E. G. White and Seventh-Day Adventism

A brief evaluation of the

Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)

in light of relevant advice from

Mrs. E.G. White

concerning institutional development

by Conrad Vine.

I hereby certify that the attached is my own work and conforms to the College's policy on academic honesty as outlined in the College prospectus.

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Introduction

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) represents an institutional response by the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) church to human suffering. ADRA is only one of many SDA institutions, and faces the challenge common to such institutions: that of adhering to the institution's original purpose within the SDA church's overall evangelistic mission.

Due to a lack of contiguity between the existence of Mrs. E.G. White (EGW) and ADRA, there has been no direct input by EGW into ADRA's development. However, EGW did provide input during the development of institutions, and this advice proved invaluable in ensuring that SDA institutions were consistent with the mission of the SDA church.

This paper's methodology will be as follows: 1) a short outline of ADRA; 2) an analysis of key institutional development principles enunciated by EGW; and 3) a brief evaluation of ADRA against these key principles.

ADRA – An Outline

In 1956 the SDA church created the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service, Incorporated (SAWS). By 1958, SAWS reported relief shipments to 22 countries with a total value of about $485,000. The name was modified in 1973 to be Seventh-day Adventist World Service (SAWS), but in the mid-1970s the organization began to broaden its mission from disaster relief to long-term development, so in 1983 SAWS became Adventist Development and Relief Agency, International (ADRA)[1].

Established for the purpose of individual and community development and disaster relief, ADRA fulfills this mandate without regard to race, gender, political or religious affiliation. Reflecting the character of God through humanitarian relief and developmental activities, and believing in the potential of each individual to reflect the image of God, the dignity that is inherent in every person, and the importance of the quality of human life, ADRA operates five core portfolios: food security, economic development, primary health, disaster response and preparedness, and basic education[2].

ADRA is organized as a network of locally registered country offices, and has a diverse funding base, including the SDA church, governments, bilateral institutions, faith-based organizations, private organizations and individuals.

ADRA's high profile relief operations and long-term development work have attracted not only significant resources, but also recognition within the relief and development community[3]. ADRA is facing a number of trends that present a significant strategic challenge, and these are as follows:

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[1] www.adra.org

[2] This information is taken from the www.adra.org website, although it should be noted that I myself have written many such paragraphs in numerous proposals to a wide range of international donors.

[3] ADRA globally has received international recognition for its programming excellence, and this industry recognition is evidenced in a number of areas: the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has signed a global memorandum of understanding with ADRA, in which ADRA becomes a global partner of choice for WFP in emergency and relief food security interventions; ADRA is often chosen as a lead local partner by such bilaterals organizations such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR and UNFP, and receives significant long-term development funding from international donors such as USAID, USDA, CDC, DFID, AusAID, DANIDA, EC, ECHO, NZ Aid, CFTC, Soros Foundation, EuronAid, ADB, and various EU / Asian governments; ADRA has been granted NGO consultative status at the UN; ADRA is one of the five international PVOs to be chosen as partners by the US government's 'Networks for Health' global initiative; ADRA is a member of several inter-agency action groups in many countries, e.g. Interchurch Action in the USA; ADRA was a leading member of

- Fierce competition for funding, forcing an increasing focus on professional relief and development outcomes.

- Increasing need for networking and collaboration with other PVOs.

- A highly mobile project-driven workforce focused on financial survival through technical excellence.

- Increasing spiritual challenges to the faith of personnel due to their geographical dispersion and cross-cultural working environment.

- Demands from the SDA constituency to respond to more complex emergencies.

ADRA continues to grow within its increasingly competitive and complex environment, with professional management, systematic acquisition of non-SDA funding, and God's (seeming) blessing all contributing towards the financial and operational growth of this institution.

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the 'Sphere' working group, resulting in the publication of a manual on technical standards covering all aspects of relief and development work which has become the industry 'Bible' and benchmark resource for all field practitioners (this resource is now used across the globe for sector specific training and professional updating); and ADRA regularly receives awards from individual governments for individual projects / programmes.

