

**Ethiopian Catholic Church – Social and Development Commission Adigrat Branch (ECC-SDCOAdB)**

**Daughters of Charity – Tigray Coordinating Office**

**FY2024**

**Annual Performance Report**



**June 2025**

**Mekelle**

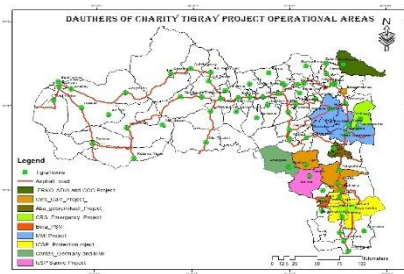
## I. Executive Summary

In 2024, the Daughters of Charity (DoC) in Tigray implemented 17 humanitarian and development projects across 17 rural districts and 5 urban centers, including support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mekelle. Targeted areas spanned Eastern, Central, Southeastern, and Southern Tigray, with urban outreach in Mekelle, Maichew, Mekoni, Edaghamus, and Adigidom.

These interventions focused on six key areas: Protection, Education, Health and Nutrition, Livelihoods, Emergency Response, and Peacebuilding. Through this multi-sectoral approach, DoC-Tigray aimed to support vulnerable communities, improve access to essential services, and foster resilience and social cohesion.

The projects reached 224,602 individuals—57% of whom were women—with a budget utilization rate of 98% (ETB 453.7 million out of ETB 465.1 million). This reflects DoC-Tigray's strong commitment to effective resource management and impactful service delivery, contributing meaningfully to both immediate relief and long-term recovery in the region.

## II. Project Location



The Daughters of Charity operates across 24 districts within five of the seven administrative zones in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. Our work spans the Central, Eastern, Southeastern, Southern, and Mekelle zones. However, we currently do not have a presence in the Western and Northwestern zones. The organization's reach covers both urban and rural communities, allowing us to address diverse needs in areas affected by conflict, poverty, and limited access to essential services.

## III. Target participants

Our programs target the most vulnerable, including school children, survivors of gender-based violence, female-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, children under five, unemployed youth (especially young women), the elderly, people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, and communities affected by conflict and drought.

#### IV. Our Partners

In 2024, our journey was made possible by the unwavering support of our partners—our **Strategic Collaborators** - who brought expertise, innovation, and resources that expanded our capabilities beyond what we could achieve alone.



## 1. Programme Implementation

### 1.1. Protection Programme

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) response packages delivered through Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) in Tigray provide critical support—including psychosocial care, medical aid, legal assistance, and livelihood opportunities—to women and girls affected by conflict. In 2024, the DoC operated 11 WGSS sites, engaging over 21,000 participants in life skills, recreational, and self-care activities, while distributing dignity kits to 4,469 vulnerable girls and women to promote hygiene and confidence. IEC materials were shared during community events like the 16 Days of Activism and Ashenda festival to raise awareness about GBV services. 13 health facilities were assessed and supplied with essential medicines, benefiting over 40,000 people. 725 GBV survivors were supported with case management, with 501 referrals made to health, legal, and social services to help restore dignity and well-being.



*Figure 1: WGSS sites in one project sites in Shimta, Southern zone*



*Figure 2: Drop-in and life skill activities in pictures*

## Success Story 1: Nx's Second Chapter: Healing, Connection, and Purpose

### Background

Nx, an 80-year-old woman from Freweyni, was divorced years ago after facing rejection due to infertility. The emotional toll deepened with her HIV/AIDS diagnosis, leaving her isolated, stigmatized, and financially strained.

### Intervention

Referred to the Women and Girls Safe Space (WGSS) through the GRIT Project, Nx received:

- Individual and group psychosocial support to process grief and anger
- Inclusion in a SILC group, fostering connection and financial empowerment
- Continued HIV care and GBV case management, including counseling and adherence support

### Outcomes

Nx has reconnected socially and emotionally. She attends group sessions, feels accepted, and has resumed small-scale marketing. Her HIV treatment adherence has improved, and she expresses renewed hope and energy.

She said: "For years, I lived with the pain of being a wife who could not give children. I thought I was less of a woman. This project reminded me that I am still valuable. I can host, work, laugh — I can live."

