

Mapping the Oikoumene

A Study of Current Ecumenical Structures
and Relationships

Jill Hawkey

World Council of Churches
Geneva

This is a working document, which has been produced within a tight deadline. It has therefore not been possible to devote time to additional editing, style, etc.

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P.O. Box 2100, 150 route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Web site: <http://www.wcc-coe.org>

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While every attempt has been made to provide correct information and not misquote people, I take total responsibility for any errors that I may have made.

Jill Hawkey¹
November 2004

¹ Jill Hawkey was contracted by WCC to undertake this work. Originally from Aotearoa New Zealand, she is a member of the Methodist Church. From 1993-2004, she was the Director of Christian World Service (the development, justice and aid agency of the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ)) and in this role, participated in Executive meetings of CCANZ. Jill now lives in England.

Executive Summary

The last half of the twentieth century witnessed the birth and growth of many ecumenical organisations at the national, regional and global level. These organisations were established primarily by churches to undertake work on their behalf and each has developed its own priorities, programmes and governance structures.

Over the last ten years, there has been much discussion as to how these different ecumenical organisations relate to each other and whether the current structural relationships are the most effective for responding to the fresh challenges of the twenty-first century. The issue of whether we need a reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement is firmly on the agenda.

This mapping study, based on 65 interviews with representatives of churches and ecumenical organisations, is part of this much larger discussion on reconfiguration. It has been prepared for a consultation *Ecumenism in the 21st Century* which takes place in December 2004. The study aims to enable participants at the consultation to have an understanding of some of the actors currently in the ecumenical movement; their history, membership, programmes, funding, relationships, some of the major issues they are facing and what they see as their particular role in the ecumenical movement.

This study then highlights some of the major issues arising out of this complex picture of organisations and relationships. It explores whether these organisations are working towards a common vision and asks whether it is possible for the different ecumenical actors to jointly develop and own a vision relevant to the twenty-first century. The study highlights the perception from various corners of the world of an increase in 'denominationalism' and reluctance from churches to work ecumenically.

Recognising that the greatest participation and membership in ecumenical structures is at the national level, this study asks whether National Councils of Churches (NCCs) are engaging their entire membership in the issues being addressed by regional and global ecumenical bodies. It also questions whether the different global ecumenical bodies are relating to the NCCs and Christian World Communions (CWCs) in such a way as to promote participation by all their members and not just members of the WCC. The study highlights the need to look at the structural relationships between, in particular, Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs) and the WCC and also CWCs and the WCC.

Many ecumenical organisations are working on similar priority areas, in particular HIV/AIDS, globalisation and interfaith issues. The need for greater collaboration in these areas was noted in order to avoid duplication

and competition. Greater emphasis on ecumenical formation encouraging organisations to look beyond their own mandates and work programmes to the broader ecumenical movement was presented as a way of preventing the competition that has developed between different ecumenical actors.

For many ecumenical organisations, funding is a major concern. This study highlights the fact that agencies/ specialised ministries provide the majority of funding for ecumenical organisations but that most are only able to fund programmes that fit with their mandate of overcoming poverty and injustice. This raises some questions about the agencies influence in the setting of priorities in the ecumenical movement.

Those interviewed were asked what they perceive as the role of the WCC and a variety of responses were given which indicates that clarification of the unique roles of the WCC is required.

This study raises many issues for churches and ecumenical organisations to consider as they look ahead into this new century. It concludes that for churches and the broader ecumenical movement to be relevant and effective in this century, change is required. Our current divisions impede our witness as the body of Christ and undermine our effectiveness in working towards the healing of the human community and earth.

1 Background to this Study

I believe that the time has come to review the organisational and structural arrangements in the world-wide ecumenical movement which we have inherited from the generations before us and to explore a new ecumenical configuration which can respond effectively to the challenges which lie ahead in the 21st century.

Konrad Raiser, WCC General Secretary in his report to Central Committee 2002

Right now, we have a beautiful soup with all kinds of animals.

Israel Batista, General Secretary, CLAI

The 20th century, particularly the last sixty years, witnessed the birth and growth of many ecumenical organisations. While some, such as the YMCA/YWCA were founded in the mid 19th century and the national missionary councils of the late 19th century were the forerunners to a number of National Councils of Churches, the great expansion of ecumenical actors occurred following World War 2.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was inaugurated in 1948 as a fellowship of churches with the purpose of calling each other to the goal of visible unity. The WCC then encouraged national churches to come together to form their own National Councils of Churches or National Christian Councils. The first Regional Ecumenical Organisation (REO), the East Asia Christian Conference (now called the Christian Conference of Asia) was founded in 1957. From these, other national and regional ecumenical bodies were born as churches committed themselves to work together on a wide range of issues including Christian broadcasting, medical care, theological education, emergency response and development assistance. Many of these national bodies were developed in response to a particular crisis or situation, including drought, earthquakes and liberation struggles.

At the global level, organisations were created to enable churches to act together on issues as diverse as communication, credit, disaster relief and tourism. As recently as 2000, a new body, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance was formed.

Over the same period, many confessional bodies such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) identified one of their roles as promoting unity amongst the Christian family. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s also resulted in significant changes in their relationship with other confessional bodies and the start of bilateral dialogues.

The outcome of fifty years of intensive growth and development is seen in the rich array of actors who are part of what is generally referred to as ‘the ecumenical movement’ today. But do these organisations all share the same vision? How are they interrelated and who funds them? Are they able to respond to the challenges facing the Church and the world today? Do they witness to the unity of the Church or are they an expression of our divisions? For the past 10 years, these types of questions have been raised with a growing recognition that the current structures and inter-structural relationships may not be the most effective for meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

Part of the difficulty of this discussion is that there are very different understandings among churches and ecumenical organisations as to what constitutes the ‘ecumenical movement’ and there is no authoritative definition of the word ‘ecumenical’. Perhaps the best known definition is that formulated by the WCC Central Committee in 1951:

It is important to insist that the word (ecumenical), which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth (oikoumene), is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church to bring the gospel to the whole world.²

When ‘ecumenical actors’ are talked about, it generally refers to those churches and ecumenical organisations who are committed to working for what the WCC Vancouver Assembly referred to as the ‘two profoundest ecumenical concerns: the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and destiny of the human community’³. However, consensus as to this understanding cannot be assumed.

In 1998, the WCC adopted the policy document ‘Common Understanding and Vision’⁴ which highlighted the importance of relationships within the ecumenical movement; the relationship between the WCC and regional, national and local councils, with Christian World Communions, International Ecumenical Organisations, Christian communities and churches which are not members of WCC, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. It also noted that these relationships should be characterised by a spirit of mutuality and cooperation and of shared tasks and resources rather than competition and a demarcation of areas of influence.

² WCC *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*, 1997.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

During the late 1990s, discussions between the WCC and REOs were also highlighting the need for a new configuration of the ecumenical movement in its global and regional expressions. While diminishing financial resources were partially an impetus for these discussions, they explored the possibility of moving beyond consultation, coordination and cooperation to joint priority setting and decision making.

A similar call was made by representatives of Christian World Communions (CWCs) at the WCC Assembly in Harare in 1998 when they fostered a recommendation to ‘facilitate and strengthen the relationships between the WCC and CWCs’.

These various initiatives throughout the ecumenical movement led WCC General Secretary, Konrad Raiser to include a major section on the need to reconfigure the ecumenical movement in his report to Central Committee in 2002. Raiser noted that the inherited pattern of ecumenical organisation lacks overall integration and that

‘the ethos of competition and logic of the corporate world are beginning to make inroads into the field of ecumenical organisation’⁵.

Antelias

Following the approval of Central Committee, a series of consultations was initiated with the main ecumenical partners to explore their attitude to a proposed process of reviewing the patterns of ecumenical organisation which had developed over the 4 decades. As a result, the WCC convened a small meeting with experienced ecumenical co-workers from the different partner organisations in Antelias, Lebanon in November 2003.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- analyse the main challenges presented by the changing world situation and their implications for the configuration of the ecumenical movement
- identify the key areas of change and renewal necessary for a reconfiguration, and
- design a process of consultation and study leading to a report on reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement to the Central Committee in 2005 and eventually to the WCC Assembly in 2006.

The consultation was enriched by the participation of young people who earlier in the week had met separately to reflect on the same issue.

⁵ WCC Report of the General Secretary to the WCC Central Committee 2002

The Antelias meeting started with an exploration of the changing context in which we now live, reflected on the vision and values of the ecumenical movement and noted the rich array of current actors. It highlighted that 'Reconfiguration' can be understood differently; one understanding referring to 'broadening the ecumenical movement' ensuring greater participation of the Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, the second referring to the process of 'deepening the fellowship' between churches and the third addressing the question of how relationships can be strengthened between existing ecumenical actors to ensure greater coherence and effectiveness in our work. While noting that all three were interrelated, the participants at the meeting recommended that in further discussions on reconfiguration, emphasis be placed on the third understanding. The meeting concluded by calling for a broad participatory process in which all those committed to ecumenism would be invited to give their input and share their reflections on the future and shape of ecumenism in the 21st century. It asked that WCC convene a meeting within a year bringing together representatives of churches and partners to further the conversation.

2 The Mapping Study

In preparation for the 2004 Consultation on Reconfiguration, WCC commissioned a consultant to undertake a mapping study of the current actors in the ecumenical movement.

The purpose of the mapping study was to:

- *Identify the major ecumenical bodies at various levels (eg: member churches, national, sub-regional, regional and global conciliar bodies, denominational/confessional structures at the national, regional, and global levels, international ecumenical organizations, specialized ministries/agencies and associated ecumenical bodies)*
- *Describe how and where these ecumenical bodies interact, indicating where formal bilateral or multilateral relationships exist and reviewing funding of the major ecumenical bodies*
- *Identify areas of overlap between the ecumenical bodies, eg: in governance structures*
- *Identify strengths and weaknesses in this rich panopoly of ecumenical bodies*

Methodology

A small staff Reference Group and regional desk staff worked with the consultant to identify some of the key organisations in the ecumenical movement.

A two stage process was then developed:

1: A fact-finding exercise on each organisation based on information on their website, in annual reports or from other surveys (such as the Ecumenical Partners Survey undertaken by the World Council of Churches in preparation for their Roundtable)

2: Telephone or face to face interviews with a number of people from each 'category' of organisation to discuss in greater detail the relationship between their organisation and others in the ecumenical family, funding relationships and to identify where difficulties exist in the current structural arrangements. Interviewees were also asked to talk about what they see as their particular role in the global ecumenical movement and the role of the World Council of Churches.

Rationale

There were a number of reasons for choosing to interview people rather than send a questionnaire. First, WCC is currently undertaking its own evaluation of its programmes in preparation for the forthcoming

Assembly in Porto Alegre and questionnaires had been sent to a significant number of people within the ecumenical movement. The annual survey of specialised ministries/ agencies was also taking place. It thus seemed inappropriate to send yet another questionnaire to people, all of whom are busy with their own work. Second, talking in person allows for a more indepth discussion so as to achieve a greater clarity about the issues being raised. Third, it provided an opportunity to engage with some of the participants who would be attending the forthcoming consultation and to hear first hand what they hoped would be achieved from the discussions on reconfiguration.

Interviews

A total of 65 interviews were undertaken, each one lasting approximately one hour. Interviews were generally with the General Secretary or Director of the organisation. A small number of churches who had expressed an interest in attending the second Consultation on Reconfiguration were also interviewed.

People interviewed were from the following sectors:

Christian World Communions	12
REOs	5
Sub-regional Fellowships	2
Other regional bodies	2
NCCs	9
Agencies/ Specialised Ministries	9
Mission agencies	1
Southern diaconal agency	2
International Ecumenical Orgs	7
Denominational Global Youth Group	1
Assn of Theological Institutes	1
Churches	9
Special Commission on Orthodox Participation	2
WCC	2

A full list of participants can be found in Appendix 1.

Limitations of the Study:

1: Focus

This study only maps a particular section of the ecumenical movement. Its focus is primarily on the ecumenical instruments which have some relationship to the WCC. It does not attempt to map the network of relationships of the Roman Catholic Church or the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

2: Balance

While every attempt was made to include people from all regions, different confessional families and both women and men, it was not possible to find balance across all categories. Contact requesting interviews was made by email which resulted in responses coming more readily from Europe and North America.

Regional balances were difficult to attain but also aren't clear cut. For example, many global organisations are based in Europe or North America, but staff come from throughout the world. Overall however, Latin America and Asia were underrepresented in terms of the number of people interviewed.

Only 15 of the 64 people (23%) interviewed were women. This highlights the issue that ecumenical organisations continue to be led by men. Four of the organisations interviewed have a particular focus on young people.

3: Subjectivity

While interviewing has its advantages, it is also highly subjective and in most cases, is one person's particular perspective. A number of interviewees commented 'this is my personal opinion because we haven't discussed it as an organisation'. Quotes have been attributed to a particular person when they are referring to their own organisation or context. For all other quotes, simply the sector the person comes from is noted.

4: Scope

Given the numerous ecumenical organisations existing in the world today, it would be extremely difficult to undertake a fully comprehensive mapping exercise. While the number of organisations included in this study is only a small percentage of all those that exist, it none-the-less highlights a number of issues which may well be common across a much larger number of organisations.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the different organisations was outside the scope of this study.

5: Just One Piece of the Puzzle

This report is only one piece of work being undertaken on the subject of reconfiguration. For example, the Conference of European Churches has undertaken its own study to inform the process, the German academy at Loccum held its own consultation on reconfiguration and it has been on the agenda of many other meetings during the past two years. A number

of ecumenists from around the world have also contributed articles for a collection of reflections on the subject of ecumenism in the 21st century and the types of structures needed.

This report begins to examine a very large and complex issue. It aims to be a discussion document to help prepare participants attending the forthcoming consultation *Ecumenism in the 21st Century* (Nov 30-Dec 3 2004) and to stimulate wider discussion and debate.

3 Who Are The Current Actors in the Ecumenical Movement

3.1: The National Level

3.1.1 Churches

The base of the ecumenical movement is the estimated 2 billion Christian people⁶ in the world today. Christianity remains the world's largest religion, followed by Islam (1.3 billion) and Hinduism (900 million).

However, the body of Christ is certainly not united. While it is estimated that half the Christian population (approximately 1 billion) are Roman Catholic, the World Christian Database⁷ estimates that there are over 9000 different Christian denominations in the world; the United States of America being the most prolific with 635.

The WCC brings together 342 churches, denominations and church fellowships in 120 countries throughout the world, representing approximately 550 million Christians and including churches from the diverse traditions of the Protestant Reform, most of the world's Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, as well as many united and uniting churches⁸. Despite representing only one-quarter of the global Christian population, it remains the 'most comprehensive and representative body among the many organised expressions of the ecumenical movement'.⁹

Therefore, when we consider the Christian community at the local level, we are not talking of a homogeneous body but rather a deeply divided community with its own set of complex relationships.