EGW Institutional Development Principles

EGW provided extensive input to the development of SDA institutions, particularly from c. 1860 – 1904. EGW had first called for health reform in 1848 and 1854, and during the Otsego vision[4] the broad principles of health reform were revealed.

Health reform was viewed as important for three broad reasons: 1) improved health improved spiritual perception; 2) improved health was important in light of the forthcoming *parousia*; and 3) abstinence was necessary to financially support missionary activity[5].

A vision in December 1865 led to the establishment in 1867 of the Western Health Reform Institute (WHRI), which then experienced financial difficulties until 1870 when the Board of Directors changed[6]. However, the financial position only gradually improved until in 1876 EGW and her husband took the lead in asking Dr. J.H. Kellogg (JHK) to take over the WHRI's leadership.

Changing the WHRI's name to the Battle Creek Sanitarium (BCS) within months, JHK led the institution until his death, sixty-seven years later. JHK was a charismatic figure, highly educated, respected around the world, and successful in establishing associated organizations[7]. Over time JHK came to control the SDA church's medical missionary activities, but tensions grew between JHK and the SDA church, and in 1907 JHK was disfellowshipped[8].

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[4] 6th June, 1863, Otsego, Michigan.

[5] P.G. Damsteegt, 'Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission', William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, (1977), pg. 223.

[6] EGW continued to provide detailed advice following visions in 1868 and 1871 concerning the dangers of extreme views and of losing sight of the original objectives for the institution.

[7] R.W. Schwarz & F. Greenleaf, 'Light Bearers', Pacific Press Publishing Association, revised edn. (2000), pgs. 199-204. For example, the Chicago Medical Mission (1892), BCS School of Nursing (1883), Haskell Home (1894), James White Memorial Home (1895-6), the SDA Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association (MMBA – 1893) and the American Medical Missionary College (1895).

[8] R.W. Schwarz & F. Greenleaf, 'Light Bearers', Pacific Press Publishing Association, revised edn. (2000), pg. 271. JHK was disfellowshipped ostensibly for his lack of tithing, failure to attend church services, and opposition to EGW's role in the church

As mentioned above, during the 1876-1902 period EGW provided extensive input to the development of institutions, and from her input a number of key principles can be deduced[9].

1) Medical missionary[10] work (MM) is to support the proclamation of the three angels' message, and is not to become unduly large, draining resources from the church's primary purpose. This principle is shown in the following quotes, "As the right arm is to the body, so is the medical missionary work to the third angel's message. But the right arm is not to become the whole body….is not to become the great burden of our mission"[11].

2) In order to ensure coordination between MM and gospel proclamation activities, MM work must be subject to the governance structures of the SDA church. The following brief summary of EGW's role in the JHK and MM developments from 1890 –1904 illustrates how EGW supported this principle.

JHK had convinced the 1893 General Conference (GC) not to establish a department for church charitable and MM activities, persuading them instead to establish the MMBA (which he then controlled). This led to severe tensions between JHK and the church, with EGW repeatedly counseling JHK on the dangers of focusing too heavily on MM work to the exclusion of all else, and of leading the MM work away from the church through emphasizing the undenominational, "philanthropic and humanitarian"

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[9] There is much material from EGW concerning institutional development, including correspondences with JHK himself, General Conference leaders, and directly to General Conferences in session, particularly in 1899 and 1901. The principles outlined are taken as broad summaries only of her extensive advice.

[10] The "Medical missionary" concept in EGW's writings encompasses a range of activities, including traditional physician/patient activities, and what we would understand today as humanitarian relief activities, as manifested in her time primarily by the Chicago Medical Mission.