Though stigma persists, Nx draws strength from her SILC group, WGSS support, and faith. Her active role in community life helps her manage ongoing challenges.

Nx's story is a powerful example of late-life resilience. She now mentors younger women, embodying hope, healing, and restored dignity.

## Case Story 2: From Isolation to Connection — Ms X's Journey of Healing

### Background

Ms X, 45, from Endamekhoni Meswaeti, faced deep emotional and economic hardship. Infertility, the loss of her mother, war trauma, and a past surgery left her isolated, depressed, and unable to work.

### Intervention

Through group counseling, Ms X found a safe space to share her story, connect with others, and rebuild her self-esteem. The sessions helped her process trauma and develop emotional coping strategies.

### Outcomes

- Improved mood and reduced depression
- Greater self-confidence and communication skills
- Stronger social bonds and sense of belonging
- Enhanced resilience in facing daily challenges

She said: "Before joining the group, I felt completely alone. Now, I have friends who understand my pain."

### Ongoing Challenges

Ms X still struggles financially and occasionally feels lonely. She copes by leaning on her group peers, practicing mindfulness, and staying socially engaged.

Ms X's transformation—from withdrawn to expressive—shows the power of community and emotional support in rebuilding lives.

## 1.2. Social Programme

Educational support initiatives enhanced student learning by providing scholastic materials, tutorial classes, and school fee coverage, benefiting 4,750 students and improving access, academic performance, and retention. Teachers received essential supplies, and five schools in Abergele were equipped with desks and blackboards to foster a better teaching environment. Additionally, 450 vulnerable children received daily meals through the Abba G/Michael program, boosting health, attendance, and concentration. These efforts led to improved test scores, reduced dropout rates, and greater inclusion of marginalized groups.



Figure 3: Abba Gebremichael support program - Meal provision in pictures

### Success Story 3: How Nigisti Reclaimed Her Future After War



#### Background

In the conflict-affected Abergele District of Ethiopia's Tigray Region, 21-year-old Nigisti Weldesenbet is rebuilding her life after war. Once a tenth-grade student with ambitions of becoming an accountant, Nigisti supported herself by running a small coffee and tea business while studying at Admas University in Mekelle.

#### Interrupted Dreams

Everything changed in November 2020 when war broke out in Tigray. The violence caused mass displacement, destruction, and famine. Feeling a duty to protect her community, Nigisti joined the resistance and was seriously injured in combat. Her education stopped, her business collapsed, and she nearly gave up hope — even considering migrating to the Middle East in search of a future.

## A New Chapter: Recovery Through Opportunity

But after the Pretoria Peace Agreement, the Daughters of Charity, with Caritas Germany, launched the *Integrated Emergency Response and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation* project in Abergele. Nigisti was selected through a transparent, needs-based process to receive support.

She was given psychosocial care and business training, which restored her confidence and entrepreneurial spirit. With a startup grant of 24,000 Birr, she reopened her coffee and tea shop in Yechila town. Mentored by project staff, her business thrived — growing to 64,000 Birr in capital within a few months. The local government even provided her with a permanent business space.

## Transformation and a Vision for the Future

Now serving over 20 customers a day, Nigisti has also re-enrolled in college at Ethio-Lens, resuming her studies in Accounting and Finance. Nigisti's journey is a powerful reminder that with the right support, even dreams shattered by war can be revived — and transformed into something stronger.

“You won’t find me in this same small business for long,” she says. “I’m planning to move on to bigger and better things.”

## Success Story 4: From Displacement to Determination: Nebiyat’s Journey of Hope



### Background

Nebiyat Yemane is a 14-year-old girl currently living in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Tigray with her parents. Her family was forced to flee their home in western Tigray due to conflict. Since then, life in the camp has been marked by hardship — her parents remain unemployed, and the family often struggles to meet their most basic needs. Despite these challenges, Nebiyat has always clung to one hope: her education.

### Turning Point

In 2024, Nebiyat's life began to take a new direction when she enrolled in the *Girls Gain Project (GGP)* at her school. Through the program, she received much-needed scholastic materials and menstrual hygiene supplies. She also participated in training on personal hygiene, life skills, and social values — all of which had a transformative effect on her confidence and outlook. She became an active member of the Gender Club, joined the school's volleyball team, and took part in peer learning and awareness events.

