

**The Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission
(EOC-DICAC)**

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The Ethiopian Orthodox Church–Development and Inter–Church Aid Commission (EOC – DICAC) is a 33 years old development wing of the Church. EOC – DICAC has been playing a leading role, among others, in multifaceted socio- economic development activities of the country. DICAC is instrumental in combating the recurrent draught and HIV/AIDS through tackling the root causes of poverty.

1. Introduction

The ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (EOC)

Brief History

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the most ancient churches in the world. Christianity came to Ethiopia in the first century A.D through an Ethiopian eunuch ,+ the treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, who was baptized by saint Phillip the Apostle (Acts 8:27 – 38). Prior to the introduction of Christianity, Ethiopia was known for its monotheism based on the Old Testament. Therefore, the Church maintains and reflects the unaltered Christian traditions of the Apostolic Fathers and core practices of the Old Testament in her services and teachings.

According to many historians, Ethiopia is the first African country to adopt Christianity as a state religion in the 4th century, during the Axumite period. The EOC, since then has been expanding throughout the country as an influential religious and social institution. Moreover, the Church has managed to influence positively and become part of the culture .

Therefore, one can observe the impact of EOC in almost all aspects of the country's history and present image. This includes her role in the social, economic, cultural, educational, and political life of the country. The Church has been the main provider of education for centuries; and continues to contribute much to the development of modern education in the country. The

role of the Church in defending the country in time of invasion has a significant place in Ethiopia's history. The instrumental contribution of EOC in strengthening solidarity and creating a culture of tolerance among all Ethiopians is shown in many ways. The country owes most of its historical heritage, religious art, icons, sa-bean alphabet and even its calendar to the Church. These positive involvements in national and social life have accorded the church respect, acceptance, and high moral integrity not only among believers/followers, but also citizens, local and foreign scholars and researchers, and civil societies as well.

As one of the ancient Churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is in full communion with the Egyptian Coptic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Church of Malabar in India and the Armenian Orthodox Church. EOC is also a founding member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and thus developed good relations with other churches, governmental and nongovernmental institutions.

Why EOC in Socio-economic Development?

Structurally the Ethiopian Orthodox Church assures its presence in almost every village of the country. The existing structure of the church stretches from the Holy Synod, the highest level of authority, to parishes, and by way of priests, to every family and village. The Holy Synod provides the spiritual and policy guidance; the Patriarchate head office manages the executive assignments and respective dioceses administer the day-to-day activities of parishes-through respective wereda and parish level representatives.

To date, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has 44 dioceses, each headed by an archbishop, and 481 Weredas (county/district) offices (Wereda betekihnet) to coordinate their respective parishes. The EOC, with about 40 million followers has half -a-million Clergymen, found even in remote areas delivering spiritual services. The clergy are integrated within the community. Thus, their acceptance and respect among the laity is very strong. The Church galvanizes its potential and will power through its 36,000 parish churches and monasteries. The 2000 traditional church schools run by the EOC are found mostly in rural areas adjacent to churches and monasteries that have been providing spiritual and secular education for centuries. Two million Sunday school youth, of which at least a quarter are graduates and professionals, assure the bright future of the church and the country at large. All these historical, spiritual, human and organizational capacity give EOC a significant comparative advantage to participate successfully in the socio-economic development of the country.

"They shall prosper that love thee" (Pssa'm 122:6).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church recognizes its spiritual and social responsibilities in the socio-economic development of the country. The Church has a moral obligation to play a leading role in sharing the sufferings of the disadvantaged. The EOC has been, therefore engaged in many development activities including education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure, to mention but few.

The words of St. Paul the Apostle " If any would not work, neither should he eat" (Thess.3:10) have been the guiding motto of the Church in development activities.

The Church acknowledges and emphasizes the importance of socio-economic development, as well as obeying and serving God. To this end the Church teaches and encourages everyone to work hard towards socio-economic development As the Bible says, " For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee"(Psalm 128-2). The EOC strives to fulfill both *spiritual and social responsibilities in harmony* in which one compliments the other as the Bible puts it ***"They shall prosper that love thee"*** (Psalm 122:6).

2. Establishment of the Commission

2.1 Establishment

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC) was established by the Legal Notice No-415 of 1972.

It is the development wing of the church and is one of the oldest and largest non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country.

DICAC was initially established to encourage and aid young people to receive training in vocational education, to help the poor, and generally aid in the national endeavor for educational, economic & cultural development. To date, it has expanded its services into other socio-economic directions of the country.

To day, it is involved in programs such as: integrated rural development, food security, water development, relief and rehabilitation gender and development, HIV/AIDS intervention, refugees & returnees affairs, and other related programs.

2.2 VISION

EOC-DICAC envisions a just society in which everyone leads quality life.

2.3 Mission

Assist the disadvantaged communities in Ethiopia to attain self reliance by tackling the root causes of poverty: drought, conflict, gender inequality, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic by promoting sustainable development programs and community empowerment.