[11] E.G. White, Manuscript 3, (1899), in 'Welfare Ministry', Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1952), pg. 256-258. E.G. White also wrote in Special Testimonies, Series A, no. 9, pg. 68, in 'Welfare Ministry', Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1952), pg. 256-258 that "deeds of mercy must be done; the poor and suffering must be aided…especially in new fields, where the standard of truth has never yet been uplifted, this work must be done". This quote, although not directly related to the principle that the MM work is to support the proclamation of the three angels' message and is not to drain resources from this gospel work, does show how E.G. White viewed MM work within the overall context of SDA missiology: MM work was to be conducted, particularly in areas where the gospel had not yet been preached, thus facilitating the later presentation of the gospel message (see key principle # 4 below for further on this issue).

aspects of the work[12] [13]. EGW subsequently played a central role in the 1901 and 1904 GCs, during which the GC brought the MM work firmly into denominational control.

3) Welfare ministry is to exhibit "unselfish interest". "It is only by an unselfish interest in those in need of help that we can give a practical demonstration of the truths of the gospel"[14]. EGW was clear that welfare ministry on behalf of the poor was of itself to expect nothing in return if it was to demonstrate the true nature of the gospel. In fact, MM and welfare ministry "is the gospel in practice, the gospel practically carried out"[15].

4) MM and Welfare ministry, whilst exhibiting an "unselfish interest", prepares communities for a fuller proclamation of the gospel. "Do medical missionary work. Thus you will gain access to the hearts of people, and the way will be prepared for a more decided proclamation of the truth"[16]. "Here is an opportunity to proclaim the gospel – to hold up Jesus….when the suffering body has been relieved, the heart is opened, and you can pour in the heavenly balm"[17]. MM and welfare work, whilst uninterested and unselfish of themselves, prepare people's hearts for a fuller revelation of the gospel.

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[12] D.E. Robinson, 'The Story of our Health Message', Southern Publishing Association, (1943), pg. 254.

[13] EGW wrote many letters to JHK on these issues, urging him to consider the direction he was taking the MM work into. Her views are perhaps best presented in her letter published in 'Testimonies for the Church', Volume 8, Pacific Press Publishing Association, (1948), pgs. 180 – 191,

[14] E.G. White, 'Review and Herald', March 4, (1902) in 'Welfare Ministry', Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1952), pg. 32.

[15] E.G. White, 'Counsels on Health', Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1923), pg. 532.

[16] E.G. White, 'Review and Herald', December 17, (1914) in 'Welfare Ministry', Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1952), pg. 58.

[17] E.G. White, 'Medical Missionary', January, (1891) in 'Welfare Ministry', Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1952), pg. 26.

Evaluation Of ADRA Against Key EGW Principles

Principle 1: is ADRA taking a disproportionate share of SDA resources, and hindering the global proclamation of the gospel? ADRA has grown rapidly since 1983, and now employs c. 4400-5000 employees globally. The annual value of operations, including cash and non-cash items, is almost 200 million USD[18]. Approximately 90% of all employees and non-cash programmatic resources are funded through non-SDA sources[19], e.g. commodity, medicine or clothing donations

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[18] The figures vary year to year, primarily due to responses to new disasters and the phasing down of post-emergency operations.

[19] It should be noted that the ADRA structure reflects a mix of operational and SDA church structural requirements. At the operational level, ADRA is organized as a network of self-sufficient country offices, each operating programmes that have been funded by various international donors. Should a country office not be able to access international donor support, then the SDA church through the 'annual appeal' may choose to fund micro-projects, e.g. hurricane relief in the Caribbean, and earthquake relief in various quake zones. When there is no significant funding, and there is no likely chance of significant funding due to various donor / country specific factors, the ADRA Country Director is normally a national of the country in question, and is employed at the same remuneration rate as a pastor in the country in question. In these situations, the ADRA Country Director will spend his / her time primarily on organizing local voluntary relief activities, gathering local resources, and mobilizing church members for social relief type activities, e.g. visiting isolated pensioners, distributing clothing bales to orphanages, operating soup kitchens for vulnerable segments of the local community. This type of work, although of a low-cost nature, is generally viewed as valuable by local SDA church administrators as it encourages a service ethos amongst church members, and through exposing church members to the most vulnerable within their society, fosters appreciation and gratitude to God amongst the church members for what God has done, and is doing, for them.

