

Suggestions for sample Long Term Rehabilitation and Development
Projects in Ethiopia.

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The main purpose of the Seminar on "Root Causes of Drought and Prospects for Food Self-Reliance in Ethiopia", held at the International Livestock Centre for Africa, from November 11-13, 1985, under the joint sponsorship of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, was to find some help in projecting and planning for long term development and resettlement projects leading to food self-sufficiency and drought-free conditions in Ethiopia.

The study has revealed two sets of causes, mutually inter-related:

- a) the Socio-economic Causes of drought
- and b) the technical causes of drought.

The socio-economic causes cannot in fact be separated from the technical causes. We shall indicate the main causes here, without trying to distinguish between socio-economic and technical.

1. Socio-economic Pressures and Lack of Long-term Planning

As the population increases at an average of 2 to 3% per year, there will naturally be increased pressure upon the food supply. If Ethiopian population was 42 million in 1984 and it began increasing at the rate of 2% per annum, the country would have 57.66 million people in 2000 A.D. - an additional 15.66 million mouths to feed.

One need not doubt the capacity of the land in Ethiopia to support that many additional people. The point is that there has to be planning - not just family planning, but also over-all planning to make sure that the increased population gets food, jobs, and the facilities for living a life worthy of man.

The single most important root cause of the recent drought is certainly the absence of planned productivity increase. Let us hope that we will not make the same mistake again and keep comprehensive planning to keep productivity in line with peoples' needs.

Socio-economically speaking the absence of proper planning may be attributed to the fact that those who held power in the nation were not committed to the interests of the whole people of Ethiopia. This situation has now changed, and let us hope that over-all planning would become a

permanent feature of the political economic structure, and that the peasants' associations and the common people will play an increasing role in national planning and implementation.

This is fundamentally the task of the party in power - to ensure people's participation in national planning and implementation. The Church, with its wide infra-structure among the people, can however play an important role in making the people conscious and aware of their own best interests. It is important that the analysis and assessment of people's interests, and ways of making people's participation in national planning and implementation, should form part of the training of priests and lay leaders in the Church.

2. Environmental Deterioration

Here again a chain of factors has to be analysed. Blief among these are deforestation and mindless cutting of trees in town and village; over-grazing, soil erosion due to bad agricultural practices, mono-crop farming; lack of boudring and terracing, non-utilisation of available water, and so on.

The tragedy is that people in general are not aware of the linkage between these factors and the drought. The peasant's vision is too narrowly focussed in immediate personal benefit, not an long term common welfare of the whole nation and people. Working for a change in people's understanding and attitudes in these matters would constitute an important task of the Church.

Such change of understanding and attitudes cannot be achieved by preaching alone. There is no substitute for actual physical demonstration. Most of the project proposals given below are oriented more to demonstration rather than verbal education.

The Church can at this point co-operate and co-ordinate with peasant associations and other peoples' organisations in their efforts to achieve the same goals. The Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, as a centuries old institution trusted by the people, has a very special contribution to make in changing the basic attitudes of the people from narrow selfish interests to more common social interests.

The Project proposals and suggestions given below are directed to these over-all long term goals of food self-sufficiency and peoples'welfare in Ethiopia.