

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)
Department for Mission and Theology (DMT)

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EECMY FAMILY MINISTRY 2011-2015

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THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF FAMILY MINISTRY

The Motto of Mekane Yesus Church is “**Serving the Whole Person**”. The Church wants to serve people in all their needs, whether spiritual, mental or physical. The EECMY has also clearly stated that all what the Church does shall be based on the Bible.

The starting point, thus, is that the **EECMY Family Ministry is based on the Bible**. Having this kind of frame of reference does not mean that Family Ministry would be dealing with spiritual matters only. Vice versa, having the Bible as basis the Ministry has open channels to all what is human.

In an Ethiopian society it is common to think that everybody gets married sooner or later, the idea of single adults is new. Thus ‘Family Ministry’ in this context is normally related to marriage. In Ethiopia ‘family’ often means the extended family, which is much larger unit than the nucleus family of western countries.

‘Family Life Education’ includes many different features of Church work. It covers ‘preventive’ education, but it is also related to the ‘curative’ field of Counselling, whether pre-marital or marriage counselling.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:27). The Bible leads one to look at people as equals, making no difference based e.g. on gender. **Equality between women and men** is a fundamental starting point in Family Ministry.

The issue of equality is quite clearly originating from the Bible, even if some Bible passages are often misinterpreted. Apostle Paul says, true, that " Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. " (Eph. 5: 22). But at the same time he also continues saying, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (Eph. 5: 25). This seems to be even harder order that ever the one given to the wives. And finally, **excluding any reasoning possibly supporting the inequality or discrimination between the partners**, the Apostle goes on saying, that "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph. 5: 21).

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." (Gen. 2:24). God created or instituted **marriage, a lifelong union of one man and one woman**. The EECMY gives a very high value on Christian marriage and wants to do everything possible to safeguard the status and practice of the marital union. When doing this, the Church stands on the same line with the government and traditional cultures of Ethiopia.

"May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth." (Prov. 5:18). Marital union is meant to be for **peace, joy and harmony for both partners**. Marriage is also a place to learn unselfishness, since you are to take into consideration the other's needs, too. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph 4:32) - "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." (1Peter 3:8)

God's design for human relationships included sexual relations from the very beginning. Sex is a built-in, essential part of marriage. This is because sex unites a husband and wife, and gives them pleasure. "... a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (Gen 2:24). A Christian husband and wife are fully free to give each other sexual pleasure. **The joy of marital sex is something holy, heavenly.** The fact, that sex is also for reproduction, comes later; sex as such is sufficient.

It is well known, that sexuality is an area where many problems lie in many partnerships. The Bible presents marital sex as a gift of God, which in God's plan is wanted, even holy. "His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend." (Song of Songs 5:16) - Instead of traditional one-sided for-man-only way of thinking the Christian **marital sex is for mutual joy, mutual pleasure.**

As more and more couples seem to face the problem of childlessness, it is good to see how God instituted marriage. The marital union of the man and woman as such is "enough", whether there are children or not. **Marriage is a proper marriage, even if it is a childless one.** Sex can also give them children (Gen. 9.1), but it is good to realize that the children are not the only result of marital sex, not even the major one. - The challenge of the Church is to encourage and counsel those, who are not able to get children of their own.
- One advisable solution to them could be **adoption**, especially when seeing the increasing, large numbers of orphan children in today's world.

Teaching on marriage and other family related issues is **needed for various target groups:** youth, engaged couples, newly married couples, couples of different ages, parents, grandparents (out of whom many might be widows), the growing group of single adults, etc. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom..." (Col 3:16).

'Family Ministry' means **servicing the whole society**, not only married couples. The extended family type of living includes many different sides. **Widows and orphans** are just examples: "Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need... If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Tim 5: 3,8). The Bible goes on: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." (James 1:27).

Child rising is a major task of Christian parents. Here, too, the issue of equality is raised in Apostle Paul's teaching: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4). The parents, the children, and the community, should understand,

that **every child - whether boy or girl - is of equal value**. By stressing this fact it is possible to **improve the status of girls and women** through strengthening the Christian family model.

Marriage is also a social institution. **Marriage and family is the foundation of the Society**. A family is a basic unit of a congregation. Strengthening the marriage means strengthening the family, the church and the society.

Through strengthening the family the Church may considerably build peace and harmony in society, too. If the families are well and healthy, also the society might be in good condition. "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers." (James 2: 8-9).

Keeping the Ten Commandments helps each other to live in harmony. Honouring the parents is one starting point, "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Ex. 20: 12). One of the goals of Family Ministry is to educate children as well as adults **to live as good citizens in their own local society**. Dr. Luke recalls an exemplary citizen in Acts 10:2: "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly". In Old Testament there is an advice to fulfil justice: "Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land..." (Deut. 16:20). And in New Testament Paul goes on challenging his readers: "... you then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? (Rom 2:21).

The Church is to **combat any forms of domestic violence**, be it physical, psychological or sexual. There are local cultures which may allow or even support some types of domestic violence. The Church is, however, to safeguard any people against violence in any form. "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matth. 7:12).

Even if it might be unpopular in certain areas, the Church is to **fight against harmful traditional practices**. No Christian should consciously or deliberately break or mutilate what Lord the Creator has made. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Ge 1:31). One of those practices is the Female Genital Mutilation. The FGM is not only unnecessary and harmful, but it should actually be called crime, violation against human rights and an act of oppression against women - still practiced in Ethiopia. "Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you" (Deut. 6:18).

Family Ministry is one essential **means to help in the frightening situation of the AIDS pandemic** through emphasizing the significance of faithfulness in the life of couples and families. About faithfulness in marital life the Bible gives straight orders when saying, "Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebr. 13:4). Faithfulness, sticking to one-to-one basis in partnerships, is the very means to combat the AIDS pandemic.

