

Diaconical master-plan for the ELCT Northern Diocese

Note: This paper is making references to the “ELCT Diaconia Policy” by using the abbreviation “DP” and the numbering system used there.

I. The Fundament: Unity about values, present situation and objectives

1. Basic values

The ELCT policy states the diaconical ministry together with worship and the proclamation of the Gospel as the third dimension of the church (DP#2c). Therefore diaconia is an important function of the Body of Christ. As every single congregation is a full representative of the Body, diaconical ministry must be present in every congregation (cf. DP#3b/i). If the picture of the body must be used also for the diocese with all its congregations and institutions, also diaconical institution must build up the whole body of Christ and support the diaconical work in the congregations¹

2. Priorities

If we consider the picture of the body of Christ as our basic theology, we must regard the following priorities:

- As the congregation is a full representative of the Body of Christ other institution are there to support the local ministry. We must try first to serve the needy, where they are.
- As the body of Christ exists of human beings, we must invest our money mainly in people and to help them to find and develop their gifts. With a lot of well-trained and encouraged workers we can achieve many things, even using local funds only. David Livingston said: “The treasure of Africa is its people”.

3. Present situation in the ELCT Northern diocese

The ELCT Northern diocese has started two diaconical centres. In some congregation and districts there are already diaconical committees or activities, but a broad diaconical ministry on the parochial level is missing. We have no policy to evoke diaconical activities in the congregations and to unite all diaconical activities within the body of Christ.

4. Goals

- We must start to develop and support the diaconical ministry on the parochial level.
- We must reshape existing activities in order to support the diaconical ministry at the parochial level
- We must build up an effective infrastructure at the parochial, district and the diocese level in order to support the diaconical ministry in the congregations.

II. Strategies – keys for development

The ELCT policy is showing some strategies, however to implement the policy we must add some more.

¹ Cf. DP#10 here mainly the financial argument is used for the preference of the diaconical work in the congregation, in DP#3b/ii a clear objective to support the diaconical ministry in the congregation is missing.

1. To preach and to teach about God's love and mercy for all people.

According to our Lutheran doctrine (A.C. art. 5) the origin of believe is the proclamation of the gospel. People can only be convinced by the Holy Spirit to change their lives and their thoughts and to get a diaconical attitude. The diaconical Spirit cannot be commanded, it is a gift of God. So we must preach and teach faithfully about these issues and we must be ourselves living example for a diaconical life style. (cf. DP#4, about training and education)

2. To be aware of Volunteers and volunteer groups

However even as we hope that God will pour out his spirit on ever single Christian, he gives his special diaconical charisma to some people in every congregation. We must be aware of what God's Spirit is doing. We must encourage people to discover and develop their gifts. These people will do their work on a volunteer base and they will gather themselves in volunteer groups within our congregation.²

3. Wise leadership: To support and to guide volunteers

Like other spiritual gifts also people with the diaconical gift need support and guidance. The work of this governance can be compared with the work of a farmer: He must sow, water, fertilize, weed etc. He is responsible for the growth, but he never can cause the growth, which is alone in God's hand. We must be very careful not to reject those gifted by God, how it happened so often in church history. And right now many who had been gifted for the diaconical ministry are doing this work outside of the church in one of the concerned NGOs. So we must support volunteers spiritually, technically and materially. Spiritual people will always open for guidance, if we guide them with a humble heart. This kind of leadership will take place first under the parish pastor, however it must be backboned by seminars, materials and services provided at the district level.

4. Effective use of full-time diaconical staff

If we mainly count on volunteer and lay-worker we will lead less full-time worker however with different qualifications: They must of course be gifted and committed for this kind of work, because even experience and knowledge can not replace real faithful commitment. They must have field experience, because they will guide and train volunteers doing their job at the grass roots. They should have some kind of qualification, for example a written thesis on a diaconical subject or practical work-experience in the field during the time of their education or before being admitted to the ministry. They will mainly operated from office of the district level to visit different congregations and volunteer groups in the field. Staff working in diaconical institution may use a part of their time to make seminars and assessment at the parochial level.

