain partners strongly favor extension. In practice, the DSPR mandate has already widened in most areas to enable some program activities to benefit non-refugees, especially in Israel and Jordan where these categories either do not exist or are more intermixed. All DSPR loan programs are extended to non-refugees.

On each occasion the mandate has been debated, the decision has been NOT to amend it. Since refugee numbers continue to grow and since UNRWA services reduce, services are more needed than ever. Secondly, the rationale for DSPR is that the right of return for Palestinian refugees remains a key principle so the mandate represents as much as symbolic solidarity.

10.4 Identity

The mind of DSPR is as complicated as the body. All elements of DSPR appear to share common vision and values, strongly committed to ecumenical Christian witness through service. However the differing contexts and evolutionary paths for each Area has led to fragmentation of DSPR's identity and role which makes it more difficult to chart its future, for example:

- Indigenous or international? Areas are locally registered, with local governance and staffing.
 DSPR's history calls it "an indigenous program"; NECC Gaza is "an integral part of Palestine
 Society and culture". Yet two Areas carry the international label and the primary association of
 ICC is with international not national NGO network.
- Church-Related Organisation or NGO? DSPR is "not an ordinary NGO since it has the Church dimension", its staff "are not development professionals but are engaged in development because of religious convictions". However church connections have become formalized, passive; its programs are increasingly judged by professional NGO standards.
- Charity, service-delivery or development organisation? DSPR Areas show limited programmatic evolution; several elements of earlier programs continue decades later. While some new developmental elements have emerged, Area programs retain some earlier charity approaches (eg individual rehabilitation, grants). Service delivery is the dominant mode across

DSPR; yet even the `core business' - vocational training, health centres – now operates in only three Areas while there is no common approach for the other activities.

There is consensus on DSPR's uniqueness; however, its common characteristics are less easily defined. While remaining proud of history and its values, there is the risk this promotes isolation.

11. Governance

11.1 Area Committees

The Area Committee is the basic organisational platform of DSPR, the real locus of decision-making where program work is planned, implemented and monitored. According to DSPR regulations, the entire membership of Area Committees is appointed by the respective heads of Churches for 4 year periods. Committee turnover is low; most committee members are male (21% women) generally older and retired, and the majority are Palestinian, 17% are clergy. Perhaps 30% of AC members can be described as active although this varies. Generally the quorum of 7 is fulfilled for meetings but, a smaller Exec. Sub-Committee involving a more active caucus meets more frequently to conduct the routine work.

Assessment

The governance of Area Committees reflects their voluntarist origins and, for the active minority a worthy, volunteer Christian commitment. However, Area Committees also reflect the ageing and formalization of DSPR; its former organic engagement with the local community replaced by armlength operation and bureaucratic appointment. However, Committee membership may often represent more a symbolic than practical involvement, performed as a social duty and a recognition of status. Three significant concerns on Committee composition were aired:

- a) Church indifference to DSPR shown in slow or late appointments and limited consultation with Area Committees. They tend to be poorly informed and relatively disinterested. Hence appointments do not invigorate Committees (with women, younger members, professionals).
- b) Conversely, concern was also expressed regarding over-involvement by clergy especially senior clergy. Apart from their other heavy commitments, the presence of such individual can stifle Committee operation, through natural deference accorded by other members, and even influence the DSPR `culture'.
- c) Engagement of the Christian community `base': Top-down appointments directly from the church hierarchy deprives Committees from involving potential members drawn directly from the local Christian community which now show little awareness or ownership of DSPR.

Although some Committees directly appointed members previously, the scope now available for changing the appointment process, through amending the current DSPR regulations, is unclear.

Variations in how Areas operate were noted. In certain cases, damaging crises have arisen. Based on limited evidence, the Committees in Gaza and also Jordan are relatively active and engaged. Nevertheless, certain concerns surfaced in several Areas:

- The division of roles between governance and executive (Ex Sec) was not always clear. In certain cases, Committees risk `over-involvement' in routine management functions.
- Committee members seem to envisage DSPR's role as primarily charitable or service delivery. They identify many additional unmet needs and/or look back regretfully to the larger programs operated previously. This may constrain both program evolution and focus.
- The role of Area Committees is limited to overseeing existing Area operations despite the fact
 this is now quite limited and can be handled by staff. Since Committees are themselves
 'volunteer role models' and since DSPR's unique advantage is the active engagement of local
 Christians, the major challenge and appropriate Committee role is probably to revitalize and

re-engage DSPR with their original constituency (through education, outreach, volunteer-intern programs, selective resource mobilization).

Recommendations regarding Area Committees

- 1. Area Committees can empowered themselves to obtain the most committed and professional membership available, ensuring more women and younger members. The opportunity to amend DSPR regulations (when MECC revises its own constitution in late 2005) should be considered. Regardless, ACs should exercise influence pro-actively by proposing suitable candidates for member churches to endorse or, less satisfactorily, specify criteria for new appointments; or engage their own appointees in sub-committees.
- 2. Given the reduced scale of Area operation, reducing the size of Area Committees (from 12 to 8 for example, if the current Church appointment arrangement continues) and quorum is appropriate allowing active members a clearer role, and include Executive Secretary as a full voting member to strengthen his/her authority with the necessary exclusions.
- 3. Area Committee members would benefit from a clear and simple definition of roles and responsibilities of committee and staff respectively. This should allow the Committee strategic oversight of programs while allowing staff greater operational autonomy. This may entail reduced frequency of meetings, enhanced authority of the Ex. Secs. Daily presence of Committee members in Area offices and in routine administration can be reduced.
- 4. Area Committees could make a vital contribution to reach out and engage the local Christian Community and seek to revive the original DSPR tradition. This may involve, for example, more systematic education and communication within the Christian community, opening opportunities for youth to participate in DSPR programs in intern or volunteer capacities. The Committee as a whole or an active Sub-committee can lead this critical task.
- 5. Area Committee members must receive adequate orientation on changing roles for DSPR and new development approaches through: exposure visits to best practices locally, participating in NGO networks; active involvement in strategic program planning sessions.