The global church today is very different from that of the mid 20th century with huge growth in the South while the number of people attending 'mainline' churches in the North is declining. Much of the growth has been in Evangelical and Pentecostal churches which have little or no contact with the formal ecumenical structures.

⁶ www.adherents.com last modified 6 September 2002

⁷ www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd

⁸ World Council of Churches *Annual Review 2003* pp 5

⁹ World Council of Churches; *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches 1997* pp12

3.1.2 National Councils of Churches

History

In their book *Councils of Churches and the Ecumenical Vision*¹⁰, Kessler and Kinnamon trace the history of National Councils of Churches (NCCs) to the missionary movement of the late 19th century. The magnitude and difficulty of world mission in this period led to a desire to substitute competition between mission groups with cooperation. Missionary Councils were established in Europe eg; German Missionary Council (1885) and the British Missionary Society (1912) and in the mission fields of Asia and Africa (eg; the National Missionary Council of India, Burma and Ceylon 1912). The Edinburgh missionary conference of 1910, often called the beginning of modern ecumenism, led to the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and gave considerable impetus to the founding of missionary councils in colonised regions. In 1910 there were two national councils through which limited cooperation was possible. By 1928, there were 23.

The first national council in which the churches were constituent members was the Protestant Federation of France (1905). This was followed in 1908 by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America which by 1910 included 31 denominations representing the majority of US Protestants. By the middle of the 20th century a new understanding was emerging whereby only church bodies were to be represented in the Councils; a trend deeply influenced by the formation of the WCC with its basis as a 'fellowship of churches' and purpose of calling the churches to the goal of visible unity. Councils were to be not simply instruments for cooperative service and evangelism but fellowships through which the churches sought to grow in deeper unity with one another.

NCCs Today

Today, the WCC lists 105 NCCs. While the number interviewed for this study (9) is too small to make many generalisations, there are some common threads between them.

Most of the NCCs interviewed were founded in the 1940s and 50s with Botswana and Fiji National Councils being created in the 1960s and Tonga in 1973. While the basis for the Councils was predominantly to promote unity amongst the churches, a number of the Councils came together in response to a particular crisis within the country. For example, the Botswana Christian Council formed in 1966 when a major drought was effecting the north of the country. Individual churches were trying to fundraise outside Botswana and they were encouraged to make a joint appeal. Similarly, the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia was created so that

¹⁰ Kessler D and Kinnamon M *Councils of Churches and the Ecumenical Vision*
WCC Publications 2000

churches could take a common stand to the State which had been under communist rule since 1948 as well as being able to relate to the churches in neighbouring countries, including those on the other side of the 'iron curtain'.

Roman Catholic Participation

Most NCCs were started by churches from the Anglican or Reformed family with Orthodox churches joining some time later. The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s encouraged the promotion of ecumenism and in more recent years, the Roman Catholic Church has become members or associate members of seventy NCCs.

In some countries, Roman Catholic participation led to the creation of a new organisation and a new way of working. For example when in 1990, the Roman Catholic Church joined Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), the organisation not only changed its name but took on a new way of working. The new body was to be a means of helping Churches work together, not a separate ecumenical organisation. This means CTBI speaks and acts only when there is consensus among the Churches.

Similarly, the Canadian Council of Churches adopted a new model when the Roman Catholic Church joined in 1995- that of the Forum. In the Forum, all participants in any ecumenical action speak and make commitments only with the full voice of their own church. Actions that receive 100 per cent consensus are recognized as representing the common Christianity held and as the voice of The Canadian Council of Churches. Actions that do not find 100 per cent consensus may go forward as joint actions of some member churches.

Roman Catholic participation is strong in Pacific ecumenical organisations. However, one Church leader stated

The pain of our working together is that we cannot kneel at the Lord's table. The Catholic Church is one of our members, but we cannot share the Eucharist. The churches here work closely with the Roman Catholic Church and many of our members cannot understand why there is a difficulty around the Eucharist. Everything else we can do together except the Eucharist but this is the heart of our worship. God came so that our barriers should be broken down. People at the local level don't understand why there are barriers.

Church leader, Tonga

Membership

NCCs interviewed differed in membership from the Tongan National Council with 3 members (Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic) to the national councils in Botswana, Britain and Ireland, and the USA, each with over 30 members. Some have organisations as members while for others only churches may be members.

While many churches join NCCs as a sign of visible unity or to work together on common programmes, there are sometimes other incentives to join. For example, to get entry into a Church of England primary school, it is advantageous to belong to one of the churches which are members of CTBI. This has encouraged some Pentecostal groups to become members. Similarly in Botswana, churches have been able to access funding for new church premises through NCC membership.

For many churches, membership in the NCC may be the only place where they relate ecumenically. It is estimated that on average, only a quarter to a half of the member churches of NCCs are also members of a Regional Ecumenical Organisation and even less will be members of the WCC. For example, in Botswana, only two of the approximately 30 member churches are members at the regional or global level. By default, they feel that BCC represents them there.

In a number of countries there is more than one 'ecumenical' body. For example, in Latin America there are now two different types of NCCs; those related to historical churches and those related to Evangelical or Pentecostal churches. The Churches Together model being developed in the USA will have a much broader membership than the NCCCUSA. However, it will not replace the NCCCUSA but stand alongside it.

Programmatic Work

Despite the different contexts and membership, the broad framework of programmatic work is quite similar between the NCCs. Two areas are common to most NCCs; first, a Unity programme (or Faith and Order) and second, a programme which focuses on Church and Society and responds to the situation in the nation. Leadership development/ capacity building or ecumenical formation is another area common to a number of NCCs. Programmes for women and youth are prevalent and inter-faith issues are also becoming increasingly important.

It is at the programmatic level that some NCCs have created space for individuals from non-member churches. For example, the NCCCUSA has 5 Programme Commissions whose participants are drawn not only from NCCCUSA's 36 member communions, but from a total of 54 denominations representing the broad spectrum of American Christianity.

The number and size of the programmes and staff depends on the financial resources each NCC has. The largest NCC interviewed was the NCCCUSA with 35 staff compared to the Fiji Council of Churches with one General Secretary and 2 support staff. Some NCCs have experienced huge changes in recent years due to a decline in funding. For example, prior to a financial crisis in 1996, the Botswana Christian Council had 65 staff. Today it has 10.

Priorities and Issues

Some of the major issues facing NCCs relate directly to their contexts. The Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic is struggling with the relationship between Church and State including the restitution of property that belonged to the churches prior to 1948. The Council of Churches of Malaysia is facing the strength of Islam and its influence on government policy.

Encouraging churches to work together and be prophetic were two issues a number of NCCs were struggling with. Lack of participation or ‘ownership’ by member churches is a major problem with some NCCs.

It is very difficult to get ownership from the churches. People see you as a Bank; as a local donor. Most churches joined because they were going to get money to build churches. Once they have their money they don't participate.

General Secretary, NCC in the South

One of the responses to the issue of ownership is to give Heads of Churches a greater role in the decision making of NCCs. For example, the Board of the Botswana Christian Council now comprises Heads of Churches.

Funding

A further issue facing many NCCs, both large and small, is funding. The vast majority of funds for NCCs in both the North and the South is locally generated. For many it comes primarily through church membership fees although if more than a very small secretariat is to be sustained, additional sources of income are required. The Hong Kong Christian Council has an endowment fund which covers 80% of their costs. The Botswana Christian Council generates 60% of their income locally through renting space in their building and a project selling baskets which was initiated with support from the WCC. One sixth of the income for the NCCCUSA comes from royalties from the Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Some funding from external sources is available for the specific programmatic work of the NCCs. For example, HIV/AIDS work undertaken

by Christian Councils in Botswana and Fiji is able to attract funding through the United Nations. NCCs in the Pacific also access funding through the Pacific Conference of Churches for specific priority areas.

While individual donations only account for a very small percentage of donations to NCCs, it is worth noting that in 2003, an individual donated approximately US\$7.4 million to NCCCUSA because of the stance it took against the war on Iraq.

Ecumenical Relationships

NCCs relate to a variety of other ecumenical organisations at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels. At the national level, many have created agencies or organisations which focus on a particular area, for example refugees or emergency relief. The structural relationship between the agency and NCC differs from country to country. For example, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has a category in their constitution for 'agencies' which covers self-governing charities undertaking work on the Churches' behalf. They include Christian Aid, CAFOD, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, Christian Enquiry Agency, Christians Abroad and One World Week.

Two of the NCCs interviewed (Botswana and Hong Kong) have related organisations such as the YMCA or Bible Society as members whereas other NCCs will have more of an informal working relationship with other organisations. In countries where the Roman Catholic Church is not a member, some form of working group is often set up between the NCC and the Catholic Bishops Conference. In Malaysia, a broader body exists, the Christian Federation of Malaysia which brings together the Catholic Bishops Conference, the Council of Churches of Malaysia and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowships.

Regionally, the relationship between NCCs and REOs differs from place to place. Some REOs (for example, the Christian Conference of Asia) have NCCs as members while in other regions they are associate members. NCCs form the membership of the sub-regional fellowships which have emerged in Africa in the last 10 years.

At the global level, the primary relationship for NCCs is with the WCC. According to the rules of WCC, NCCs can be recognised as an Associate Council and are then invited to send a representative to Assembly and may, at the discretion of Central Committee, be invited to send an advisor to meetings of the Central Committee. There seems however to be some lack of clarity about what this means for NCCs.

When the WCC meets, I am always invited to come but I'm not sure what for. I don't have a voice or a vote- so maybe it's not important for me to be there.

General Secretary, NCC

Other connections between NCCs and the WCC focused around 4 main areas:

- 1: Programmes: working with staff at the WCC to implement specific programmes
- 2: Funding: WCC's role in facilitating funds from donors or from within WCC's own resources for the programmes of NCCs
- 3: Brokerage: in some countries, the NCC is used to broker representation to WCC meetings. In Britain and Ireland, CTBI works with the churches to develop joint responses to WCC consultation documents
- 4: Personal Connections: the involvement of NCC staff on some of WCC's Commissions.

The relationship with WCC is not always easy to maintain however

Sometimes the WCC is just too far- sometimes we have to put the information in our own context, and it needs to be translated. This is difficult so I have to pick and choose which part of WCC's work is relevant for us.

General Secretary, NCC

The Role of NCCs in the Global Ecumenical Movement

Participants were asked 'what do you see as your organisation's particular role in the global ecumenical movement?' While every answer was different, common themes emerged:

- 1: to provide a space for churches to come together. For example,

The Council of Churches of Malaysia offers itself as an instrument or agency to the Churches in Malaysia whereby they can more and more do together everything except what irreconcilable differences of sincere conviction compel them to do separately.

From Constitution of the Council of Churches of Malaysia

- 2: linking national to international issues. For example

Botswana Christian Council's role is to bring the issues of the country to some serious international exposure.

David Modiega, BCC

Since 9/11 our international and external roles are more important than ever. We need to take church leaders to Asia so they know what is happening there. Robert Edgar, NCCCUSA

3: offering experiences to others in the ecumenical movement

We may be able to offer some insights from our experiences of living with people of other faiths, for the sake of building and sustaining unity.

Hermen Shastri, CCM

...to show how to be the minority and how we have worked together despite the oppression of the State

Jitka Krausová,

Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic

4: taking global concerns to the national level

When there is a global campaign eg: against the war in Iraq, we have tried to promote it

Simote Ve'a, Tonga NCC

3.1.3 Agencies and Specialised Ministries

Closely associated with NCCs are the group of organisations widely known as ‘agencies’ or ‘specialised ministries’. While acknowledging the sensitivity around the word, they are referred to in this report simply as ‘agencies’ for the sake of brevity. They are the group of national actors who are either related to the NCC or a particular national church and whose work focuses primarily on responding to human suffering around the globe, whether it be through emergency relief, development programmes or advocacy work to address the root causes of suffering. The agencies are particularly significant in that together, they fund a large proportion of the diaconal work undertaken in the ecumenical movement and many of the ecumenical structures.

History

While some denominations have established a national church committee or department to respond to global poverty and injustice (for example, the churches in Canada), others work through ecumenical agencies. Most of these agencies were established following World War 2 to raise funds and assist with reconstruction in Europe. During this period they worked closely with the Department of Reconstruction and Inter Church Aid of the WCC. In the 1950s, the focus started moving from Europe to other parts of the world. The WCC held its Central Committee meeting in India in 1952-3 where it received an official mandate to work in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The Dutch agency, ICCO is somewhat different from other ecumenical agencies. ICCO was founded in 1964 when the Dutch Government decided that non-governmental programmes should be able to apply for government funds to fight poverty. ICCO was established by the Protestant churches in

the Netherlands as a ‘mediator-organisation for co-financing projects from diaconal mission bodies of the Protestant churches’¹¹.

Since the early 1990s, the agencies have been meeting annually with the WCC; initially as the ‘Heads of Agencies Network’ and more recently also as participants of the WCC Roundtable. Approximately 35 different agencies from Europe, North America, Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand are invited to these meetings although there is no formal membership. Over the past 4 years, an annual Ecumenical Partners Survey has developed and much of the following information draws on the results from that survey.

Vision Statements

While the vision statements of each agency are written in their own style and with their own emphasis, they have a number of features in common. They include

- 1: being ‘rooted in faith’ and ‘driven by the gospel’
- 2: being supported and sustained by members of the churches
- 3: working for a new earth where all people live free of poverty and injustice and where creation is respected
- 4: being an advocate for those who are poor.

Governance

The Boards of each of the agencies comprise representatives from their member churches.

Work of the Agencies

Income

The combined budget of the 17 agencies who responded to the 2003 Ecumenical Partners Survey¹² was US\$747 million. This is larger than the annual budget of the International Committee of the Red Cross (US\$601 million) and World Vision (US\$527 million). However there is great variation in size between agencies. For example, EED in Germany has an annual budget of approx US\$130 million and a staff of 180 whereas the Presbyterian World Service and Development Committee in Canada has a budget of US\$2 million and a staff of 5. Approximately 50% of this combined total comes from national governments or international organisations (eg: EU), 9% from church budget allocations and the remaining 41% from fundraising, investment income, bequests and other such sources. The funding profile differs considerably from agency to agency. For example, Bread for the World receives most of its income

¹¹ www.icco.nl

¹² Berge, G and Bazin, J *WCC Round Table Ecumenical Partners Survey Analysis* March 2003

through fundraising and does not receive any Government funding compared with ICCO whose income comes primarily from the Dutch Government.

Type of Work

On average, long term development assistance accounts for 50% of expenditure, with emergency relief receiving 13-14%. Advocacy and development education receives 4-6% and local social services 4%¹³.

Regions

Expenditure breakdown by region was as follows¹⁴:

Africa	31%
Asia	24%
Latin America	18%
Europe	10%
Middle East	6%
Worldwide	11%

Some of the agencies have either national or regional offices in other countries (for example, Norway has 6 regional offices and 14 country offices) and four of the large European agencies have a joint office in Central Asia.