In countries where there is significant donor funding, or the chance of significant donor funding, then additional managerial and technical expertise is brought to the country office. These expatriate Country Directors are generally church employees, known as 'inter-divisional employees', and their salaries and benefits packages are funded either by the local division from SDA church resources, or are charged to the programme budgets of the individual country office in question, i.e. are paid for by the international donors. In these country offices, large donor programmes require the employment of many employees, often more than work for the SDA church in the particular country, thus adding significantly to the tithe yield for the local church mission / conference / union / division. In some countries around the world, the overwhelming majority of church tithe is from ADRA workers, without which the local SDA church would not be able to function without dependence on grant transfer payments through a Mission structure.

At a strategic level, the SDA church appointments an ADRA Director at each church division. This officer is responsible for liaison and coordination between the church and ADRA within the division in question, for ensuring that the country strategies, policies and programmes within each country office are consistent with SDA church beliefs, policies and strategies, and for monitoring and evaluation of country office activities. These Division Directors are paid for from SDA church funding, but country offices within each division are encouraged to transfer funding to the ADRA division office to help cover operational costs, to purchase equipment, and for use in emergency relief responses. There are twelve such Division Directors globally, a negligible figure given the global size even of SDA division offices, but even this figure is reducing as ADRA International moves from a strategic oversight structure that reflects the SDA church's own divisional structure, and establishes a strategic oversight structure that reflects donor funding trends, e.g. establishing regional offices for Africa and for Asia. These regional officers are ADRA employees, reducing the previous burden on the SDA church's resources, and operate across SDA church divisional boundaries. However, these officers are still approved by the SDA church division boards in the divisions where they operate, and present reports to

from bilateral or government donors, and many offices operate almost entirely on non-SDA funding[20].

Concerning resource concentration, ADRA does not primarily operate around SDA institutions. Programmes target the most vulnerable populations, primarily in isolated, rural, or conflict/post-conflict areas. ADRA is often the only official SDA presence, or works in districts where there is as yet no SDA church presence. Through significant non-SDA donor support, ADRA employs large numbers of church members, supporting the local church through increased employment opportunity and tithe yields. On balance, it would appear that although ADRA does utilize SDA resources, ADRA is neither taking a disproportionate share of global SDA resources, nor is encouraging an unequal distribution of SDA resources[21].

Principle 2: is ADRA operating under SDA denominational control? EGW was very clear during the 1901 and 1904 General Conferences on the need for the denomination to manage all its activities and prevent kingly authority within semi-autonomous entities.

Each ADRA country office has a Board of Directors. The Board Chairman is always the President of the local SDA church entity, and the Board's constituency is the local SDA church in session. Each church division has an ADRA Director, responsible for ensuring cohesion between country offices and the church within the division. All country office proposals and appointments are approved by the division ADRA board[22]. The ADRA International President is appointed by the GC Executive

the local SDA church division boards, and as such are still under the governance structures of the SDA church.

[20] Adventist Development and Relief Agency International 2001 Annual Report, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA.

[21] As a major employer in many developing countries, ADRA contributes significantly to the social and economic development of marginalized communities, including of many SDA church members, and as such ADRA retains significant support from many SDA church members in developing countries who may otherwise never gain meaningful or salaried employment.

[22] Each ADRA country office must approve all operational and strategic policies, country strategies, and director (project or country level) appointments within their own country office. However, the SDA church division must also approve all of these key points for any given country office.

Practically speaking, an ADRA country office will identify key candidates for contract project director positions, and will then propose these candidates to the local ADRA Board, and following local

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Committee, itself appointed by the GC in session. All Country Directors are church appointees, either by the local church directly, or as inter-divisional employees and therefore subject to approval by a number of denominational bodies. Based on this evidence, it would appear that on balance the ADRA governance structure is subject to democratically elected denominational control at all levels.

