My Humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.

- Desmond Tutu
ABOUT FDCD

Founded in 2004, the Forum for Development, Culture, and Dialogue (FDCD) represents the collective vision, mission and history of the Urban Rural Mission’s work in the MENA region. As such, the program looks back at over twenty years of history of community organizing, leadership training, spiritual reflection, and response to marginalization and dehumanization.

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

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IN 2013

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ANOTHER YEAR PASSES...

In Arabic there is a proverb that says, “No other day passes like the day before it,” meaning the day before it was so good! 2013 has been one such year for FDCD. It was a year full of activities that addressed the needs of the youth and civil society in our troubled and tense region.

The revolutions, which swept across the region in 2011, brought initial hopes for a new era of democracy, peace, and an overall change for the better; however, the subsequent three years have proven to be far from the dream initially imagined. As thousands of people continue to loose their lives as a result of sectarian and political violence, there is a continued need to amplify voices of mutual respect and peace.

The Syrian case has definitely affected, and continues to affect, all of us as waves of religious extremism, speech of hatred, and ongoing violence has damaged values, people’s integrity, and people’s coexistence. In the midst of all of this FDCD strived to have a humble effort to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation focusing on the young people, the youth, and civil society in Syria and Lebanon.

FDCD’s theme for 2013 was “Training people to be ambassadors for peace and reconciliation.” Through the training of hundreds of young people in the theory and practice of interfaith dialogue, conflict management, humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and trauma healing, FDCD has truly lived this motto. As the conflict in Syria constant-

FDCD staff, volunteers, friends, and partners have worked together with different communities across the region to engage divided communities in dialogue, and promote the spirit of fellowship and mutual respect among them in a way to preserve their life and dignity and to give them a glimpse of hope in a region torn by conflict and war.

Thank you to all of our partners, volunteers, staff, and friends who worked together with FDCD’s board to achieve this amazing impact in a region in need of hope.

Riad Jarjour
President
Empowering Youth in Democracy & Peacebuilding: The Role of Dialogue!

Commitments of the participants were beyond our expectations for what they carried with them as package from IWSC; Tony from Palestine promised “I will create a session at the university where I work and teach about dialogue”. Mahmoud from Denmark said that he will write an article for a local newspaper on his experience and the practice of interfaith dialogue”.

Thirty-three participants from 13 countries: America, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Madagascar, Norway, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Syria shared experience, fears, prayers and valuable times. Four Muslims read the Bible at the Rabihe Evangelical Church during Sunday service, and all participants learnt and performed the Islamic prayer in a Shi’ite Mosque at Der al kamar. An experience that made them all sit back and think of what separates us, they concluded as Hilary from Canada said: standing and praying with Batoul (from Syria) at the Mosque was really powerful and meaningful so I felt really safe and welcoming”; while Raja from Jordan wrote: “I found it rewarding to be seated in a church surrounded by a group of people of different ethnicities and culture and how everyone participated in their own way.”

Ms. Agnete Holm from Denmark and Mr. Ahmed Hazem from Egypt, both were the trainers for IWSC 2013, where they working on empowering those youth to be the catalyst figure of democracy and peace building.

The challenges met the overcome objective of the camp, overcoming all the regional obstacles and conflicts, building bridges of true knowledge and peace among participants, and proving that real interfaith dialogue brings all together, despite differences.

Lebanon, the setting of the camp, could welcome all also to enjoy it nature, and to learn from its experience to grasp the different aspects of dialogue, such as: confrontational dialogue, reformatory dialogue, socio-ethical diapraxis dialogue...

And as the president of the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue said “One of the biggest changes of the world is to accept each other as each one of us is, within the different political, social and cultural backgrounds.”

The International Work and Study Camp is going to continue as a yearly summer camp, wait for our announcement to be part, support and deliver the message of Unity in Diversity that this camp carries and proves every year!
LIU, dialogue is more than just talking to one another. It is a complex concept, and we seek to actively create greater mutual understanding and deeper insight through the people around us. Not necessarily to agree on more things, but to gain deeper insight on our dialogue partners' rationales and motivations. To go into real dialogue is risky, as we have to put ourselves on the line. The trainees for sure met new ideas and new ways of thinking, and through LIU they were taking the risk to change and broaden their perspectives.

LIU builds on the vision that religious diversity is socially understood and professionally managed to promote a positive change, by leaders from different sectors, as a factor of mutual understanding, social cohesion, and peace-building within and between pluralistic societies.