Priorities

While the priorities differ from agency to agency, the 2003 survey noted most agencies were working in the areas of food security, finance and micro-enterprise development, HIV/AIDS, gender and economic justice. The survey highlighted that a number of the agencies have developed expertise in the areas of violence and conflict, HIV/AIDS and refugees and displaced populations. Some agencies have special advocacy campaigns on debt, trade, water, HIV/AIDS, Africa and landmines.

Issues Facing Agencies

Agencies interviewed were asked to identify the major issues currently facing their organisations. There were some common responses including:

- 1: the desire to remain rooted in the life of the churches and maintain a Christian identity in an increasingly secular society
- 2: reaching younger people who are interested in the advocacy work but ‘put off by the Christian part in our name’
- 3: no longer being able to rely on loyalty but rather having to present yourself as being relevant to society including the churches- which means offering alternatives for action
- 4: competition between agencies for funds

¹³ Ecumenical Partners Survey 2003, 2004.

¹⁴ Ecumenical Partners Survey 2003

5: the desire for ecumenical agencies to develop a global alliance to increase coordination and achieve a visible global identity.

Relationships with Other Ecumenical Actors

Alongside the WCC, the agencies probably have the strongest network of relationships with other actors in the ecumenical movement. At the national level, they relate to the member churches, the national ecumenical body as well as other coalitions (both church and secular).

While a few agencies (eg: United Church of Canada) fund a significant number of NCCs in the South, most funding is largely dependent upon the programmes being undertaken by the NCC. The core costs of NCCs are rarely funded although specific programmes which are in line with the mandate of the agencies are likely to be supported. One agency noted

The decision was made a while back that it's not just about family. It is also about the type and quality of work being done.

Director of agency

Ecumenical diaconal agencies established by NCCs in the South (eg: Christian Care Zimbabwe, CASA in India) are often the preferred partner for agencies in the north as their mandates are in line with the agencies and they are 'family'. One agency is developing a hierarchy of partners to assist with decision making regarding funding. The top of the hierarchy is

Ecumenical church based organisations (with a sub-category for specialised church based organisations or confessional organisations in countries where it is not possible to work through an ecumenical body).

Director of agency

Over the last two to three decades, agencies have also developed partnerships with non-government organisations which have blossomed in the South. Preference may be given to funding these organisations rather than NCCs because they more closely fit the mandate of the agencies. However, some agencies who support a number of NGOs in a given country will also ensure that they support the NCC.

Regionally, agencies are the primary funders of both sub-regional fellowships, regional ecumenical councils and other regional ecumenical bodies. In general, funding is allocated to particular programmes of these organisations rather than the organisation as a whole. This is primarily because funds received from national governments cannot cover the work of faith and order and theological education.

However, the relationship with REOs is moving beyond simply funding.

Agencies are looking increasingly at working in partnership with CLAI. For example, we are working with Christian Aid on Fair Trade and the week of action and with Norwegian Church Aid on HIV/AIDS. The relationship with agencies is becoming much more of a working relationship rather than just a funding relationship. CLAI also takes a brokering role. A meeting is planned between (one agency) and the churches in Latin America because some of the churches are wanting to challenge the agency's policy.

Israel Batista, CLAI

Within Europe, 17 of the agencies who relate to the WCC have formed a separate organisation, APRODEV. This cooperation aims to influence decision-making processes in the European Union institutions, facilitate access to these institutions for the ecumenical family and strengthen cooperation and joint work among APRODEV agencies.

Globally, agencies financially support and relate closely to a number of the global ecumenical actors. Agencies worked together with the WCC in the formation of ACT, EAA and the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa. Today, most, if not all, are members of ACT International and work through ACT for emergency response, some as implementers as well as funders. Most are also members of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and are working with the Alliance on issues of trade and HIV/AIDS. The agencies also relate to and support other actors such as ECLOF, Oikocredit, World Association for Christian Communication and the YMCA/YWCA.

Agencies in countries where the Lutheran Church is the major church also have a close working relationship with the Lutheran World Federation which has its own large emergency relief and development programme (see Section on CWCs, p.31).

Agencies are also major funders of the WCC and the annual Roundtable has led to a feeling amongst agencies of a closer relationship and greater transparency. In general funding tends to be for particular programmes with some areas eg: Faith and Order, seen as outside the mandate of the agencies. A number of individuals from the agencies participate on various WCC Commissions.

The WCC has also been an important source of ideology for many agencies. The 'World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community', held in El Escorial in 1987 influenced the thinking of many agencies.

Norwegian Church Aid's core values – justice, participation, responsible stewardship of God's creation, mercy and peace – came from the WCC.

Atle Sommerfeldt, NCA

Agencies do not however, have any formal or structural relationship with the WCC. Some European agencies feel that their structural link comes through APRODEV which is an International Ecumenical Organisation under the WCC rules. An appropriate category for agencies is currently being explored by the WCC.

For some agencies recognition in the structures is not so important;

We don't want recognition in structures but rather recognition in partnership. We want to contribute to the overall direction of WCC in its work, planning and priority setting. But we only want to work together on the areas that relate to our mandates. Our money is raised for relief and development, not for mission, evangelism and theology. It would be a great scandal if funds for development and relief were instead funding these areas.

Director of Agency

The Role of Agencies in the Global Ecumenical Movement

Most agencies saw their role in a similar light, including

- 1: enabling the churches in the given country to respond to international issues
- 2: supporting churches and church based organisations in the South in their struggle for justice
- 3: using their expertise to build a world where marginalised people have a fair share of the world's resources
- 4: mobilising significant funding for the ecumenical movement
- 5: having a strong voice in their own society, including being able to challenge governments on development issues.

The two Canadian organisations interviewed both saw part of their role was to highlight the need for southern participation and to ask the question 'how does it impact on the life of our partners?'

3.1.4 Southern Diaconal Agencies

As mentioned above, a number of NCCs in the South established their own diaconal agencies. The actual structural relationship between the NCC and the agency differs from country to country depending on the context. For example, Christian Care in Zimbabwe was formed in 1966 by the NCC at the height on the nationalist movement. There was a fear that the NCC would be banned because of the WCCs support of liberation movements in Africa. So Christian Care was set up as an voluntary, welfare organisation initially caring for the families of political activists who were imprisoned. Post independence, their work turned to drought relief and working with refugees from Mozambique's civil war. Over time they have developed into a large development and relief agency with 130 staff and supported by

ecumenical agencies in Europe, North America and Australia. Like many diaconal agencies, they are their own organisation but closely related to the NCC. For example, the Director of Christian Care sits on the Executive of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. They have a working relationship with AACC and WCC, and through ACT implement relief programmes within Zimbabwe.

Christian Commission for Development (CCD) in Honduras is a similar organisation. It was established in 1982 with support from WCC to respond to the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. As the situation changed, CCD's work focused more on long term development. Today, CCD supports local development initiatives, provides training and advocates for positive national development policies. It also initiates processes of reflection and action that aid people's awareness of the relationship between faith and politics and enable church people to participate in local development. Thirteen different denominations (including Roman Catholic, Reformed and Pentecostal) participate in CCD's work and governing bodies. Funding comes from major ecumenical agencies and churches in Europe and the USA.

3.2 The Regional Level

3.2.1 Regional Ecumenical Organisations

The first Regional Ecumenical Organisation (REO) was the East Asia Christian Conference (now called the Christian Conference of Asia) which was founded in 1957. Over the next 25 years, a further 6 REOs were founded, each with its own history, programme and style of working. The seven REOs existing today are:

- All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)
- Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC)
- Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)
- Conference of European Churches (CEC)
- Latin America Council of Churches (CLAI)
- Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)
- Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)

Membership

Membership criteria differs from REO to REO. In some (eg: CCA, PCC) both churches and NCCs are members. In others, for example CEC, NCCs are associate organisations. The membership of CLAI includes not only 150 churches, but also 21 Christian organisations that specialise in certain areas such as youth or theological education.

While the membership of most REOs is Protestant or Orthodox, the Roman Catholic Church is a member of PCC, CCC and the MECC.

In 1976, the Roman Catholic Church joined. It was a major step forward for us. Because we bring our community life with us, that is what keeps us together ecumenically. We forget our differences and the Roman Catholics belong to the ecumenical family.

Valamotu Palu, PCC

Membership of MECC comes through the 4 main church families with each family (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Evangelical) having an equal voice.

On average, approximately half the membership of REOs are also members of the WCC. For example, of the 126 members of CEC, 70 are members of WCC.

Number of Staff

The size of REOs differs greatly. The smallest (PCC) has 7 staff, CLAI has 28 while the MECC has 83 (excluding the staff of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees).

The offices of some REOs may be based in more than one country. For example, CEC has 11 staff in Geneva, 8 in Brussels (Belgium) and 2 in Strasbourg (France). MECC has offices in Jordan, Syria, Cyprus and Egypt.

Programmes

Among REOs interviewed, the types of programmes were very similar generally falling under the broad headings of

- 1: Faith and Unity
- 2: Church and Society
- 3: Gender, youth and culture

However in recent years, a number of REOs have been exploring new ways of implementing their programmes and are working more closely with member churches or NCCs in order to increase effectiveness and reduce expenditure. For example, PCC has recently abolished programme desks and now has a specific focus on implementing programmes at the national level through NCCs.

The Programme Managers (generally the General Secretaries of NCCs) implement the programmes and we just facilitate or coordinate from here. A Regional Ecumenical Animation Team, made up of the Programme Managers and representatives from other regional organisations in the Pacific, meets once or twice each year to share priorities and develop an action plan. This is much more effective than in the past because more people at

grassroots level are participating. Before we struggled to get women and youth involved but today there is much greater participation.

However, this approach doesn't leave us much time to work on regional issues as we are spending more time with NCCs and member churches. For the next few years, PCC will have to focus more on regional issues.

Valamotu Palu, PCC

CLAI has also undertaken major changes including reducing the number of programmes from fourteen to nine. The priority is placed on strengthening relationships with churches and enabling countries to develop their own processes and programmes. Programmes will only be established at regional level if they meet the following criteria:

- 1: this is a priority for the churches and having a regional programme will expand the possibilities
- 2: this is an area where churches are not greatly involved eg: economic justice, and where CLAI is able to take the lead.

Many of CLAI's programmes are now based in specific countries and attached to a member church. Over the past three years, CLAI has moved from spending 70% on internal staff and administration and only 30% on programmes to now spending 70% on programmes and 30% on the CLAI infrastructure.

A new vision and style was needed. We called our churches and said 'while you may be becoming poorer and poorer, you have people and facilities.' Today most of our staff are part-time, and in most cases churches have given their staff to CLAI (most are local pastors) as well as office/ building space.

Israel Batista, CLAI

Each programme is organised differently with many being done at sub-regional level. For example, there is a youth coordinator for each of the 5 sub-regions who is responsible for the youth programme in their region. This work is done voluntarily with CLAI providing an honorarium for expenses. On the other hand, the indigenous peoples' programme is based in Bolivia and is a joint programme of WCC and CLAI. One of CLAI's larger member churches has joined with CLAI in developing the health programme.

Such joint ventures have meant a greater ownership by the churches and more engagement in the work. Moving to a local reality has meant we have a lot of churches related to us. There is tremendous capacity at the national level. We now give an average of US\$5000 to each country and they add their own resources to it and then decide what to do with it. An agenda is identified which makes sense

to the churches. The churches are now owning the ecumenical movement whereas in the past we were a group of friends.

Israel Batista, CLAI

Major changes to the All Africa Conference of Churches are also being explored (See Section 4.3.2.1).

Issues Facing REOs

REOs are facing a number of similar issues.

1: Promoting a spirit of ecumenism and the need for ecumenical formation.

Many still struggle with what ecumenism is and there is a real need to do more work at the grass-roots level.

Valamotu Palu, PCC

2: What unity means in the face of so much diversity.

What does unity of the church means when we have liberals and evangelicals who are so diverse both politically and theologically. Our Theological Commission is exploring how in the midst of our diversity we can build an evangelical identity with a Latin America face.

Israel Batista, CLAI

3: Theological articulation for the Asian, African, Latin America, Pacific, Caribbean, European or Middle East context.

4: Relating to people of other faiths.

5: Being able to respond to current issues such as conflict, HIV/AIDS, globalisation, poverty, migration, climate change, the position of women in society.

6: Enabling the churches to speak adequately on current issues and to have a prophetic voice.

Funding

With the exception of CEC, 70-80% of income for REOs (90% for the MECC) comes from ecumenical funding partners. This stands in sharp contrast to the funding patterns of NCCs where most of the income is locally generated.

The General Secretary of CCA noted:

While it is difficult to get cash from churches in Asia, they are giving in kind by hosting training programmes and meetings.

Ahn Jae-Woong, CCA

Churches make significant contributions to the MECC – in terms of providing premises, supporting staff and other gifts in kind.

Aline Papazian, MECC

Ahn Jae Woong also noted

The partners have a Roundtable every 3 years. Most agencies are giving funds to CCA to allocate to priority areas rather than as designated for particular programmes. They trust us, they know that we are careful with it and we produce monthly financial reports. There is a mutual respect for each other. Of course, they are critical and ask hard questions on particular issues- but we explain these and they understand.

Ecumenical Relationships

As previously mentioned, a number of REOs have been working at closer relationships with the NCCs. CEC facilitates an annual meeting of NCCs and when CCA is implementing a programme, it will circulate information on it through both NCCs and churches and ask the NCC to coordinate it. CLAI however, is continuing to work directly with member churches rather than through the NCCs.

REOs have a wide range of relationships with other regional bodies ranging from theological institutes to action groups. Often they have been instrumental in the formation of other ecumenical organisations. In some places, a clear division of labour has been worked out. For example, the Pacific Resource Concerns Centre is recognised by PCC as taking the lead on nuclear issues and PACFAW on women's issues.

A number of REOs are working together on common issues. For example, MECC has been working with both CCA and AACC on the issue of migrant workers. In many regions there is a close working relationship between the REO and theological institutes. While only one Association of Theological Institutes was interviewed for the purpose of this study (ATIME), it seems that their experience is not unique.

ATIME was formed in 1967, seven years before the MECC. The relationship grew between the two ecumenical bodies and ATIME is now part of the Faith and Unity Department of the MECC. ATIME has a particular role in strengthening the relationship between member institutes so that theology can be approached both from an ecumenical and a Middle East perspective.

Similarly, CCA has a close working relationship with the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) and the programme

for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA). CCA was also instrumental in establishing the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) which is a movement and network of various theological institutions and associations. It includes both CCA and the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences.

In regions where the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the REO, there is usually a working relationship between the REO and the relevant Bishops Conference.

At the global level, CEC is working with LWF on human rights issues and WARC on the Mission and Unity project but other REOs did not mention any direct relationship with Christian World Communions. CEC's close working relationship with LWF and WARC may be influenced by the fact that all three organisations are located in the ecumenical centre in Geneva.