Principle 3: does ADRA exhibit "unselfish interest" in its activities? Almost all the non-SDA donors specify that the funds should not to be used directly or indirectly for evangelizing purposes. ADRA personnel recognize this non-proselytizing and unselfish modus operandi[23], although the extent to which this principle is emphasized depends on the country context[24].

Many PVOs have overt humanist or advocacy agendas - ADRA does not. Through recognizing the God-given dignity and value of all human life, affirming the value of what is, and seeking to encourage local communities to develop further, ADRA's activities are widely accepted precisely because ADRA does not seek to impose a new social paradigm or a hidden religious agenda[25].

Principle 4: does ADRA's work prepare the way for a fuller presentation of the gospel? The above principle of 'unselfish interest' does cause concern amongst

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approval, will forward the name(s) to the ADRA Division Board for approval. For inter-divisional employees for any position, following approval of a 'call' by the local ADRA Board and the ADRA Division Board, the 'call' is sent to the employee's home division, which must then approve the 'call', after which the G.C. Secretariat must approve the 'call', following which a contract may be signed. Each of the boards in this process is overwhelmingly staffed by SDA church members voted by their respective constituencies, and is chaired by the duly elected president. ADRA country offices may recruit within each country for all non-director positions, but for all director-level positions, the evidence shows that there is SDA church control over all such appointments. In addition, the local ADRA Board and the local ADRA Division Board must approve all project proposals, all project budgets, all country strategic plans, all operational policies, and each country office is audited by SDA church auditors, either from the G.C. or from the local divisional office, thereby explicitly bringing the governance and oversight of each country office firmly within the control of the SDA church at various levels.

[23] A good example of the explicit ADRA stand on unselfish interest is seen in the chapter entitled "Crossing Boundaries – ADRA and AWR" by D. R. Syme (a senior ADRA executive) in "Adventist Mission in the 21st Century", edited by J. Dybdahl, Review and Herald Publishing Association, (1999).
[24] For instance, the unselfish nature of the assistance is particularly emphasized in Muslim countries.
[25] It is interesting to note that ADRA works in approx. 150 countries, including countries with Buddhist, Muslim, Bahai, Hindu, Animist, Confucian, and other traditional faiths, whereas many of the largest PVOs, e.g. CARE, World Vision and Oxfam, although with larger global budgets, operate in many fewer countries, and are not so readily accepted across such a wide spectrum of faith traditions.

church members who see the church's mission primarily as being traditional evangelism, however, ADRA personnel are noted for their spiritual dedication, and this explicit spiritual dimension remains highly distinctive within the relief and development community.

In emergency relief scenarios, ADRA provides immediate physical assistance, e.g. shelter, water and medical supplies. Anyone with experience of the trauma, disorientation and despair common in complex emergencies will recognize that it would be counter-productive to preach the three angels' message to refugee and displaced persons instead of providing practical and physical assistance[26].

Most of ADRA's activities however are developmental, in which ADRA works with communities to break out of poverty. It is in this process that the God's image and the values of His kingdom are fully demonstrated. In a sense, the type of development activity is not as important as the way it is delivered. ADRA personnel are often the first professing Christians in a community, and it is through working together, building trust, and demonstrating kingdom values that communities glimpse an image of God.

There can be no statistical or financial evidence for this question, but after almost six years of working for ADRA in difficult and culturally hostile territories, I would argue that on balance of empirical evidence alone ADRA's work does prepare the way for a later and fuller presentation of the gospel.

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[26] It is somewhat ironic that the SDA church constituency is primarily interested in supporting emergency relief operations, e.g. after earthquakes or hurricanes or other natural disasters, and gives most generously to support emergency relief operations, yet it is in the longer-term development type activities that Kingdom values and a full picture of God and His character are most clearly presented through ADRA's operational style and values.