To be part of LIU is not only to attend a training workshop. It is to have built a network and new relations that can be used as a means of access to knowledge, know-how, support and inspiration. The participants of the LIU framework are charged to return to their communities to engage in the living-out of LIU's vision. Their collaboration with local religious leaders, civil society, government, and institutions continues the work of dialogue and understanding.

The completion of 2013's class of participants leads the way for the program's continuation in the years to come and the enlarging of a network of dialogue and understanding.
Responding to the Syrian crisis that started in 2011, the Forum for Development, Culture, and Dialogue (FDCD) continued its partnership with several international organizations and foundations to address the urgent humanitarian needs of those displaced in Syria through the provision of food and hygiene items, school kits, winterization items (such as blankets, clothes, and heaters), and fuel. In total, over 40,000 internally displaced persons were assisted by the efforts of FDCD and its partners.

The start of 2014 brings not only a new year and the prospects of Geneva II, but also the three-year memorial of what has become an incredibly dirty conflict.

Over the course of 2013, the death toll in Syria passed 120,000 persons, the number of refugees now numbers more than 2.3 million and conservative estimates place the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) over 6.5 million persons.

In addition to the areas who are the major nexuses of the conflict, an increase in violence moved to areas previously considered as safe havens for many of Syria’s internally displaced. For those residing in the Qalamoun region, the last quarter of 2013 proved to be one of the most difficult as Government and opposition forces engaged in armed conflict for the control of the strategic region. It is in this region, the Qalamoun, where FDCD continues to focus the majority of its relief efforts.

With the conflict showing no sign of abating, FDCD plans to continue its administration of humanitarian assistance in the coming year. It is our hope that through the administering of humanitarian assistance to those most deeply affected by the conflict, the foundation of a network of understanding and cooperation can be laid in preparation for the reconstruction of Syria, whenever the conflict comes to end.

“It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving”. Mother Teresa
Gathering youth activists from the civil society, from different religions and political affiliations in Syria, is a great and exceptional event. The workshop held by the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) in cooperation with “Mobaderoon network” and with the support of “the Arab initiative of the Danish ministry of foreign affairs” and Damascus was a success on all levels.

The workshop took place in Brumman-Lebanon at a time when Syria was suffering from ongoing conflict and confrontations resulting in the killing of a large number of people and the displacement of many others, turning their lives upside down and leading to partitions and discord even among brothers and friends.

Thirty activists took part in the workshop facilitated by two South African trainers. For five days they worked together, analyzing the current situation in Syria, describing the nature of the conflict as well as its impact on the lives of citizens, and working to find mechanisms to build bridges of peace throughout Syria. First, Fatima and Mandy, the South African trainers started with breaking the ice and building trust among the participants (since this workshop has gathered people from both camps (opposition and loyalists to the Syrian regime). The distance separating them as well as their disagreement regarding what is happening today and how peace and security can be brought back to Syria was obvious.

Carefully navigating the nuances of the group, they (Fatima and Mandy) were able to overcome the obstacles that initially hindered any communication between the participants; thus allowing the participants to think of possible solutions for the crisis.

At the end of the workshop, the participants were asked to think of initiatives to be implemented in Syria in order to promote peace messages as an alternative for violence and messages of exclusion. In fact, many initiatives were submitted among which five were shortlisted: Art and peace building through the production of an album with songs on peace, the women for peace initiative, the “integration of displaced children in host societies” initiative, the “Mento Aleyna” initiative and finally “the village” initiative.

We have really achieved success through this program to build, together, peace bridges in Syria”...

And this was only the beginning...
MAINTAINING CIVIL PEACE IN LEBANON
FROM THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

Just after this workshop, we will meet with them at our office, it could be a common sentence that you can hear after any training workshop, but when the "We" reports to a group of young from the 8 March political coalition and the "Them" refers to a young man representing the 14 of March Christian party, it gives another sense.

The Maintaining Civil Peace in Lebanon Project targets a group of young students who are activists and representatives in different political parties and represent different fields of study inside their universities. This project, newly launched in 2013, opened an opportunity for 32 young people committed in their political parties to meet and discuss essential topics. This workshop also created an open space of discussion and dialogue between the political students and few politicians in two different open conferences. Senior politicians, such as deputes and ministers provided the participants with a free space for interaction and
the sharing of ideas (economics, social, politics...). This initiative further advanced the relationship and connection between the constituency and the political representatives.

