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Ethiopia Update



Ethiopian ladies measure grain.



On April 2, new hope for peace and stability came to Ethiopia with the inauguration of the first ethnic Oromo prime minister, a 41-year-old Christian of Muslim background, Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

With 105 million people, Ethiopia is the second most populous African country and growing fast. This multi-ethnic country is landlocked by Eritrea and Djibouti on the Red Sea and Somalia on the Indian Ocean. Other neighbors are Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya.

Complexity

Although only 35% of the population, the mainly Muslim Oromo people are

the largest single ethnic group in Ethiopia. At 27%, Amhara people are the second largest, whose kingdom ruled Ethiopia seven centuries, until the 1974 fall of Emperor Haile Selassie. It embraced a form of Christianity dominated by superstitions and unbiblical elements. Most Ethiopian Christians today still identify with this traditional church.

From 1974 to 1991 a Communist regime suppressed all religious affiliation. This was overthrown by the current Federal Democratic Republic guaranteeing freedom of religion. However, the past few years it faced escalating civil unrest resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands

of imprisonments, especially of ethnic Oromo people who felt bypassed. In February, this led to the sudden resignation of the previous prime minister. *Pray that the new government will bring peace and stability.*

Diversity

Ethiopia is a vast country of very diverse environments on both sides of rugged mountains with over 80 ethnic language groups. It has been a leading African kingdom since Bible times. Acts 8 records the dramatic conversion to Christ of a leading Ethiopian official journeying

homeward. The gospel continues to spread. Today nearly 20% of Ethiopians call themselves evangelical Christians, but there is little Bible knowledge and few truly qualified spiritual leaders.

Strategy

In Ethiopia, MERF seeks to both share the gospel and strengthen believers in God's Word through shortwave radio broadcasts in three major languages: Amharic, Oromo and Somali. Much needed basic Christian literature is being translated and



Gospel broadcasting.

printed in these languages. Biblical training is also carried out through regional conferences. Emergency diaconal aid has helped brothers and sisters suffering from persecution and those in severely drought-stricken areas.

Gospel Broadcasting

Currently both Amharic and Oromo gospel broadcasts present the basics of biblical faith following Louis Berkhof's *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*. The Amharic translation of this small book is in final review in preparation for publication. Praise God for good feedback from listeners:

"Thank you for your program concerning the authority of Scriptures. It challenges me to give priority to the Word of God in my life and ministry." Lemma from Sululta, Oromia

Somali gospel broadcasts share the good news in Christ with Somali Ethiopians, who are 6% of the population. Except for a number of small quiet fellowships, all are Muslim. The programs can also be heard in neighboring Somalia and beyond. Weariness with sufferings from radical Islam is creating new openness to the gospel. *Pray for many to come to faith in Christ and to grow in grace. Also, pray for wisdom and protection to the broadcasters who do secret field visits. As Somali refugees are spread across the globe, pray for the development of internet gospel broadcasting to reach them.*

Word and Deed

Emergency diaconal aid of basic food stuffs to fellowships suffering hunger in severely drought-stricken areas took much time and

effort over the past two years. Despite this, last year the Westminster Shorter Catechism was translated and printed in Oromo and Somali languages. This year the team is able to give more attention to developing the literature ministry. There are many opportunities for literature distribution, such as in hospitals, to MERF broadcast contacts and at the biblical training conferences.

Literature in the Oromo language is especially lacking, so it is exciting that both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism have just been translated to Oromo and are ready for printing.

Please pray that publications will be especially helpful to small fellowships without pastoral care.

Biblical Training

Last year some biblical training was given to pastors of the East Shewa Evangelical Fellowship and a three day training for students from all over the country at Jimma Summer University which are in a largely Islamic areas. Already this year, two or three day training events on discipleship and children's ministries were held for churches in three different Oromo towns: Debrezeyit, Woliso and Modjo. The Modjo seminar included participants from churches in 21 different districts in a 150 km radius. *Pray for this and future training in God's Word to bear good fruit.*

*"I will make mention of Egypt and Babylon to those who know Me, Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there."
— Psalm 87:4*

An introductory Bible Guide pamphlet printed at the end of 2017 in Amharic, Oromo and Somali has been much appreciated and already reprinted several times.



Modjo church hosted regional biblical training

MERF-Canada

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