### Impact

Before joining the GGP, Nebiyat describes herself as shy and uncertain. Today, she is confident, outspoken, and plays an active role both at school and at home. She supports her younger siblings, contributes to family decisions, and is recognized as a young leader by her peers and teachers.

Her academic performance has also soared — this year, she earned an impressive 97% on her grade report and is preparing confidently for the upcoming national ministry exam.

### Looking Ahead

Though her family continues to face economic difficulties, Nebiyat now looks to the future with renewed

hope. Inspired by the support she received, she dreams of becoming a nurse so she can give back and help others in need.

### **Message of Gratitude**

“Thank you for giving girls like me the chance to dream, grow, and shine,” she says.

## **Success Story 5: Eggs of Hope: How Amlisa Turned Poultry into a Pathway**



### **Background**

Amlisa Weldeyohannes is a Grade 10 student who lives with her mother. Despite performing well in Grade 9, continuing her education was uncertain due to financial hardship. With her mother unemployed and limited sources of income, even basic school expenses were difficult to cover. Everything changed when Amlisa received support from the *Girls Gain Project (GGP)*.

### **Turning Point**

In 2024, Amlisa became a beneficiary of GGP’s livelihood support initiative. She received 10 chickens and 30 kilograms of chicken feed — a seemingly modest intervention that would soon transform her life.

The poultry provided a reliable source of income. Amlisa began collecting eggs weekly and selling them at the local market. The money she earned helped her pay for all her educational needs: school uniform, exercise books, pens, a backpack, shoes, clothing, and even monthly transportation costs.

### **Impact**

Through this small but powerful support, Amlisa has gained more than financial stability — she has gained independence and a sense of control over her future. She carefully manages her earnings, saving a portion each week. Together with her mother, she is now planning to reinvest in the poultry business by hatching some of the eggs to expand her flock.

“This small poultry support has become the foundation of our livelihood,” she shares. “It’s helping us survive — and plan ahead.”

Amlisa now sees education not as a dream, but as a real and achievable goal. With hopes of attending college, she is determined to grow her business to support her journey every step of the way.

### **A Message of Gratitude**

Amlisa offers heartfelt thanks to those behind the project — and to Mr. Arthur Wigchers.

“You made sure I have access to education and hope for a better future. Now, I have a big dream to achieve, and I finally believe it’s possible.”

## Success Story 6: More Than Savings: A Journey to Literacy and Sisterhood



### Background

Selam Abreha is one of the founding members of the *Kabana SILC group* — a community savings and lending circle created through the Girls Gain Project (GGP). What started in February with 19 young women has since grown to 25 members, all united by a shared goal: financial empowerment. But for Selam, the journey has been about much more than money.

### Turning Point

Since joining the group, Selam has saved 1,700 Birr. But more importantly, she found something she never expected — sisterhood.

“SILC gave me more than just a place to save money,” she says. “I found sisters, true friends who support me.”

Before joining SILC, Selam had never learned to read or write. She quietly shared her dream of becoming literate with the GGP team, knowing they also worked closely with local schools. The response was immediate and encouraging. She connected her with a teacher, provided her with a notebook and pen, and cheered her on from the very beginning.

With their support, Selam began learning — and her confidence blossomed alongside her skills. Today, she reads and writes with pride.

### Impact

The changes in Selam’s life didn’t stop at literacy. With additional seed money support from the GGP project, she was able to expand her small coffee and breakfast business. The investment allowed her to purchase essential materials and improve her service — boosting her income and stability.

What started as a savings group has become a source of strength, identity, and transformation.

“This group didn’t just change my finances,” Selam reflects. “It transformed my life.”

### Looking Ahead

As Selam continues to grow her business and her skills, she does so with the backing of a strong, supportive community of women — and the unshakable belief that her dreams are valid and within reach.

## Success Story 7: A New Voice: Yared’s Journey Toward Awareness



### Background

Yared Kindeya is a 14-year-old student in Grade 7 at Maiweyni #2 Elementary School. Like many adolescents in his community, Yared once held misconceptions about topics rarely discussed openly — particularly menstruation. Though he had encountered the subject in class, it remained confusing and even shameful in his mind. That began to change in 2025 when Yared joined the *Girls Gain Project (GGP)*.