In order to build a healthy society the Church is obliged to teach the young generations, too. **Pre-marital teaching** is a crucial necessity, should we want

to survive in the world of collapsing family structures, AIDS and other frightening diseases. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body." (1 Co 6: 19-20). On the field of Pre-marital teaching the Church is to give Biblical education concerning sexual behaviour, i.e. abstinence before and faithfulness in marriage.

“Strengthening the family” as an overall title covers many different fields of ordinary life. One very much needed field is **teaching the basics of family economics**. In a poor developing country this is even more essential. - The Bible is very realistic and practical, when giving advice: "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, `This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'" (Luke 14:28-30).

Finally, one very important field of Family Ministry is the **Pre-Marital, Marital and Family Counselling**. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2). - It is very important to help people through strengthening means of Family Life Education to avoid problems and crisis in their life. But there are anyhow always people who have got into trouble, and they need education, help, counselling and encouragement. This includes also the issues of **Family Planning**.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is a rapidly growing African Church. The membership figure (20,000 in 1959 when the Church was founded) has reached 5,3 millions by the end of 2009. The Church has strongly focused on evangelism, reaching out to new people. But experiencing growth, the Church is also challenged to nurture those already members. A field which has clearly been forgotten during many years is taking care of the welfare of marriages and families.

1970'ies

In 1973 the Mekane Yesus Church arranged in Addis Abeba a Seminar on issues of Marriage and Family. The visiting lecturers were Rev. **Walter Trobisch** and Mrs. **Ingrid Trobisch**, supported by the Lutheran World Federation, LWF. The invited participants came from the Synods, which were five at that time, and from Mekane Yesus Seminary. When serving the LWF member churches in this way the Trobisch couple had the aim to encourage churches to take an active, responsible role on the field of marriage and family. – As a result of the mentioned seminar there were, for example, some gatherings of married couples in Hossana (Kambata Synod), led by Rev. Kaarlo Hirvilammi and Mrs. Anna-Leena Hirvilammi, missionaries sent by Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM, that time called FMS). The couples were discussing together, what it practically means to live as Christian husband and wife.

Possibly as a result of the mentioned seminar, too, the Mekane Yesus Church tried to start activities for families in local congregations in 1970'ies. Duplicated material for “Family Week” in congregations was prepared. But these activities did not continue, possibly due to lack of follow-up.

- 1980'ies In 1988 Mrs. **Anna-Kaarina Palmu**, a Finnish missionary sent by FELM, started the EECMY AIDS Prevention and Control Program. The issues related to marriage and family quite naturally came up in the AIDS Program, which at that time carried the name "**Preventing AIDS etc through strengthening Christian family life.**"
- 1990'ies Under the umbrella of the AIDS Program **the Palmus** (Rev. Matti Palmu was the Theological Advisor of the Church) started a series of so-called "**AIDS - Marriage Courses**" in different parts of the Church. Everywhere the feed back was the same: "Please arrange more teaching like this." In 1993 the Palmus presented a written report on their Marriage teaching during 1988-1993 appealing to the Church Officers: "Please appoint somebody to take responsibility on arranging teaching in the field of Christian Marriage & Family Life!"
- In late 1990-ies the Gospel Ministries Department (GMD; the name was later on changed to be Department for Mission and Theology, DMT) had "Counseling Section". The Palmus were called by the Church to work within the GMD Counselling Section of the EECMY Central Office in Addis Abeba. The couple arrived in Ethiopia in January, 2000. But due to difficulties in getting work permits they were sent to Hossana Mekane Yesus Seminary. (Around the same time the re-structuring of Central Office lead to the discontinuation of the Counselling Section.) From the very beginning, however, it was made very clear, that the Palmus would serve the whole Mekane Yesus Church, and that the program was based in Hossana only temporarily. The Program Description of the "EECMY Christian Family Life Education Program" (FLEP) was approved by the Seminary Board in June, 2000.

The beginnings of the **Family Life Education Program (FLEP)**

- 2000 Since 2000 the EECMY has run a specific program for Family Ministry, nowadays part of Department of Mission and Theology (DMT). Mrs. **Anna-Kaarina Palmu** and Rev. **Matti Palmu** served as advisors of the program 2000-2009. They were sent by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), which financed the program from the very beginning. As of 2004 an Ethiopian couple, Rev. **Geneti Wayessa** and Mrs. **Aberash Tolossa**, joined the staff. Starting 2005 Rev. Geneti has been the co-ordinator of the Program. Also since 2005 the Pre-Marital teaching has been arranged in the Synods in Western Ethiopia by Mrs. **Helena Räisänen** and Mr. **Tapio Räisänen**, who were sent by the Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM).
- Basic level teaching In 2000 it was decided to arrange a **Basic Marriage Course** (for couples only) **in each and every Synod**. There were multiple aims for these courses: 1) To help the participants to find some useful improvements for their own marriage and family life, 2) Through that, to help them serve better in their respective duties in the church; 3) To encourage the participants to teach on marriage issues in their localities, 4) To find possible candidates for future Training of Trainers (TOT) courses for Family Ministry. In addition to these, quite obviously the aim was also 5) To raise awareness for Family Ministry amongst Church Units' leadership, pastors, evangelists etc. - During 2000-2005 there was a four-day Basic Marriage Course in all 20 Church Units.

The **“Basics of Family Ministry”** courses were also started in 2000 in the **Theological Institutions** and Bible Schools of EECMY. The Church has four Theological institutions, namely in Addis Abeba, Hossana, Nekemte and Aira. The teaching has been arranged in such a way that each and every student should get an intensive course in Family Ministry during the diploma or degree level studies. By 2009 the Family Life Education has also been included in the Curriculum of the Theological institutions of the Church.