11.2 Central Committee

The Central Committee is responsible for the overall vision and a comprehensive strategy for the whole of DSPR. The nine-member Central Committee meeting twice-yearly has overall responsibility for planning, co-ordination and supervision; it comprises 5 Area members and 4 Members-at-Large (or Alternates) representing the four MECC church families (for 4-year terms). Other staff participate ex-officio including all Ex. Secs, Finance Officer and Auditor. Sensibly, Finance Sub-Committee meetings are held immediately preceding the CC meeting. CC Meetings are also convened in conjunction with Round Table Meetings 18-month cycle). No Executive Sub-Committee or Standing Committee routinely operates between meetings, as is the practice in most Areas. Instead Office-bearers, especially the Chair, are expected to perform this role. The DSPR Ex. Secretary maintains extensive and regular ongoing communication with CC members, especially by email, ensuring meeting arrangements are acceptable and finalized and circulating necessary supporting documentation.

Assessment

Although constitutionally central to DSPR, the functioning of the Central Committee appears constrained by structural and practical factors:

- Churches do not always nominate appropriate or committed Members-at-Large; some do not attend, others are not active or vocal. Some Area representatives add little.
- The issue of area imbalance on the Committee is a concern (contravening DSPR Regulations, 4 out of 9 current Committee members are drawn from one area Jordan).
- Since the CC convenes only for 4 days per year, agendas are inevitably loaded. Meetings seem reasonably well-planned with regular items and strategic issues which generate healthy

- discussion. However meeting discipline seems somewhat slack reducing time available; strategic and administrative items are intermixed so time is often lost.
- Recent efforts have been made to highlight decisions taken (motions carried) and to report back on progress made at later meetings. Progress in carrying through agreed actions has been patchy, and this includes formation of sub-groups to pursue a specific decision.

Overall the Central Committee does not exercise the necessary direction and especially follow-up expected for DSPR. Its central authority is already limited by the autonomy of the Area Committees and itself constrained by the fact that the Committee effectively exists for two brief half-yearly meetings, relying on volunteers who give freely of their time. The mechanisms to ensure the Committee exercises influence between meetings do not function consistently – no equivalent of a Management Committee, while ad-hoc groups formed find it difficult to function.

The Central Committee now commands a limited field of meaningful action. Due to earmarking, the discretion for the Committee to allocate the dwindling general budget (20% of total) has reduced. No regional program exists. The Committee sees a limited role in monitoring and accountability compared with planning. There is modest scope for improving the effectiveness of meetings through improved discipline, management and especially allocating responsibilities, deadlines for agreed actions. At present, follow-up of decisions lies primarily with the DSPR Ex. Sec but this often requires action from others which may not materialize. Thus, even with a reduced role and despite good intentions, the CC struggles to offer the overall direction, guidance, support and scrutiny to the Areas intended.

Recommendations regarding Central Committee

- 1. Central Committee composition can be strengthened through constitutional change empowering the existing committees to select members. Even without this, the Committee leadership can pro-actively influence appointment (both MaL and area representatives) by: identifying appropriate individuals for church or AC endorsement, proposing criteria for desirable candidates; by using its own rules to press for replacement of non-attending members; by ensuring fair geographic spread of representation. A full vote should be considered for the DSPR Ex. Sec to enhance his/her symbolic authority.
- 2. CC meetings can be strengthened by: improved meeting discipline, reducing area-by-area presentations in favor of inclusive thematic items, ensuring agenda planning and chairing cover strategic issues, decisions and follow-up, injecting improved program and financial analysis, stressing rationalization and focus rather than adding activities, by producing draft minutes for agreement. allocation of responsibilities before the meeting disperses.
- 3. Redefine role and responsibilities of the Committee as outlined in DSPR Regulations and translate into a simplified `Job Description' for all CC members. This should lay particular focus on the relations with the DSPR Executive Secretary and with the Area Committees
- 4. Appoint a small, active Executive Sub-committee responsible for ensuring the CC functions adequately between meetings. The ESC (including the Ex. Sec) should seek to participate in one strategic review and planning meeting once a year in each Area Committee.
- 5. Strengthen follow-up on agreed decisions by defining agreed CC decisions/actions more clearly in terms of person(s) responsible and deadlines, ensure actions are achievable, and prioritized. The Ex Subcomm. should circulate an update on progress or lack of progress once between CC meetings, and hold accountable all area-based representatives.
- 6. Within 2 years, if CC/CO continues to struggle and fail to achieve necessary strategic changes agreed, serious consideration should be further restructuring by reconstituting DSPR as an informal regional network of autonomous Areas without CC or CO (Section 16).

12. DSPR Organisational Management

12.1 Human Resources

Staffing: DSPR's total staffing is now only 105 staff (including part-time), 61% in Gaza. An estimated 40-50% of staff are women, and the vast majority are Christian. DSPR has very limited staff turnover so there is clear ageing. Gaza is now the only Area now able to run separate departments supervised by capable professionals, such as health, vocational training. Staffing in other Areas has shrunk to become a very small team or even virtually a `one-person' operation – an Area Ex. Sec (program director) with only administrative staff. Apart from ICCI (employing only 1.5), all Areas still employ staff in field projects mainly specialist trainer/instructors or health workers based in centres or camps. All Areas with Revolving Loan Funds employ at least one staff to manage. JCC and ICCI, use part-time accountants.

With the key exception of Gaza, all DSPR branches including Central Office now depend on one or very few key individuals to perform the wide range of tasks involved in program management. This capacity is partly augmented by active Area Committee volunteers, especially Gaza and Jordan. Jordan has expanded its capacity by developing a network of volunteer educators supervised by a part-time co-ordinator and by privatizing services at one of its two clinics. Many Areas carry out a wider range of tasks than their program budgets suggest including management of loan funds, networking and advocacy tasks, and ecumenical interaction. ICC especially the Ex Sec, is heavily engaged in the latter, facilitating visits, arranging permits for many ecumenical visitors in the absence of any WCC, MECC presence.