### Turning Point

Through GGP, Yared participated in the *Teen Star* training, a key component of the project focused on adolescent reproductive health and self-awareness. For Yared, this training marked a profound shift. He

began to understand menstruation as something natural, powerful, and worthy of respect. This new understanding didn't just stay with him — it reshaped how he treated others, especially the girls in his class.

### **Impact**

Yared now actively supports his female classmates, offering help when they are in pain or unable to attend school due to their periods. He takes notes for them, ensures they feel safe, and educates his male peers to challenge the stigma surrounding menstruation.

"I want to help change minds — like mine was changed," he says.

Another turning point came through the *Youth Action Kit (YAK)* training, which helped Yared become a stronger communicator. Once closed off and stubborn — even with his own parents — Yared now shares openly about his day, his studies, and his thoughts. His relationships at home have grown stronger as a result.

In school, too, Yared has overcome challenges. He used to be afraid to speak up in class after being mocked by peers who sarcastically called him "the scholar." But through the confidence he built in GGP, he no longer lets teasing hold him back. Today, he speaks with pride, helps others, and embraces his role as a leader.

### **Looking Ahead**

Thanks to the Girls Gain Project, Yared is no longer just a student — he is an advocate. He is respectful, confident, and committed to being part of a more supportive, informed, and gender-equitable community.

He said that "I have become someone I am proud of — someone ready to lead change."

## **1.3. School Feeding Program**

Launched in 2017 in Atsbi, the School Feeding Program—funded by Mary's Meals International—provides daily nutritious meals to improve the health, learning, and attendance of schoolchildren in Tigray. By 2024, it expanded to 223 schools across 12 districts, reaching 123,842 students and helping reduce dropout rates, enhance academic performance, and support vulnerable families. The initiative also improved classroom engagement, social interaction, and family stability by relieving the burden of daily meal provision. 159 schools lacking kitchens were also prioritized, leading to successful construction. Community members supported the effort by contributing local materials and labor.



Figure 5: School feeding program in pictures

**Success Story 8: A Plate of Hope: How School Feeding Brought Mizan Back to the Classroom**

**Background**

Mizan Tadesse, 14, lives in Tsigereda town, Geralta Woreda, with her mother, Tekle, and six siblings. After her parents’ divorce, the family struggled to survive on rain-fed farming. With limited income, they leased their farmland and lived off a third of the harvest—barely enough to eat.



Miza said that: “Before the school feeding program, I stayed home with my mother, but its return enabled her to go back to school. With access to daily meals, I am now actively participating in class, more energetic, and enjoys playing with friends during break time.

**Challenges**

The war and ongoing drought worsened their situation. Displacement, hunger, and poverty forced Mizan and her siblings to leave school—not because they didn’t want to learn, but because they couldn’t learn on empty stomachs.

“Even after peace was declared, I didn’t return to school. We had no food, and I didn’t want to stress my mother who couldn’t afford school materials,” Mizan shared. Her older siblings migrated to Wukro in search of work, leaving more responsibility on her mother’s shoulders.

**Intervention**

In 2024, hope returned when Mary’s Meals, in partnership with the Daughters of Charity (DoC), introduced a school feeding program at Tsigereda Elementary. The daily hot meals allowed Mizan and her siblings to return to school.

## Impact

Mizan is now an active student, enjoys school again, and dreams of becoming a teacher to help children like herself. For Tekle, the program brought much-needed relief.

*“Without it, none of my children would be in school,” she said.*

## Looking Ahead

Mizan and her mother emphasize the need to continue the feeding program, as many families still face hunger and hardship. Their story shows how a simple meal can restore education, dignity, and hope.

### Success Story 9: Twin Brothers Reclaim Their Dreams Through School Meals



## Background

Tedros and Goitom, eight-year-old twin brothers, live in Maychew town in the Southern Zone of Tigray. They are third-grade students at Almaz Alemu Primary School. Before the conflict, their mother supported the family through small-scale handicraft work—an income barely enough to cover their basic needs. Despite these economic hardships, the twins showed a strong commitment to their education, with a special interest in art and science.