There were very different responses regarding the relationship between the REOs and ACT. CCA has an agreement with ACT that whenever there is an emergency, people work through, and fund ACT directly. CLAI however finds ACT more difficult as while they want to be supportive, having to be a member of either the WCC or LWF to be a member of ACT does not make sense in the Latin American context.

Five of the seven REOs and two of the four sub-regional fellowships in Africa are members of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

Relationship with the WCC

The rules of the WCC¹⁵ outline the relationship between REOs and the WCC. It reads:

1. *The World Council of Churches recognizes regional ecumenical organisations as essential partners in the ecumenical enterprise.*
2. *Such regional ecumenical organisations as may be designated by the Central Committee:*
 - a) *shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the Assembly;*
 - b) *shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the Central Committee;**and*
 - c) *shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.*
3. *In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the World Council shall inform each of these regional ecumenical organisations regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed World Council programmes in its region.*

¹⁵ www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/rules-e.html

4. The Central Committee, together with the regional ecumenical organisations, shall establish and review as appropriate guiding principles for relationships and cooperation between the World Council and regional ecumenical organisations, including the means whereby programmatic responsibilities could be shared among them.

Four of the five REOs interviewed report a positive relationship with the WCC. The relationship with the 5th, the PCC, has only recently been strained due to the decision to move the WCC Pacific Desk to Fiji without consulting Pacific churches or the PCC. This is discussed further below.

CEC noted the increasing areas of collaboration while CCA commented that since Harare, the relationship had greatly improved with joint programme coordination through an annual WCC-CCA Liaison Committee Meeting. CLAI considers the joint work with WCC on the economic justice programmes and the indigenous peoples' programme a great success.

The WCC continues to have an important function for some of the REOs in mobilising funds. For example, CCA appreciates the WCC's Asia desk approaching ecumenical partners for funding.

The WCC meets with REO General Secretaries each year. These meetings are primarily a chance to hear what each organisation is doing and to share common issues, but more recently they have also been taking some joint action together. For example the REO/WCC meeting in 2004 wrote to the Secretary General of the United Nations concerning the situation in Darfur, Sudan.

The area where there is greatest potential for conflict and overlap between the WCC and REOs is with the 'area desks' of WCC. The structural relationship between the Secretary for Europe and CEC was mentioned by a number of people interviewed in this study. The question was also asked why WCC has an Eastern Europe diaconal desk and would that not be better handled by CEC?

The situation in the Pacific highlights the importance of the WCC working collaboratively rather than competitively with REOs. While the decision making process to relocate the Pacific desk was difficult, defining each organisation's role has also been difficult. According to PCC, they are aware that their current focus on strengthening ecumenism at the national level left a gap at the regional level which they need to address. However, the WCC's work in trying to fill this gap by developing regional programmes for member churches has led to role conflict.

If the WCC is going to implement programmes then it will be duplicating our role and should go back to Geneva. If they are here

to implement programmes, they are undermining our relationship with them. The WCC should be working through existing networks and the REO. I hope that WCC seriously considers the network right from regional to national to the local level. There needs to be a solid link to REOs and NCCs – now it's just a dotted line.

Valamotu Palu, PCC

A review of the Relocation of the Pacific Desk that included both PCC and member churches has recently taken place and staff at the WCC Regional Office and PCC are working to clarify roles and tasks.

Role within the Global Ecumenical Movement

In considering the role of their particular REO in the global ecumenical movement, those interviewed highlighted three major contributions; First, bringing their particular context or situation to the international community. For example

To bring Asian special characteristics to share with the global community. We have special issues; poverty, conflict, diversity, sustainability, security. We want to share all these things with an Asian flavour.

Ahn Jae Woong, CCA

Second, providing a Forum for churches in the region to make a regional response to issues.

Third, playing a prophetic role with biblical and theological perspectives.

Others will talk of the political issues but we need to voice justice issues from a biblical and theological perspective.

Valamotu Palu, PCC

3.3 Sub-Regional Fellowships

Sub-regional fellowships are the newest actors on the ecumenical scene.

There are 4 operational in Africa;

FOCCISA (Southern Africa)

FECCLAHA (Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa)

COFCEAC (Central Africa (French-speaking))

FECCIWA (West Africa)

Two of the sub-regional fellowships (SRF) were interviewed for this study; FECCLAHA and FECCIWA.

FECCLAHA and FECCIWA both started in the 1990s in response to conflict in the regions. FECCLAHA has a membership of 7 NCCs and 4

member churches (from countries where there is no NCC) and FECCIWA has 7 NCCs and 5 member churches.

FECCLAHA facilitates ecumenical cooperation in three main areas: building awareness of people in the churches on issues such as small arms; advocacy particularly targeting policy makers, and capacity building of member churches. FECCIWA's programme is similar; peace making and peace building, good governance, capacity building and networking.

Funding comes from ecumenical agencies in Europe, the US and Canada with some support from the WCC Strategic Initiatives Fund. The staff team is small (7 in FECCLAHA and 5 in FECCIWA) and the work programme greatly depends on what funding is available.

While NCCs are their members and they have a clear understanding that all national issues are the responsibility of the NCC, ownership by the NCCs remains an issue. The General Secretary of FECCLAHA noted

The Councils themselves are struggling. We are not dealing with the kind of Councils that we were in the 1960s. They are trying to understand what they should be doing right now.

Karimi Kinoti, FECCLAHA

Besides the NCCs and funding agencies, sub-regional fellowships relate to the All Africa Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches. The two interviewed are also both members of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

What is particularly relevant for the mapping exercise however, is their relationship to the AACC. Despite FECCLAHA being founded out of the AACC Great Lakes Working Group, there was some initial hostility from parts of AACC who felt that the sub-regional fellowships were competing with them. However, in the past year, the AACC and sub-regional fellowships have engaged in a conversation aimed to defining the roles of each actor and working towards a common vision.

In January 2004, the AACC called a meeting of the sub-regional fellowships and the NCCs to talk about working in a more deliberate way. A panel of 12 then developed a proposal which is currently being circulated amongst member churches. It has the AACC General Secretariat and a small staff working specifically on issues at a continental level and not doing the programmatic work that fellowships are doing. The General Secretaries of the fellowships would report directly to the General Secretary of the AACC. With regards to governance, the Central Committee and Executive Committee will come from the regions. For example, the Executive Committee of FECCLAHA (either all or part) would be part of the Executive Committee of AACC.

This would overcome one of the problems with the current structure that many of those on the Governance bodies of AACC do not take the issues back to their country or are not involved in ecumenical activities at either national or regional level.

General Secretary, Sub-Regional Fellowship

With regards to funding, various options are being considered. One is that fundraising for core costs is undertaken by the AACC for their own and the sub-regional fellowships' operations with the sub-regional fellowships fundraising for their own programmatic costs (and therefore responsible for reporting to donors on their activities).

(see Section 4.3.2.1 for further discussion on the AACC initiative)

3.4 Global Bodies

3.4.1 Christian World Communions

While not 'ecumenical organisations' Christian World Communions (CWCs) play a significant role in the ecumenical movement. The WCC Yearbook (2003) notes

International organisations of churches of the same tradition or confession have been formed since the middle of the 19th century...Since 1957 there have been annual informal gatherings of the secretaries of such organisations and it is from among the bodies represented at these meetings that this list is taken although not all of them would define themselves as 'Christian World Communions'.

For the purpose of this Study, priority was given to those CWCs who have a significant number of churches belonging to WCC. 12 of the 20 listed in the WCC Yearbook were interviewed including the permanent representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Moscow Patriarchate who participate regularly in the Conference of Secretaries of CWCs. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic) and the World Evangelical Alliance were included to ensure a broader perspective than just WCC member churches.

While the CWCs have great variety in terms of membership, organisation and programmes, there is significant similarity in their aims or purpose. Most CWC mission or purpose statements include elements of the following:

- 1: strengthening the unity of churches of that tradition
- 2: promoting inclusive community of those churches
- 3: relating to other Christian communions and organisations

A number also describe their roles as 'promoting an ecumenical spirit' or 'serving Christian unity in the world'. The Disciples Ecumenical

Consultative Council (DECC) note that they will not do anything on their own that could be done ecumenically.

Membership and Funding

There is great variety in the size of CWCs. The largest, the Anglican Communion, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) each bring together between 65-75 million people. Anglican membership comes from 164 different countries. At the other end of the spectrum, the Church of the Brethren and the Friends World Committee for Consultation have less than 500 000 members.

The Reformed family have 4 different organisations representing them at the global level with some having common membership. For example, 23 of the 39 members of the Reformed Ecumenical Council are also members of the WARC.

Most, if not all CWCs are witnessing rapid growth of their churches in the South while churches in the north are either remaining static or declining. For example, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria) is experiencing growth of 7-8 000 people per annum.

Most of the funding for the work of the CWCs comes from member churches.

Programmes

There is great variety of structures and programmatic work among CWCs and therefore significant differences in the number of staff.

The largest, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), is divided into three main departments:

- 1: The Department for World Service is the international relief, rehabilitation and development agency of LWF with field offices in more than 31 countries and with more than 5000 workers.
- 2: The Department of Mission and Development works with member churches and currently has 450 ongoing mission and development programmes.
- 3: The Department for Theology and Studies.

70 staff from 20 different countries work in the Geneva headquarters.

On the other hand, the Reformed Ecumenical Council has 4 Commissions assigned by Assembly (Youth and Christian Nurture, Theological Education and Interchange, Mission and Diakonia, Human Relations) but only the Youth Commission has a part-time staff person. The other Commissions act like 'baskets' for collecting questions and dealing with issues. REC has a total staff of 8.

Most other CWCs have less than 15 staff.

While not all CWCs undertake programmatic work, there are some common themes or priorities being addressed by those who do. They include:

- 1: Theology
- 2: Mission
- 3: Working with people of other faiths
- 4: Human relations/ relationships between women and men
- 5: Human rights issues
- 6: Economic justice
- 7: HIV/AIDS
- 8: Global sharing

A major part of the work undertaken by a number of CWCs are the bilateral dialogues with other CWCs. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity described the purpose of their dialogues as being

'...to deal with the issues and matters of faith in which we had conflict; with the Orthodox in the 11th Century and the Protestants in the 16th Century- and to deal with these issues over which we divided and to see if we can resolve them'.

John Radano

For the Roman Catholics, the first bilateral dialogue was with the Lutheran World Federation in 1967 and this led to the Joint Declaration on Justification in 1999. A total of 18 different dialogues have taken place with other CWCs and churches over the past three decades.

The Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican Communion are also engaged in a number of bilateral dialogues. The Anglican Communion has 6 bilateral Commissions (2 with the Roman Catholic Church, and one each with the Oriental Orthodox, Orthodox, Old Catholics and Baptist World Alliance). Two further commissions are in the pipeline with the LWF and the Methodist World Council.

Issues Facing CWCs

A major issue facing some of the CWCs is division within the family which has become accentuated through either (or both) the growth of the church in the South and/ or the debate on human sexuality. Related to this, is the growing diversity amongst the membership of many CWCs. One General Secretary noted

'Being a world family of faith, what do we have in common theologically? 75 years ago, our family was much more culturally

homogeneous, but this has changed with the majority now living in the Global South'

General Secretary, CWC

Another major issue mentioned by half of the CWCs interviewed is the decline in finances.

CWCs also noted that their own issues could not be separated from the issues of their constituencies and were particularly concerned about inter-faith issues at both the local and the global level. The need to foster spirituality was also a key concern for some of the CWCs.

Relationships with Other Confessional and Ecumenical Bodies

CWCs come together in an annual meeting of General Secretaries. Larry Miller, of the Mennonite World Conference who is currently acting as the Secretariat for CWCs noted

The Conference of Secretaries is in modest evolution. Its primary role is an informal meeting of General Secretaries to inform each other what is happening and to discuss issues. Occasionally the Heads of Communions are invited. At every meeting, each Communion reports back, then there is general discussion. The type of issues discussed include :

- theological- eg; the results of bilateral dialogues*
- reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement*
- ethical issues eg; globalisation, peace*

Another CWC General Secretary noted

There is real resistance against the meetings being used for planning any collaborative work which means that it probably doesn't reach its potential. The message is that those who want to work collaboratively can do so outside the meetings. However, the danger is that those who want to work on common issues are those that are in Geneva- so would we really gain anything? My proposal at the past two meetings has been that we should get together intentionally with the WCC.

A number of CWCs work closely with each other on particular issues. For example, the Reformed Ecumenical Council and WARC.

Originally there was a lot of animosity between REC and WARC which began to change in the 1960's. The first formal contact was in 1967. Since 1998 WARC and REC have had regular formal meetings out of which comes a common report.

Richard van Houten, REC

WARC and REC are working together with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa assisting some of their member churches who have deep divisions between them to reach some form of reconciliation.

Joint work is also found where two confessional bodies are very similar in terms of theology and polity. WARC and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) have developed a special partnership and DECC is exploring how they can be more involved in WARC's programmes. Both of these Communion also work closely with the Council for World Mission, a mission organisation established in 1977 which grew out of the London Missionary Society, the Commonwealth (Colonial) Missionary Society and the (English) Presbyterian Board of Missions. 31 of CWM's member churches are also members of WARC.

The LWF and WARC are both based in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. They are attempting to work closer, have two Senior Staff meetings each year and are exploring the possibility of joint Assemblies.

Relationship with the WCC

According to the rules of the WCC, 'the World Council of Churches recognizes the role of Christian World Communions or world confessional bodies in the ecumenical movement'.¹⁶ If CWCs wish, the WCC Central Committee may invite them to send a delegated representative to the Assembly or send an adviser to meetings of the Central Committee. The rules also note that the Central Committee shall 'establish and review as appropriate guidelines for relationships and cooperation with Christian World Communions'.¹⁷

CWCs interviewed noted that they try to attend Central Committee meetings although this is sometimes difficult for smaller CWCs based in the USA.

While none of the interviewees mentioned any formal guidelines for the relationship and cooperation with the WCC, there are a number of different places where WCC and the CWCs work together, including 1: through Commissions of the WCC in particular, Faith and Order. The WCC's role in facilitating the bilateral fora and undertaking multilateral dialogues is seen as important by the CWCs. One noted

Who else could call these meetings except the WCC? It is an important role they play

General Secretary, CWC

The Roman Catholic Church is a member of the Faith and Order Commission and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, while not being a member of WCC. Together with the WCC-Roman Catholic Joint Working Group, they are the major places of cooperation between the two bodies.

¹⁶ www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/rules-e.html

¹⁷ www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/rules-e.html

Similarly, the Reformed Ecumenical Council's primary relationship with WCC is through being an affiliate member of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

2: CWCs participation in particular programmes of the WCC such as the Decade to Overcome Violence.

3: when WCC and the CWCs are working on similar issues. For example, the General Secretary of WARC stated

We are working closely on economic justice and environmental degradation. In 1997 WARC produced a Declaration on Economic Injustice and Environmental Degradation. In 1998, WCC Harare Assembly didn't start anew but rather used WARC's work on the topic as a reference. We also work together by inviting staff working on similar issues to consultations. For example, our Department on Partnership of Women and Men worked closely with WCC Women's Desk and LWF when preparing the Gender Justice manual.