Core Values

- "... for I was hungry and you gave me food I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was sick and you took care of me; I was stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you gave me cloth; I was in prison you visited me (Matt. 25:35-36)

- Even while we were still there with you we gave you this rule. He who does not work shall not eat" (2 Thes. 3:10)

Principles

-Human dignity, Partnership, Accountability, Effectiveness & Efficiency, Transparency, Gender sensitivity, Sustainability and Tolerance.

Goals:

- 1) Contribute to a food secure society in a sustainable manner
- 2) Contribute towards a literate society
- 3) Contribute towards a society free of HIV/AIDS and opportunistic diseases.
- 4) Contribute towards gender-equity and
- 5) Promote peace and reconciliation.

2.5 Objectives

Using the wide network of the church and the clergy (which is a comparative advantage of EOC-DICAC) at all levels of the development effort, DICAC's main objectives are:

- ◆ To improve Household food Security
- ◆ To improve disaster management, humanitarian assistance efforts
- ◆ To enhance communities participation and partnership in socio-economic development.
- ◆ To reduce the spread & impact of HIV/AIDS
- ◆ To promote peace & good governance through formal & non-formal training programs.
- ◆ To capacitate the clergy's potential so that they can play & serve as proactive development agents.
- ◆ To strengthen the leading role of the church in socio-economic movement of the country
- ◆ To help displaced people
- ◆ To build human capacity through better health, nutrition & education

◆ **The Coordinating Offices**

The projects and programs that are functioning in the various regions of the country are coordinated by regional coordination offices.

Goals:

• **Organizational Structure**

The commission is organized as an autonomous non-governmental organization (NGO) under the auspices of the church.

The Management Organs

Board. It is composed of eleven members who are nominated and appointed by the Patriarch and the Holy Synod on the basis of their religious devotion and professional skills. The board is responsible for making policy decisions.

Executive. The chief executive officer is called “The Commissioner” and he is responsible for making policy decisions.

Departments. There are five departments that carry out the main functions of the commission.

They are:

- Development Department
- Human Resources Development and Finance Department
- Policy and Planning Department

3. Major Programs of EOC-DICAC

DICAC is running nine major focus programs. These are: Integrated Rural Development; Food Security; Water Resources, Hygiene and Sanitation; Relief and Rehabilitation; Gender Development; Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control; Refugee and Returnee; Capacity Building; and Peace, Democracy and Good Governance. Although each of these Programs embarks to attain specific objectives, all of them contribute to the successful accomplishment of DICAC’s Mission. Depending on the specific conditions each of them complements each other and they form synergy to curb poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as the pandemic (HIV/AIDS) and associated problems.

3.1. Integrated Rural Development

The objectives of the program are:

- to increase and diversify food and agricultural production in terms of quality and quantity,
- to conserve the natural resource base,

- to advocate & lobby on Environmental protection (inner cities) improved access to social services (such as water, health, education), which would in turn contribute to the overall living conditions of the target communities,
- to promote diversified income generating schemes and empower communities through skill trainings, and enhance the sustainability and replicability of the project outputs.

Recognizing the role played by Integrated Rural Development Programs, DICAC is committed to expand its intervention areas to the Southern, Eastern and Western Regions in addition to the on-going projects in Wogera of North Gondar, Bugna of North Wollo, Ensaro Wayu and Hagere Mariam of North Shewa, Dahna of Wag Hamra, Goncha of West Gojam, Seharti and Enderta of South Tigray and Kokir of West Shewa.

3.2. Food Security

As a follow-up to the environmental rehabilitation projects, which were implemented between FY 91 and 97., DICAC commenced food security projects in 1998 with adequate consideration to make the program geographically and objectively focused to address food insecurity problems of most vulnerable communities.

In 2004, there were four food security projects including: Endamehoni woreda of Tigray Regional State, Wadela and Mekdela woredas of Amhara Regional State (ARS) and Sodo woreda of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. In 2005, the number has been reduced to one in Wadela wereda of ARS.

3.3. Water Resources, Hygiene and Sanitation

The major objective of this program is to improve health status and sanitary facilities, as well as promoting hygienic awareness.

Reduce burden of water collection through improved access to safe water.

Apart from water and sanitation activities being implemented in other programs, until 2004 DICAC had secured funding and implemented water, hygiene and sanitation projects in seven areas. These included Meket, Gidan, Quara, Tsegedie Armachiho of Amhara Regional State and Hintalo Wajirat and Raya Azebo of the Tigray Regional State. These projects alone benefit more than 210 thousand people.

3.4. Relief and Rehabilitation

DICAC's development programs were emerged through Relief and rehabilitation continuum programs. Their origin was emergency relief services, which evolved into rehabilitation and development.

The main objective of the Relief and Rehabilitation Program is to save lives of affected population. This is done through the provision of food components and other basic necessities at the time of disaster, and continuing rehabilitation through integrated local programs.