5. Effective on the job-training and mentoring

Education is normally considered, to pay a lot of money to go to a classroom and to listen to the teacher. Seminars are also normally a single day event listening to the teacher and to get some food. There is no follow up and the outcome is poor. We need to establish more *mentor-relationships*.³ Experienced workers must counsel and train individual workers or groups and committee while they are on the job. This mentor –relationship may then be topped up with seminars using state

² Important historical note. In Germany volunteers or volunteer groups started almost all diaconical work. The official church authorities did not command Diaconical work. Also the missionary work was started by voluntary societies.

³ The best model of this mentor model is Jesus and his disciples.

of the art training methods, like *workshop*, *group work* etc.⁴ Education must be understood as two-way system, in which teachers and students will work to gather to *exchange ideas, their evaluation and distribution*. It must be secured, that the “wheel is not invented a second time” So we must create a climate, in which new ideas are tested and optimized in the field, but also are exchanged quickly. The work in field must not be restricted by a lot of rules and restriction. We must also think about diaconical update- for different professions (pastors, evangelists, parish-worker, teachers, state –officers etc.).

6. Quality management and controlling (QC)

Of course a lot quality control will take place at the grass roots, if people are working in a team, because they will control each other (example: balance between pastor and diaconical committee). However we must improve the local control capacities by giving and maintaining clear qualities guidelines. Quality standards must be included in the syllabuses of all training programs. On the level of the diocese there may be an institution providing those guidelines and rating the diaconical efforts in the different congregation. The best congregations may receive an award. The rating system will be a good feedback for the volunteer groups building up self-confidence. It will build also help to build up the confidence of sponsors.⁵

7. Effective and transparent use of funds (Stewardship)

All the so far suggested strategies are cheap. They can even start with local funds. Effective use of funds means, that *we can do more with less money*. Sponsors in overseas and in Tanzania, want to *see* a big outcome and performance of their money. Only thus we can maintain long-term sponsor relationships.⁶

We must use cost-effective methods like home based care, instead of expensive centre building. Expensive measures, which have not an sufficient output must be stopped or reshaped in order to prevent, that these measures are blocking funds and human resource to be used effectively where they are needed first. Every measure with long-term obligations (like running a centre) must have long term plan of sustainability, which answers the question: *Who is going to pay the bill?* This strategy must of course also include measures to ensure proper budgeting and bookkeeping and prevent corruption. (cf. DP#9 “Sustainability”).

III. Steps to be taken – project and programs

According to the ELCT Policy it is the task of each diocese to ensure , that there are strategic plans and that diaconical work is carried out at different levels (DP#6-a)

1. On the parochial level

The only realistic suggestion of the ELCT policy for the parochial level is to establish a Diaconical committee (DP#5 –D).⁷ The committee will have the task to register all needy persons, to make an annual budget, plan and prepare an evaluation report of diaconical activities. The committee will raise money from internal and external resources for the planed activities kept in a separate diaconical account. The chairperson of the committee will be represented in the parochial council.

⁴ HuYaMwi is already using a mixed model with advisors and seminars.

⁵ We recommend also to get further advise from other controlling organisation, like Transparency international (Dar Es Salaam) an Anti corruption society.

⁶ Many sponsor like to identify themselves with the buildings build with their money. But on the long run they will get tired to care for the buildings. So let us direct the money, where the sponsor really want to see it: to help people.

⁷ The other suggestion to employ a deacon on the parish level is beyond the financial possibility of the most congregations. May be later evangelists will be replaced by deacons.

However to work effectively this committee needs further training and guidance. So we need to set up a set of training material, seminars and mentor-relationships to start and to improve the work of the diaconical committees.⁸ All books, seminars and materials must be non-academical, but simple and affordable for everybody.⁹ (cf. DP #6-a-ii)

2. At the deanery level

The ELCT policy suggests a deacon to coordinate all diaconical activities in the deanery and the existence of a diaconical committee of 6 to 8 people with representatives from the parishes (cf. DP#5/C). Like the committee in the parish it will be responsible for annual planning, budgeting, fund raising and bookkeeping. The committee will collect all reports and statistical data from the parishes and will process them to the diaconical department of the diocese. The chairman will be represented in the executive committee of the deanery.

In the near future we must ensure, that each district get one diaconical worker.¹⁰ The main task of this full-time diaconical worker is to support the diaconical ministry in the congregation and to provide mentor-relationship. On the long run one diaconical full-time worker will not be enough, even if we motivate a large group of trained volunteer workers to assist him.

