

United in Mission · Unis en Mission  
Vereint zur Mission

# MAGAZINE

FOR THE UNITED IN MISSION FELLOWSHIP

## Ramatea and the consequences

The Ramatea General Assembly is one year behind us. The names of Bethel, Mülheim and Ramatea will be noted in the history of „Vereinigte Evangelische Mission/United in Mission“ (VEM/UiM). For the first time in its history, the representatives of all foster churches of the United Evangelical Mission (VEM) in Germany and the representatives of all VEM partner churches in Africa and Asia, came together in Bethel, Germany, in 1978 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of VEM. One of the decisions of this consultation was „to seek new ways and forms of work

of assisting one another more effectively in fulfilling our missionary task and to unite in joint action in mission as much as possible“. Ten years later (1988) a similar consultation took place in Mülheim, Germany. This consultation decided to continue and enhance what had been agreed upon in Bethel. It formed the "United in Mission Committee". One of the tasks of this Committee was "to study ways in which the structures of the VEM could be reformed in a way that partner churches from Africa and Asia could participate fully in decision making. The United in Mission Committee

is given a three year period of time for the submission of its proposal of new structure to partner churches."

The VEM/UiM Constitution which has been prepared by the Committee was discussed and adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in Ramatea on October 16, 1993 at 12 noon local time. One cannot separate the Ramatea decision from the decisions taken in Mülheim and in Bethel.

### TRANSFORMATION

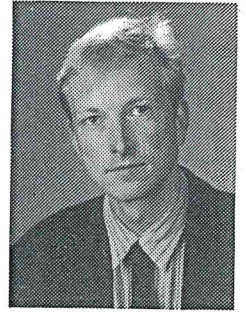
The adoption of the VEM/UiM constitution means that the present VEM is going to be transformed into VEM/UiM (a provisional name: the final version is to be decided

by the next Assembly). The main purpose of this transformation is not only to give opportunity to the VEM partner churches from Africa and Asia to participate fully in policy or decision making, as mentioned in the Mülheim document. Neither just to internationalise the present VEM. It is more than that. It is a logical consequence of the successful mission work of VEM in Africa and Asia. The former mission fields have brought forth independent churches, which also have the task to fulfil the mission of Christ.

Therefore, the main purpose of the transformation is the mission itself. It will be carried out in new ways and



## "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" - New forms of co-operation within UiM



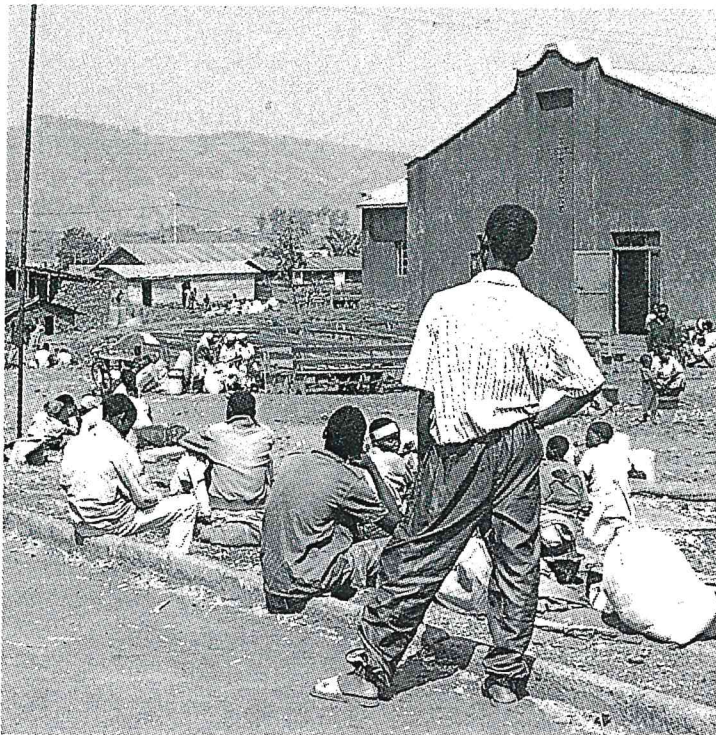
Dr. Jochen Motte

### JPIC WORK - AN URGENT CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCHES

In October 1993 when Delegates of all Partner Churches of UiM unanimously adopted the UiM Constitution, they also expressed their responsibility for questions of Justice, Peace and Integrity of creation (JPIC) as part of their missionary understanding. A visible sign for the strengthened efforts in that field was the creation of a Desk for JPIC, which took up work on 1 December 1993.