In addition to the above main objective², the Relief and Rehabilitation Program intends to meet the following specific objectives:

- To prevent deterioration in the nutritional status and prevent famine in the target groups.
- To prevent or stop abnormal migration of farmers in search of food.
- To minimise or reduce sale of assets in time of hardships
- To build community capacity by promoting activities like employment generating schemes.
- To rehabilitate chronically food insecure families through provision of rehabilitation components.
- Ensure the incorporation of rehabilitation and preparedness in the overall disaster management schemes integrated with relief and development activities.

Although the degree of intervention and coverage depend on the disaster situations and availability of resources, DICAC implements this program in almost all the regions of the country.

3.5. Gender and Development

The main role of gender and development is to bridge the gender gap in the development endeavors of all the DICAC programs by creating equitable access to economic, social, and political benefits, with particular attention to marginalized rural based communities.

In order to make sure that DICAC's development programs are

gender sensitive and play proactive role in facilitating and promoting women's articulation of their needs and priorities, DICAC established Gender And Development (GAD) Division. As gender development is a cross cutting issue that should be addressed in all other programs, DICAC is committed to ensure gender equity right from the design stage up to the termination of any project.

Specific objectives of this program aim at empowering women to enable themselves, self-reliantly and confidently, promote policies that will enhance women's role in development activities, create gender awareness among development practitioners, strengthen women's participation in leadership, promote women's technical and educational capacity, and support poverty alleviation by promoting income generating activities.

3.6. HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control

Taking into account the increasing trend of the pandemic, DICAC established the department of HIV/AIDS prevention and control in March 2001. Since then, DICAC has expanded its anti-HIV/AIDS activities and is opening branch offices in all the regions of the country.

The objectives of this program include:

- To increase the level of awareness of the society to bring behavioral change .
- To provide community and home based care including support for PLWHA [people living with HIV/AIDS] and HIV/AIDS orphans.
- To strengthen voluntary counseling & testing (VCT) and Counseling services [pastoral, hotline, follow-up counseling and pre/post test counselings], to alleviate the psychological trauma and avoid stigma / discrimination against PLWHA, their families, and orphans.
- To provide life, skill training, and livelihood insurance schemes for PLWHAs, orphans, dependants, and commercial sex workers to help them become self-reliant.

As part of the programmatic activities, DICAC has prepared a long-range strategic plan and project implementation guidelines for its HIV/AIDS program.

3.7. Refugee and Returnee Affairs

Major activities of the Refugee and Returnee Affairs include: the provision of basic assistances (subsistence allowance, material assistance, medication and other material assistances) for the urban refugee community, promotion of self-reliance of refugees through the provision of skill training and income generating schemes, enhancing area development programme through planting various kinds of trees assist refugees attain formal and informal education, and providing counseling services to refugees who face hardships.

In 2004, DICAC has Refugee and Returnee Affairs camps and activities in Dimma, Pugnido, Bonga, and Itang in the Gambella Regional State, and Assosa in Benishangule Gumuz Regional State, besides urban refugee support in Addis Ababa, Awasa and Dire-dawa .

3.8. Capacity Building

This program is among the few pioneer programs that formed DICAC at the time of its establishment. The overall goal of this program is to promote self-reliance and confidence among vulnerable communities in the country through various activities which include but are not limited to skill training, empowerment, provision of appropriate instrument. This program is one of the cross-cutting issues where all other programs implement as part of their programmatic activities. Given the church's potential in terms of its deep-rooted structure as a human resource vis-à-vis DICAC's commitment, this program will make magnificent contribution to enable DICAC achieve its mission.

The major strategic approach is strengthening the capacity of the clergy, parish councils and the youth through the provision of appropriate development oriented programs and instruments, which would enable them serve as agents of change for their respective communities. As part of its capacity building program DICAC also initiates community managed small-scale development programs.

Apart from occasionally used training venues, DICAC is using the Church's training centers, located in various regions, for providing skill trainings to the clergy and Sunday Schools.

4. Partners and membership

4.1. Local Partners

DICAC has a wider network and closely works with formal and informal organizations that are operating at grass root level, i.e. the Woreda, Zonal, and Regional Government offices, and CBOs and NGOs. Moreover, at Federal level partners include pertinent government offices, Church Organizations, CSOs, Donors and NGOs.

4.2. International Partners

ACT international
Bread for the world
Christian Aid
Church of Sweden Mission
Church World Service
Churches from Canada World University
CRDA
David and Lucie Packard foundation
EED
EIFDDA
EU
Finish Church Aid
HEKS
HAPCO
Inter Church Action
Intermon Oxfam
ICCO
IOCC
Lutheran World Federation
National Council of Churches in Australia
Norwegian Church Aid
Pathfinder international
Reformed Churches of the Netherlands
Royal Netherlands Embassy
The United Churches of the Netherlands
The United Methodist Churches on Relief
UNDP
UNESCO
UNHCR
USAID
Water AID
WCC
World vision

4.3. Membership

DICAC is among the founding members of WCC, AACC, CRDA, EIFDDA and JRP.