Setri Nyomi WARC

4: through cooperation on joint ventures. For example, LWF and the WCC are the parent bodies of ACT International and LWF, WCC, WARC and CEC are the 'joint owners' of Ecumenical News International (ENI).

5: through working with the WCC on the Global Christian Forum, an initiative that is bringing around the table all the major Christian traditions, including Roman Catholic, Pentecostals and Evangelicals for dialogue and the building of relationships of mutual trust.

The Role of CWCs in the Ecumenical Movement

CWCs consider that they play a number of important roles within the global ecumenical movement. They include:

1: fostering unity amongst their own community and working to prevent further divisions

2: promoting ecumenism amongst their own Communion

We try to bring the ecumenical commitment we have as a result of the second Vatican Council to wherever Roman Catholics are present and to help engage in dialogues to help overcome the theological conflicts that are at the root of all divisions. Our role is to promote Christian unity towards the goal of visible unity.

John Radano, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

3: providing an entry point into the ecumenical movement. Just over half of the membership of larger CWCs are members of the WCC and therefore they see that they have an important role to foster ecumenical engagement with those who are not

Just under half aren't members of WCC either because of their theology or because they are so small. WARC provides an opportunity to bring them on board ecumenically.

Setri Nyomi WARC

For smaller CWCs, this role is even more important. For example, only 3 of the 96 national Mennonite churches belong to the WCC. The General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council noted

REC provides a safe entry point for our members into the ecumenical world.

Richard van Houten, REC

4: adding their 'truth' to others. For example;

We do not have a corner on the truth but we have a truth that can be added to others. What Disciples stand for at our best is an absolute commitment to the ecumenical- we don't do anything on our own that can be done ecumenically. Part of our role is to bear witness to the value of the ecumenical movement itself.

Robert Welsh, DECC

5: bringing their area of expertise or speciality

The Church of the Brethren provides a voice that is deeply concerned about the proliferation of violence as a justifiable way to resolve conflict.

Stan Noffsinger, Church of the Brethren

WARC is very intentional about ensuring there are strong theological reflections undergirding our actions. Because we have a more homogeneous constituency than WCC, this is easier for us to offer, but can be drawn on by WCC.

Setri Nyomi, WARC

3.4.2 Other Initiatives Towards Unity

A number of other initiatives aimed at promoting unity are also occurring across denominations and in some cases across countries.

Within Europe there are two such initiatives. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (formally known as the Leuenberg Fellowship) came into being in 1973 when the 'Agreement between Reformation Churches in Europe' was signed. The signatories of the Leuenberg Agreement, now counting 103,

'grant one another a pulpit and table fellowship on the basis of the common understanding of the gospel as expounded in the Leuenberg

Agreement. They commit themselves to common witness and service at local, regional and European levels and to continuing theological work'.¹⁸

The Porvoo Common Statement and Declaration is the outcome of dialogue between 4 Anglican Churches and 8 Nordic and Baltic Churches which took place from 1989-92. These churches have common histories, 'are all Episcopal churches and almost all of them are the national church and the continuing manifestation in its own land of the historic (western) Catholic Church'.¹⁹

Within the USA, Churches Uniting in Christ brings together nine Christian communions that have pledged to live more closely together in expressing their unity in Christ and to combat racism together. Each church has committed itself to working towards the day when ministers are authorised to serve and lead worship, when invited, in each others' Communion.

3.4.3 International Ecumenical Organisations

The group of organisations referred to as 'international ecumenical organisations' are perhaps the most diverse of any group of actors in the ecumenical movement. Organisations with a focus on youth have thus been dealt with separately.

3.4.3.1 Youth Organisations

4 organisations with a focus on young people were interviewed in this Study. Three are global bodies (YMCA, World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), Syndesmos) with the fourth being the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE). The YMCA, WSCF, and EYCE are all ecumenical groups while Syndesmos aims to be a 'bond of unity' (in Greek 'Syndesmos') between Orthodox youth groups around the world.

The YMCA is one of the oldest ecumenical organisations. The first YMCA was established in England in 1844. Participants at its first International Conference in Paris in 1855 stated

Here we are, an Episcopalian, a Methodist, a Baptist and a Congregationalist- four believers but a single faith in Christ. Forward together!²⁰

It was established intentionally as a lay Christian movement which sought unity amongst Christians. Today the YMCA is found in 125 different countries and has 40 million members. Within each country, the YMCA has developed differently. For example, in the USA it is primarily viewed as a

¹⁸ <http://lkg.jalb.de>

¹⁹ <http://www.porvoochurches.org>

²⁰ Shaha, B *The YMCA as a Lay, Christian, Ecumenical Movement*. Paper written for the YMCA.

‘swim and gym club’ whereas in Bangladesh where the church is very divided, the YMCA is a major meeting place for Christians to gather.

John Mott, who was active in the early years of the YMCA was instrumental in founding WSCF in 1895. WSCF works specifically with students and today there are has 106 national Student Christian Movements.

The EYCE was formed in 1968 to encourage Christian youth movements to work towards the unity of all Christians. EYCE believes that bringing people together is the best way to foster mutual understanding between different Christian denominations and traditions and therefore focuses on ecumenical training around various issues. Its members are national ecumenical youth councils and denominational youth bodies in countries where there is no ecumenical council.

Through WSCF, Orthodox young people met each other and in 1953, decided to establish Syndesmos. Today it is a federation of 122 youth movements and theological schools in 43 different countries.

The primary focus of Syndesmos is fostering unity amongst Orthodox youth. EYCE, WSCF and YMCA are addressing a range of issues at either global or regional level. This includes HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, gender, the situation in the Middle East, sexuality, globalisation and inter-faith relations. The funding patterns are very diverse however. YMCA is supported by contributions from the regions whereas WSCF and Syndesmos receive most of their funding from European ecumenical development agencies with the latter receiving some contributions also from Orthodox churches and individuals. EYCE receives three-quarters of its funding through the European Youth Foundation.

All of these organisations have an extensive network of ecumenical relationships. At the national level, many YMCAs are associate members of the NCC. There is great variety of relationships between NCCs and Student Christian Movements. While some are part of the ecumenical structure, others (eg: SCM Canada) chose to remain outside the body so that they can more easily critique it.

At the regional level, there is a close working relationship between WSCF and the REOs with joint work being undertaken on issues such as leadership development, HIV/AIDS and gender. Syndesmos and EYCE relate closely to CEC (EYCE is an Associate Member) and participate in their events. EYCE coordinates youth stewards for CEC as required.

All youth organisations spoke of a helpful working relationship with the WCC through their youth desk, but also through particular programmes such as International Affairs and Economic Justice. The YMCA noted the joint work that had been undertaken by the YMCA, YWCA, Pontifical Council and WCC for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

These youth organisations are facing a number of similar issues. Funding was a major concern for all of them. WSCF was experiencing some particular challenges:

There is a tension because partners want to fund programmes which are about development whereas WSCF's priorities may be student conferences, providing space for biblical reflection and debating issues such as globalisation.

Lawrence Brew WSCF

Another issue was how to work with a diverse membership regarding subjects like the war on Iraq and sexuality.

3.4.3.2 Other International Ecumenical Organisations

Besides the 4 youth organisations, 5 other international ecumenical organisations were interviewed. Each of these organisations has a particular focus:

- ACT International (Action by Churches Together) brings together member churches of the LWF and WCC to provide a coordinated response to emergency situations
- the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) enables churches and their related organisations to be effective advocates for a more just, peaceful and sustainable world
- the Ecumenical News International (ENI) is an independent news agency providing news on religious, ecumenical and humanitarian affairs to both secular and church media
- World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) focuses on communication, in particular the democratisation of communications and supporting communication for human dignity
- the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund (ECLOF) makes fair credit widely available for poor and excluded groups

Three of the five organisations (ENI, ACT and EAA) have been established in the last 10 years. ECLOF, like many other development agencies, was established at the end of the second world war to provide grants to rebuild churches in Europe. WACC was established in 1968. ENI, ACT and EAA are also similar in that they have arisen out of various church related organisations' desire to work more closely together. For example, ENI is a joint venture of WCC, WARC, LWF and CEC whereas the WCC and LWF are the parents of ACT.

All 5 organisations have a close working relationship with the WCC. 4 are listed in the WCC Yearbook 2003 as ‘Ecumenical Bodies Structurally Related to the WCC’ while the 5th (WACC) is an ‘international ecumenical organisation’. However, their work includes many churches outside the WCC membership. ECLOF works with all churches, including Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and also with people of other faiths. The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, in having ‘participants’ rather than ‘members’ has attempted to be as inclusive as possible. Participants at a gathering EAA held prior to the recent AIDS Conference in Bangkok were intentionally drawn equally from 3 sectors; Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and ‘WCC traditional partners’. However, participation from the Orthodox churches is still limited with only one Orthodox church amongst the list of participants. ENI is also trying to be ‘truly ecumenical’;

People see us as the WCC’s news agency but we don’t want this. We are trying to be truly ecumenical. At least 30% of our news relates to the Roman Catholic community.

Peter Kenny, ENI

Caritas, the Catholic agency, is an observer on the ACT Emergency Committee and works jointly with ACT on a number of programmes (for example, in Ethiopia and Sudan).

Relationships between ecumenical organisations and other networks vary according to context and focus. For example, ACT has little working relationship with CCA, but works closely with MECC because of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Iraq. WACC has undertaken a number of workshops with REOs and is working closely with EAA. EAA’s participants include a number of CWCs as well as REOs, sub-regional fellowships and NCCs.

Funding is a concern for each of the organisations. Church-related agencies provide the majority of funding for ACT, EAA and WACC. WACC has been informed that a major funder is halving its grant over the next 5 years and contributions to ENI have been steadily decreasing. ECLOF was only able to meet 50% of its requests for loans last year (although 86% of new loans are met by repayments on other loans).

3.4.4 The World Council of Churches

The General Secretary and one of the Officers were interviewed separately as part of the Study but their responses have been combined for this section.

History

In 1937, church leaders agreed to establish a World Council of Churches, but its official organization was deferred by the outbreak of the second world

war until August 1948, when representatives of 147 churches assembled in Amsterdam to constitute the WCC.

Aims

The aim of the WCC is to pursue the goal of the visible unity of the Church. It calls the churches to

'deepen the fellowship of Christian churches and communities so they may see in one another authentic expressions of the "one holy, catholic and apostolic church".... The aim is not to build a global "super-church", nor to standardize styles of worship.

WCC Website²¹

Membership

As of January 2004, 342 churches were members of WCC. Together, these churches have a total of around 550 million members (though it is important to note that different churches have differing ways of calculating membership numbers). Member churches come from more than 120 countries on all continents and from virtually all Protestant and Orthodox Christian traditions. A majority of member churches now come from the South.

Member churches must have at least 25 000 members although associate membership is given to those which have at least 10 000 members.

While the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, it has worked closely with the Council for more than three decades and sends representatives to all major WCC conferences as well as to its Central Committee meetings and Assemblies. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity appoints 12 representatives to the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and cooperates with the WCC to prepare resource materials for local congregations and parishes to use during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Programmes

WCC programmes relate to the Council's five "historic" themes: faith and order; mission and ecumenical formation; justice, peace and creation; international affairs, peace and human security; and diakonia and solidarity. Programme teams relate to each of these areas with additional teams addressing 'relationships' (church and ecumenical relations as well as interreligious relations and dialogue).

The WCC also has a number of other special programmes including the Decade to Overcome Violence, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme

²¹ www,wcc-coe.org/wcc/who

in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), a focus on Africa and the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS initiative in Africa (EHAIA). A Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC was also established at the Harare Assembly in 1998. The WCC also has an ecumenical institute at Bossey and an extensive library.

Current priorities, as articulated by the two people interviewed, fall under 3 broad headings:

- 1: The search for visible unity
- 2: Facing the challenges of our times, including globalisation, HIV/AIDS, violence against women, climate change and conflict
- 3: Inter-religious issues; not only dialogue but how people actually live together in diverse communities.

WCC needs to grapple with issues like how we live together as human beings where we feel responsible to each other so the fullness of life can be reached by the majority of people.

Sam Kobia, WCC

The WCC Financial Report 2003 noted that 205 people work for WCC of whom 166 are ‘core staff’ (with fixed contracts) and 39 ‘non-core (including consultants, temporary staff, interns and volunteers). While most staff are based in Geneva, there are small offices in New York (including a United Nations Liaison Office), Eastern Europe, the Pacific, and the Middle East.

Finances

Income has decreased steadily in recent years. In 1999, WCC had an income of CHF58.8 million compared with CHF47.2 million in 2003. Contributions in 2003, including membership, totalled CHF 40.2 million (85% of total income) while CHF 7 million (15% of total income) was generated from rental income, book sales and investments. Of WCC's ‘contributions income’ in 2003 (CHF 39.8 million), 85% came from Europe and 14% from North America. The main contributing countries were Germany (37%), the Nordic countries (14%), USA (11%) and the Netherlands (11%)²². Of the top 20 funding partners for programmatic work, 63% came from ecumenical development agencies and 37% from member churches²³.

Issues Facing WCC

WCC is facing a number of internal issues including its reliance on a relatively small group of agencies and churches for its funding. Concern was

²² World Council of Churches *Financial Report 2003*

²³ Figures obtained from WCC finance staff.

also expressed that the WCC is trying to do too much with too few staff resulting in workloads being too heavy.

A report on the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches was received by the Central Committee in 2002 which will lead to significant changes within the WCC. A consensus style of decision making is to be adopted and changes made to common prayer at WCC gatherings so that it is clearly identified as either 'confessional' or 'interconfessional'. The membership criteria will be increased to 50 000 with a new criteria of 'churches in association with WCC' to sit alongside 'churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC'. Churches would be accepted as joining the fellowship at a meeting of the Central Committee rather than waiting for the next Assembly.

A number of people interviewed mentioned the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation. While there is some anxiety as to how such changes will impact on the WCC, overall, the outcome of the Commission is viewed as positive, 'presenting a model for talking through difficulties without walking away'.

The whole notion of consensus forming has much to offer- not just for how ecumenical bodies should live together but how a whole church can live together rather than polarising each other.

Member of the Special Commission

The Role of the WCC

While WCC's formal 'purpose and function' are set out in its Constitution, those interviewed see it as having the following roles:

- 1: to be a space where the largest and most diverse group of churches come together
 - 2: to convene, coordinate and provide cohesion in the ecumenical movement
 - 3: to interpret the sign of the times and articulate what it means and how WCC should respond
 - 4: to mediate between different parts of the ecumenical movement or in the wider society as required
 - 5: to be a credible global church body to relate to other global organisations.
- How others perceive the role of WCC is covered in section 4.6.

4 Issues for Consideration

This rich panopoly of actors in the global ecumenical movement raises many issues. The following section draws out the major themes and issues raised in the 65 interviews and highlights the areas that require further discussion.

