






PROMISING PRACTICE REPORT

Collaboration with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church

Date [14/3/2023]	Contact details Habtie Honelign (habtie.honelign@giz.de)
Subject	Key Facts & Figures
 Geographical coverage	Implemented in Sekela, Banja, Ebinat, East and West Belesa Woredas (25 kebeles) in Amhara Region, Ethiopia.
 Actors and Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close collaboration with zonal Ethiopian orthodox tewahido church (EOTC) Diocese, Woreda <i>betekihnet</i> and church level priests • With the consent & acceptance of EOTC Development and Inter - Church Aid Commission (EOTC-DICAC)
 Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected 81 Zonal & district level EOTC leaders • Selected 596 Church level priests • 7180 pregnant and lactating women with children under two years of age who are the soul children of trained priests • General community members who are participating in the religious gatherings and events at the time of nutrition education provided in the selected intervention churches <p>Selection criteria for church level priests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who are experienced on providing religious teachings • Those who have soul children • Those who have willingness to teach their soul children after they get trained
 Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amhara is the highest malnutrition prevalent (41.3 %) region next to Tigray (48.7%) and Afar (43 %) regions. • All beneficiaries of the project are EOTC follower and accept all religious information from their religious fathers. • For adult members of the EOTC with the average person fasting for around 180 days per year. • Even though the church doctrine exempts children under-seven and pregnant & lactating women from fasting, the followers didn't have adequate information about it. • To contribute on malnutrition reduction the church developed training manual titled “ለእናት መልካም ፍትፍት” (nutritious food for mothers) and working with Save the Children and Alive & Thrive in Amhara region. • The role of EOTC was to provide soft copy of training materials, providing training to priests at different level and follow up its operation. Generally, GIZ gives financial support for its operation.
 Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To development capacity of religious leaders on fasting exemption declarations • To create awareness about the fasting exemption declaration of EOTC for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 2 in selected churches of project intervention woredas. • To improve nutritional status of Children under seven, pregnant & lactating women through promotion of diversified feeding, including animal source food, by trained priests as per fasting exemption rule of the church



Methodological approach

To ensure its acceptance, ownership and sustainability, following approaches were chosen:

- Discuss and get approval from federal EOTC- DICAC office
- Cooperation Agreement) sign with respective zonal diocese
- Active involvement of woreda *betekihnet* and zonal diocese in the planning implementation & monitoring processes
- Using training materials prepared by the EOTC-DICAC itself
- The training of training and its cascading have been facilitated by zonal and woreda EOTC staffs
- Target group trained & mentored by respective soul father



Results

Main activities accomplished:

- Training of trainers provided for 81 Zonal dioceses and woreda *betekihnet* staffs
- The training cascaded to 596 church level priests
- Trained priests individually counseled 7180 pregnant and lactating women
- 60845 community members addressed with nutrition related topics like malnutrition, diversified feeding, male involvement, social role in children, pregnant and lactating women feeding
- The operation reviewed at woreda & regional level
- List of pregnant & lactating women reached with nutrition counseling and education collected

Main results observed

- Awareness increment on 7180 pregnant and lactating women about fasting exemption regulation of the religion and the purpose of diversified feeding
- More than 60,000 community members awareness improved concerning malnutrition, diversifications, holistic support for children, pregnant & lactating women nutrition
- Integration of nutrition education with routine services of the church
- Pregnant and lactating women feel happy while they educated about fasting exemption by their religious leaders and soul fathers
- Most priests accepted fasting related doctrine and pledge to expand the education to their followers
- Pregnant and lactating women start to eat animal source food during fasting period



Success factors

Framework conditions include:

- cooperation agreement made between NSAP and the church
- Start with the discussion and get approval from EOTC- DICAC
- Using of the church's' own training materials and resource persons
- Involvement of zonal diocese and woreda *betekihnet* at each step in the operation
- Empower EOTC structures for project implementation and limit external role on monitoring of results and financial support



Constraints

The EOTC structures need to be further strengthened:

- More churches need to be targeted and priests needs to be trained to reach more 1000 days targets and community members at large.
- During data collection GIZ learnt that quality of data was not as per the standard; though it would be good to provide program monitoring & documentation training, at least for woreda and zonal staffs is mandatory
- To improve quality of the operation there should be frequent follow up & support at church level
- Computer and printer support to strengthen documentations
- Strengthen the integration & sustainability of nutrition education in routine church operations
- Challenges from noon NSAP woredas and kebeles, which is the complaint from priests who did not get the training.



Sustainability

The potential for sustainable implementation is shown in:

- Positive attitude of trained priests towards fasting exemption rules
- In project intervention areas fasting exemption became part of dogmatic teaching of the religion
- Strong organizational structure which is conducive for activity integration and reaching more people within short time
- High number of trained priests (7 priests) per a church
- Integration of activity in scheduled monthly meeting with their soul son in the church
- Positive perception of untrained priests towards dogmatic directions of the religion on pregnant & lactating women fasting exemption
- High acceptance of religious leaders & priests by followers



Replicability and potential for upscaling

The potential for up-scaling via EOTC structures is guaranteed through:

- Availability of trained priests facilitating & reference manuals would be good opportunity to propagate healthy feeding practice in unaddressed areas of the woredas.
 - The project showed how nutrition education can be easily integrated with church activities; which is another good learning to upscale the activity in other areas
 - Good understanding of priests on the subject matter
 - Acceptance of fasting exemption rules, especially by pregnant and lactating women
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