Staff Development: With the exception of Gaza, relatively little has been invested in staff development by Areas in recent years. Most key staff have participated extensively in the Organizational Development processes which included capacity-building. Tight restrictions on movement have also reduced interaction among Areas, eg the former practice of Ex.Sec. meetings. Opportunities to use DSPR meetings for exposure visits are not adequately exploited.

HR Policies and Conditions: There is no standard human resource policy across DSPR and no central data maintained on staff. The differing contexts in which each DSPR branch operates render uniformity impossible. Key elements such as job description and at least basic annual performance review do not seem to be standard in several branches (ICCI, CO). Remuneration levels and provisions are equally divergent. Only Gaza offers provident fund and annual bonus compared with gratuity in other areas. Salary costs in Israel are prohibitive due to state taxes. In Jordan, staff costs are comparatively lower hence the slighter larger staffing, proportionately, Overall it is perceived DSPR salaries have fallen behind those of comparable organizations

Assessment

In general, DSPR staff appear experienced and committed. The reduction in staffing to the current minimal levels, excluding Gaza, has reduced DSPR operational capacity and competence to critical levels which also constrains Areas' ability to develop and adapt their respective programs. There is limited budget scope to recruit additional staff. More strategic use of this scarce resource and improved team working among remaining staff is required, but necessary adjustments are not always apparent, for instance geographic concentration of activities. Travel restrictions limit sharing and interchange of HR. DSPR must overcome the related problem of professional isolation. The leadership succession issue is also critical: there is a pressing need to develop a second-line management in Gaza and Lebanon.

No common HR policy, thus terms of conditions of employment, exists across DSPR. Basic organisational data (eg staff numbers, composition) is not maintained or reported centrally. Job Descriptions and certain procedures (authorizing expenditure) do not always exist.

Recommendations:

- 1. The role of Ex Secretaries needs to be more clearly defined, including the respective responsibilities of Committees and Secretary, to allow greater operational freedom, especially for smaller Areas. This requires revised terms of reference for AC and Ex Sec, respectively, updating job descriptions, amending administrative and financial procedures.
- 2. Conditions appear to vary too greatly across Areas to justify developing a comprehensive HR Manual. Nevertheless, DSPR can agree certain minimum common standards and procedures applicable throughout (eg, job descriptions, leave provision, working hours, etc).
- 3. For individual Areas, a project manager or equivalent needs to be recruited soon for JCC to supervise field activities and groomed for succession. Gaza also needs to identify and develop an eventual replacement for its current ES. DSPR should give priority to engaging qualified/ experienced women candidates to ensure improved gender balance at this level.
- 4. To address the constraints of limited HR capacity, each Area can be more innovative in maximizing this resource. This includes: rationalizing program interventions from the operational perspective (eg fewer field sites, separate activities); exploring opportunities for volunteers, partnership with other organizations, shared staff with other Areas.
- 5 Staff development is important at this time of transition and needs strengthening through: using DSPR events more systematically for interaction; planning deliberate interaction among sectoral professionals (health, voc training); and increased involvement with NGO networks and NGOs in each Area

12.2 Management and Financial Systems

A recent detailed assessment painted too positive a picture of DSPR. However there is every reason to accept their favorable observations of the more detailed procedures in place. In the case of financial systems, an informed opinion is that no other NGO in Palestine possesses this capacity in its financial system and that DSPR has surplus capacity in this area. Overall the review reveals DSPR as a mature, established operational organisation with key management and financial systems in place to a satisfactory level – a key asset.

The upgrading, consolidation-standardization of financial systems across DSPR since 2000 has been effective and made a clear contribution to professionalizing DSPR, such as:

- Successful adoption of a new computerized accounting package and system (GIT) across all ACs, though further upgrading an adaptation with attendant costs is envisaged
- Introduction of a comprehensive Financial Manual and the switch to accrual-based accounting (IAS) though not operationalized in all aspects. A common chart of accounts is followed throughout.
- Consolidated external audit, one auditor completing a standard report for all ACs.

Recommendations

1 Revisit and implement recommendations of the 2003 Report on Financial Management.

12.3 Central Office

As a loose federation, DSPR Central Committee and Office are the main elements which represent a unified DSPR framework. The role of DSPR's Central Office is critical in unifying the organisation both internally (co-ordination) and externally (representation, communication). The Central Office comprises only Executive Secretary (as chief executive officer), Finance Officer and Administrative Assistant. The DSPR Regulations offer the only guide to Central Office responsibilities. They are, in general, to implement the wishes of the Central Committee and have general administrative responsibility for all aspects of DPSR's work. This involves co-ordinating meetings, promoting unified strategic planning, facilitating operational plans, central finance, communication with Areas, and internal partners, capacity building and primary contact with

MECC The strategic goals which the Central Office set for itself are to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of DSPR, and its responsiveness to changing and emerging needs.

Assessment

Strengths: Ensuring the DSPR machinery functions (meetings, planning, OD processes); harmonized financial management; maintaining good ongoing communication with stakeholders; ensuring planning and reporting obligations are fulfilled; consolidated financial management; coaching and moral support, especially to smaller Areas and their Ex Secretaries; and as a thinktank generating ideas, drafting policy, providing commentary and analysis.

Weaknesses: Follow-up of strategic and organisational processes already launched; despite need for focus, limited success in harmonizing programs across DSPR; setting and ensuring minimum standards are maintained across DSPR (implementing CC decisions, HR etc), field visit thus practical engagement with Areas is now very limited; CO's dependent legal status under ICC in Jerusalem is very constraining; its advocacy role has been stifled by other actors.

