

<b>Norad project number:</b>	<b>GLO-04/268-1 (NCA project ID 10004)</b>
<b>Name of your Organisation:</b>	<b>Norwegian Church Aid</b>
<b>Local Partner(s):</b>	<b>Evangelical Church of Eritrea (ECE).</b>

**ABOUT THE EVALUATION****Evaluation year: 2004.****Conducted by: Dr Ken Jenkins****Country: Eritrea (Asmara)****Region: Eastern Africa****Theme/DAC sector: 420.10 and HIV/AIDS****SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

**Title of Evaluation Report:** Review of Evangelical Church of Eritrea Commercial Sex Workers (CSW) Program.

**Background:** While the level of HIV infectivity is low in Eritrea, it is higher within the Commercial Sex Workers. The Evangelical Church of Eritrea, funded by NCA has sought to implement a program to enable CSW to acquire skills, thereby enabling them to become financially self-supporting. The program commenced in 2002 and has trained approximately 20-30 women per year.

**Purpose/ Objective:** To assess the status, successes, and weaknesses of the Evangelical Church Commercial Sex workers program and to make appropriate recommendations.

**Methodology:** Interviews were done with various members of the program and with staff involved with the CSW program.

**Key Findings:** The project has been successful in building a good group dynamic and inputting educational, moral and spiritual support to the CSW group. They had received significant training in HIV/AIDS.

The CSWs had been trained in the various skills – weaving, sewing and embroidery. They had also received the necessary materials to continue in the skill they had learned.

The CSWs had found that they were unable to sustain themselves through the training they had received. This was due to a number of factors, such as lack of markets, lack of space to continue working at home, lack of motivation, poor materials etc.

**Recommendations:** A full survey on follow-up on the graduates needs to be conducted (done by the NCA HIV/AIDS officer in 2005).  
A full market survey needs to be done to determine the viability of products prior to commencing training (proposed for 2006).  
Beneficiaries need to be canvassed and interviewed to determine their interest in various trainings. Many were not particularly motivated to practice their skills.  
Group dynamics need to be considered and the need for central production centres needs to be considered.  
Standard of equipment needs to be considered.

**Comments from Norwegian Church Aid:** The Commercial Sex workers program implemented by the Evangelical Church of Eritrea has had some success in group dynamics and educational training. However it has not been a success in enabling the CSWs to become self sustaining. To this end a market survey needs to be instituted to ensure that products are saleable. In addition it is essential to ensure that the women are motivated in their area of training. NCA is committed to help ensure that these prerequisites are fulfilled.

## **REVIEW OF ECE COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS PROGRAM**

### **Dr KR Jenkins**

It was my privilege to spend some time in the latter part of 2004 working with Norwegian Church Aid reviewing a number of their programs and writing some project proposals. NCA works with a number of partners but the primary partner is the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. I have already submitted several reports regarding the structure of much of the church but what follows is a short report with some recommendations regarding the Commercial Sex Workers (CSW) Program.

### **BACKGROUND**

The HIV/AIDS epidemic sweeping sub-Saharan Africa has touched Eritrea. The percentage infectivity is comparatively low at somewhere in the region of 3%. This figure is apparently fairly stable but the same figure does not apply within the group of CSWs where infectivity is in the region of 30%. To this end the ECE has sought to address the need with a programme with the following objectives;

- To reduce the number of prostitutes contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- To equip the participants of this project with new skills in order to financially empower them to return to mainstream society.
- To train the participants of the project to be peer educators. A working knowledge of HIV/AIDS is essential.

This project was started in 2002 and has been funded by Norwegian Church Aid and managed by the ECE. It has continued to be funded by the NCA and has continued over the subsequent years. Approximately 20-30 CSWs are part of this program each year.

### **ASSESSMENT**

The program currently running has many positive results. The ladies have been through a full training schedule. During this time they have been taught a lot about HIV/AIDS, and there has been a significant spiritual input. The graduation ceremony was a testimony to the spiritual state of these ladies. There is no doubt that there was high level of enthusiasm and potential for change for these ladies. The input from the staff and the financial support from NCA were much appreciated.

To this end there has been a partial fulfillment of the program objectives. At present the ladies are producing a number of handicraft products, which are then put up for sale. However a snap survey done early in the year showed that many CSWs had been unable to sustain themselves using the skills that they had learned and had ceased to use the skills and were potentially returning to the sex trade. There needs to be an urgent review of the changes required to make the training more appropriate and to enable these ladies to genuinely become self supporting.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The present system is producing ladies with potential but this is not being fulfilled. The products being produced seem to lack the potential to make them self-supporting. There seems to be a need to review the whole training program. The ladies need to be

consulted in order to assess the type of training that they would like to do and the financial potential of such training needs to be assessed. The present system produces handicrafts that are available through many other Eritrean groups and the market for such products is extremely limited. My recommendations are as follows;

1. A review of the state of previous graduates to be done to assess how many have been able to maintain a self-supporting status. I think this will reveal a depressing picture of failure.
2. A think tank needs to be conducted to assess what concepts are likely to work. There are a number of potential projects that could be undertaken. If handicrafts are to be continued I believe that it may be necessary to look at seeking to establish an export market and to produce products that would be desired in places like Norway, Sweden and the US. This could be done through the input of some of the Norwegian and Swedish expatriate ladies in Asmara. The wife of the Norwegian ambassador and Mrs. Holmgren could play an advisory role in assessing what sort of products would be popular in Europe.

If it is desired to address needs in Eritrea I believe that it is needed to reassess the whole training, as the present product range seems unlikely to sustain these ladies. I know that in Zimbabwe there has been success in different schemes such as training people to make coffins, gravestones etc, items that the local people are desperate to buy. I wonder if the CSWs could be trained to set up and manage the tents which are so desired for the many weddings, baptisms etc in Eritrea. They could be supplied with the tent but would then be responsible as a group for maintaining the tent and setting it up. They could also be trained in catering for such celebrations. There may also be a place for supplying the ladies with used wedding dresses from the US and the Scandinavian countries. These could then be rented out for weddings and maintained by the ladies. It seems that this could have potential to be a money earner. The need for coffins is also a potential major money earner and the ladies could be trained in this skill.

I believe that there is an urgent need to reassess the present system that seems to be churning out a product that does not enable the ladies to become self-supporting. The ladies graduate with high hopes but these hopes are not fulfilled as they set out to move into their new lives. I do not think that getting a house or simply continuing on this road will enable the program to be a success.

3. This whole project needs to be constantly reassessed to ensure that the real objectives are being achieved. If not we need to change and try another concept. Change within this program is going to be essential. Being self-critical is a vital component.
4. The present ECE staffing situation is greatly lacking in adequate administrative staff. This shortage extends to the CSW project. Dr Michael Paliero is doing his best but is stretched way beyond his ability to input into the many programs under his care.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present CSW program is achieving some spiritual and educational objectives. However it is not succeeding in providing CSWs with the necessary skills to become self-supporting and to escape the cycle of poverty and the need to be in the sex trade. A radical review is needed and some new and innovative changes brought in. The help of outsiders may be needed and a constant critical review needs to be part of the program. Success is not measured in the number of people who graduate but by the number who successfully become self-supporting through skills they have learned.

I trust that these recommendations are useful and I would be happy to discuss and assist where needed.

Dr Ken Jenkins