

EPA Responding to Changing Conditions

"Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the shift completion of their appointed rounds." The statement written in about 430 BC by the Greek historian Herodotus succinctly defines the diligence expected of the postmen and the agency they represent.

Mail, consisting of government dispatches has a long history. Most mail was still being transported the same way in the middle of the 19th century. During the growth of international trade there came a need for business correspondence. In the Ethiopian context the history of postal service is over a century old.

In Ethiopia messengers called "melikitegna" conducted correspondence. These people were very able to travel quite long distance within an inhospitable area. The postal system was officially established in 9 March 1894. Emperor Menilik assigned a Swiss citizen called Mr. Alfered Ilg, to properly organize and manage the postal service administration.

And the first Ethiopian stamps that carried the portrait of Menilik were printed in Paris, France and sold in some rural towns of Ethiopia in 1894. As Ethiopia was not a member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the stamps were not valid outside the Ethiopian kingdom.

Once the postal system was established, consecutive modernization measures were taken by the Emperor. For instance, Ethiopia became a member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and started to work in collaboration with other member states.

The Postal Service was established in 1966 as an autonomous body by proclamation number 240/1966. The major achievements made by the postal administration after its re-establishment was the construction of the current General Post Office which enabled the office to launch different new services, like postal saving and postal money order.

Even though historical references show that the Postal Service is as aged as the service in the rest of the modern world, its development is sluggish. The total number of post offices in the nation until the fall of the military regime was only 470, restricted to the major urban areas. The total number of private boxes is not more than 49,000.

Prior to 1993 one private box used to serve 1133 people. Now the ratio is 1 : 525 people. The Ethiopian Postal Service as a government body has taken various measures to increase the number of post offices to 837. This is almost twofold to what has been achieved in almost 100 years.

Best Practices

No.	Service	Year	
		Pre 1983 EC	1998 EC
1	Total number of post offices	470	837
2	Total number of private boxes	48,500	149,617
3	Man power	1,078	1,387

Currently, the postal service not only delivers mails, but also collects taxes as a source of additional revenue.

Recently, the organization has started working as an agent in tax collection and payment of pensions. In the city of Addis Ababa alone it disburses payments to over 85,000 pensioners.

It has also launched a new service, international money order, in collaboration with an international financial institution, called Cash 4 Africa, based in New York, USA. The Postal

Service is also under negotiation with similar institutions to launch a similar service.

The Ethiopian Postal Service (EPS) is quickly and aggressively responding to changing conditions. The speed, convenience and lower cost of emerging communications such as internet poses challenge on the way people communicate. Therefore the agency is engaged in providing universal service at an affordable price.

The Ethiopian Postal Service in spite of efforts to introduce new services to its esteemed customers, the whole enterprise was not fully based on assessment of customers' needs. To address such a major handicap, the agency has launched a fundamental overhaul and over the last two years it has been engaged in Business Process Reengineering scheme. The Reengineering program primarily focused on the organization's four core processes, namely:

Letter post - an ordinary letter mail;

Parcel - this is a mail different from letter post could reach up to 30 kg;

EMS - Express mail service and Money transfer.

Currently, the study is almost finalized and ready to be implemented. It is believed that there will be structural and administrative changes which will have a positive bearing on improving services EPS is delivering.