*“Today, the twin brothers receive school meals every day, which meet their daily food needs. Their focus on learning has been restored, and they now enjoy playing with their friends during school breaks. They have developed a strong inner hope and determination to see the light at the end of the tunnel”.*

## Challenges

When the war broke out, their already fragile life collapsed. The conflict claimed the life of their father, who was never found despite the family’s desperate search. The emotional toll of his disappearance was devastating. Soon after, their mother’s health began to deteriorate due to trauma and stress. With no stable income or adult guidance, Tedros and Goitom were forced to take on adult responsibilities.

Eventually, the twins dropped out of school to help their family survive. Hunger, grief, and instability overshadowed their once bright future. Occasional support from kind neighbors kept them going, but it was not enough to bring stability.

## Intervention

Following the Pretoria Peace Agreement, schools reopened, and Tedros and Goitom returned to class—supported by a caring school community. But the true turning point came with the introduction of a school feeding program at their school, supported by Mary’s Meals and the Daughters of Charity.

## Impact

The daily meals addressed their immediate hunger, boosted their classroom attendance, and reignited

their love for learning—especially in art, where they found emotional expression and joy. Encouragement from teachers and peers further helped them heal and thrive.

### Looking Ahead

Today, Tedros and Goitom are motivated to succeed and support their mother in return. They emphasized the critical importance of sustaining the school feeding program, especially amid rising living costs. Their story illustrates the profound impact of school meals—not just in nourishing children, but in restoring dreams and dignity.

## 1.4. Emergency, Livelihood and Food Security Programme

The Humanitarian, Livelihoods, and Food Security Program addresses urgent and long-term needs of conflict-affected communities in Tigray through emergency aid, livelihood restoration, and food security initiatives. In 2024, over 6,600 vulnerable individuals—including IDPs, orphaned girls, and pregnant women—received essential food supplies, while 4,416 survivors of GBV and other at-risk groups were supported with emergency cash assistance to stabilize their situations and promote recovery.



Figure 6: Distribution of emergency food and cash in pictures

To rebuild livelihoods, DoC provided over 50 million Birr to 2,200 individuals, helping them regain income sources and economic independence, especially among women. These efforts reduced poverty, strengthened resilience, and empowered families to make sustainable decisions. The program also emphasized vocational training and small-scale farming to diversify income and reduce reliance on aid.



Figure 7: Livelihood support in pictures

WASH interventions included constructing and rehabilitating 19 wells and 3 toilets in schools and communities, benefiting over 34,000 people. These efforts improved access to clean water, enhanced hygiene, and supported student health and attendance. Training for WASH Committees ensured sustainable management of facilities, fostering community cooperation and a healthier learning environment.



Figure 8: Water construction in pictures

## Success Story 10: Restoring Hope: Empowering a Family Through Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance

### Background

Meselu Tefera Gebru is a 50-year-old mother of four and the primary caregiver for her family, including her husband who is disabled due to wartime trauma. The family faced severe financial hardship, compounded by Meselu's own health issues and the inability to meet basic needs, including food and education for their children.

### Intervention

Through the CST-Ethiopia grant, Meselu received Multi-Purpose Cash assistance provided by the Daughters of Charity. This support enabled her to purchase essential medication, provide regular meals for her children, and cover school-related expenses.

### Results

- Meselu's health improved due to access to medication.
- Her children's nutritional needs were met.
- Most significantly, her children returned to school, reigniting their hopes for the future.

### Impact

The support restored Meselu's sense of dignity and control over her life. She expressed deep gratitude, noting that the Daughters of Charity truly lived up to their name by being a source of compassion and hope during her family's most difficult time.

## Success Story 11: From Devastation to Dignity: Hadas Kiros's Journey of Recovery and Resilience

### Background

Hadas Kiros, a 55-year-old mother from Selewa Woreda in the Southern Zone of Tigray, once led a stable and dignified life through livestock rearing. Her work not only supported her family but gave her a strong sense of purpose. However, the outbreak of war shattered everything she had built.