This intensified peace, human rights and environmental work within UiM began at a time, when partner

*Rwandese refugees in the  
Zairean city of Goma*



churches in Africa and Asia are affected by injustice, torture and war in the most terrible way imaginable. Regarding the war, the bestial murder of more than 500.000 people and millions of refugees, the Churches in Rwanda are in a situation where they have to rebuild their whole work from the beginning. The events in the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) in Indonesia also are disturbing. In relation with the ongoing interference of military forces in internal church affairs, pastors and other church co-workers and church members were arbitrarily arrested and tortured. A peaceful solution of the conflict which could save the unity of the Church is not in sight. In other partner churches also the situation is characterised by suppres-



*UCCP headquarters in Manila,  
Philippines*

sing political, ecological and social circumstances and conflicts within the churches. The hope expressed in Psalm 146 that God will provide justice for those suffering under violence is a hope echoing the real oppression and danger of many within our UiM Community. The structure of a strengthened Human Rights Work within UiM will be useful to provide assistance and advocacy for the oppressed and for those who are denied their rights. This work will be done within the ecumenical network and in co-operation with the respective national and international Human Rights and Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations.

### NEXT STEPS IN BUILDING UP A JPIC-NETWORK

The aim of the UiM partner churches of "Growing together" also applies to UiM-Human Rights and Environmental Work. For this reason, the UiM Partner Churches were asked to appoint JPIC-Contact-Persons. These Persons will transmit requests and concerns of their own Church on JPIC issues to UiM and they will be asked to inform their Church on JPIC news and requests coming from other Partner Churches. A Workshop on JPIC issues in Sri Lanka (3-11 September 1994) will be a first opportunity for the JPIC-Contact-Persons to meet each other and to learn about Human Rights and environmental problems of the respective countries. Together, we will share experiences in "Fact finding" (documentation of human rights violation and environmental destruction). Such fact finding work can be regarded as a pre-condition for national and international advocacy and lobby work. Establishing publicity and influencing the respective governments from outside the country shall help to uncover and prosecute human rights violations. Also, political, social and ecological abuses can be made public by such work. Special experiences in "Fact finding" can be found for instance in our Partner Churches in the Philippines (the United Church of Christ) and in Sri Lanka (Methodist Church) where professional JPIC Work has been done for



*Harvesting in Northern Luzon Province, Philippines*

## JPIC PROJECTS IN OUR PARTNER CHURCHES

many years. The situation in both countries is characterised by many human rights violations committed by military and paramilitary forces, partly provoked by economical processes of development which endanger or destroy the environment to a great extent and lead to pauperisation and the displacement of many people. The experiences resulting from the JPIC work in the Philippines and Sri Lanka will be shared among the members of the Workshop to encourage the respective JPIC work within the Churches and to investigate possibilities of international co-operation on JPIC issues.

The United Church of Christ (UCCP) has run an enormous number of projects and programs schemed for marginalized people in the Philippines. Representatives of UIM partner churches were given the opportunity in relation with a UIM Committee Meeting in Manila in February, 1994, to visit an agricultural project of UCCP together with the JPIC Contact Person of the UCCP, Rev. Sam Briones, the Head of the JPIC Department of the Church, and Mr. Salomon Abellera, the President of the General Synod of UCCP. "Condora" - that's the name of an agricultural centre of the UCCP for sustainable

development. The centre tries to research ecological methods of agriculturing and provides training for the farmers in the region. Condora is situated in Northern Luzon near San Fernando. The mountains typical for that region make it very difficult for the farmers to make a living. As a result of a one sided development monocultivation can be found in that area. One of the main problems arising from this is the erosion of the fertile soil. Therefore, Condora tries to find different methods of cultivation which prevent the erosion of the soil and work without any chemical fertiliser. Although the planting of different agricultural products and the fertilisation by self made fertilisers on small plots of land is very hard and

costs a lot of working-hours, the co-workers of Condora could register first success on their plantation by developing alternative forms of cultivation. On the compound of the research and model farm, training programs are held for the farmers of the region. Those who have decided to start with alternative forms of cultivation on their own farm are visited and advised regularly by the co-workers of the centre. On the long term this form of sustainable development can enable the farmers to have a safe and sufficient income.

For future JPIC co-operation within UIM it will be very useful to share such experiences as these. Also, alternative forms of funding for a wide range of JPIC projects and programmes have to be worked out and implemented. A first step into that direction was the creation of a fund for legal aid. It will take some time till a working JPIC network is built up within UIM. This shall be done according to the objectives laid down in the UIM Constitution: that churches related to each other in the one Body of Christ strive together for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in a world torn apart.

*Jochen Motte*

*(Rev. Dr. Jochen Motte is UIM-Secretary for JPIC.)*