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| TOT training | The Training of Trainers (TOT) courses were started in 2002 in order to get local teachers for Family issues in synods, parishes and, as a final goal, in congregations. By the end of 2009 there were about 600 TOT trained facilitators in various parts of the country, in all Units of the Church. BUT the aim is to have a Family Ministry instructor in each and every congregation of the Church, i.e. in 6-7.000 places of service. Thus there still is a huge need for additional facilitators, and the resources of the DMT Family Ministry office are far too small for such a training task. - The Family Ministry staff and the trained facilitators have also arranged teaching for various other target groups . |
| TOT (Pre-marital) | Since 2005 the program has expanded to the field of younger generations, during the first years mainly in the west of the Church. The Training of Trainers (TOT) courses for Pre-marital teaching were started in 2008. |
| TOT-T training | The Training of Trainers of Trainers (TOT-T) courses were started 2008. By 2009 there were 54 TOT-T trained facilitators who are supposed to run TOT courses in local synods. |
| Marriage Counselling | Strengthening the Structure for Marriage and Family Counselling activities and providing training for Marriage and Family Counselling is a great task. The counselling activities are there in most EECMY congregations, but there is very little (if any) training for the paid or voluntary servants on this field. The Family Ministry Staff started the training of these counsellors in 2008 in one congregation in Addis Abeba. The idea was that the Marriage and Family Counselling training could be expanded to cover all the Synods in future. |
| Teaching materials | "A Handbook for Family Ministry" , was published in English in 2006 and in Amharic 2008. The Oromiffa translation of the Handbook is being processed. - A participant's Book for Family Ministry was published in English in 2008 and in Amharic in 2009. Both books have been prepared by Anna-Kaarina and Matti Palmu. - Teaching materials for training of Pre-marital facilitators and the Marriage & Family Counsellors have also been produced, first as duplications. |

The main sectors of Family Ministry

The **five main sectors of Family Ministry** during the first 10 years have been: 1) Pre-marital teaching; 2) Marriage and family teaching for couples; 3) Teaching various target groups on marriage and family life; 4) Marriage and family counselling and 5) Training for Family Ministry (including Training of Trainers, TOT, Training of Trainers of Trainers, TOT-T, Training of Trainers Refresher Course and training for Family and Marriage Counsellors).

THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING IN 2010

The EECMY Family Ministry (Family Life Education Program) has reached the age of 10 years. In 2000 the Church invited the Palmus to start the program and had a rough plan to run the program for about 3-5 years. The program, however, was continued for a full decade, and the FELM also agreed to go on with the financing the program up to 10 years, i.e. up to the end of 2009. The Palmus served as advisors of the program for ten years 2000-2009, first leading the program as the only full-time workers for about five years, and then assisting Rev. Geneti and Mrs. Aberash for another five years.

There were suggestions for evaluation already couple of years ago. The evaluation of the program was finally done late in 2009 by the Mekane Yesus Management and Leadership College (MY-MLC). - The very first recommendation in the evaluation report states that there is a need to have a strategic plan for the work of the Family Ministry.

THE GOALS OF THE EECMY FAMILY MINISTRY

2000

The way, how FLEP Program Description (2000, see the Appendix) stated the Purpose and the Objectives of the Program, is quite valid still after ten years of function. Some of the Purposes mentioned and still valid, are

- To raise awareness on Family issues;
- To promote Christian Family Life Ministry through conducting awareness raising seminars and workshops etc.;
- To educate church workers on Family issues including pre-marital teaching;
- To offer the church workers an opportunity to renew their partnership in Marriage during a retreat-type of gathering;
- To search for Key Persons to promote the Family Life Ministry;
- To collect and create new materials on Marriage and Family life,
- To strengthen the Family Counseling activities in the Church, and
- To finally achieve the goal of having Christian Family Life Education as an essential part of ordinary teaching in all the Church Units.

From the very beginning the issue of finding key persons has been important. The 2000 Program Description stated this as follows: “One of the main objectives of the Program is to search for Key Persons in different Church units. These Ethiopians, whether Church workers or voluntary ones, will participate in teaching and otherwise act as resource persons for the Program. They should gradually take responsibility of promoting the Christian Family Life Program in their respective working areas. The idea is not to employ new people but to integrate Christian Family Life Ministry to the existing Church activities. “

2009-2010

The Information Leaflet of the EECMY Family Ministry (2009, see the Appendix) states **the aims and goals of the Family Ministry** as follows:

THE BASIS: The EECMY Family Ministry is based on the Bible.

- To help Church people to live in happy marriages and families. The happier the married lives are, the better service they can give in their respective duties.
- To raise awareness amongst the leadership on the necessity of Family Ministry;
- To train Church personnel for Family Ministry;
- To arrange Family related courses, Retreats etc.;
- To strengthen the structure for Marriage and Family Counselling activities;
- To collect and create materials for Family Ministry.
- To train as many instructors or couples as possible to act as Family Ministry teachers while working in their respective duties.
- To finally have Family Ministry as an essential part of ordinary teaching and service in all levels of Church work.

THE VISION OF THE FAMILY MINISTRY (stated in the Leaflet of 2009):

- To build up a healthy congregation and community growing from a healthy marriage and family;
- To encourage Church workers who are happy in their marriages to spread the Good News through their life example and teaching;
- To improve the status of girls and women through strengthening the Christian family model;
- To help in the frightening situation of the AIDS pandemic through stressing the significance of faithfulness in the life of couples and families;
- On the field of Pre-marital teaching, to give Biblical education concerning sexual behaviour, i.e. abstinence before and faithfulness in marriage; and
- To strengthen the congregational structure for Marriage and Family Counselling activities.