Hadas Kirso said, "I feel renewed! What started as nothing became a glimmer of hope thanks to DoC for helping treat my anxiety. I have found meaning in the rest of my life again."

### Challenges

When conflict erupted, Hadas lost her home, her animals, and her peace. Armed groups looted and burned her property. She witnessed unimaginable violence, including the deaths and displacement of neighbors. Forced to flee with her daughter, she endured months of fear, hunger, and trauma. Living in unsafe conditions and battling war-related gender-based violence, Hadas suffered both physically and emotionally. While emergency aid arrived after the Pretoria Peace Agreement, it did little to address her immediate and long-term needs.

### Intervention

In 2024, a turning point came when Hadas was selected as a beneficiary of the "GBV Response, Mitigation, and Livelihood Recovery in Tigray (GRIT)" project, funded by CST and implemented by the Daughters of Charity (DoC). Through the Women and Girls Safe Space (WGSS), she accessed vital psychosocial support and enrolled in business skills training. Upon completing the training, she received a cash grant of 23,484 ETB to restart her livelihood.

Hadas used the grant to purchase three sheep. Within months, they reproduced, and she sold the flock for 40,000 ETB. Adding her savings, she bought a **pregnant dairy cow** worth 43,000 ETB — a reliable and sustainable source of income.

### Impact

Hadas's life has changed significantly. She now leads a SILC (Savings and Internal Lending Community) group, saves 210 ETB monthly, and has accumulated 36,000 ETB. While lending activities are yet to begin, the group plans to use their savings to create impactful loans. More importantly, Hadas has regained her confidence, dignity, and hope.

During a recent project visit, she sang joyfully:  
"ፀሓይ በረቆ አብ ሰለዋዮ፡ ደናግል ደቂ ፍቕሪ እኖ ድኻዮ"  
*"The sun shone over Selewaye, where the DoC stood as a mother to the poor."*

### Looking Ahead

Hadas now plans to upgrade her dairy cow to a better breed and grow her business further. Her journey

shows the power of timely support, resilience, and the importance of restoring livelihoods to rebuild lives after conflict.

### Success Story 12: Stepping Forward: Fre Weldegebreal's Path from Displacement to Business Success

#### Background

Fre Weldegebreal, a 35-year-old mother from Edaga-Hamus in Tigray's Eastern Zone, was once a thriving petty trader known for her entrepreneurial spirit. She operated a modest clothing business, selling garments for both children and adults. Her earnings allowed her to support her household comfortably, and she had plans to expand her business further. Her life was stable, purposeful, and full of ambition.

Fre W/real said that "The support I received from DoC turned my darkest days into a new beginning where joy returned and the future became bright again."



#### Challenges

The outbreak of war in Tigray changed everything. Fre was forced to flee her home, leaving behind her business and assets. Displaced to a nearby village, she and her child lived with relatives under overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. While she had a roof over her head, her relatives were also struggling and unable to support her financially. Fre endured daily hunger, fear, and psychological trauma. In an effort to survive, she began selling street food — but it was not enough to rebuild her life.

#### Intervention

In early 2024, a turning point came when Fre was selected as a beneficiary of the **GRIT project** (*GBV Response, Mitigation, and Livelihood Recovery in Tigray*), funded by **CST** and implemented by the **Daughters of Charity (DoC)**. She received **five days of psychosocial and business skills training** at the Women and Girls Safe Space (WGSS). Soon after, she was granted **23,484 ETB in startup capital**, which reignited her confidence and enabled her to restart her entrepreneurial journey.

#### Impact

Fre re-entered the petty trade sector, this time selling children's and adult shoes. Using the DoC grant as **collateral**, she successfully secured **97,000 ETB from Dashen Bank** and **40,000 ETB from Adeday**, a local savings and credit institution. With over **137,000 ETB** in total investment, she established a **small shoe shop**, paying 5,000 ETB in monthly rent. Her business quickly gained momentum. Today, she earns daily revenues of **4,000 to 10,000 ETB**, generating a **net daily profit of around 2,600 ETB**, after covering loan repayments and household expenses. Her inventory is sourced from Mekelle and carefully tailored to customer preferences, ensuring high demand and steady growth.