4.1: Do We Share a Common Vision?

The WCC's Vancouver Assembly (1983) spoke of a 'eucharistic vision' which

unites our two profoundest ecumenical concerns; the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and destiny of the human community.

The mission or purpose statements of NCCs and REOs tend to reflect these two strands of ecumenism;

....Together, the churches work to promote the unity of the Church and to present a common Christian witness to the people and institutions of Europe.

Website of the Conference of European Churches²⁴

The Council promotes unity of witness and outreach to the people of Hong Kong.

Shing-yit Eric So, Hong Kong Christian Council

The larger Christian World Communions which undertake programmatic work have similar mission statements

The LWF confesses one holy, catholic and apostolic church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world. LWF acts on behalf of its member churches in areas of common interest such as communication, ecumenical and interfaith relationships, human rights, humanitarian assistance, theology and the various aspects of mission and development.

Website of the Lutheran World Federation²⁵

The aims of the Alliance (WARC) are to
-strengthen the unity and witness of Reformed churches
-to interpret and reinterpret the Reformed tradition
-to work for peace, economic and social justice, human rights and the integrity of the environment
-to promote fully inclusive community

²⁴ <http://www.cec-kek.org>

²⁵ <http://www.lutheranworld.org>

-to further dialogue with other Christian communions and other religions

Website of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches²⁶

However, the tension between the two aspects on ecumenism is widely recognised within the movement. The WCC Policy Document *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision* (1997) notes

*But the effort to integrate these two Biblical visions (John 17:21 and Ephesians 1:10) has been challenged by a continuing tension and sometimes antagonism between those who advocate the primacy of the social dimension of ecumenism and those who advocate the primacy of spiritual or ecclesial ecumenism.*²⁷

Some organisations, for example agencies and some international ecumenical organisations, have been established primarily to deal with issues of social justice rather than the quest for unity. Their mission statements highlight their work being rooted in the gospel, supported by the churches to advocate justice, human rights and the dignity of all. On the other hand, smaller CWCs are more likely to put the primary emphasis on building unity within their own Confession and with other Confessional bodies.

Some NCCs are working hard to keep the two aspects in balance. For example, the Canadian Council of Churches is very careful and intentional in balancing its two Commissions (Faith and Witness and Justice and Peace). Each Commission gets the same amount of time to report to the Board, has the same amount of money and the same staffing allocation.

The Churches Together model being developed in the USA alongside the NCCCUSA seems partly a response to this tension;

Christian Churches Together has some potential because it includes all the family of faith, but it is able to do it because they have said that they won't be political or do programmes or outreach.

General Secretary, CWC

There is little doubt that the tension between the two aspects of ecumenism is exacerbated by limited financial resources with agencies being able to fund much of the justice/ programmatic work while funding for unity issues is more difficult to locate.

Despite these tensions, those interviewed were very clear that they were part of an ecumenical movement which was much broader than themselves.

²⁶ <http://www.warc.ch>

²⁷ WCC *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches* 1997 p 10-11

While some put their emphasis on unity and others on witness, they all wanted to participate in this movement and were clear about what their role is in the wider movement.

What was not so clear, however, is how the ecumenical vision of unity of the church and healing of the world translates today. A number of people noted the need for a new ecumenical vision.

We ought to have a vision out of which comes structures and organisations- but the problem is that there are so many visions.

General Secretary, CWC

In summary, it seems that we have the potential for developing a common vision for the ecumenical movement in the 21st century. There is broad understanding of the two strands of ecumenism, a desire to be part of the wider ecumenical movement and clarity over the particular contribution which each player is able to offer.

Question for Discussion: Can we develop a common vision for the work of the whole of the ecumenical movement which is relevant for the 21st Century and owned by the various actors?

4.2. Are the Churches Committed to Working Together?

One of the greatest challenges however, is whether the churches are committed to working together for a common vision. While ecumenical organisations themselves (whether they be NCCs or agencies) and global confessional bodies may desire to work together for the sake of unity and healing of the world, is there the same commitment from churches who are the very base of the ecumenical movement?

For some churches, the answer is a very loud ‘Yes’. Promoting ecumenism is central to their work, their policies stipulate that they will not undertake any work on their own that could be done ecumenically and they give priority to supporting ecumenical structures and instruments. On the whole, however, those interviewed had another experience of the church.

The only difficulty is that churches don't want to work together. One church proposes a good thing and others don't want to join in.

Jitka Krausová Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic

What was described as ‘denominationalism’ or ‘confessionalism’ is being felt in all corners of the world.

Some of the denominations are now retreating into their own family church which defeats the purpose of ecumenism.

Valamotu Palu, Pacific Conference of Churches

Churches are going back into their denominations. Why? Because as one Bishop said, we've never taken seriously coming together. It has been pressurised by the lack of resources. If ecumenical movements don't serve money, they don't see the need of fellowship. They can get money through the Anglicans, the Roman Catholics and so on- which undermines our work.

David Modiega, Botswana Christian Council

Denominations are starting to come up again- particularly at the national level.

Forbes Matonga, Christian Care Zimbabwe

People talked of a growing commitment to confessional bodies and less to the ecumenical; a desire to preserve and enhance the identity of the confessional body rather than risk their own identity; of competition between confessional and ecumenical bodies.

A major problem is that LWF and WCC are competing- as soon as WCC held a consultation on HIV/AIDS, LWF did exactly the same a year later.

General Secretary, Agency

This ambivalence towards commitment to the ecumenical vision is felt particularly by ecumenical organisations in times of crisis or controversy.

Churches have wanted to be part of the building project, but sometimes when there are political issues, economic issues or ethnic issues, churches have wanted to maintain some distance.

Hermen Shastri, Council of Churches of Malaysia

When things get difficult, the Staff becomes BCC rather than the churches.

David Modiega, Botswana Christian Council

The experience of the Hong Kong Christian Council is somewhat different however.

Pastors, when they think of wider theological reflection on social issues, will think of us. When they think of who can represent the Christian Church in Hong Kong, they will think of the HKCC. When a crisis comes, we are always asked to give our response as a collective expression.

Shing-yit Eric So, Hong Kong Christian Council

Perhaps ironically, HIV/AIDS has led to greater cooperation between churches in some places.

For a long time there wasn't much cooperation because of competition and 'stealing of sheep' but since HIV/AIDS, we have

had to work together. We have now agreed that we will work together in emergency situations. If the Government wants to speak to us, we go together.

David Modiega, Botswana Christian Council

For younger people, their particular 'denomination' does not seem so relevant. Many will attend a church which 'fits' their theology or offers particular programmes irrespective of the denomination.

I have a sense of increasing interest and participation of young people in faith related and ecumenical activities, particularly campaigning- but also of spirituality. For young people, denominational hard lines are irrelevant. If this could be fostered, it could make a big difference.

Director, International Ecumenical Organisation

The question of ownership of ecumenical structures is being considered by a number of organisations. One response is for greater participation of church leaders in the decision making bodies of ecumenical organisations. However the flip-side of this development has been the lack of participation of women and ecumenically committed lay people.

Despite having had a Decade in Solidarity with Women, the ecumenical movement is still strongly dominated by men. With the move away from lay ecumenical participation and the emphasis being given to 'church leaders' statements, the ecumenical scene looks increasingly male.

Director of Agency

Another response is for an ecumenical organisation to act only if it has the full support of all its member churches. While there is little doubt that this greatly increases the ownership of any statement made or action taken, it does hinder the ecumenical organisation from being able to react quickly. The ecumenical body also loses one of the roles it has taken over the years which is to be a place where churches can commit themselves to a joint action through the ecumenical body which, for various reasons, may have been difficult for the church to undertake in its own right.

Question for discussion: What would our national and global churches look like if we seriously addressed the 'Lund' question: 'Should our Churches not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?' (from Third World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lund 1952).²⁸

²⁸ Tomkins, O (ed) *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order* SCM Press, London 1952

4.3: Do our Current Structures Impede our Potential?

This study has highlighted a number of interrelated areas where the structural relationships between organisations impede rather than enhance the potential of the ecumenical movement.

4.3.1: Participation and Membership

If the ecumenical movement is to be as inclusive as possible, the issue of participation in the ecumenical movement on the one hand, and membership in ecumenical organisations on the other, needs further consideration.

1: An Inclusive Ecumenical Movement

It is widely accepted that the ecumenical movement is much wider than membership of the WCC and includes the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches. And yet, often the ecumenical movement is spoken of as if these churches are outside it.

The tent isn't big enough. Until we find some way that Roman Catholics and Pentecostals belong, it is nonsense to talk of ecumenism'.

General Secretary, CWC

The issue is whether the organisation that calls itself the most representative ecumenical organisation in the world actually represents the variety of Christian traditions and variety of positions in the world without the participation of the Roman Catholics and the evangelical churches. A true expression would be a Forum that fully represents the families: Protestant/ Pentecostal/ Roman Catholic/ Orthodox. It is not easy to establish dialogue between these 4 groups of Christians but it is dangerous of the ecumenical movement to turn into a club of liberal churches dependent on Europe and America.

Representative of Church

John Radano of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity commented

In some of the Reconfiguration material, they talk about getting Roman Catholics and Pentecostals more involved- but we are already involved. Just because we are not part of the WCC doesn't mean we are not part of the ecumenical movement'.

A greater openness to broader participation was often cited in response to the question 'What are the positive changes happening in the global ecumenical movement?'

The appeal for dialogue with Pentecostals and Charismatics is being heard.

Karl Johnson Jamaica Baptist Church

Evangelicals and Pentecostals have been a very tiny minority and there was a concern that those who spoke up would get hushed. Now questions are able to be raised.

Richard van Houten The Reformed Ecumenical Council

There is a very close working relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. They have put their life into the ecumenical and we have accepted them as part of the family.

Apimeleki Qilio Fiji Council of Churches

The proposed Global Christian Forum which will bring together WCC member churches with the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches is seen as a positive way forward.

The Global Christian Forum is a very useful initiative because its strength lies in that it is trying to bring people in at the 'affect' level. It is not trying to have a Roundtable discussion or do mission planning.

General Secretary, CWC

However, some concern was also expressed at the implications of this broader participation for ecumenical organisations. The question was asked 'at what cost do we achieve greater participation and will it prevent ecumenical organisations from being prophetic?'

When the Roman Catholic Church joined, programmes were reduced and staff dismissed. We're facing some major issues in our country but the NCC won't be able to agree to make a statement. One has to say- maybe we went ecumenical at the wrong level.

Church representative

2: Increasing Participation

This study has highlighted that the broadest level of ecumenical participation is at the national level with the Roman Catholic church, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches belonging to a number of NCCs. However, less than half of the members of NCCs are members of the REOs and the percentage who were members of WCC is even smaller. While insufficient research has been undertaken in this study to have an exact figure, it is estimated that no more than 25% of churches who are members of NCCs are also members of WCC. In some cases it is much less (eg: Botswana where only 2 of the churches who are member of BCC are members of the WCC).

This raises a number of questions:

- (a) how are the NCCs engaging their entire membership in the regional and global issues being addressed by REOs and the WCC?

- (b) are the global ecumenical bodies such as WCC (but also others such as ACT and EAA) relating to NCCs in such a way as to promote participation by all members of NCCs and not just members of WCC.

One participant questioned whether NCCs can become the means by which churches belong to the WCC.

Most churches which are members of the NCC don't belong to the WCC (often because they are too small). It would be interesting to explore how much NCCs could represent the range of churches globally.

General Secretary, NCC

A similar issue exists in relation to Christian World Communions. As previously noted, it is rare for a CWC to have more than half of its members being members of the WCC and for some (eg: the Mennonite World Conference) it is only 5%. The primary reasons given for not joining WCC were size (member churches have to have over 25 000 members) and theology (the perception that WCC is theologically liberal). Many CWCs already see part of their role as exposing non-WCC member churches to broader ecumenical issues but it raises the questions:

- (a) how can such a role be formalised so that the work and concerns of the WCC, REOs and NCCs can be channelled through CWCs?
- (b) how can the voices of non-WCC members be heard in the broader ecumenical family?
- (c) what specifically is the role of CWCs in promoting ecumenism?

Over the years, WCC has developed various practices in relating to NCCs and CWCs as well as to its member churches. But it is not clear how formal these are. While the WCC Rules note that NCCs, REOs and CWCs will be provided with copies of all general communications sent to member churches of the WCC, there seems less clarity and standardisation over issues such as invitations to participate on Commissions or Consultations and whether these are dealt with by NCCs, CWCs or sent directly to member churches. One CWC noted with some joy that they had been asked for the first time to select people from their Communion to participate in a Decade to Overcome Violence event. CWCs had been asked to assist with the process to ensure representation across all Confessional bodies.

Irrespective of whether or not churches become members of WCC, there is huge potential for the WCC, REOs and other ecumenical actors to be far more inclusive by drawing on the wider membership of NCCs and CWCs and not simply focusing on member churches.

Question for Discussion: How can those churches whose only involvement in ecumenism is either through participation in their NCC or CWC be

encouraged to be participate further in the ecumenical movement? How can other actors in the ecumenical movement ensure that they include these churches in their work?

3: The numerous levels of belonging

A further issue regarding membership is the pressure placed on the national churches who do belong to the various levels of ecumenical bodies. Many of WCC's member churches will belong to their NCC, REO, WCC and CWC. They may also be members of the Council for World Mission (or another global mission agency), the national ecumenical development agency, other ecumenical bodies at the national level, ACT International and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. Some of the European Churches are also members of the Porvoo family or the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe.

This can create a number of problems:

- (a) the church's ability to absorb the programmes of the various organisations into the life of the church
- (b) the church's ability to participate in the life of the organisations
- (c) the church's ability to fund the various levels

When the church says it's a member of 15 different organisations, there are members who do not appreciate this participation. They say that the church lives in the ecumenical circle and doesn't take care of anything else. So this diversity brings to us a lot of work.

Church representative from the South

Small churches in particular struggle with funding.

We fund all the different ecumenical organisations – national, regional and global – at this stage, but it is going to stop. It is quite hard, because they each don't ask for much- but when you have 7 or 8 of them to fund, it becomes difficult. Increasingly we are having to ask- what are we getting for our financial contribution and is it making a difference at congregational level?

Church representative from the North

One of the churches in the South noted

It isn't too difficult for us because we sometimes use our benefactors from Europe to pay directly for us.

Church representative from the South

There are some attempts within the ecumenical family to address this question of 'levels of belonging' and they are discussed in the next section.

Questions for Discussion: Do we need to reduce the 'levels of belonging' for member churches. If so, how is this best achieved?

4.3.2 Structural Relationships

Conciliar Bodies

One of the major issues highlighted in this study is the structural relationship between NCCs, REOs and the WCC. Currently, each organisation has its own members, governance structures, policies and work programmes. While attempts are made at networking through annual gatherings or liaison meetings, the basic structural relationship does not lead itself to cooperative patterns of working and there is great potential for duplication.