Most stakeholders are aware the Central Officer exercises limited authority or influenced limiting its role to advice and persuasion. This is due to:

- DSPR only "exists by the goodwill of the five legally and functionally autonomous Area Committees". DSPR's Ex. Secy exercises no direct authority, even over Area staff and only practical leverage through financial management and communication with partners.
- Areas, especially the two larger ones (with more earmarked funding), clearly protect and assert their independence. Smaller Areas, more isolated and financially dependent on general budget allocations, appear readier to accept greater CO involvement.
- The Central Committee itself lacks authority or influence to direct Areas (due to travel, earmarking etc). In addition, the Ex Secretary `serves two masters' since s/he is administratively responsible to the MECC General Secretary.
- Professional capacity at Central Office is limited, given work involved and compared with comparable NGOs. It naturally tends to focus where its role is clearer and accepted (finance, reporting, external communication) as well as routine administration and communication. This means limited capacity to engage in other issues, especially program management and monitoring, including PME, which lie more clearly within the responsibility of Areas

Despite the stated wish of almost all stakeholders for a strong central office to lead and unify DSPR, there is also acceptance and resignation of the continuing unsatisfactory situation.

12.4 Expanding Central Office Capacity

The issue of augmenting Central Office capacity has been long discussed within DSPR, included specific suggestions for: Program manager; Fundraising; Advocacy; Internal audit.

Overall, the Finance Officer role remains too narrow for a small organisation. A case can be made to strengthen and professionalize DSPR by engaging a program-PME manager combined with fundraising support, which would also free the Ex Sec to work on advocacy. Since Areas also lack professional capacity, this function may augment competence while sharing the cost. However, lack of capacity is merely one constraint confronting the Central Office. A program manager would face the same difficulties which limit the current effectiveness of the CO, especially Ex. Sec at present. This is in addition to travel problems, the likely difficulties of recruiting a sufficiently experienced staff, and of financing this position. Adding a staff member will not address its current lack of authority and so the function could easily be marginalized. Fundraising will not directly bring funds but require work with Areas to approach local sources.

Recommendations

- 1. Widen the Finance Officer role to include internal audit for all Areas, including systematic visits and additional administrative tasks. Existing finance tools should be more actively exploited to generate analytical management information to support decision-making.
- 2. Regarding Program Manager-Fundraiser, an appointment is desirable but to ensure the benefits are not neutralized by current constraints, it is therefore suggested that:
 - such an appointment be conditional upon DSPR completing a strategic rationalization process (recently agreed in CC) which would both create the necessary conditions and demonstrate willingness to allow a program manager to operate.
 - a clear job description (and modus operandi) must be agreed with Areas, and the cost allocated from DSPR general budget, demonstrating all Areas' stake in this function.
 - in case of difficulties of recruiting a suitable staff, alternative possibilities of engaging either part-time and/or consultant services to perform this role (even beyond Jerusalem).
- 3. The DSPR Ex Sec. needs to lead the organisational development processes especially strategic program rationalization, to ensure that CC decisions are carried through; and to assert minimum standards (especially PME, related functions) to demonstrate DSPR is changing and that it can function as a unified organisation. This requires active follow-up with respective Areas, along with the CC Chair or others. If a program manager is added and an advocacy role agreed, the ExSec can lead DSPR's advocacy strategy.
- 4. The dependent legal and administrative status of the DSPR (Central Office) under ICC is unsatisfactory. If a cost-effective independent legal solution cannot be agreed, then the MoU needs rewritten to allow the Central Committee (or Ex. Subcommittee) the necessary oversight allowing greater operational autonomy to the Ex. Secretary.

13. Organisational Development Processes and Functions

13.1 Organisational Development Processes

Since 1998, DSPR has undergone major change processes aimed at enabling it to become an efficient professional organization. All were externally facilitated, and aimed at improving direction, systems and capacity-building, including strategic planning; organisational development/change management; PME; finance systems upgrading/standardization. Other supporting initiatives include evaluations, finance review have also taken place

Assessment

DSPR and partners deserve credit for taking positive action to strengthen and modernize the organisation. The processes were often time-consuming and extended. DSPR has been able to claim some resultant visible improvements, eg financial strengthening and harmonization processes. DSPR staff perceive themselves to be more professional and knowledgeable and some partners note some enhancement. However, in general, the prevailing view is that DSPR has not really reaped a proportionate benefit from these processes. Major concerns include:

- Strategic planning, PME and organisational development exercises encouraged have not themselves fostered significant evolution in programs or operation - a primary intention. Generally they have justified a continuation of the status quo.
- Processes have not concluded with sufficiently definable results mainstreamed across DSPR.
 The exhaustive PME exercise (addressing a key concern by agreeing universal goals, objectives, indicators) has not been practiced or sustained throughout DSPR. Even financial harmonisation, widely adopted, has not been fully concluded.

The reasons for limited success in concluding and mainstreaming the outputs of these processes across DSPR, include:

- The serious deterioration in the situation from the second *intifada* restricting movement, requiring attention be devoted to emergencies, basic program operation.
- The complex DSPR structure and power balance which permit Central Committee and Central
 Office limited authority, together with limited capacity to follow through where the Areas retain
 real decision-making power. Greater pressure could also have been exerted
- Insufficient motivation, ownership or initiative from the Areas themselves to accept improvements as well as limited capacity to put them into effect.
- A combination of innate organisational conservatism, and inertia together with the capacity limitations at Central Officer and the Areas.

Recommendations: see those for section 13.2

13.2 Planning and Reporting

Planning in DSPR operates within the following framework

- Strategic plan for individual Areas, and for Central office (developed 1998-2000 and revisited in 2002) - broad statements of mission, identity, context and not time-limited.
- o Program planning: 3-year rolling plans with indicators, targets and budgets updated as annual revisions which also serve as the operational planning level.
- Community-based consultation with stakeholders (a type of participatory planning) in some cases, as the basis for program planning and detailed project activity planning.

Monitoring in DSPR involves mainly ongoing project/activity monitoring and separate financial monitoring, conducted monthly; periodic updates (not following any standard format) for Central Committee meetings; and annual monitoring for year-end reporting (both for individual Areas and consolidated for DSPR as a whole). Area staff also monitor through regular project visits; central office monitoring is through consolidation or informal contact, not actual visits.