Fre also joined a **SILC (Savings and Internal Lending Community)** group, which has built up **20,000 ETB** in collective savings, aiming to start internal lending soon.

#### Looking Ahead

Fre Weldegebreal is now a symbol of resilience and self-reliance. With her shoe business thriving, she plans to **expand to nearby towns**, creating new jobs and increasing her income. She credits the initial support from DoC as the spark that reignited her hope.

Her story demonstrates how targeted support, training, and determination can rebuild lives shattered by conflict — one step at a time.

## 2. Cross cutting issues

### **Peacebuilding, Capacity Building, and Safeguarding**

In partnership with CRS Ethiopia and the Tigray Youth Association, DoC trained 180 youth from five towns in peacebuilding using the 3Bs and 4Ds approaches, equipping them with conflict resolution and social cohesion skills. The training was cascaded to 582 more youth across districts like Mekelle and Axum, fostering a growing network of youth peace ambassadors committed to promoting harmony and preventing conflict in their communities.

DoC's protection program also delivered capacity-building training to 9,232 participants on topics such as protection mainstreaming, psychosocial first aid, GBV case management, and business skills for conflict-affected women. Additionally, 99,143 individuals across WGSS sites benefited from community outreach and awareness activities focused on gender equality, leadership, and trauma-informed care.

To uphold safeguarding standards, DoC implemented robust policies aligned with seven core standards, recognized by CRS. All new staff signed a Code of Conduct and completed safeguarding orientation, ensuring accountability, ethical conduct, and the protection of vulnerable groups throughout project implementation.

## 3. Operation

By the end of 2024, DoC's coordinating office employed 161 staff, 54% of whom were women. The workforce saw notable changes with 114 new hires and 10 promotions, while 45 employees exited due to various reasons. Educationally, 58% held degrees, and the organization emphasized talent development while recognizing the need to address staff turnover for long-term stability.

Procurement activities totaled over 279 million Birr, with 82.79% of spending conducted through open bidding, reflecting DoC's commitment to transparency and value for money. Performa and restricted bids accounted for 11.87% and 4.77% respectively, while direct and special purchases remained minimal, underscoring adherence to competitive procurement standards.

Operationally, DoC completed annual inventories, improved stock tracking, and introduced stricter fuel monitoring. Key logistics achievements included vehicle license renewals, insurance coverage, and the development of new administrative guidelines. These efforts supported efficient resource management and reinforced accountability across projects.

## 4. Finance

The finance report summarizes key activities during the reporting period, including budgeting, expenditure tracking, cash management, and compliance with donor and government regulations, reflecting DoC's commitment to transparency and accountability. The finance team supported programs and stakeholders by ensuring accurate financial records, processing payments per policy, and maintaining updated bank and cash books.

Core tasks such as budget preparation, cash forecasting, and monthly expenditure reporting were effectively managed, with timely submissions to donors and internal departments to support planning and fund availability. Financial data was consistently shared with program teams to guide decision-making.

Additionally, the team ensured timely submission of monthly financial reports, monitored staff advances, and successfully completed an external audit for 2020–2023. Routine financial operations were carried out smoothly, reinforcing coordination and operational efficiency across the organization.

## **5. Planning and MEAL (PMEAL)**

Despite being newly established, the PMEAL department made strong progress in enhancing planning, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning. It developed 15 indicators for School Feeding Program aligned with Mary's Meals International standards, created tracking tools, and began integrating systems like Kobo Toolbox to streamline data collection. Joint field visits and baseline surveys strengthened oversight, while project-level assessments helped identify gaps and improve implementation.

Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) was conducted across several projects, including food and cash support initiatives funded by Caritas Germany and IcSP-EU. Findings showed improved food security, reduced stress, and high satisfaction with safety and fairness, though inflation posed challenges. All PDM reports were submitted to donors, ensuring transparency and guiding program improvements.

The department also revised and submitted key project proposals, delivered safeguarding training, and facilitated staff learning through exposure visits.

## **6. Program participants and financial summary**

In 2024, DoC planned a budget of ETB 465.1 million across 17 projects and achieved a 98% utilization rate with ETB 453.75 million spent, reflecting strong financial management and efficient resource use overall. A total of 224,602 participants were reached, 57% of them female.