

## The Contribution of NGOs in Social Reconstruction

Wossenu Yimam

### Introduction

It is known that in developing countries, NGOs play a significant role in the provision of various kinds of services which promote social reconstruction. This paper is, thus, aimed at examining the role played by some NGOs in the process of social reconstruction in Ethiopia. The writer has tried to survey the developmental activities of three NGOs, i.e. Redd Barna-Ethiopia, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, and Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia.

These organisations are selected because of their active involvement particularly in the construction of educational and health institutions, in agricultural extension programmes, and other similar humanitarian activities which enhance social reconstruction.

The paper starts with briefly-highlighting the historical background of each organisation; then, presents the various activities performed by the organisations. It is then followed by a concluding remark.

### The Contribution of Redd Barna-Ethiopia

#### Background

Redd Barna is a non-governmental, secular, voluntary, and humanitarian organisation. According to Tegegne (1994:224), it was founded in Norway in 1946 with the following aims: (a) to participate in national and international work for children in need of help, (b) to work for better understanding and friendship between peoples of the world, (c) to strive for increased insight into the living conditions of children, and (d) to seek promotion of constructive opinions concerning problems related to these aims.

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## Redd Barna in Ethiopia

Redd Barna started its first work in Ethiopia with the establishment of a leprosy research institute, the Armauer Hansen Research Institute, jointly with Radda Barnen, in Addis Ababa in 1969 (Tegegne, 1994:225).

The overall goal of Redd Barna-Ethiopia, as it is stated in the organisation's 25 years Jubilee Report (1994:3), is

*to promote and work for the best interest of children in Ethiopia, aiming to reduce children's vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters, to enhance full utilisation of children's resources and capabilities in line with their own best interest, and to secure children's healthy and harmonious upbringing within the family and community environment.*

The cardinal policy framework of the organisation is neutrality in political, religious, and ethnic matters and uses this as a basis for working with families, communities, and government institutes. This is based on the UN convention of the rights of the child. The organisation is active in child-centred rural and urban community development programmes, relief and disaster preparedness, and promotion of saving and credit co-operatives using the operational principles of institutional capacity building; technological, ecological and cultural appropriateness; community participation; combating poverty; women and children orientedness, and sustainability of programmes.

As Tegegne (1994:226) noted, Redd Barna-Ethiopia spends between 11-15 million Birr for projects in Ethiopia. Redd Barna-Ethiopia is now one of the biggest international non-governmental organisations which plays an important role in social reconstruction. According to the 1994 Annual Report, the organisation runs five projects in the rural and urban areas of Ethiopia, i.e. Child-Centred Rural Development Projects, Child Centred Urban Development Projects, Projects with Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, Child Advocacy, and Grant-Aided Projects. A short treatment of these projects is presented hereunder.

## **Child-Centered Rural Development Projects**

Redd Barna-Ethiopia implements five child-centred rural development projects in different regions of the country. These projects are well planned and implemented with the idea of time-limitation and phase-out in mind. The planning time span is 6 to 8 years. This is done to avoid the risk of developing dependency syndrome.

Some of the objectives and the results of this project as a whole in 1994 were:

- Reduce infant and child mortality rates in the project areas: EPI vaccinations reached a total of 9,400 children and 7,500 mothers.
- Reduce children's vulnerability to communicable and other diseases: A broad range of Primary Health Care activities reached a total of 16,400 children.
- Improve children's health: One new clinic facilitated by the organisation was opened, expanding the basic preventive and curative capacities to cover approximately 80,000 more people including mobile outreach services.
- Reduce vulnerability of local agricultural production: A number of ecological rehabilitation activities such as terracing and tree planting have increased the area to be cultivated and increased productivity on land with approximately 10%.
- Improve household economy: 1,300 households were supported to gain profits from cash crops, and another 4,000 households were supported to gain profits from animal fattening and other husbandry activities.
- Water development: A total of 11 villages got a new water facility within 1 km radius.
- Improve school attendance and literacy rates: One new school was taken into use and 30 literacy centres were supported.