There is no reflection from national to regional to global. People who go to WCC conferences aren't working at regional or local levels. Because WCC selects member churches, you have different people bringing different issues from the key issues being taken to the sub-regional fellowships. When WCC speaks, it should be based on reflections at all levels.

General Secretary, Sub-Regional Fellowship

If you are an ecumenical body and you are wanting to strengthen the whole ecumenical body, then why do you concentrate on just member churches and overlook national and regional ecumenical organisations?

General Secretary, REO

Some highlighted that there needed to be a two-way flow of information.

Whatever is happening at the global level- or regional level- needs to be channelled right down to the grass-roots level wherever you are. It is one of the joys of the ecumenical movement. When things are being celebrated in Geneva or South Africa, they should be celebrated in my own home. Everything should be flowing 2 ways.

Apimeleki Qilio Fiji Council of Churches

One of the questions to be addressed is whether greater cooperation can be achieved through more intentional planning of activities with NCCs or REOs or whether a more radical readjustment of structures is required.

In particular, the relationship between REOs and the WCC was questioned.

Should CEC not be the European grouping within the WCC and responsible for the ecumenical work on Europe. While this would work for Europe, it may not work for all other REOs.

General Secretary, NCC

Currently there is competition between WCC and REOs. If the REOs were chapters or branches of WCC, then they wouldn't have to compete for resources.

Director of Agency

We have been encouraging NCCs, REOs, sub-regional fellowships, WCC and agencies to come together. It is not good to have structures at different levels who are taking up the same challenges. WCC needs to design a process to bring people together.

Director of Agency

The All Africa Conference of Churches and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland are currently exploring how there can be greater coherence between the different levels of ecumenical actors. They are set out in some detail here as they provide a model that is worth considering with regards to the relationship from national to sub-regional to regional and then global.

All Africa Conference of Churches

The Report written by the panel of 12 and currently being considered by AACC's member churches (see Section 3.3 above) notes that

the need for a cohesive movement that works in harmony and interdependently with each participating organ adding value and synergy to every aspect of life of the ecumenical movement in the continent... This process is not led by an attempt at one organic structure for the ecumenical movement in Africa. The emphasis rather is on the need for healthy inter-dependent relationships based on complementary mission and action among all the ecumenical bodies.²⁹

The paper defines roles for each level.

1. AACC would synchronise ecumenical work in the continent, develop collective theologizing processes for Africa and undertake continental advocacy.
2. The role of sub-regional fellowships would be to enable common regional action, interpreting socio-political and economic dynamics in the region for the benefit of the churches, enabling regional advocacy, keeping the flow of information between the AACC and NCCs on issues that call for action and capacity building of NCCs.
3. NCCs would remain the strongest level of the ecumenical movement.

²⁹ AACC *The Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement in Africa* 2004 (a discussion paper prepared by 'The Panel of 12')

NCCs should be given room to continue to be the key leaders in focused ecumenical mission as per call of their contexts.

The Paper outlines the structural relationships as follows:

1: The entry point for the churches into the ecumenical movement would be at the NCC level. This would then lead to an automatic membership at sub-regional and AACC levels. Only in churches where there is no NCC should member churches apply directly to the AACC for membership.

2: This in turn would require that a process is developed whereby member churches will pay one subscription fee that would give them full membership in the ecumenical family in Africa.

3: The representation of the churches at sub-regional and AACC level should be so planned that it is direct, but processed in an agreeable manner through the NCCs. In other words, the fact that all these structures belong and represent the churches should never be compromised under any circumstances.

4: Sub-regional fellowships should effectively become a regional office of the AACC, chaired by the regional vice president of the AACC, with the regional members of the AACC General Committee serving as part of the committee that serves the sub-region (with further members added from the region), the General Secretaries and presidents of the NCCs in the region and the General Secretary of AACC being ex-officio members.

5: The General Secretaries of the sub-region will be one of the Deputy General Secretaries of the AACC financed by the AACC and participating fully in the Secretariat of the AACC.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

In Britain and Ireland, churches belong to a Council of Churches in their own nation (England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland) as well as to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). The relationship between these bodies is currently being explored for a number of reasons:

1: churches have a desire to reduce the layers of ecumenism they have to relate to. The issue of funding was addressed two years ago so that churches now only make a single contribution which is then divided between the 5 organisations.

2: to replace the current rigid structure with a more flexible structure that allows the shifting of resources.

3: there is a real confusion especially in England as to who does what, why and how.

The changes being explored would involve CTBI becoming owned by, and the agency of, the 4 national bodies. Staff would be employed under a single employment arrangement and a Moderator appointed who is a figure head for all 5 bodies. Policy direction would be made together for all 5 bodies by a meeting of leadership across the 4 nations and the bodies would be governed by a Committee comprising representatives of each of the 4 nations.

In summary, the key structural issues between NCCs, sub-regional fellowships, REOs and the WCC which need to be addressed are:

- 1: the lack of formal structural relationship between the different levels
- 2: the levels of membership which is putting pressure on some national churches
- 3: the need to clarify the particular roles of each body and assign an appropriate division of tasks so as to avoid duplication and increase effectiveness
- 4: the issue of governance, ensuring that those who participate in the governance of the World Council of Churches are working closely with the national and regional ecumenical bodies.

Questions for Discussion: What is the ideal structural relationship between NCCs, sub-regional fellowships, REOs and the WCC? Are there aspects of the work being undertaken by AACCC and CTBI which can assist our reflections?

Christian World Communions

There are difficulties in the relationship between WCC and CWCs which arise from a number of issues:

- 1: Historic: the decision when the WCC was established to have national churches as members rather than confessional bodies. The impact of that decision is still felt by a number of CWCs today in meetings of the WCC where a member church from one country is able to have a voice and a vote but the CWC which represents the world wide body of churches has no voice nor vote.

The Membership Study Group of the WCC recently looked at alternatives of either confessional or regional membership, but rejected both as leading to a diminished sense of the constituency's ownership of the work of the Council.³⁰

³⁰ WCC 'Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC', in *the ecumenical review*, Vol 55, no 1 Jan 2003

2: Lack of structural relationship: While the World Council of Churches ‘recognizes the role of Christian World Communions or world confessional bodies in the ecumenical movement’³¹ there is a lack of structural relationship between them. One CWC described the interactions between CWCs and the WCC as ‘courtesies’.

3: Misperceptions of each other

At different times there have been different understandings of the relationship. From the WCC side, there is the feeling that CWCs aren’t promoting unity and are only promoting their own identity. On the CWC side, there is the feeling that WCC doesn’t understand their realities. These issues are then further complicated by personalities...

General Secretary, CWC

4: Duplication of Programmatic Work

A number of respondents (including NCCs, REOs, agencies and CWCs) cited the most significant duplication in the ecumenical movement occurring between WCC and CWCs.

I see WARC, LWF and the Anglican Communion all doing their own programming that could be done together through WCC.

General Secretary, CWC

A major obstacle is the 3 main ecumenical institutions (WCC, LWF WARC) maintaining themselves as separate organisations with only a couple of examples of successful collaboration (ACT, ENI). I don’t know how many Committees I have been on that have called for greater cooperation, but nothing significant changes.

Church representative

In particular, people were concerned at the duplication between WCC and LWF.

ACT and the WCC started to discuss Genetically Modified Organisms. Three months later, LWF started the same. All of them are inviting us into their circles. LWF should restructure itself to a minimum and cooperate with WCC. If WCC is initiating some advocacy work, then they should join it.

Another imbalanced structure is the fact that WCC gave up its own emergency aid department, but LWF didn’t- so now you have ACT and LWS. Now you have LWS starting its own appeals bilaterally- not even through ACT.

Director, Agency

³¹ www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/rules-e.html

How do we sustain both WCC and LWF. They duplicate even though they are in the same building. It is not affordable.

General Secretary, REO

There is some debate over whether two organisations working on the same issue is duplication or specificity with CWCs producing materials that are more tailored and appropriate for their audiences.

We have to be careful before we talk about duplication even if we are all working on it. For example, CWCs will work very directly with leadership and congregations. We can do this more directly than organisations such as WCC which gives us a vantage point. We should be seen as complementary.

General Secretary, CWC

For a number of years LWF, WARC and WCC have been meeting together in an 'In House Staff Group' to look at how they can avoid duplication. They are currently examining the work they are each undertaking on globalisation, violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

One of the issues which needs to be explored is at what stage cooperation is taking place. Once an organisation has decided to embark on a new programme and has allocated funding to it and employed staff, it is often too late for working cooperatively. Recognising that each organisation has its own governing body which sets priorities and direction, it may be that some sort of agreement needs to be reached between the organisations that new programmes will not be developed without first consulting each other and exploring whether this is a programme which is best undertaken by one body or whether it could be a joint initiative. Such an agreement would challenge the different organisations as to whether they are genuinely committed to working cooperatively for the benefit of the wider ecumenical movement.

The General Secretary of WARC also noted the potential for greater cooperation in the area of bilateral dialogues.

Often, we don't compare notes enough. While being in Geneva helps, we need to be more conscious about meeting together. Duplications are evidenced in Assembly themes, in the areas of scholarships and dialogues. While dialogues are probably not currently duplicating, there could be more efficiency eg: if all the Reformation family came together for conversations with either the Roman Catholics or the Pentecostals.

Setri Nyomi, WARC

A number of people interviewed also expressed concern at the lack of coordination between the work of the CWC offices and the WCC office based at the United Nations.

It would seem that the combination of these factors impede the working relationship between CWCs and the WCC. Considering the collective membership of CWCs and the potential for greater participation in ecumenism, it is crucial that this relationship is further examined and consideration given to finding a new structural relationship for CWCs, clearer role definitions and divisions of tasks.

Questions for Discussion: What is the most appropriate structural relationship between WCC and CWCs? Is there work being undertaken by CWCs that would be more effective if done ecumenically?

Other Areas of Duplication

Duplication is not only happening between WCC, REOs and CWCs. Throughout the movement, many different organisations are working on similar themes, often without any reference to each other. Many people mentioned as priorities HIV/AIDS, globalisation, inter-faith issues, violence against women.

A Church in Germany organised an international conference on the environment and the Ecumenical Patriarch was organising a similar Conference. If we could do it together as Christians and as members of the WCC, the expenses would be less, human resources would be less but the message would be stronger.

Benedict Ioannou, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Lack of collaboration has also led to pressure being put on third parties.

EYCE organised a training event on avoiding conflict and inter-religious dialogue. WSCF were also having an inter-religious seminar and both of us wanted to work with the Federation of Muslim Youth. While there is a difference between us and WSCF, it could have been a trilateral event.

Aaro Rytönen Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe

It was also noted that one of the characteristics of society today is that people are less likely to join organisations and more likely to come together to work on particular issues.

There are many coalitions and alliances that are forming based on purpose and function at the global level. People aren't coming together along denominational or geographic lines but rather are forming partnerships for joint action.

General Secretary, CWC

One of the downsides of collaborative work however, can be the loss of visibility. For example, it was noted that there is some concern at the WCC that it is losing its visibility because work previously being done in the name of WCC is now being undertaken in the name of ACT or EAA.

Question for Discussion: In the history of the ecumenical movement, where has our collaboration on issues been most effective? What are the ingredients for successful collaboration and what is preventing us from working together on issues?

4.4: How Can We Overcome the Barriers That Divide Us?

Our division impairs our witness.

General Secretary, CWC

While clarifying vision and streamlining structural relationships are essential, a major challenge facing the ecumenical movement is overcoming the competitive relationships which have developed between actors. Competition was particularly mentioned as being between the regional and global level and also between confessional and ecumenical organisations.

I see it as very territorial. There is not a lot of recognising different roles and not a lot of mutual respect. There is more a spirit of competition than cooperation.

Director of Agency

The ideal relationship would be from national to regional to global- but there are difficulties in relationships caused by power tensions, money politics, problems with different personalities. We talk about representation, participation and transparency but sometimes it seems just political.

General Secretary, REO

Such competition is fuelled by the availability of resources. For example, various ecumenical organisations compete for United Nations funds available for HIV/AIDS programmes.

On an advocacy level, EAA has played an important role bringing us together to work on HIV/AIDS. But in terms of practical action, everyone is doing their own thing- NCCs, REOs, WCC, LWF- it doesn't make any sense.

General Secretary, International Ecumenical Organisation

One possible way forward is to place greater emphasis on ecumenical formation, enabling people to see beyond the vision, mandate and

programmes of their own organisations to the wider vision of the ecumenical movement.

Every ecumenical organisation is primarily concerned about its own issues and concerns. We have to see that we are linked together. It is hard when we are all so overworked to look beyond what we are doing. We need to relate more.

Representative of REO

Promoting an understanding of the vision and values of ecumenism is essential. It cannot be assumed that people working for an ecumenical organisation understand the history, vision and values of the ecumenical movement.

We tend to see more of the ecumenical partners not being inclined to the ecumenical movement. Because they are receiving funds from governments, they are taking up the values of government rather than of the ecumenical movement.

General Secretary, Southern Diaconal Agency

A number of people interviewed noted that ecumenical formation was not only needed by people within their organisations but also in theological institutes where ecumenism is often marginalised and at grass-roots level for lay people.

If the ecumenical movement is to be coherent and effective, it cannot rely only on structures and statements, but also has to develop its human potential. Competition between agencies is less likely if strong personal relationships have been built up between staff members and a common vision and purpose has been fostered.

We need leaders with a big heart and spark for ecumenism. We need ecumenical fire. WCC has talked about how the world has changed and organisations have to change. But structures can only be effective if the people driving them are effective.

Representative of NCC

If a strong ecumenical movement is to be built, the issue of staff turnover also needs to be considered.

In most ecumenical organisations, there is not enough staff turnover. There is a lack of new ideas coming through. The ecumenical movement would be strengthened if people were moving back into their denominations or seminaries and sharing their ecumenical experiences and understanding.

Director, International Ecumenical Organisation

Questions for Discussion: What other processes could be in place so that competitive relationships are avoided? How can we foster stronger personal relationships with each other? How can ecumenical leadership be developed?

4.5: Who Can Fund the Ecumenical Movement?

Funding was a major issue mentioned by most people interviewed.

We are dramatically under-resourced money wise and staff wise. This can lead to communication difficulties and people being frantically overworked. Because in some people's minds, ecumenism is an 'add-on', it makes it much easier to cut resources to ecumenical activities.

General Secretary, REO

Funds are decreasing and are unlikely to increase again because of the decline in the traditional funding base- European and North American churches. We have to find ways of working together that don't involved huge expenditure.

General Secretary, NCC

While NCCs are struggling to find resources from within each country, REOs and global bodies are significantly impacted by funding decisions made by a relatively small group of agencies.

As previously noted, the limited mandates of many agencies result in them being able to fund only specific programmes of ecumenical organisations.

This impacts on organisations in a number of ways;

Activities are undertaken on the basis of when resources are available which can make priority setting difficult. We can get money for programmes but we can't get it for core costs.