THE STATUS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE EECMY FAMILY MINISTRY IN 2010

The Training Structure by 2010

The **present teaching or training structure** of FLEP (see the Appendix) is as follows:

- LEVEL I: "**Basic Marriage Course**" or "Course on Basics of Family Ministry", or similar amount of teaching, 25-30 teaching periods, in Congregation, Parish, Synod, Bible School, Theological Seminary, other institutions etc.;

Participants: a) of "Basic Marriage Courses" couples. b) of other teaching variety of target groups. The basic contents of the Course have been some 12-13 Learning Periods of the Palmus' "**A Handbook for Family Ministry**"

- LEVEL II: **Training of Trainers (TOT) Course**, 75 teaching periods;
Participants: the ones, who have finished the Level I Training, as the main rule couples; (as exception singles). The contents of the Course: the participants have studied the Palmus' "**A Handbook for Family Ministry**" and practised the learning materials of it by teaching turn by turn during the TOT-Course.

- LEVEL III: **TOT Refresher Course**, 25-30 teaching periods; Participants: the ones, who have finished the Level II Training;
- LEVEL IV: **TOT-T (TOT for those, who will teach TOT Courses on Synod levels)**, 75 teaching periods; Participants: the ones with Level III Training and much Family Ministry teaching experience in their Units;
- LEVEL V: **TOT-T Refresher Course**, 25-30 teaching periods; Participants: the ones with Level III Training.

The **responsibility of arranging the Basic Level teaching was transferred from Central Office to the local facilitators already in early years of the program**, i.e. as soon as the TOT Courses had been started in 2002.

The **responsibility of arranging the TOT Courses has gradually been transferred from Central Office to the Synods as of 2008**, when the TOT-T Courses were started.

Some of the burning issues in recent years have been the ownership of the program (Central Office / the local level) and the budget: who finances the programs in any level of the Church.

The number of trained facilitators of Family Ministry by 2010

The number of people, who have participated in Basic level teaching (whether in courses or other teaching sessions in various programs) **is to be counted in hundreds of thousands**. For example, concerning the year 2007 only, the local trainers from various Church Units reported having had more than 90.000 participants. - **By 2010 there are close to 600 TOT trained facilitators** in all the Church Units. Further on, **there are 54 TOT-T trained facilitators**, who have been authorized to arrange TOT Courses in their respective Church Units.

How many trainers are needed for EECMY?

The final goal is to have a trained Family Life Educator for each and every congregation (or preaching place) of EECMY. According to the Statistics of 2009 there are **6755 congregations** and 2825 preaching places, i.e. altogether 9580 places of service in EECMY.

There is a plan **as an in-between goal to train a facilitator for each group of ten congregations**; this means there is a need to have about 680 trainers. Some of the Synods have already reached that goal, while some are very far of that yet. The final goal is, however, to have a TOT-trained facilitator for all of the 6755 congregations.

[See the Appendix “Statistics of EECMY & Family Ministry trainers”.]

Who is responsible, or who is the Owner of the Work?

From now on it should be clear, that **the Owner of Family Ministry is the Local Congregation**. All others should carry a supporting or advising role. But how to reach that stage? Who is responsible for reaching that stage?

ACTION PLAN FOR THE YEARS 2011-2015

THE GOALS FROM 2010 ONWARDS

The year 2010 is a year of transformation in the EECMY Family Ministry. As of 2011 **the “Program” is to be transformed towards a “Movement in the Local Congregations”**. This means a clear change in the ownership of the Ministry. The Program was started and run by the Central Office DMT Family Ministry office. Now the role and status of that office, renamed as “Office for Family Issues”, will be more focused on following up and encouraging the local trainers in Church Units, not any more on arranging activities.

The Synods, partly in co-operation with each other forming “Clusters”, groups of Synods, will be responsible for encouraging and enforcing the Family Ministry activities within their areas. Further on, the responsibility lies on the Parishes (presbyteries), but the final responsibility is by the local Congregation.

The “resources” on one hand, and the “activities” on the other hand, are described in the “EECMY Family Ministry Overall Structure 2010” chart (see the Appendix). As stated there, **The Basis, the definite owner of the work, is the local Congregation.**

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ACTORS ON VARIOUS LEVELS

CONGREGATION

* Family Ministry integrated to the Constitution, structure and activities *

RESOURCES

- Congregational members (including elders, pastors, evangelists and other responsible people)
- TOT trained facilitators
- Trained counsellors
- Voluntary professionals
- Teaching materials; collection of books etc.
- Working group
- Networking
- Peer groups (women, youth etc.)
- Budget

ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy; Awareness raising
- Teaching in all working fields:
 - Pre-Marital teaching
 - Marriage teaching
 - Family life teaching
- Teaching at the schools, too
- Teaching the girls/boys groups
- Creating Cell groups / Couples´ Groups
- Counselling; support (pre-marital, marital, family)
- Annual Family Conference
- Keeping up collection of books
- Fund raising
- Sharing information, reporting
- INFLUENCING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

PARISH (Presbytery)

* Family Ministry integrated to the Constitution, structure and activities *

RESOURCES

- Parish leaders, workers and other responsible people
- TOT trained facilitators
- Family Ministry Contact Person
- Synod (having the facilitating role)
- Congregations
- Teaching materials; collection of books etc.
- Networking
- Bible School, T.E.E.
- Budget

ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy; Awareness raising
- Arranging TOT Course (& Refresher Course)
- Arranging Pre-Marital TOT Course
- Teaching Family issues at the Bible School
- Teaching various target groups, including schools
- Training leaders for the girls/boys groups
- Annual Family Conference
- Keeping up collection of books
- Sharing information, reporting
- INFLUENCING THE CONGREGATIONS

SYNOD

* Family Ministry integrated to the Constitution, structure and activities *

RESOURCES

- Synod leaders, workers and other responsible people
- TOT-T trained facilitators; Family Issues Contact Person
- DMT, Women's work, Youth work, HIV/Aids work, Dassc
- Team for Family issues
- Parishes
- The CO Office for Family Issues
- Teaching materials; library
- Networking
- Seminary; Bible School; T.E.E.
- Budget

ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy; Awareness raising
- Arranging / hosting the TOT Course
- Arranging / hosting the Pre-Marital TOT
- Arranging TOT Refresher courses
- Teaching Family issues at the Seminary, Bible School and various target groups, including schools
- Arranging counselling training
- Follow up; Sharing information; Reporting, collecting reports and information;
- Preparing and distributing teaching materials
- Keeping up collection of teaching materials in library setting
- INFLUENCING THE PARISHES

CLUSTER

- * A) A Forum of TOT-T trained couples *
* B) A Follow-up Team of the Synods' Contact Persons *

RESOURCES

- The resources of the Synods
- The CO Office for Family Issues

ACTIVITIES

- Supporting the training in Synods
- Co-operating in arranging the TOT and TOT-T Courses in Synods together with the Office for Family Issues
- Arranging consultations
- Sharing resources
- Sharing information

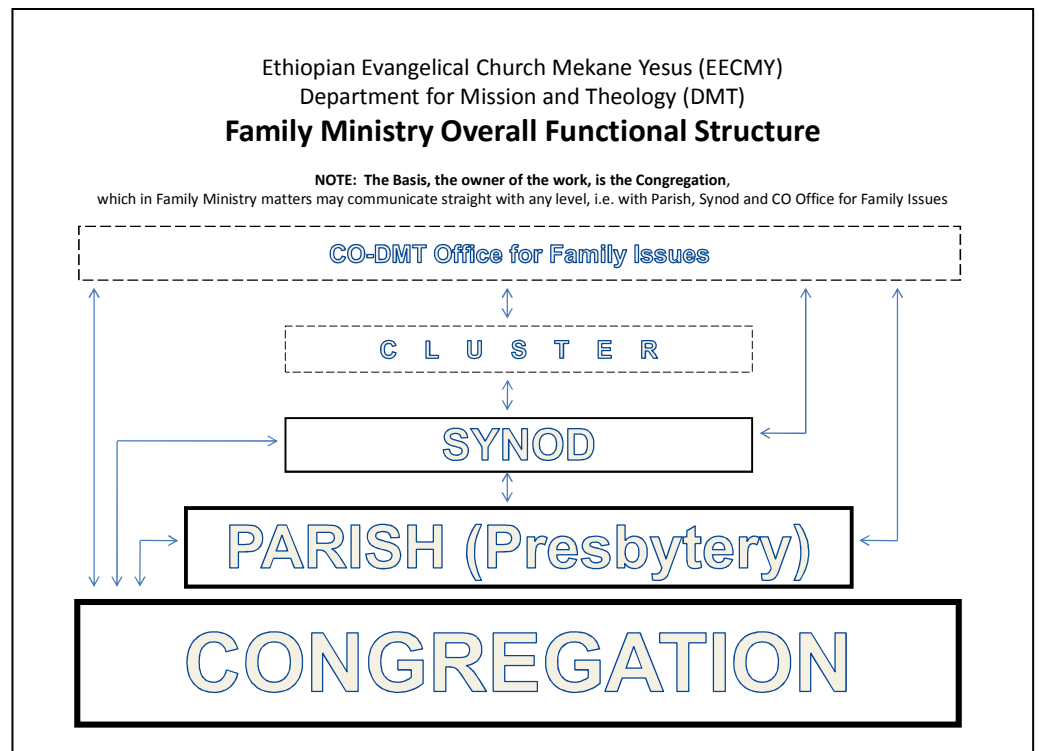
EECMY CO-DMT - Office for Family Issues

RESOURCES

- CO Staff, leaders
- The Advisor for Family Issues
- DMT, Women's work, Youth work, HIV/Aids work, Dasse
- Synods and their resources
- Trained TOT and TOT-T facilitators and Advanced level trained persons
- Networking (EECMY and others, nationally & internationally)
- Professional consultants
- Training institutions
- Partners of EECMY
- Library; Internet
- Budget

ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy / Awareness raising
- Following up, Encouraging
- Arranging TOT-T courses, TOT-T Refresher courses and Advanced training ("Family Life Institute")
- Co-operating in arranging the consultations of the Clusters
- Assisting in various level trainings
- Creating/strengthening networks
- Collecting/creating teaching materials, distributing them
- Keeping up Library
- Keeping up the Internet Home Page
- Reporting, collecting reports and information
- Sharing information



ABOUT TEACHING MATERIALS

As already mentioned above, (1) "**A Handbook for Family Ministry**" and (2) "**A participant's Book for Family Ministry**", prepared by Anna-Kaarina and Matti Palmu, have been used as teaching material for EECMY Family Ministry. (3) **Teaching materials for training of Pre-marital facilitators** are been processed by Helena and Tapio Räsänen. (4) A "**Basic Material for Marriage and Family Counselling**" has been processed by the Palmus.

For the Pre-marital and Marital training purposes two books (written in English by the Brittens) (5) "Questions young people ask" and (6) "Answers for your marriage" have been used as additional source material for the TOT trained. These books are available in Amharic, and the Räsänen's have got them translated and printed in Oromiffa, too.

In addition, there is a variety of books on Marriage and Family, available in English, Amharic and some also in Oromiffa. The **TOT and TOT-T trained facilitators have during their training received about 15 books** to be used as resource in their service.

There are a lot of marriage and family related books available, in English in great numbers and even in Amharic quite a lot. The problem is where to find contextualized material suitable for the local situation in Ethiopia. Thus one of the great tasks of the Office for Family Issues is **to search for good, usable material already published, and further on to produce (or get translated) new, reliable material to be used by the Family Ministry facilitators.** It is also evident that the participants of the courses or other type of programmes need and want to get (buy) learning materials of various types.

How to get enough TOT-trained facilitators for congregations?

As mentioned, the final goal is to have a TOT-trained facilitator for all of the EECMY congregations, who are 6755 in 2009 statistics. At the same time there are 574 TOT-trained facilitators by the end of 2009. So is it too daring to have a bold plan to train a facilitator for all congregations?