## **Child-Centred Urban Development Projects**

In this respect, Redd Barna- Ethiopia runs two projects in two 'kebelles' of Addis Ababa with a total population of about 18,000. Previously, the organisation has completed three urban projects in Addis Ababa before it is phased out.

Some of the objectives and results of this project in 1994 were as follows:

- Reduce infant and child mortality rates in the project areas: EPI vaccinations reached a total of 392 children and 210 mothers.
- Reduce children's vulnerability to communicable and other diseases: A broad range of Primary Health Care activities reached a total of 3,000 families and basic

workshop and seminar settings have been supplemented with the use of audio-visual aids, drama and role plays.

### **Grant-Aided Projects**

Under this category, there are three projects which are financially supported by Barna-Ethiopia. Among these, the first project which the organisation has supported since 1976 is the Queen of Peace Children's Home in Addis Ababa which is Mother Theresa's Sisters. The organisation's support consists of an annual grant and secondment of a pick-up vehicle with a driver.

The second project refers to the financial support given to the National AIDS Control Program. In its efforts to prevent and control the spread of HIV and to combat AIDS in Ethiopia, Redd Barna - Ethiopia supported this programme from 1988 up to 1992. Since 1993, its approach has been modified to allow it to enter into financial and professional partnership with national NGOs.

The third one which is a new initiative for the organisation is a Saving and Credit Institutionalisation Project. This project aims to facilitate the establishment of an Ethiopian equivalent of the Grameen Bank for credit to the poor without collateral. The background for this initiative was that after having facilitated the establishment of more than a hundred successful formal and informal savings and credit groups and cooperatives in urban and rural project areas with more than 3000 family members, RB-E saw the need for a back-up institution to sustain the present achievements after phase-out and to cater for growth. It was hoped that a Special Financial and Promotional Institution for Micro-entrepreneurs in Ethiopia would be established as a legal and independent entity in the near future.

In general, these are the most important projects of Redd Barna- Ethiopia which have played a significant role in changing the lives of the needy. For these and other similar projects, the organisation has spent US\$111.2 million between 1969 and 1994.

## **The Contribution of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus**

### **Background**

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is a religious, voluntary and humanitarian organization which was formally instituted as a national church in 1959



with about 20,000 members later organized into four synods. At present, the church has seven synods and one work area. Since 1959, with its motto of 'serving the whole person', the church has made a valuable contribution in various aspects .

In the following paragraphs, the highlights of the Church's contribution will be treated.

### **Educational Activities of the Church**

According to the 1993 Annual Report, the Church operates 9 kindergartens, 27 elementary, 10 junior high, and 3 senior secondary schools. Besides, there is one school for the blind in Ghimbi, one school for the deaf in Hossana, and one school for the mentally retarded in Addis Ababa. Moreover, the Church runs 6 vocational schools in Arba Minch, Bedelle, Challià, Hagere-Selam, Hossana, and Nedjo. In these schools about 13,423 students attend their education.

The Church, in its endeavor to produce enough trained manpower for its activities as well as for nation building, has also offered a number of scholarships to young Ethiopians. To mention some, 171 boys and girls are pursuing their high school education in the various synods with the financial assistance of the church. Apart from this, 49 international scholarships have been granted by the church in various fields of study.

### **Health Services Rendered by the Church**

To achieve its development target, the church renders considerable health services to the Ethiopian people. As it is noted in the 1994 Annual Report, the church has 2 rural hospitals, one mobile clinic, 13 major and 34 minor clinics in the various parts of the country. Through these health institutions, the church gives both preventive and curative services to the public. Moreover, the church's AIDS prevention programme is expanding its services to reach out more and more people through workshops, seminars, materials and posters.

### **Child Care and Sponsorship Programme of the Church**

This is one of the Church's programs which is geared to children's service. Under this programme, there are three aspects, i.e. Child-Day Care Centres, Sponsorship and Orphanage Programme, and Family Re-unification Programme.

In the Child Day Care Centres, care is given to children coming from poor urban homes. The children get their breakfast and lunch at the centres during the day time. Whereas they get their supper at their home, the food stuff for supper is given to the family or relatives of the children by the Day-Care Centres. The children are also provided with clothing twice a year. Moreover, they are given basic medical services. From the 1993 Annual Report, it was observed that 1240 children were able to get the necessary assistance in 13 Day-Care Centers.