It is the task of each district to ensure the participation of all congregations and to finance this program. Each district may choose a model applying to its local situation and resources, for example the offering of “huruma”, foundation of a diaconical society etc.

3. At the level of the diocese

One of the urgent tasks on the level of the diocese is to install an effective diaconical administration. The ELCT policy requires a diaconical department, a diaconical coordinator and a diaconical committee/board of about 6 to 8 people (cf. DP#5-B).

The key role of diaconical administration is to keep the unity within a diversity of volunteer based or independent activities (cf. Strategy #5 above). Within the body of Christ we need both freedom and dependency: Freedom is needed to develop a diversity of ministries and gifts. Dependency is needed to preserve the unity of the body of Christ. This will safeguard this important ministry from the possibility to be neglected or hindered.

a. The diaconical secretary

The diaconical coordinator will be a *link* between the different diaconical activities and the head quarter of the diocese. So his/her main task is to ensure

⁸ Concerning the ministry to orphans the orphan ministry of the LBS Mwika (HuYaMwi) has already set up a system to a limited number of pilot-parishes. The results are now available in the book “Ushauri kwa Walezi wa Yatima” which is also taught in a seminar at the LBS Mwika. HuYaMwi will continue with its pilot-parishes to gain more experience and to make it available to the public. A second book-project “Ushauri kwa wajumbe wa kamati” is also targeting the work of volunteer people at the parish level. We expect, that HuYamwi will have enough funds to continue with this work for the next years.

We suggest, that also other diaconical projects will choose pilot-parishes to develop the diaconical work in the congregations in other area of the diaconical ministry. In the futures books and seminars may also be planned by different institutions, for example a small booklet: “Msingi wa Udiakonia usharikani” containing the main social problems encountered in the congregation.

⁹ Historical note: During the time of enlightenment in Europe in the 18th century the education of the population was much improved by this kind of small booklets, even sometimes short articles very provided calendars.

¹⁰ So the regional offices of the Aids Control Program (ACP) in Bukoba have three full-time workers: a nurse for home based care, a teacher for awareness raising and seminars, and a social worker for social support and advocacy.

communication between the different stakeholders. However according to the diversity of activities the role of the coordinator will be as following:

- He/she will *counsel* the autonomous diaconical institutions according to the policy of the diocese (cf.DP #5-E-IX)
- He/she will assure, that the diaconical policy is followed throughout the diocese.
- He/she will *supervise* the five planned regional diaconical offices at the district level.
- He/she will *call* consultant meetings with various stakeholders.
- He/she will *initiate* and *administer internal projects* from his desk. Some of these projects can later be outsourced as external projects. For example the QC-program must start as an internal project, but may later get more independence as an external program.
- He/she will *keep track, harmonize and monitor* already existing *external projects* having their own infrastructure (budget/board/ office), for example HuYaMwi as a research and education agency. The legal nature of these external projects might be different: departments of other ELCT-institutions, diaconical societies, associations and agencies of different kind under the legal roof of the ELCT Northern diocese.
- He will *keep contacts* with relevant NGOs and governmental institutions.
- He will collect statistical material and reports from the districts and will publish an annual report.

b. The diaconical administration

The diaconical administration can only function well, if she receives the same support and guidance from the diocese, which she is supposed to give to the diaconical activities in the field.¹¹ So we suggest the following requirements:

- There should be a diaconical department with its own committee/board, as required by the ELCT policy.
- All institutions and offices of the diocese must be ready to support diaconical issues.
- There must be a yearly grant out of the general budget of the diocese for the diaconical desk to cover at least running costs (cf.DP#6 introduction), so that donated money will be used directly to help the needy
- There must be financial autonomy under the supervision of the diocese to secure enough transparency for sponsors, e.g. right of budget making, separate bank accounts, right to collect money and to receive donations, an inventory list of all properties designated for the diaconical work
- The diaconical administration will propose from time to time a suitable organization structure and regulations within the framework of the diocese. The diocese must approve all proposals.

¹¹ We must realize, that there are different models of diaconical administration within the Lutheran church. In Germany the diaconical work is organized as an independent society (Diakonisches Werk). In Finland the work is fully cooperated in the church administration.