General Secretary, Sub-Regional Fellowship

It is difficult time-wise to undertake the programmatic work as well as fundraise.

General Secretary, Sub-Regional Fellowship

It also impacts on the work of the WCC.

Funding for much of the ecumenical infrastructure comes from a small group of agencies that have a relationship to the churches but are not directly part of the church. While they are very loyal to the Church, they have their own mandate and agenda. In pure money terms, they have the greatest influence. Every time we have tried to adjust priorities, it fails to make any difference because the bulk of the funds comes from the agencies.

This has more influence than all of the Consultations because agencies can only fund certain things. We look at things that are most important for the Council- such as Global Christian Forum, Interfaith work and the understanding of Mission work in Faith and

Order, but if you look at the money, they are constantly marginalised.

Church Representative

While none of the agencies interviewed expressed any desire to be setting the overall priorities of the WCC, the reality is that their funding does influence what programmes are able to be developed. This has led to complaints about the agencies and accusations that they are in fact setting the priorities.

There is a growing question about whether international aid agencies have a non-democratic decision making place in CEC and WCC. There is a situation where WCC will become an umbrella for the aid agencies- which will then become the centre of decision making because they are the donors. There needs to be more accountability, transparency, coordination between the agencies and the institutional ecumenical movement.

Church Representative

An unresolved issue is the growing autonomy, strength and financial resources of the ecumenical agencies.

Director of Agency

We need the WCC to organise the dialogue between agencies and churches as a fair mediator – but it's not happening. Everywhere, everyone is complaining about agencies- many WCC staff are not mediators but are rather fuelling the gap. But WCC needs us- as we have this ongoing relationship with churches in the field of human rights and food security issues. We have many contacts with churches worldwide.

Director of Agency

This mistrust of agencies has been further exacerbated by a number of agencies wanting to form a global platform to increase their coordination and visibility. For some, there are fears that this will direct funds away from existing ecumenical structures and organisations.

A number of the people interviewed were not aware of the level of funding that agencies provide to the global ecumenical movement. Surprise was expressed that the churches themselves were not the major funders of the WCC. In order to overcome misunderstandings and suspicion, it seems important that:

- 1: the structural relationship between agencies and the WCC is clarified
- 2: work is undertaken to promote greater understanding amongst all actors in the ecumenical movement as to who is funding what, why certain programmes are able to be funded while others aren't and what the implications of this are.

3: There are some large European Churches as well as agencies, who are major funders of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organisations. It may be that these churches, and agencies with wider mandates take particular responsibility for funding those parts of the ecumenical movement which others are not able to fund.

Questions for Discussion: What processes can be put in place to promote greater understanding of the role, mandate and funding criteria of the agencies? How do we broaden/ strengthen the funding base of the ecumenical movement in all its facets?

4.6: The Role of the WCC

Participants were asked what they see as the particular role of the WCC. Despite the variety of responses, some strong themes emerged.

1: WCC gives expression to the reality that the body of Christ cannot be divided.

The symbolic role is more important than its reality. It represents that there is one faith which serves one God. What it is, is more important than what it does'.

General Secretary, NCC

2: WCC is a fellowship of churches.

We see the WCC as the 'big family' of churches worldwide. It is a place of meeting of different churches and groups where we learn to relate to each other as brothers and sisters and to go out of our historical/ theological background to see what variety there is.

General Secretary, International Youth Organisation

3: WCC's role is to hold the work of diakonia, mission, ecclesiology and unity together.

We need integration between the areas of unity and justice and peace.

General Secretary, Southern Diaconal Agency

If I know something of the Nigerian Church, it's thanks to WCC!

General Secretary, NCC

4: WCC is an enabler of a common value system.

As agencies, we need the wisdom, insights and dialogue of the churches as they assemble in the WCC as a counter-voice to our own logic.

Director, Agency

5: WCC's role is in global analysis and action.

We look to WCC to provide the global analysis and to cooperate with others to provide fora on issues like climate change and globalization.

General Secretary, REO

6: WCC is the voice of the Christian world.

The political events of the world are unfortunately being attached to faith labels. I want WCC to be able to be the voice of the Christian part of the world.

General Secretary, CWC

7: WCC is facilitator of the ecumenical movement.

....to have a facilitating role; getting groups together, trying to manage the conversation. We don't need a big staff; rather, we need to look at who we can partner with and who we can affirm.

General Secretary, NCC

The WCC can play a role in lifting up all the ecumenical work happening around the world. They have been focused too much on their own programmes rather than lifting up what others are doing. I agree with the direction that WCC be more connecting and less programmatic. The down side is that people don't take seriously organisations that are connecting rather than doing.

General Secretary, CWC

8: WCC is the heart of the ecumenical movement.

I prefer to think of WCC as the heart rather than the centre of the ecumenical; to deliver blood to all parts of its constituency.

Director, Agency

I don't want WCC to be the bosses. It threatens our whole relationship. I'd like WCC to change its attitude; to be more motherly and fatherly to the needs of the whole ecumenical family.

General Secretary, NCC

To have so many different expectations placed on any organisation is not easy. It is particularly difficult for the WCC as it has half the number of staff that it had ten years ago, but the work load and expectations certainly haven't halved.

Pressure of limited resources and a different context demands that WCC works in new ways. This was articulated in the policy document *Common Understanding and Vision* and incorporated into a revised Article 3 of the WCC Constitution.

Article 3 states that

To strengthen the one ecumenical movement, the Council will:

- *nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;*
- *establish and maintain relations with national councils, regional conferences of churches, organizations of Christian World Communions and other ecumenical bodies;*
- *support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels;*
- *facilitate the creation of networks among ecumenical organizations;*
- *work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations.*³²

This Article is particularly important to the discussion on reconfiguration as it acknowledges the many actors in the ecumenical movement and highlights the particular role of WCC in ensuring that there is some coherence within the movement.

A number of people interviewed stated that only WCC can undertake this role and they find it extremely helpful that WCC has opened up the whole question of reconfiguration.

The willingness to review existing structures is very positive. I see it as a courageous move to look at where we want to be.

Representative of Church in South

It is positive that there is a broad conversation about this. I admire the WCC for opening these questions in an official way.

General Secretary, CWC

It is positive that the reconfiguration process is happening so long as there is a real open dialogue between the different partners and openness to listen to each other and meet the requests of different parties and settle different conflicts.

Director, Agency

Question for discussion

Within the myriad of roles WCC has, what are those that only WCC can undertake or that WCC is best positioned to undertake?

³² www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/con-e.html

5 Conclusion

This report indicates that the discussion on reconfiguration is timely. The 20th century witnessed the creation of many innovative ecumenical organisations aimed at bringing the churches together as a sign of the unity we have in Christ and to witness to our broken world. Much has been achieved over that time with the ecumenical movement playing significant roles in parts of the world where conflict, human suffering and division have been prevalent.

As we have turned the corner into the new century, fresh challenges face us; conflicts which are presented as being between faiths, divisions within churches in the South which result from patterns of missionary activity in the last century, chronic poverty exacerbated by patterns of globalisation widening the gap between the rich and the poor, the destruction of God's creation. The list is endless and poses huge challenges for the Christian community.

Should we respond as individual organisations, each with our own mandate and work programme? Or is it possible to envisage new ways of working together and being together?

The process for addressing these questions will shape the outcome and is therefore crucial. It will take time to consider whether we can jointly develop a vision for the whole ecumenical movement which encompasses and is owned by the various actors. Any vision statement will need to address the values which underpin our life together and the way that we will work together.

Special attention needs to be paid to the structural relationships between some organisations, in particular between REOs and the WCC and between CWCs and the WCC. How can greater coherence be achieved between the national, regional and global levels so that the concerns of people in local communities are heard and addressed at whatever level is most appropriate? How can we ensure that global issues which are being addressed by global ecumenical organisations become relevant to local church congregations?

The structural relationship between agencies and the WCC requires clarification. Greater recognition needs to be given to the significant role agencies play in the ecumenical family, not only through funding but also in accompanying churches and other ecumenical organisations in their struggle for justice.

This study highlighted a number of issues (in particular globalisation, HIV/AIDS, inter-faith issues), that are being addressed by a variety of

actors, often in isolation from each other. Can priorities and work programmes be developed jointly rather than attempting to cooperate once these have been set?

There is huge untapped potential within the ecumenical movement. The Global Christian Forum is perceived as an exciting way forward to bring Christians of various traditions together and break down some of the existing barriers. However, there are also churches who are members of NCCs and CWCs but not members of WCC or REOs. If the ecumenical movement is to be as inclusive as possible, we need to look at ways of encouraging the participation, if not the membership, of these churches in other ecumenical programmes and activities.

Membership of governance bodies needs further consideration. Achieving coherence through the national, regional and global structures will remain difficult if each layer continues to have national churches as its prime constituency. Currently organisations such as the WCC Central Committee are not benefiting from the extensive experience of NCCs, REOs and CWCs. Various options could be explored including a limited number of places on Central Committee for representatives from these sectors. Two people interviewed suggested that WCC explore a 'two house system'; one for churches and the other for ecumenical organisations and CWCs.

Redefining roles is essential. Which issues are best addressed at the national, regional or global level? Which tasks are best undertaken ecumenically and where can confessional bodies add extra value? Who has particular expertise in this area? What communication channels do we need to ensure that if one organisation undertakes a particular piece of work, it is owned by and recognised as being part of the work of the whole ecumenical family?

A deliberate decision to be together and to work together is, in the short term, likely to be the more difficult option. There are many issues that need to be addressed and they will take time. It will require that we look beyond our own organisations to the wider ecumenical movement. We may have to 'let go' some of our current ways of working, our programmes and the perceptions that we have developed about each other. It will involve taking risks and will require genuine renewal at all levels

But if the church and broader ecumenical movement are going to be relevant and effective in this century, change must happen. Our current divisions impede our witness as the body of Christ and undermine our effectiveness in working towards the healing of the human community and the earth. As a new generation of people in a new era, it is time to give fresh meaning to the

words spoken by the delegates at the first assembly of the WCC in 1948; 'we intend to stay together'.

Questions for Consideration (from end of each section)

- 1: Can we develop a common vision for the work of the whole of the ecumenical movement which is relevant for the 21st Century and owned by the various actors?
- 2: What would our national and global churches look like if we seriously addressed the 'Lund' question: 'Should our Churches not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?'
- 3: How can those churches whose only involvement in ecumenism is either through participation in their NCC or CWC be encouraged to be participate further in the ecumenical movement? How can other actors in the ecumenical movement ensure that they include these churches in their work?
- 4: Do we need to reduce the 'levels of belonging' for member churches. If so, how is this best achieved?
- 5: What is the ideal structural relationship between NCCs, sub-regional fellowships, REOs and the WCC? Are there aspects of the work being undertaken by AACC and CTBI which can assist our reflections?
- 6: What is the most appropriate structural relationship between WCC and CWCs? Is there work being undertaken by CWCs that would be more effective if done ecumenically?
- 7: In the history of the ecumenical movement, where has our collaboration on issues been most effective? What are the ingredients for successful collaboration and what is preventing us from working together on issues?
- 8: What other processes could be in place so that competitive relationships are avoided? How can we foster stronger personal relationships with each other? How can ecumenical leadership be developed?
- 9: What processes can be put in place to promote greater understanding of the role, mandate and funding criteria of the agencies? How do we broaden/strengthen the funding base of the ecumenical movement in all its facets?
- 10: Within the myriad of roles WCC has, what are those that only WCC can undertake or that WCC is best positioned to undertake?

Appendix 1

People Interviewed for Mapping Study

Churches

Vsevolod Chaplin	Russian Orthodox Church
Hans Engdahl	Church of Sweden
Penisimani T. Fonua	Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
Wesley Granberg-Michaelson	Reformed Church of America
Ane Hjerrild	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark
Karl Johnson	Jamaica Baptist Church
Maake K Masango	St Giles Presbyterian Church, South Africa (member of WCC Executive Committee)
Stanley da Silva Moraes	Igreja Metodista no Brasil
Conrad E Nguvumali	Moravian Church in Tanzania
Chris Nichol	Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

National Councils of Churches

Robert Edgar	National Council of Churches of Christ in USA
David Goodbourn	Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Karen Hamilton	Canadian Council of Churches
Jitka Krausová	Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic
David Modiega	Botswana Christian Council
Apimeleki Qilio	Fiji Council of Churches
Hermen Shastri	Council of Churches of Malaysia
Eric So	Hong Kong Christian Council
Simote Vea	Tonga National Council of Churches

Regional Ecumenical Organisations

Ahn Jae Woong	CCA
Israel Batista	CLAI
Keith Clements	CEC
Valamotu Palu	PCC
Aline Papazian	MECC

Sub-Regional Fellowships

Baffour D. Amoah	FECCIWA
Karimi Kinoti	FECCLAHA

Christian World Communions

Gary Edmonds

Mikhail Gundyayev

Benedict Ioannou

Nancy Irving

and Joseph Andugu

Larry Miller

Stan Noffsinger

Setri Nyomi

Sven Oppegaard

John Peterson and

Gregory Cameron

John Radano

Richard van Houten

Robert Welsh

Mission Organisation

Desmond van der Water

Specialised Ministries/ Agencies

Hans Bruning

Belletech Deressa

Richard Fee

Chris Ferguson

Jonathan Fletcher

Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel

Kirsten Laursen

Daleep Mukarji

Atle Sommerfeldt

Southern Diaconal Agency

Noemi Espinoza

Forbes Matonga

Theological Institutes

Michel Nseir

World Evangelical Alliance

Moscow Patriarchate

Ecumenical Patriarchate

Friends World Committee for

Consultation

CWC Secretariat (and Mennonite
World Conference)

Church of the Brethren (USA)

World Alliance of Reformed
Churches

Lutheran World Federation

Anglican Consultative Council

Pontifical Council for Promoting
Christian Unity

The Reformed Ecumenical Council

Disciples Ecumenical Consultative
Council

Council for World Mission

ICCO, The Netherlands

Evangelical Lutheran Church in
AmericaPresbyterian World Service and
Development, Canada

United Church of Canada

CWS (Aotearoa New Zealand)

Ecumenical Diakonia, Germany

Church World Service, USA

Christian Aid, UK

Norwegian Church Aid

CCD, Honduras

Christian Care, Zimbabwe

Associations of Theological
Institutes in the Middle East
(ATIME)

International Ecumenical Organisations

Lawrence Brew	WSCF
Linda Hartke	Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
Muhungi Kanyoro	ECLOF
Peter Kenny	ENI
Randy Naylor (with staff)	WACC
Thor-Arne Prois	ACT International
Bartholomew Shaha	YMCA

Other

Olga Oleinik	SYNDESMOS
Aaro Rytönen	Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe
Rob van Drimmelen	APRODEV

Special Commission on Orthodox Participation

Leonid Kishkovsky	Orthodox Church in America
Mary Tanner	Church of England

World Council of Churches

Marion Best
Sam Kobia