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ADRA Ethiopia

ALEMU HAILE

Alemu Haile is director of ADRA Ethiopia.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is the global humanitarian organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its mission is to work with people who live in poverty and distress to improve their circumstances. ADRA Ethiopia began its operation in Ethiopia in 1982, providing relief assistance for vulnerable people in Ethiopia.¹

The Beginning of ADRA Work in Ethiopia

During the 1982 drought in Ethiopia, people living in Wello and Asaita in northern Ethiopia especially suffered. In response, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ethiopia started relief work, particularly east of Addis Ababa in a place called Legetaffo. The Ethiopia Union Mission opened a shelter to assist people coming from the Wello Region because of the severe drought. The government restricted them to the center in Legetaffo village, and forbid them to come to Addis Ababa. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were involved, among them ADRA Ethiopia.²

When ADRA Ethiopia started work at Legetafo in 1982 as an emergency shelter, it did not have a proper office. Later, ADRA Ethiopia activities were moved to an office in Megenagna on the eastern side of Addis Ababa. That was the beginning of ADRA Ethiopia work in the country.³

The first country director of ADRA in Ethiopia was Nathanael Olana. For a long time, ADRA Ethiopia rented offices in three different places. The first was at Megenagna, the second at Gojam Berenda, and the third at Kebena near the Russian Embassy. In 1991, the ADRA Ethiopia office was moved to the Ethiopian Union office compound.⁴

In 1992, because of the work ADRA had done to help the people fleeing the drought in the northern part of the country, the government offered the agency a piece of land measuring 22,479 square meters in Addis Ababa for the construction of a warehouse and housing for workers. Also, ADRA acquired a new office in the union compound. ADRA was one of three organizations with facilities in the union compound. The other two were the Filwoha Seventh-day Adventist church and the Ethiopian Union Mission office.⁵ The ADRA office was built with the assistance of ADRA Sweden and the Swedish government. At the time of writing, the compound is comprised of the union mission, ADRA Ethiopia, the Adventist World Radio recording office, a community library, an Adventist Book Center, a Dorcas Society store for the local church, and a cafeteria for workers and the public.⁶ This construction of the church infrastructure was made possible by an Adventist couple from Sweden who worked for the Ethiopian government at Alert Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Both were medical professionals; he a medical doctor and she a senior nurse in that hospital. The wife wrote a proposal to build better living center and office for ADRA Ethiopia, which would offer cooking schools and a library for the Filwoha Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁷ God used them mightily.

ADRA Ethiopia Five Core Sectors

ADRA Ethiopia's five core sectors include food Security, health, economic growth, education, and emergency management. Since the beginning of operations, most of the humanitarian projects have been secured within Ethiopia by UNOCHA. ADRA Ethiopia has developed its expertise in these sectors and in various subsectors, specifically in education, emergency response, and preparedness, food security, and livelihoods, health and nutrition, economic growth, and water, sanitation and hygiene.⁸

ADRA Ethiopia Regions of Operation

ADRA Ethiopia operates in five regions in the country: Oromia, Somali, Afar, Gomella, and Tigray. More than 80 percent of ADRA Ethiopia projects are in the area of development. From its inception, ADRA Ethiopia has been governed by a local board consisting of various professionals from all walks of life. The government of Ethiopia registered ADRA Ethiopia as a foreign NGO, since it has a network office throughout the world.⁹

ADRA Ethiopia is an independent NGO in which all decisions are made either by the local administrative committee or board in Ethiopia and all staff members are Ethiopians including the country director. ADRA Ethiopia works very closely with the government, unlike other international NGOs in Ethiopia. Moreover, ADRA

Ethiopia does not receive any financial support from ADRA International.¹⁰

Lists of ADRA Ethiopia Country Directors

Olanna Natenael (1982), Blackwood (1983-1987), Nemera Fufa, acting (1988), David Hardware (1989-1990), Gideon Girsha, acting (1991), B. Eya, acting (1991), Johani Harju (1991-1992), Colling Richardson (1993-1996), Gelgelu Sado, acting (1997-2003), Paul Smart (2004-2005), Zerihun Awano, acting (2006), Herman Wagner (2007-2009), Jerry Sarasawit (2010), Zerihun Awano, acting (2011), Jonathan Beagles (2012-2013), Zerihun Awano, acting (2014-2015), Douglass Kathy (2016-2017), Zerihun Awano, acting (January to August 2018), Alemu Haile (September 2018-present).¹¹

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Roba Ditta, ADRA Ethiopia worker for 36 years and 3 months, interview by Alemu Haile, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, June 15, 2021.

2. A. Abate and F. G. Kiros, Agrarian Reform Structural Changes and Rural Development in Ethiopia, in *Agrarian Reform in Contemporary Developing Countries*, ed. by A. K. Ghose (London: Croon Helm, 1983).

3. R. J. Baulch, Entitlements and the Wollo Famine of 1982-85, 1985, mimeo.
4. A. Belete, B. Haile Mariatn, and Z. Wolde Gebriel, *Profile of Wollo Under Famine* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Nutrition Institute, 1974).
5. Ebssa Etefa, ADRA Ethiopia worker for 36 years, interview by Alemu Haile, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, June 15, 2021.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Zerihun Awano, program director of ADRA Ethiopia for the past 11 years, interview by Alemu Haile, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2, 2021.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Roba Ditta, ADRA Ethiopia worker for 36 years and 3 months, interview by Alemu Haile, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, June 15, 2021.

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