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Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, it would appear that ADRA to a great extent operates within the first two principles enunciated by EGW: ADRA is within denominational control, and does not divert significant resources from the church's purpose of proclaiming the gospel[27].

It is in adhering to the final two EGW principles that there may be some tension: how can an organization that is registered and funded in accordance with non-religious principles simultaneously prepare the way for a fuller proclamation of the gospel?

From ADRA's perspective, the assistance provided is non-discriminatory and demonstrates "unselfish interest". ADRA does not evangelize in the traditional sense of the word, but demonstrates God's character unselfishly to those in need. This principle is clearly outlined to all prospective stakeholders. Meanwhile, from the SDA church's corporate perspective, ADRA's work, whilst of itself demonstrating "unselfish interest", is ultimately working to free communities from the shackles of poverty, thereby enabling minds to perceive spiritual truths.

In a competitive industry, ADRA is recognized for its emphasis on the spiritual dimension[28]. ADRA personnel interact primarily with government officials, other PVOs, donors, community representatives, corporate leaders, and the media, most of whom are not Christian and may never meet a pastor or evangelist, but they meet ADRA personnel. Life in ADRA can be spiritually difficult, but it is the gospel being lived out in a hostile world.

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[27] Some may argue that any diversion of SDA church resources away from traditional evangelism is a misuse of church resources. However, what is at issue from EGW's perspective is not the absolute use or not of church resources per se, but whether the MM work utilizes disproportionate SDA church resources. This is a somewhat paradoxical situation: if ADRA uses SDA church resources exclusively, then it is open to the potential charge of draining SDA resources from 'traditional' evangelism, whereas if ADRA seeks non-SDA church funding, as it does, then it is open to the charges of moving away from denominational control. It should be noted however that whenever there is a natural disaster, there is enormous pressure put on ADRA officers to respond with relief aid by the SDA church constituency, particularly in the country(ies) affected. This natural instinct to provide assistance, however laudable, must be accompanied by a concomitant understanding that in today's global environment, the critical mass necessary for global responses is only possible with significantly more resources than the SDA church is willing to invest in ADRA, hence ADRA's aggressive acquisition of non-SDA resources.

[28] Faithful Sabbath observance, leading sober lives amidst regular partying and heavy drinking, an emphasis on transparency and honesty, a refusal to engage in endemic corruption, and remaining kind, patient and forgiving in the most hostile of environments send powerful messages.

The tension between these two EGW principles may cause problems[29], but on balance it performs a constructive role: it encourages constant evaluation of activities against purpose; it discourages a repetition of the BCS and JHK events; it ensures every new generation of ADRA workers considers ADRA's function within the SDA church; it precludes sterility and complacency of organizational thought; and thereby it ensures that ADRA continually remains able to meet the needs of its primary constituency: the poor; the vulnerable; the homeless; and those without a voice.

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[29] This tension may play a negative role whenever any individual within ADRA or the SDA church emphasizes one of these two principles to the exclusion of the other. An ADRA Project Director, overly concerned about industry specific impact measures, may view themselves primarily as being a relief and development professional, and may view the local church as being amateurish, out of touch with local needs and realities, and as being primarily concerned with the needs of its own members than of the larger community. A church administrator may view ADRA's work as being primarily an explicit evangelistic tool, and may bring untoward pressure on the local ADRA officers to provide assistance only to church members rather than to the most vulnerable within the local community (a pressure that is strongly resisted). It is clear that a balance needs to be struck, between being true to the non-SDA donors' emphasis on humanitarian and non-proselytising assistance, and the need to demonstrate Kingdom values in a selfless manner: this is often the most difficult balance that any ADRA officer must deal with in operational and strategic decision-making.

The tension described above is primarily experienced by ADRA workers, although it may be said that the same tension also operates to a lesser extent within the SDA church constituency, who may not fully understand the EGW principles outlined above, preferring to view ADRA's work as being the 'opening wedge' of the gospel, but not understanding the need to operate with a modus operandi exhibiting 'unselfish interest'.

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