Assessment

The planning process in DSPR is conducted separately by individual Areas, with a separate section added for Central Office and without overall unification. CO guidance ensures broad similarity in plans presented but there is no unified or even harmonized plan for DSPR as a whole. Since the harmonized PME system has not been adopted uniformly, the result can be a complex and confusing series of individual plans. It is very difficult to link budgets with planned activities. Participatory planning involving grassroots participants is variable. Monitoring is conducted by the Areas following their annual plans, CO exercising remote quality control.

Similar concerns arise for reporting. Overall DSPR communication and financial reporting is viewed favorably, but program reporting is variable. Some Areas are very timely in internal reporting, others late, related to variable capacities. Three Areas publish their own printed annual report. Recent overall DSPR annual reports appear more concise and consistent but lack adequate overview and analysis. The view among partner agencies, the key end-user, of DSPR reporting performance tends to be mixed. The following limitations were noted:

- limited consistency especially in terms of consolidation. providing no overview of DSPR program coverage, achievements by objective/sector, organisational summary, hence an impression of diverse, programs with limited commonality.
- no reflection of planning such as progress/variance against annual or 3-yearly plans nor how achievements in one year build cumulatively on previous years'. Activities or outputs are facts isolated in time, and program context.
- insufficient contextual analysis

• no connection between narrative and financial aspects or improved financial analysis. basic organisational information, for example, staff numbers, is often lacking

Overall, the planning and monitoring process may implicitly encourage inertia. The strategic plan is open-ended, the 3-year rolling program arrangement helps continuity (smoother financing) but offers no `watershed' – a defined point or stage to review cumulative progress and to consider future options. This ongoing arrangement may suit service delivery but may not facilitate program evolution required which requires more deliberate review and adjustment.

Recommendations

- 1. Change management needs to be accepted and implemented BY AND WITHIN DSPR. This means DSPR building an internal quorum for agreed measures steps and for this quorum to take full responsibility and ownership. Hence:
 - DSPR needs to set defined outputs and outcomes associated with change processes, and to be pro-active in following-up and implementing them. CC/CO must strengthen follow-up and press more actively for compliance among Areas.
 - Continuing partner support for processes is necessary but external facilitation may actually deflect DSPR from taking difficult decisions. Partner involvement needs to be constructively critical and press for implementation of defined outcomes.
- 2. The PME process integrated several processes and promises more professional and systematic program planning and management for DSPR. Before this valuable investment in PME is completely lost, two immediate steps are required:
 - All Area Committees themselves must conduct monitoring against their own agreed PME/log-frame formats (annual, half-yearly), and DSPR Central Office to ensure this occurs; this can be consolidated across DSPR, providing a much-needed overview.
 - Active guidance by the CO/CC Chair is needed to establish this practice, and ensure it is used and Area Committee representatives, especially Ex Secretaries, must apply this
- 3. Define explicit 3-year planning phases for strategic and operational planning in place of the rolling program (it can continue as `bridging'). Each new cycle would be preceded by a strategic review and replanning. This entails updating the strategic plan (as a practical exercise rather than lengthy meditation) and linking this with program plans including indicators, targets and financial aspects. DSPR can report against achievements over this phase, cumulatively as well as annually.
 - o To avoid repeating earlier mistakes, the move to strategic-program planning cycles could occur after short-term program rationalization is completed, thus probably for 2007-2009.
 - Prior to that, launch an internal time-limited review and rationalization exercise for each AC, facilitated by CO and CC Chair/Committee. Current commitments can be reviewed against objectives and in terms of cost-effectiveness and sustainability – aided by this evaluation – with the focus on taking hard decisions, including program cutbacks.
- 4. DSPR would benefit from promoting and projecting a common organisation rather than a collection of Areas. To support other measures, it can consider:
 - Stressing the DSPR brand (name, logo) on individual Areas, for example, in Annual reports. to be carried more prominently alongside their own labeling. Consider also producing regularly some practical and symbolic instruments to project this common identity (eg calendars/year planners, diaries, advocacy poster(s), website)
 - Wherever possible, present information in reports, meetings on DSPR as a whole (overall coverage, main sectoral interventions/achievements), stress common themes applicable to most/all Areas rather than a series of lists or individual Area concerns.

14. External Links and Relations

14.1 NGOs, Civil Society Organizations and Others: At Central level, DSPR's formal connections tend to be international with MECC, WCC and to donor partners as well as, through committee membership, to the churches. Although the DSPR Ex. Secretary appears to be in close contact with a range of other actors, this tends to be at the informal or ad hoc level.

It is Area Committees which operate in the public realm beyond DSPR projects and activities. They need to maintain the necessary bilateral links with government, for registration, with local authorities and with organizations such as UNRWA with whom working relations are good. For certain Areas, such as the Occupied West Bank especially, this entails regular contact with the Israeli military authorities as well as Palestinian Authority.

In terms of linkages with other civil society actors, this varies; in general Area Committees `tend to be non-entities in NGO networks'. Gaza is active especially in PNGO health though not a formal member. ICC continues for historical reasons as a member of AIDA (for international NGOs, donors) although its program is closer to local NGOs. In other areas, Areas are affiliated with the national NGO network (only recently for JCC) but their involvement appears to be rather marginal due to limited capacity and because DSPR perceives itself to be `different'. Church-related agencies, with which DSPR shares closer affinity, seldom function as a collective group. Repeated initiatives to activate such a network (eg in Jerusalem), and to co-operate on joint activities repeatedly founder. DSPR still enjoys respect as an `elder statesman'.

DSPR has recognized its relative isolation in recent years but, has not really overcome it. This engagement is not perceived to be a priority. It is certainly time-consuming so needs to be prioritized but probably offers the best opportunity for Committee and staff exposure to best practices, ideas and current thinking, and to contribute to relevant issues which individual Areas, on their own, would be unable to engage in and opportunities for joint working.

Recommendations

 Despite very limited staff capacity, DSPR Area Committees are encouraged to identify and prioritize engagement with selected CSOs, NGOs/NGO networks operating in priority focus/issue networks, as feasible. The intention is: to strengthen professional exposure, increase opportunities for collaboration and expand DSPR's advocacy role.