The Sponsorship and Orphanage Program is designed to prevent needy children from becoming delinquent and, therefore, a burden to the society. This kind of assistance is given to poverty-stricken children in their homes.

The Family Re-unification Program started in 1976 with the aim of recreating good relationships between runaway children and their parents. The children are assisted in vocational schools. Sometimes they are given a one-time grant to embark on the journey of making their living on their own.

### **Appropriate Technology Programme**

The main objective of this programme is to improve the daily life of the rural-poor by introducing simple appropriate and intermediate technologies which would ease the daily life of the people.

According to the 1993 Annual Report, a total of 166 fuel saving stoves, 68 mud beehives, 24 mud houses were constructed. In addition, 103 people received training in mud technology. Furthermore, as per the 1994 Annual Report, House Construction with mud blocks, Fuel Saving Stoves, Animal Drawn Carts, Bio-gas, Bee Keeping, and Solar Water Heaters were carried out in different areas.

### **Rural Development Programme**

As indicated in the 1994 Annual Report, there are 22 Integrated Rural Development Projects implemented by the Church units. The total budget for these projects amounts to more than 50 million Birr for a project of an average of three years duration and more than 500,000 families benefit from these projects.

### **Water Development Programme**



two major components: Surface Water Programme, and Deep Well Drilling Operation. According to the above annual reports, in 1993 a total of 81,600 people were able to get clean and potable water, and a total of 202 different water supply schemes were constructed. Moreover, in 1994 around 33,000 people were provided with access to clean and potable water from a total of 44 newly constructed hand-dug wells, 65 spring protections and 9 productive bore-holes.

In sum, the Church, apart from its religious mission has made a valuable contribution in various developmental activities for social reconstruction.

## **The Contribution of Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia**

### **Background**

The Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia (FGAE) is the first non-governmental organisation which pioneered family planning in the country. As Andargachew (1991:3) noted, the Association was established in 1966 as a non-governmental and non-profit-making association to provide information, counselling and clinical services to families who voluntarily expressed their need and desire for spacing the birth of their children.

The Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia was accepted as an associate member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in 1970. Following this, in 1975 the Association was officially registered with the then Ministry of Interior, Public Security Department, as a non-governmental and non-profit-making voluntary organisation. As a result, FGAE became a full-fledged member of IPPF, which made it possible for the Association to receive substantial grants on an annual basis and to expand its services and volunteer base. Currently, the Association has 7 branch offices, 8 clinics, 25 outreach programmes and 180 community-based development sites.

### **Objectives**

As it is stated in the 1995 Information Booklet, the objectives of the Association are the following:

- To contribute to the advancement of family welfare by establishing and/or utilizing health facilities, social services and other delivery systems for the

purpose of advising and counseling married couples, youth, and interested individuals regarding responsible parenthood.

- To provide family planning education and services that will enable families to space the birth of their children and thereby help them to have the number of children for whom they can adequately care in the context of their social and psychological needs.
- To assist families and interested individuals with problems of sub-fertility and infertility through the provision of appropriate preventive and remedial psycho-social services.
- To promote public awareness and understanding about marriage relationship, responsible sexual life, reproductive processes, fertility regulation, family planning and associated problems, and the effect of population growth on socio-economic development, through diverse educational programs.
- To train appropriate professionals such as health personnel, educationalists, agriculturists, and community development workers, for the promotion of family planning knowledge and services.
- To collect, prepare and disseminate scientific information concerning population, social and economic trends, patterns of child-rearing practices and their impact on personality development, and other relevant matters as they relate to the quality of human life.

Based on these objectives, the Association delivers the following services through its branch offices and health institutions.

### **Family Planning Information, Education & Communication (IEC)**

Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia has made a considerable effort to reach a large number of people through the following methods:

#### **IEC Program for Women Groups**

In order to create awareness regarding MCH/Family planning services, women attending MCH clinics are given family planning information as part of the health education program.

