

AFRICAN FAITH COMMITMENTS FOR A LIVING PLANET

THE ETHIOPIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH MEKANE YESUS DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Long-term plan on the environment – summary

INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) became a national church in 1959. Today, with more than 5.8 million members, it is one of the biggest Lutheran church organisations in Africa and is growing fast. The Church is structured into 22 synods. It has more than 7,000 congregations and 2,600 ordained ministers with a seminary, a college, high schools, elementary schools, the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, hospitals, clinics, a broadcasting agency, a printing house, and its own radio programmes.

This long-term plan is co-ordinated through the development wing of the Church – the Development and Social Services Commission (EECMY-DASSC). This is a non-profit making organisation set up by the Church in 2000. EECMY-DASSC has extensive experience of managing natural resources, rehabilitation and environment conservation programmes, ranging from introducing micro hydro power as a means to slow the deforestation process in Ethiopia in a renewable energy community-based development project, to the Mejinger Integrated Rural Development project teaching know-how in forest management and protection of natural resources to local communities.

It has recently completed a comprehensive Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA) Study, funded by the Church of Sweden, to review eight projects run by the Church and examine their effectiveness in promoting and applying sustainable agriculture techniques. A manual outlining its findings has been produced. It will be shared in training workshops with its staff and other organisations working in sustainable agriculture in Ethiopia.

EECMY-DASSC organised a workshop in December 2011 to develop a seven-year plan. The workshop brought together 40 participants from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yeses Development and Social Services Commission, EECMY Church institutions representing 22 synods and DASSC field offices, church leaders, schools teachers and development experts.

All the Synods have drawn up their individual action plans.

A JOINT ACTION PLAN AGREES THAT PRIORITIES WILL BE:

- Mainstreaming climate change and the environment in their morning and evening worship and incorporating these issues in the school curriculum;
- Holding seminars of awareness creation on climate change;
- Promoting participatory forest management and soil and water conservation;
- Reforestation: The target is to have planted 10 million trees by year seven;
- Improved livelihood income through fruit tree planting with the planting of 200,000 fruit trees by year seven;
- Promoting improved forage management system and mud brick making;

- Promoting the use of fuel wood saving stoves with 15,000 stoves in use by year seven;
- Promoting termite control activities by reducing 100,000 mounds by year seven;
- Spring protection/development with 350 springs protected by year seven.

A Natural Resource Conservation and Sustainable Use Project was submitted as part of these long-term objectives from the Central Gibe Synod Branch Office for Ejaji in the Elu Gelan Woreda, West Shoa zone in Oromia Regional National State, as an example of local action to achieve these goals.

WORKING THROUGH THE STUDENTS OF EJAJI BIBLE SCHOOL, IT AIMS TO:

- Target 24 church congregations, reaching around 12,000 people;
- Set up five nursery sites to act as demonstration sites for the students of Ejaji Bible School and church communities at five different congregations. Water conservation actions will be demonstrated and then adopted by the 24 target church congregations;
- 250,000 indigenous tree and fruit seedlings will be grown in the nursery sites and transplanted to communal lands and private plots to cover 15 hectares of land.
- 24 people from the 24 target congregations will be trained in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and pioneer the greening of their church compounds and their surroundings;
- 50 community elders will be trained on natural resource management;
- 20 women will be trained to prepare energy-saving stoves;
- 250 energy-saving stoves will be prepared with locally available material and distributed.

This will be organised in co-operation with local government bodies that will provide nursery sites and land for demonstration. The agriculture desk of the local district will provide technical expertise and support.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus's long-term plan has the endorsement of all the Church's Synods, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church's Mekane Yesus Development and Social Services Commission, its Commissioner Deed Jaldessa and its Church President Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Edossa.

This plan was launched at ARC's Many Heavens, One Earth, Our Continent celebration held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2012