14.2 Core Partners

DSPR's core partners represent a key stakeholder group exerting major influence. This group is large (16 agencies), geographically dispersed and with differing priorities. All, with one small exception, are Protestant, the majority are long-term partners, some since DSPR's inception. DSPR's relations with partners operate at bilateral, intermediary (core group, lead agency) and full Round Table levels. Communication with partners at all three levels is a primary task of Central Office but Areas also have varying degrees of direct contact.

Relations with core partners have become more complex and challenging due to more defined strategic priorities and plans followed by many agencies as well as and increased demands on both parties. The earlier broader and more flexible basis for co-operation continues to lose ground to a more qualified and optional support to DSPR as a whole. However the partner group does not speak with one voice, and conflicting views cause confusion. DSPR certainly feel pressure and sometimes consider partnership is not conducted on an equal footing.

A distinction applies between the larger, north European agencies and other partners in attitude and approach. The former have developed new ways of working, increasingly guided by their own

strategic priorities, diversifying their own partner base to include more dynamic secular partners, more reliant on government back-donor funding and more strongly influenced in a competitive environment by newer development paradigms. It is this group which has become more openly critical of DSPR for its perceived inertia in transforming its program to meet new challenges and adopt new approaches (rights-based, strengthening civil society, advocacy). The same agencies nevertheless contribute to support and accompany DSPR's organisational processes for DSPR. Their future support is conditional or increasingly earmarked

The second group broadly comprises generally smaller or mid-sized church agencies (mainly, not exclusively North American, Australasian) which perhaps rely more heavily on private funding and have more direct linkages with their own churches. The personal dimension – whether it is communication with DSPR personnel, identification with individual refugee stories – is given greater weight. While far from uncritical, this group appears to be more understanding and accepting of the present situation, and less assertive in pushing DSPR for changes while recognizing their necessity. This smaller agency group appears to envisage continuing and relatively steady support for DSPR, while seeking to encourage positive changes in DSPR. The situation in the region and its effects on Palestinian refugees will be the primary influence

Recommendations

- 1. DSPR can probably best strengthen partnership with core partners by carrying forward the necessary program and organisational transformation which they have been seeking and which many within DSPR (and this evaluation) believes is necessary.
- 2. Develop the role of volunteers/interns placements from partner agencies to assist DSPR and to strengthen its volunteer role linked with a similar challenge to Area Committees.

15. Finances

15.1 Income Trends

DSPR has experienced long-term reduction in total funding (around 12% in actual, 50% in real terms over the past two decades). Patterns of funding over the past decade suggest increasing year-to-year variability due to the greater relative impact of time-limited bilateral (eg EU) and emergency (eg ACT) funding. Although the proportion of total funds earmarked for specific Areas has not significantly changed, their reduced absolute volume has meant the general, discretionary budget available to DSPR itself to allocate among the 5 Areas has shrunk significantly – to around \$400,000 or 20% of DSPR's total budget. Only 7 of DSPR's core partners now contribute to general budget whereas 9 direct their contributions to specific Areas.

Gaza remains the preferred Area receiving 64% of DSPR overall funding in 2004 partly due to major, limited-term EU and ACT funding. ICCI receives no earmarked funding, and Jordan a minimal amount.

DSPR has enjoyed limited success in tapping resources beyond its core partner `consortium' but Pontifical Mission, Welfare Association and local embassies have been periodic donors. Lebanon and Jordan have managed several one-time funding contributions from such sources. .

Two significant sources of non-donor income exist. Firstly, DSPR generates in excess of \$200,000 (8% of total income) in local contributions and revenues, mainly user fees for health and vocational training or community contribution to infrastructure, of which Gaza contributes over 80%. Secondly, revolving loan funds in four Areas, which use the accumulated assets established by historic donor contributions and, of course, recovered loans. Though the status of RLFs is not fully clear they may have a combined useable capital in excess of \$3million

15.2 Budget, Expenditure Trends

Despite some changes, the relative share of expenditure of the main DSPR programs have remained similar for over a decade. Overall health and education (vocational training) account for the bulk (46-55%) of program budgets with administration also significant (13-27% but dependent on accounting practice). Remaining program components show limited evolution with reduction in community development, infrastructure and individual rehabilitation as newer categories such as advocacy and capacity-building have emerged. Overall, the global financial analysis portrays a rather traditional service delivery orientation not unexpected for refugee program but with some efforts to diversify, perhaps too widely, in recent years.

Gaza has always commanded the lion's share of the DSPR program in terms of activities and budgets which normally exceed \$1 million per year. Budgets of other Areas, especially West Bank and ICCI have both shrunk several-fold. In ICC's case, successive ACT emergency appeals now means emergencies regularly contribute more than 50% of its annual budget. Correspondingly budgets for Jordan, Lebanon and CO have remained relatively unchanged in actual terms – they have worked with a similar scale of budget throughout this period.

15.3 Impact of Reducing Income

DSPR has been suffering adverse impacts of continuing reduction in donor income:

- Shrinking general budgets have squeezed programs, especially those without earmarking (Galilee, Jordan). Even Gaza is vulnerable to a high dependency on a single EU project.
- The share of overall budgets consumed by ongoing overhead fixed costs (salaries, rents etc) has increased to disproportionate levels (21% overall, ranging from 9% in Gaza to 73% in Galilee). With further downward pressure on funding, this administrative burden may increase and the recent vicious cycle may accelerate (reducing funding -> enforcing reduced capacity (and higher fixed costs) -> reduced outreach/coverage -> less attractive to donors and less capacity to change. Further donor resistance to excessive overhead `take' threatens the viability of some Area Committees and DSPR as a whole. Yet developing and transforming these ailing Committees also requires basic capacity.
- Financial pressures, along with related, deteriorating cash flow problems, have already compelled some drawing from contingency and reserve funds (interfund borrowing).
- Despite some supplementation of core donor income through EU funding (via partners) and intermittent tapping of embassies, DSPR has been very slow to mobilize local donor funding
- In general, signals from core partners indicate a degree of dissatisfaction or frustration with DSPR so future income trends are probably downwards. Scope for one core partner to compensate for withdrawal or reduction by others is now very limited.