The diversity of the participants and their positions along the political spectrum presented a challenge as to how to facilitate a positive political discussion. The broken trust existing throughout the Lebanese society as result of the current political climate further complicated the process. However, through careful mediation and purposeful dialogue the initiative highlighted both the need for the initiative’s continuation and the positive results stemming from the initiative’s immediate efforts.

As Lebanon continues to pass through this tumultuous period, we continue to seek to strengthen our society and enable the future to develop for the prosperity of Lebanon.

RESPONSIBLE MEDIA PROJECT

"Yes we can make a difference, even with a small team, and a small budget we can mobilize our community to support an independent and responsible media platform". With this positive spirit, one of the participants at the responsible media project continued to motivate the team during the seven different gatherings, training weekends, workshops and coordination meetings that took place in 2013. Through the gathering of a group of 34 participants from the different media backgrounds, especially journalists, media students and practitioners, this project aims to develop responsibility as a core ethic amongst the local media channels in Lebanon.

After several training sessions that helped the participants in developing the concept of responsibility and understanding the role of media in sustaining civil peace and preventing conflict triggers, the responsible media team developed and implemented an online campaign through Facebook and Youtube. This mobilization and advocacy helped to create pressure groups inside the Lebanese community to mobilize the local media channels to respect the call for responsibility in their media work and to respect ethical codes in practicing their work. In addition to that, this campaign aims to create personal engagements and radical behavioral changes in the perspective of the participants themselves and the whole Lebanese community to act with responsibility in their daily action in media and social media. One of the best experiences with this group was when we, as FDCD team, organized a two-day workshop where we only provided them with logistical support and the group operated smoothly and effectively to put the campaign online.

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YOUNG CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS

In a country of diversity, where political views, confessions, and geographical distributions stand in front of meeting of meeting the others, one significant word and a small hand gesture can make us sit around the same table with the same spirit. Scouts!!!

"It's not just a camp, it is not just a training, it's a gathering of spirits!" these words were shared by Mohammed, one of the participants at the Young Civil Society Leaders Project. A total of 37 participants gathered in Kfardebian and in Broumana to receive training and meet with each other. At the start of the gathering, one thing was clear: the scouts from eight different scouting associations across Lebanon shared a common scouting spirit oblivious to confessional or geographic divisions.

This project has been running for two years and continues to create a large network of young people committed in their local scouts groups to developing common understanding. The program provides participants with four levels training covering a wide content base that aims to enrich participants' conflict resolution skills and initiate them to mediation, negotiation, and dialogue skills. All of these techniques are well developed with practical exercises around different topics related to the scouting life.

Training Yes! Gathering from Different regions and background Yes! However, there is something missing when talking about scouting spirit and scouting life, we should never forget Mother Nature! In one heart and with a very impressive motivation, our scouts discover in every training a nature reserve or a national-historical heritage site. For this year we had a long hiking trip in Jabal Moussa Reserve. This trip was an opportunity to enlarge team-building skills with our scout friends. In addition to that, a field trip to the national museum of Beirut-Mathaf was an opportunity to stand in front of our large history and heritage and to meditate in front of the destruction caused by the civil war in Lebanon.
CYCLE FOR PEACE

Cycling! What a healthy activity
Cycling for a Cause! What a beautiful engagement
Cycling for Peace! Impressive!

Last year we cycled from Tyr to Tripoli. This year we cycled from the North Border to the South Border. This feat may seem as mission impossible to some, but not for us!

This 'mission impossible' became 'mission possible' when 72 participants, professional cyclists and amateurs, gathered in one heart and one spirit to support the Lebanese Army in sustaining civil peace. It was an athletic challenge to cycle 225 km in one day for amateurs cyclists, but in fact it became a festive friendship and dialogue celebration for cyclists from all around Lebanon in a close collaboration with the men of the Lebanese army in a civil act.

In fact, the 2013 Cycle for Peace aimed to support the Lebanese army in sustaining civil peace in Lebanon. Under this topic 72 cyclists joined this event to cycle from Alarida North border to Alnaqura South border, on the 4th of August 2013. Even though the security situation was unstable, FDCD collaborated with the Lebanese Cycling Federation and implemented this long trip with the security coverage and support of the Lebanese army. Participants gathered in one heart, were able to deliver a peaceful message to the Lebanese nation. For now, FDCD's Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution is busy preparing for another "Cycling Mission Possible." Through this day of unity, collaboration, and support, we all learn that even when we feel peace is impossible, if we are one, peace becomes possible.
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