A) EECMY has 4 theological seminaries and about 36 Bible Schools. It would be possible, that these 40 training institutions would offer TOT-training as an additional course to their students. If even a half of yearly graduating students would attend such a TOT Course for Family Ministry, there would be approximately 400 additional TOT-trained per year.

B) EECMY has 21 Synods. It would be possible, that every Synod, co-operating with the Synods within her own Cluster, would train for example 40 people per year. Through this channel there would be more than 800 additional TOT-trained per year for each Synod.

Calculating the above A+B there would be about 1.200 additional trainers per year, i.e. 6.000 in 5 years. **It doesn't seem realistic, but it would be possible!**

The Role of the DMT Central Office level, when the Owner of the work is the Congregation?

The owner of the Family Ministry is the local Congregation. Even though, the Central level "Office for Family Issues" will be needed for various functions, as shown above. All these are **functions aimed at encouraging, supporting and advising the work at the congregational level**. The more the congregations accept the responsibility for this work, the more they need support, e.g. on training more facilitators.

There are also a **variety of new openings, which need to be planned and arranged centrally**. One of the main tasks of the Office for Family Issues will be **creating new ideas, new ways** to fulfil the task in fulfilling the needs on the field of Family Ministry.

About networking

Networking is essential for Family Ministry. Networking within **DMT**, further on with **Youth Work and Womens' Work** and the **Training Institutions** is a very natural necessity. But there are also other areas where networking would benefit a lot, but where there has been very little or no co-operation by now. One of those is the EECMY development work, DASSC.

Family Ministry could and should join hands with DASSC actors (for example) on the fields of (a) HIV-Aids work, (b) Health work, (c) Nutrition and Hygiene work, etc. Since the Family Ministry will be arranging various activities through Clusters, it will be **of vital importance to co-operate with the DASSC Clusters**, this is the **DASSC Area Capacity Building Offices (ACBO)** and their Co-ordinators.

There would be a **great chance of co-operating with the Yemisrach Dimts Communication Services**, with various divisions of it. It would be very natural to co-operate e.g. with the **Print Media Division** in translating and printing the Family Ministry materials, and with **Electronic Media Division**, especially with the Radio work.

**THE PRIORITY LIST OF MOST NECESSARY FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES
OF EECMY FAMILY MINISTRY, AS OF 2010 AND THEN THROUGH 2011-2015**

EECMY Central Office DMT - Office for Family Issues, in co-operation with the others

| Year | Duty | Note |
|------|--|---|
| 2010 | Make sure to have enough ready printed Handbooks and Participants' Books, in English, Amharic and Oromiffa | URGENT! |
| 2010 | Create and ensure the functioning system for the sale of Participant's Books | URGENT! |
| 2010 | Create and keep up an own store bookkeeping system for the Family Ministry teaching material books, including the ones for sale as well as the ones given free to facilitators | URGENT! |
| 2010 | Encourage ALL the Synods to appoint the Contact Person for Family Ministry | URGENT! |
| 2010 | Help the Clusters to start functioning | In co-operation with the CO-DMT & Synods' DMT Directors |
| 2010 | Make sure that the MYS & the Regional Seminaries (colleges) arrange a Basics of Family Ministry course, each one once per year | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2010 | Encourage all the Seminaries to arrange TOT-training as an extra course, on voluntary basis | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2010 | Follow-up that all the Bible Schools include the Family Ministry Basic level teaching in their ordinary schedule | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2010 | Encourage all the Bible Schools to arrange TOT-training as an extra course, on voluntary basis | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2010 | Get prepared for printing the teaching material for Pre-Marital education | |
| 2010 | Arrange a series of TOT Courses on Pre-Marital education | In co-operation with the Clusters and the CO - Youth Work |
| 2010 | Start preparations for the TOT-T training for Pre-Marital education | In co-operation with the Clusters and the CO - Youth Work |
| 2011 | Secure enough training in order to have one TOT-trained for each group of 10 congregations in all the Synods | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2011 | Encourage through the Clusters the Synods to arrange further TOT-training after reaching the one-per-10-places goal | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2011 | Encourage through the Clusters the Synods to arrange a TOT Refresher Course, each one once a year | In co-operation with the Clusters |
| 2011 | Arrange a series of TOT Courses on Pre-Marital education for the remaining Synods | In co-operation with the Clusters and the CO - Youth Work |
| 2011 | Train more TOT-T –trained for those Synods who have proportionally the biggest shortage of trainers | As part of the “Advanced Level Training Program” for Family Ministry; In co-operation with the MYS |
| 2011 | Start further training for TOT-T trained on the field of Marriage and Family Counselling | As part of the “Advanced Level Training Program” In co-operation with the MYS |
| 2011 | Start preparations for further training on other fields of Family Life | As part of the “Advanced Level Training Program” In co-operation with the MYS |

THE PRIORITY LIST OF MOST NECESSARY FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES (continued)**EECMY Central Office DMT - Office for Family Issues, in co-operation with the others**

| | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| | | | |
| 2011-2015 | Encourage all the Seminaries to arrange TOT-training as an extra course, on voluntary basis | In co-operation with the Clusters | |
| 2011-2015 | Encourage all the Bible Schools to arrange TOT-training as an extra course, on voluntary basis | In co-operation with the Clusters | |
| 2011-2015 | Co-operate in planning and arranging the MTh level education on the field of Family Ministry | In co-operation with the MYS | |
| 2011-2015 | Help the Clusters to arrange Marriage and Family Counselling training | In co-operation with the Clusters | |
| 2011-2015 | Write / get people to write new Family Ministry teaching materials; print them. | | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|---|--|
| | | | |
| 2011-2015 | PREPARATIONS FOR NEW OPENINGS IN FAMILY MINISTRY: | | |
| | - Radio Programs through YDCS | In co-operation with the YDCS | |
| | - "Help Line" services through telephone for people having problems related to Marriage and family life | | |
| | - Create a system for providing training for Family Ministry through ECFE | In co-operation with the ECFE | |
| | - Create ways to get Family related programmes to Radio Ethiopia and / or private FM radio stations | | |
| | - Create ways to get Family related programmes to Ethiopian Television | | |
| | - Start a Marriage and Family Counselling Centre in a local Congregation in Addis Abeba | In co-operation with the a Congregation | |
| | - Arrange Counselling services for those Family members who have mental problems | In co-operation with professionals | |
| | - Create a system of sending a Circular Letter to the TOT-T trained Family Ministry facilitators, in order to encourage them in their service | In co-operation with the Clusters | |
| | - Offer help in arranging teaching of Family issues in various training institutions, like Nursing Colleges, Teachers Training Colleges etc. | | |
| | | | |

ABOUT THE TRAINING STRUCTURE OF EECMY FAMILY MINISTRY

The present Training Structure has been described above (pages 11-12). The Level I-V training system aims at having TOT trained facilitators gradually in all EECMY congregations.

The role of EECMY training institutions need to be clarified more in detail

A) **The Bible Schools** are giving the Basic level Family Issues teaching, and hopefully arrange also TOT-training as additional courses on voluntary basis. All the Bible Schools need to have a TOT-T trained facilitator available in order to be able to offer the TOT-training at the School.

B) **The Theological Seminaries**, MYS and the Regional Seminaries are giving the Basic level Family Issues teaching, and hopefully arrange also TOT-training as additional courses on voluntary basis. All the Seminaries (Colleges) need to have a TOT-T trained facilitator available in order to be able to offer the TOT-training at the Institution.

C) The Family Ministry **Advanced Level Training**, possibly called in future as “(“EECMY Institute for Family Issues”)” might in future be arranged by the MYS, or by DMT, as seen appropriate. Anyhow the Advanced Level Training may be seen as top-level of the congregation-oriented, practice-concentrated training for Family Ministry.

D) The **Academical Level Education for Family Ministry** is being planned. By now the Theological Seminaries have had Family Ministry issues taught in the context of Practical Theology, as part of Pastoral Care and Counselling studies, both on Diploma and BTh level.

If deemed necessary, the Family Ministry training structure on the Mekane Yesus Seminary level might look like follows:

- a) The Basics of Family Ministry would be given as a required course for all students at grade 2 or 3, not only as Elective course to some;
- b) A more comprehensive Course on Family Ministry would be given for Practical Theology students as an Elective course at grade 3; [This course might be replaced by the “TOT course for Family Ministry”, see below c.]
- c) The students would be encouraged to participate in TOT Course for Family Ministry, whether studying Practical Theology or not;
- d) The students of the mentioned Elective course would be encouraged to write their BTh paper on issues of Family Ministry;

About the **Family Ministry education on Master’s of Theology level**:

Whether it will be arranged by MYS or EGST, or the two of them jointly, anyhow the Curriculum needs to be planned thoroughly well ahead of time.

- e) The requirement for students specializing at Practical Theology / Family Ministry would be the fulfilment of the courses (a) and (b/c);
- f) The students will take the required courses on the field of Family Ministry and write their MTh theses on issues of Family Ministry.

ABOUT THE BUDGET FOR FAMILY MINISTRY

Congregation Since Family Ministry shall be integrated to the Constitution, structure and activities of local congregations, they will also be responsible for financing the work. It is believed, that this will be no problem as soon and as long as the local congregations are convinced about the need and necessity of this work.

As probably almost all the Synods are having shortage of funds, there is a fear that Family Ministry might not get the needed budget from the Synods. This makes even more evident the need of having this work owned by the congregations, not Synods. The sooner the work is really and practically owned by the local congregations, the less the work will be dependent on the uncertain funds possibly granted by the Synod(s).

(Parish, Synod) The local congregations quite naturally finance their own work. When there are training courses or other Family Ministry activities on Parish or Synod levels, the congregation is to supply her own participants, leaving no need for financing by the Parish or Synod.

What comes to the training programs arranged by the Clusters in the Synods, any participants need to be supplied by the sending body.

Central Office level The EECMY Family Life Education Program (Family Ministry) has been financed by the FELM for eleven years, 2000-2010. Since 2005 ther FLM has financed the Pre-Marital training sector of Family Ministry in the five Synods in western part of Mekane Yesus. - What happens after the work has been transformed to be “a movement in congregations”?

There will still be a need for Budget for Family Ministry on the Central Office level. This need is gradually decreasing, since the trainings on Synods and Parishes will be financed totally by the arranging bodies, not the CO level.

EECMY Central Office DMT - Office for Family Issues

ESTIMATED NEED FOR FAMILY MINISTRY BUDGET

| Year | Budget content | ETB x1000 | Total ETB x1000 | Total EUR x1000 | Note |
|-------------------|---|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Yearly up to 2010 | The total yearly budget granted by FELM, (including the salaries of 2 staff members up to end of 2010 only) | 180 | 180 | 10 | The Printing Costs are to be budgeted separately |
| 2011 | Office for Family Issues, block grant TOT-T Refresher Course earmarked | 100 50 | 150 | 8,33 | The Printing Costs and the Advanced level training are to be budgeted separately |
| 2012 | Office for Family Issues, block grant TOT-T Refresher Course earmarked | 100 50 | 150 | 8,33 | The Printing Costs and the Advanced level training are to be budgeted separately |
| 2013 | Office for Family Issues, block grant TOT-T Refresher Course earmarked | 100 50 | 150 | 8,33 | The Advanced level training is to be budgeted separately |
| 2014 | Office for Family Issues, block grant TOT-T Refresher Course earmarked | 100 50 | 150 | 8,33 | The Advanced level training is to be budgeted separately |
| 2015 | Office for Family Issues, block grant TOT-T Refresher Course earmarked | 100 50 | 150 | 8,33 | The Advanced level training is to be budgeted separately |

EECMY Family Ministry Staff

As mentioned above (p. 7) there have been maximum three couples working full time as staff members of the Family Life Education Program. The Palmus were the only workers from 2000 to late 2004. Rev. Geneti and Mrs. Aberash were then employed for Family Ministry for five years starting September 2004. The Räisänens joined the Program in 2005 and are still continuing. The Palmus continued as Advisors up to May 2009.