Assessment

This financial assessment of DSPR gives cause for concern and is entering a more critical phase. Overall, program activity hence costs have reduced, but this has not significantly affected the range of programs, activities across all Areas. The relatively gentle long-term decline of funding may even have created a `comfort zone', cushioning pressure for change. Some Areas have been adapting (in the late 1990's and more recently). Several are now active in reviewing costs and seeking new funding.

Regarding viability, the vicious cycle is more acute in smaller Areas but their situation varies:

• ICCI faces the greatest challenge in maintaining a viable program due to high operating costs in Israel and reliance on central allocations. However, it operates the largest loan fund (which covers some administrative costs) and now focuses on lower cost advocacy projects.

 Both Jordan and Lebanon have always maintained modest programs. Both programs have some scope for further rationalization, and both can claim some success in local fund mobilization, and Jordan in new cost-effective working modalities.

DSPR enjoys financial advantages compared with many NGOs reliant on uncertain project funding. The wide partner base and continuing loyalty offers DSPR a continuing, if reducing core funding platform. DSPR can operate beyond annual donor income using revolving funds. Its reputation and operational systems, esp finance, offer some hope for tapping new funding. Service delivery will never be financial sustainable but moving DSPR to a more sustainable financial footing is a primary challenge for leadership, closely related to the need for rationalization and renewal of its current program. Scarcity of resources demands these are optimized. Some Areas have begun reviewing efficiency/cost-effectiveness. Linked with a clearer program focus and approach, this can be a catalyst to transforming more conventional attitudes in DSPR, influenced by charity and service delivery, towards sustainability:

Donor Income: DSPR must look forwards not backwards in terms of donor funding, be realistic and seek to strengthen current and future prospects. The first challenge is to rebuild confidence with existing partners through listening to their concerns and seeking to reinvigorate the program and related measures. Few prospects for adding new core partners exist, especially Catholic or Orthodox agencies which remain conspicuously absent from the core partner group.

Better prospects for new funding may arise through intensified efforts to mobilize sources within the region and via core partners (EU, USAID). However these are subject to increasing competition and require reasonable professional capacity (which only Gaza and perhaps Jordan, West Bank possess at present). They will probably not contribute significantly towards ongoing core programs or administrative costs.

Local Contributions: There is scope for enhanced user income or cost recovery across DSPR, local situations permitting. Revolving Loan funds should also aim to cover their costs. Greater discipline may also be needed to collect user fees (especially for vocational training) which sometimes appears relatively relaxed (a clear policy for full subsidy for deserving cases is also needed). The challenge of local fundraising, targeted at the Christian community, or donations in kind should be encouraged by Area Committees through social functions especially in the smaller Area Committees but with modest expectations.

Cost Reduction, Maximizing Value: There is considerable scope for DSPR to optimize resources by a strategic rationalization of its program, to reduce the range of program activities to concentrate in fewer sectors (target groups, thematic interventions) where it has a comparative advantage or can make a greater impact. This clear from the annual budgets of the smaller Areas which still carry too many small line items, each with small budgets, which spread resources too thinly and stretch limited capacity. Within an agreed strategic framework, an aggressive pruning of existing programs is required.

Even for projects/activities designated a priority, more value can be squeezed from available resources by considering cost-effectiveness and efficiency (cost per beneficiary, for instance). Some projects continue for historic reasons or even emotional ties; in others changed modalities could allow greater value. Deliberate partnerships and joint ventures with other agencies (UNRWA, NGOs) can enable DSPR resources to be applied more strategically or to benefit more people, as would expanded cost-sharing with community-based partners.

Recommendations

- 1. Financial pressures are spurring reassessment. This process needs to be extended and accelerated, linked to a systematic review-rationalization for each Area. DSPR can focus attention on fewer priorities, and take decisive action to withdraw short-term from projects, activities outside this focus, or which are less efficient or sustainable.
 - o DSPR financial systems can facilitate decision-making by generating meaningful analytical management information on programs both at Area and central level.
 - Within this revised strategic framework, Areas need to plan and budget conservatively seeking to manage costs carefully and maximize benefits.
 - DSPR may reconsider the basis for reallocating general funds on 3-year strategic plan cycles, either distributing equally or according to performance in strategic rationalization.
 Since general budgets are so limited, Areas must assume primary responsibility for managing their finances (fundraising, cost recovery, efficiency).
- 2. DSPR overall and Area Committees, in particular, should review their approach to local cost recovery and income generation and seek ways to enhance this component, including:
 - o reviewing user, loan fees and cost-recovery options, seeking to apply more strictly and consistently throughout. Projects and Areas can benefit from setting realistic targets.
 - o for very needy users who rely on subsidized services, DSPR can agree define clear criteria and procedures for identifying and assisting them.
 - each Area Committee can assume the challenge of raising a modest financial or in-kind contribution from local Christian Communities (perhaps as a target of total Area income)
- 3. In terms of donor income:
 - o program and organisational measures to strengthen DSPR would contribute to rebuild confidence among core partners, and support new funding applications.
 - Areas need to increase efforts to identify potential funding opportunities within their Areas and selectively pursue them.

16. Conclusions and Strategic Options

16.1 Overview and Conclusions

DSPR has been a major humanitarian actor in the region for the past 50 years addressing the sufferings of the Palestinians. Its impressive symbolic and practical role in harnessing Christian support, locally and internationally, has benefited the lives of hundreds of thousand of refugees and others. Today DSPR remains a respected organization but of less consequence. With the exception of Gaza, its outreach and impact on the ground has diminished but not been entirely lost. The continuing plight of the Palestinians justifies a continuing role for a renewed DSPR.

