

Catholic Eparchy of Keren

Women's promotion Program



Educate the woman to educate the family

Introduction. **Women's Development Department** is one of the seven departments run by the Catholic Eparchial Secretariat of Keren (CESK). Three primary programs run by the women's development department are: **education**, **awareness** raising and **income generating**. The program is operated in villages by organizing women in **groups** containing **15-30 women**. The women's development department program is staffed by full time staff assisted by animators, who are responsible for each women's group in a given area.

Goal. The goals of the women's development department are to:

1. Free women from socio economic problems and oppressive cultural barriers.
2. Emancipate women and create conditions that encourage self sufficiency
3. Provide income generating opportunities for women to improve conditions of their families, communities, and nation.

Capacity building. To deliver quality service, and achieve the goals of the women's development department, the staff and animators, provide continuous training, monitor performance, encourage creativity, and effectiveness of the program. Continuous training is provided in areas like: (1) micro credit and saving (2) hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, procedures (3) monitoring and reporting (4) community mobilization (5) training given to women's groups. On yearly basis the women's development department of the Catholic Eparchial Secretariat of Keren produces a report of all programs, developments, successes and challenges. The full report is published in this web site. The same has been true for the past year of 2012. A summary and most salient points from the 2012 report are:

- In **2012**, the women's development program operated in **38 villages** with **52 groups** participating and a total of **1,434** women.
- There were **2** full time staff and **16** animators running the program in 2012.

Income generating program. Income generation is designed to empower women through economic development, education, skills in small scale business management and developing self confidence. This program is a micro saving and credit program. It consists of activities such as **credit**, **saving** and a **revolving fund** initiated by the women.

1. **Women initiated credit and saving:** In this program women contribute **5-30 Nakfa** weekly and build a savings account. Each women's group has its rules and regulations or by laws by which they are bound. A member of a group is entitled to borrow up to **five times their weekly deposit amount** for three months with 3% interest rate. If the savings account of the group does not have sufficient money for all members of a group to borrow from, they request a loan from the revolving fund of the women's development department of the Catholic Eparchy of Keren.
2. **Revolving fund.** This fund is exclusively set by the Catholic Eparchy of Keren for the women's development program. It is designated to fund members of groups that do not have enough savings from their weekly savings to start a small business. The revolving fund is interest free, for members of a group. The loans are expected to be returned after a year.

For example in the fiscal year of 2012, **21 women's groups** requested and received returnable interest free money in the amount of **30,000.00-48,000 Nakfa**. Total amount distributed to all groups in 2012 was **853,500.00 Nakfa**.

Formation of new groups. The women's development program works hard to expand participation of women in areas where it has not been established. In 2012, the department has expanded its activities and formed **seven new women's groups** with 300 women; in the villages of Berdeg, Feledaerb, Fsoruk, Gidana, Qerotnejar, Shaftaku and Zen.

Sharing of dividends. In 2012 three women's groups participating in **micro saving and credit program** collected savings and some extra money collected from interest and fees. The three groups were: Medhaniealem group from Halibmentel, Feden group from WesbensreK, and Selam group from Hagaz.

Current statues of Micro credit and saving program. Generally **85%** of the program beneficiaries benefited from the micro saving and credit initiative. The groups made investments in various small scale businesses that enabled them to generate profit. Their

activities include: (1) buying and selling of goats (2) buying and selling of grain (3) making and selling handcrafts and (4) running of small retail shops. Other beneficial advantages of the programs include:

- Exposure to the business world and knowledge of running a small scale business.
- Engagement of women in small scale business to earn income, from profits, contribute to their house hold economy and solve their economical problems.
- Change cultural and societal beliefs on women's role in economic development.
- Create unity, coherence and love among the members of groups and their society.
- Initiate and educate the ideas of saving for a rainy day and more.
- Group meetings are means for information gathering and sharing of experiences.

Livestock. Livestock project is another component of income generating activities. This program includes goat and donkey program. The aim of the program is to enable families obtain a source of milk from goats. The donkey program is used as a means of various transport activities like carrying drinking water from away wells from the village. Donkeys are also used to carry wood from mountains to be burned for cooking. As an example, in 2012 the women's development department distributed three or four goats each to 117 women, and one donkey each to 26 women.



E**ducation programs.** The education program includes; health education, awareness raising, and enhancing women's capacity to challenge negative customs and beliefs about women's roles and capacities.

In health education, in 2012, the educational program dealt with topics like tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS, skin diseases, pregnancy, nutrition, female genital mutilation, personal and environmental sanitation, and proper child care conducted by experts in their respective fields, in **38 villages** for about **1434 women**.

A**wareness raising program.** Training and continuous awareness programs that were conducted in 2012 for the **38 villages** and **1,434** women mentioned above, focused on gender issues, micro credit and health.

C**apacity building.** Different training and workshops were given for animators and new groups in the different women's development department. In 2012, areas were training for animators and new groups focused on (1) training, monitoring and reporting writing (2) training in leadership skills and business management (3) training on micro saving and credit program (4) training on animal husbandry and (5) a seven day workshop conducted in Dekemhare, with animators of the Eparchies of **Asmara, Segeneyti and Barentu**.

H**and weaving program.** The Comboni sisters in Halibmentel have been involved in hand weaving and various other projects for many years. In February of 2012 the women's development department of the Catholic Eparchy of Keren started a similar program. As an experiment the weaving program was introduced at the **Ela-Frer** location in Keren, with seven hand-weaving machines for seven women.



Comboni Sisters weaving programs



Demonstrating a finished product of the weaving program in Halibmentel

Supervision. In 2012, a total of 24 supervisory visits were conducted to 24 groups to monitor the smooth running of activities by closely approaching the implementation of the program. Additionally, continuous follow ups were carried out by the animators in charge of each village. Each group is visited once a week by the animators. During the supervision and follow up visits activities; financial registers are inspected, training needs are analyzed, job training is provided, and meetings are conducted with animators and women.



Book keeping



Goat business



Women's groups, their safes with 3 locks. Keys for locks are kept with 3 different women