#### **Family Planning Motivation for Captive Groups**

For this purpose, the Association has established good relationships with a number of industries and plantations which were willing to integrate family planning services in

their clinics. In order to motivate both male and female workers, family planning education and motivation have been offered in the form of lectures, group discussions, film shows, and individual counseling.

### **Family Life Education for Youth**

In order to minimize the problem of unwanted pregnancies and to inculcate the concept of responsible parenthood, the Association was able to penetrate gradually the school system with family life education. Various seminars for teachers, school principals, and supervisors were organised for this purpose. Through such seminars the whole range of subjects on family life education were discussed and the participants were encouraged to use their subjects as a means of imparting information to students.

The Association has also played an important role in promoting the integration of family life education in the school curricula. Moreover, attempts have been made to promote family planning education and motivation to adolescents by integrating it with income-generating activities, i.e. students in selected junior and senior secondary schools were provided with family planning education and information integrated with lessons on modern bee-keeping,

### **Male Motivation**

This is another educational activity of the Association which is related to the question of male involvement in family planning. This has been done by organising short-term seminars for individuals who are in community leadership positions, and who could exert influence on other individuals. The whole purpose is to inculcate in men the idea that family planning is not only for women but for the whole family.

### **Publications**

The Association produces various educational and audio-visual materials on family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, and other related topics which it distributes to the public free of charge.

### **Counseling Service**

The Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia offers counselling services to its clients concerning problems of infertility, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and other behavioural problems. The Association also handles other

important services like youth counseling with a view of enhancing adolescent fertility management by training school guidance officers, providing counselling training for family life education/family planning promoters.

Table 1 shows family planning counseling services for youth in the period 1991-1994.

**Table 1: Family Planning Counseling Services**

Types of Cases	No. of Youth Counseled			
	1991	1992	1993	1994
Psychological	20	28	18	38
Sexual problem	13	6	13	29
Contraception	22	24	26	262
Unwanted pregnancy	32	60	190	219
Post abortion	-	-	3	-
Misunderstanding with parents	-	-	7	-
Academic	6	4	1	-
Menstrual Irregularities	18	-	12	37
Love Affairs	15	14	20	32
Others(general information)	19	52	19	18
Sexually Transmitted diseases	15	19	102	136
Rape	-	-	-	18
Gynaecology problem	-	-	-	8
Infertility	-	-	-	2
Impotency	-	-	-	2
Family planning	-	-	-	42
Total	160	207	411	843

Source: FGAE, Statistical Abstract, No.8, 1995, p.36

### Training Program

This is one of the methods used by the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia to have family planning service integrated into various health institutions. Since from 1975, the Association has trained a considerable number of health workers and home economics extension agents. According to Andargachew (1991:11), by the end of 1990, about 1422 nurses, 55 health officers and 1105 health assistants were trained. In addition, between 1983 and 1990, about 526 home economics extension agents were trained by the Association.

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## **Medical and Clinical Services**

This kind of service was started in a single clinic. But now the Association renders medical and clinical services in more than 1435 health institutions throughout the country. Recently, the Association has also introduced voluntary surgical contraception in five government hospitals in Addis Ababa. This is one of the new family planning approaches which the Association has introduced and plans to expand.

In general, the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia has played an important role in the provision of family planning and counseling services, IEC, and training. As a result of its effort, nowadays family planning users are no more ashamed of being seen around family planning clinics. Apart from this, family planning is accepted at a national level as an important component of the overall development plan.

## **Concluding Remark**

In this paper, an attempt has been made to discuss the contribution of some NGOs which are established for religious, charitable or welfare purposes, and service delivery.

As indicated earlier, these NGOs have been involved in developmental activities aimed at helping the less privileged segment of our society to overcome poverty, disease, and ignorance. To this effect, they have established health and educational institutions, engaged in agricultural extension programs, and provided practical assistance and advice to the target population.

Generally speaking, these NGOs have made a valuable contribution in improving the lives of the needy by satisfying their basic needs, creating jobs and generating income. Apart from this, they have played an important role in challenging traditional practices and concepts and injecting new vision which are considered useful in facilitating the social reconstruction process of our country.

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