DSPR faces some difficult strategic challenges in the short- to medium-term future. Certain factors are becoming critical – the continuing funding squeeze closely linked to the reduction in program capacity (excl Gaza where different factors apply). Non-earmarked central allocations are at an all-time low; the vicious downward spiral applies with reduced capacity and greater share demanded by overheads leading to questions about the validity and viability of these programs. Very little rationalisation in DSPR programs has occurred in response (narrowing focus groups or range, type and location of interventions, ways of working). Maintaining levels of service delivery or other subsidised elements becomes increasingly difficult. Despite several best practices across DSPR Areas, others are difficult to justify, do not adequately promote community ownership and sustainability or are simply not cost-effective. While recognising the specific context of each Area, DSPR is challenged to present a coherent common program; and has no recognizable regional-level activity.

At organizational level, structural issues have resurfaced throughout DSPR's history. DSPR struggles to carry through necessary changes, seemingly unable to transcend the limits and

inflexibility imposed by its complex structure, which confers strengths as well as weaknesses. Local Area autonomy and arms-length control by member churches combine to ensure weak central authority and constrain strategic decision-making. DSPR ACs have become disengaged from the dwindling Christian communities from which they sprung thereby eroding their unique comparative advantage.

Partners perceive DSPR as traditional in program composition and approach, requiring undue effort to govern and manage itself, and lacking momentum, flexibility or unified authority to evolve. DSPR stakeholders have different ideas of the DSPR's role which causes some tension. DSPR is aware both of its shortcomings and the need for change. Yet the considerable investment in organizational change processes has not been adequately followed through or yielded intended benefits leaving the impression of inertia which erodes DSPR's credibility.

16.2 Strategic Options

DSPR itself must decide how to address issues identified here, most of which are known to the DSPR leadership and partners. Three broad options (not mutually exclusive) can be identified:

- 1. **Maintaining the status quo:** DSPR may choose to continue as in recent years, without introducing or following through significant program or organizational changes. Incremental changes forced upon individual Areas would continue, ongoing periodic but probably fruitless efforts made to harmonize DSPR, and most core partners may continue albeit reducing support reducing. Some Areas may become sub-viable, others may adapt and thrive; but it will be also become a challenge to justify and maintain a Central Office.
- 2. Strategic Rationalization: If DSPR can agree and respond collectively to pressures, then a more deliberate adjustment process can be planned. This would require following through recommendations-actions already agreed (incl those here deemed acceptable). The intention is not a reconstruction of the DSPR 'building' but an extensive renovation and renewal, by carrying out agreed improvements. It may best be approached as a time-limited transition phase to be completed within 2 years with concrete outcomes defined in advance and actively monitored. Reflecting the realities DSPR faces, this would seek a guided transformation to achieve a more focused, progressive and professional organization.

At program level, this entails prioritizing and rationalizing target groups, projects and activities, reviewing current modalities. In most Areas, this may require phasing-out from the wide range of activities presently undertaken (perhaps 30-40% of current line-items) to work more effectively on a more manageable focus. Individualized and charity elements may need to end (except for emergency relief) and more progressive development approaches and stakeholder involvement fostered, including closer working with community organizations and local NGOs. This approach would be assisted by moves to professionalize (project manager, PME).

At organizational level, changes suggested include empowering the relevant Committees (incl new members), and a clearer division of labour between committees and executive. A major strategic challenge for Area Committees is to become active beyond program management, where more responsibilities can be delegated to staff, in order to re-establish links with the local Christian community expanding the distinctive volunteer identity and function of DSPR. Central Committee can be strengthened by pro-active selection of members, activating an Ex Subcommittee, and improved follow-up of decisions. CO has a key role to ensure that the minimum standards set by improved financial and PME systems are respected, and to guide change processes. Although more effective if undertaken by all Areas, individual Areas would also benefit from strategic rationalization.

3. Reinvent DSPR as an informal network: If DSPR continues to struggle to make necessary changes, then an alternative organizational option can be considered. This would recognize its inherent structural difficulties and lack of synergy. DSPR is often described as a loose confederation Areas so this option would recognize this fact by simplifying and downscaling it. DSPR could be reconstituted as a more informal regional network rather than a formal, hierarchic unitary organization thereby making a virtue of necessity.

Transforming DPSR into a network would entail disbanding DSR central functions (CC, CO) Office). Individual Areas would be free to become equal members of the more informal network emerging, and links continued with MECC but on a different basis. Individual Areas would have free reign to manage their own affairs according to local priorities yet retaining links with a broad, and continuing, DSPR mission and identity.

The network itself could handle the central-regional dimension - a simple Terms of Reference would be required defining the roles and responsibilities of each member and the overall network. If necessary, a light multi-year plan could be developed for the network as a whole. The network would require a capable focal point and if appropriate steering group, from among the Area members responsible for the limited co-ordination tasks and central services. An annual network meeting can continue, still linked to a Round Table, and even a smaller steering group constituted (in place of the CC). Partners wishing to donate to DSPR's general budget, can continue via DSPR network with allocations among Areas either agreed annually or divided on an equal or preagreed basis. Limited central services, if required, can be managed by the focal point or contracted out (to one Area or to outside providers) – but may be limited to financial consolidation and external communication. Additional services, which may include advocacy, capacity-building can be arranged similarly.

Perceived advantages of DSPR becoming a network include: it overcomes DSPR's inherent structural paradox by recognizing its fragmented reality, yet allows continuity by enabling Areas to link together, without a central structure or hierarchy, to fulfill a shared mission. Continuing frustration among stakeholders about DSPR's unclear structure, weak central authority and lack of common approach is addressed since DSPR would no longer strive for elusive unity and thus less energy diverted to making a fragmented unitary organization work. It would release the majority of central costs (especially CO) for Area programs. In addition certain necessary central functions or programs can still be continued, as agreed. The basic network model itself is an accepted and established one (eg PNGO, Ittijah).

Perceived disadvantages and risks of this organizational transformation include: Area member commitment is required, and an active focal point; organizational attitudes accustomed to hierarchic set-ups and formal organisational cultures. For smaller Areas, isolation and lack of guidance may increase. The role of a network would be more limited and modest than DSPR at present. Key central functions, especially financial consolidation and communication, may be weakened if no alternative ways are found. Funding partners may not support this model.