Rev. Geneti and Mrs. Aberash have continued still after the first five years' period from September 2009 onwards. According to the 'DMT – Family Life Education Program (FLEP) Annual Plan for 2010' one of the objectives is to "Have the ministry office restructured". When listing the desired accomplishments the same document states that "staff relocation may be effected or planned for by mid of the year".

As mentioned, **the year 2010 is a year of transformation in the EECMY Family Ministry**. Since, as of 2011, the "Program" is to be transformed towards a "Movement in the Local Congregations", there will be also significant change in staff. There are no more missionaries working full time in the Family Ministry office. **The role and status of "Office for Family Issues" will also be changed**. The office will be more focused on advising and encouraging the local trainers in Church Units, not any more on arranging activities.

After the "staff relocation" mentioned in the DMT-FLEP Annual Plan 2010, **the "Office for Family Issues" will be a one-person-office**. The DMT Plan goes on stating that the future plans will be worked out "in line with the vision of promoting grassroots ownership of the ministry".

There are a lot of challenges and work responsibilities awaiting the Office for Family Issues. **The Advisor for Family Issues** shall first of all give any desired help to the Clusters and the facilitators within the Clusters. The Advisor shall, on the other hand, be responsible for various Central level issues, including the great challenges related to the "new openings" listed above.

Many of the courses and other teaching activities in Family Ministry during past years have been arranged having married couples serving together as a working team. This is still the main line what comes to teaching activities within Clusters, up to the Congregations. The Office for Family Issues will as of 2011 not arrange so many trainings any more. That responsibility will be mainly carried out by the levels closer to the local Congregations. Still, when need arises, the Advisor for Family Issues may serve as a facilitator together with the spouse, based on freelance arrangement.

When talking about the "staff" of EECMY Family Ministry it is good to realize that vast majority of the teaching activities have been and will be fulfilled by the local facilitators in Synods and Congregations. Most facilitators serve as volunteers, or they are serving in this field when possible, as a duty in addition to their ordinary job or field of service. The home of Family Ministry is in Congregation. All the others have an advisory and supportive role only. Since the owner of this work is the Congregation, also the main "staff" is there, in the local Congregation.

CHALLENGES, THREATS

- The growing problems, the crisis of marriage and family in the society;
- The HIV-Aids pandemic endangering the future of the society
- Poverty, lack of many necessities in people's lives;
- Lack of vision amongst the people responsible for the work;
- Lack of motivated, enthusiastic, active Congregational members who would see to it that the Congregations take care of marriages & families;
- Lack of TOT trainers, resulting to:
- Lack of teachers/facilitators in Congregations;
- Different problems which prevent trained facilitators from serving as facilitators;
- Conflicts, various family related problems of the Family Ministry trainers
- Lack of understanding and support from the leaders of different levels;
- Bureaucracy, heavy and restrictive administration structures;
- Lack of budget for Family Ministry activities in Congregations and trainings on Parish or Synod levels;
- Dependency on the higher level structures, i.e. Congregation on the Synod, Synod on the Central Office, etc.
- Patronizing, controlling, administrative attitudes of the past;
- Dependency attitudes on the funding from abroad;
- Quick transfers of trainers from one place of service to somewhere else;
- Lack of contextualized, new teaching materials;
- Lack of teaching materials on local languages;
- Dependency on harmful traditional thinking;
- Lack of transparency.

- Recommendations
1. For detailed list, please see the 'Priority List' on pages 17-18.
 2. The EECMY Family Ministry, having been a program led by the Central Office, should, for most parts of the program, be handed over to the Synods;
 3. The Synods should receive the responsibility, only in order to hand over the responsibility further on to local congregations;
 4. All the concerned parties should join hands in order to get the Clusters functional;
 5. The Office for Family Issues should "let the work go", i.e. let the Synods (co-operating within their Clusters) carry the responsibility for Family Ministry in their respective areas. The time has come that the up-to-now 'child' has grown up and needs to stand on her own feet, getting the independence with all the freedom and responsibilities related to it;
 6. The Office for Family Issues will still have certain responsibilities described above, like the parents take care of their grown-up children, letting the children to live their independent life, but offering help if it is required;
 7. The DMT Office for Family Issues should quickly get re-structured what comes to work done by the Office: a) Help the Clusters to get functional as soon as possible, b) Leave out part of up-to-now work load letting it to be covered by the Clusters, and c) Seize the chance to get into new openings.

Conclusion

The EECMY Family Ministry has gone long way in ten years. Still there is much to do, much to be developed.

The great task for the coming five years is to get the Family Ministry really rooted on the Congregational level. As long as the work is a 'program' or 'project' led and financed from somewhere else than the local congregation, there is a risk that the work dries down as soon as the outside guidance and financing dies away.

Where the local congregation has in practice become the Owner of Family Ministry, there it goes on, owned by the local members themselves.

We are thankful for the opportunity to work for EECMY Family Ministry 2000-2009. As well we were happy when given the chance to think through and propose our view on how to develop the Family Ministry during the years 2011-2015. As we are now serving the Lord on the field of Family Ministry not only in Ethiopia but also in various other countries, we pray God to give His guidance to the deciding ones in Mekane Yesus Church. God bless you and Family Ministry in Ethiopia!

Respectfully submitted,
in Addis Abeba March 25, 2010

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