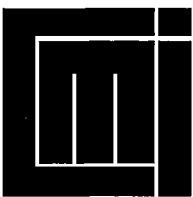


# ***Eneweyay (Let's Discuss)***

Report from a training programme  
for democracy in rural Ethiopia

Siegfried Pausewang

WP 1996: 8



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### **Summary:**

Report of a project to teach principles of democracy in a "down-to-earth" way, through discussions with rural and urban people in Ethiopia. The "Ecumenical Training Initiative for Democracy" developed before the elections of 1995 out of an attempt of European church aid organisations to contribute to confidence building through voter training and election monitoring. Responding to felt needs, it developed a unique teaching material, and started to train trainers in different rural areas, who continue to go to the villages and urban neighbourhoods, to engage people in discussions about the ways how they make decisions in their everyday life and who is participating, and how they safeguard the rights of social minorities and of the underprivileged among themselves.

### **Sammendrag:**

Arbeidsnotatet presenterer en rapport fra et prosjekt som underviser i demokratiets elementære spilleregler gjennom diskusjoner med folk i bygd og by i Etiopia. Forut for valgene i 1995 oppsto et "økumenisk utdannings-initiativ for demokrati". Flere europeiske kirkelige nødhjelpsorganisasjoner ønsket å bidra til å bygge tillit gjennom valgobservasjon og velgerutdanning. Som svar på lokale behov ble et nytt undervisningsopplegg utviklet, og et treningsprogram begynte å utdanne lokale veiledere. Disse fortsetter nå å gå ut til landsbyer og nabolag i byene, for å diskutere med folk hvordan de kommer fram til avgjørelser, hvem som har mulighet til å delta, og hvordan rettighetene til sosiale minoriteter og de underpriviligerte er sikret i lokalsamfunnet.

### **Indexing terms:**

Ethiopia  
Democracy  
Human Rights  
People's Participation

### **Stikkord:**

Etiopia  
Demokrati  
Menneskerettigheter  
Folkelig deltakelse

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## ***Eneweyay*** **(Let's discuss)**

This title was the motto of the first teaching material we developed in January 1995 in Addis Ababa, when starting a programme for voter training and election observation. This motto has followed us almost like a name for the programme since of a programme which has gone through considerable change since then.

Today we are in the process of trying to establish it as an Ethiopian non-profit organisation concerned with teaching democratic values and procedures throughout the country, through public discussions based on the same teaching material. This programme has attracted considerable attention, not only in Ethiopia, and received an overwhelmingly positive response in the rural (and urban) communities wherever our trainers come with their message.

The following programme report is self explanatory, giving the history of the programme and explaining the problems encountered on the way. It also has three different evaluation documents attached. We direct the reader's attention especially to the reproduction of the teaching materials attached - the first teaching unit, "*Eneweyay*", and a second one explaining the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of the UN, through a set of questions to each article.

After one and a half years of experimentation, the programme is these days seeking funds to be extended for a longer period. We hope it will succeed in attracting the necessary funds to continue for a few years, until Ethiopian institutions are ready to take over the professional and financial responsibility.

Bergen, September 2, 1996

Siegfried Pausewang

# **Report from a training programme for democracy in rural Ethiopia**

**July 1995/updated August 1996**

*Siegfried Pausewang*

In January 1995 a group of European church aid organisations in Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden started working on a voter training programme in Ethiopia. The initiative came from Ethiopian partners, through a coordinating group of church aid agencies working in the Horn of Africa. It was intended as a contribution to maintain peace and to create a "space of confidence" between ethnic and religious groups. It was to encourage a democratic culture, empowering voters and offering fair chances for all parties. This should allow the different ethnically based political movements a participation in the May parliamentary elections under reasonably equal and secure conditions. Voter training and election observation were seen as means to assure these groups that such conditions would be surveilled.

The programme was until March 1996 directed by Dr. Yakob Haile-Mariam, until Dec. 1994 director of the Ad Hoc Peace Committee in Addis Ababa. Since July 1995, Ato Sahlemariam Yirga is its administrative director. From Europe, it is coordinated, on behalf of the Church NGO's, by the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Bergen, Norway; with Siegfried Pausewang responsible for the overall running of the programme.

This report on the activities was written in July 1995, after the election had been held without participation of major opposition parties. On the basis of this report it was decided to continue the teaching programme after the election, and try to develop it into an Ethiopian democracy training organisation. In August 1996, after a year of experimenting, the report was updated and amended.

## **Background**

All major opposition groups in Ethiopia boycotted the 1994 elections, as they had done in 1992. When the EPRDF, the Tigre-dominated coalition of anti-Mengistu forces, took over power in 1991, they promised a new policy of democratic development, and offered the different ethnic resistance movements against the

Mengistu regime, both within and outside their coalition, a federation of new, ethnically defined regions with local autonomy and self-determination of "nationalities" within their territory. But the opposition groups soon claimed that this promise was only valid on paper, while EPRDF was actively undermining any political movement that did not subordinate itself to EPRDF leadership. The election observation in 1992, and even more in 1994, confirmed that opposition groups never got a fair chance to register their candidates, or even organise party activities on local level all over the country: local authorities, put in place by EPRDF and supported by their military, put up all kinds of obstacles, arrested candidates under constructed pretexts, closed offices, or threatened voters. While the opposition saw a clear pattern of coordinated obstruction, the Government argued that it could not easily protect unpopular opposition parties against local popular anger.

### **The church NGO initiative**

Some European Church aid agencies were approached in 1994 to organise a voter training and election observation effort following the model of the one organised by the Kenya Council of Churches before the Kenyan elections in 1992. Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and German Church aid agencies joined in such an effort. Knowing my election observation report of 1994, they approached me to coordinate their joint effort in Ethiopia. The idea was to bring the opposition back into the election process by offering them a base for confidence and security: it was expected that the promise of a neutral and informed observation could allow an agreement between government and opposition on election participation, based on the expectation that any breach of the agreement from either side would not go unobserved and could not be covered up. Following the Kenyan example, it was planned to organise an election observation and voter training programme.

For two reasons, the programme did not materialise as envisaged. First, the negotiations between government and opposition failed. Negotiations were held in Washington in the beginning of February, but in the meantime the opposition had experienced new obstruction and arbitrary arrests on local level, and did not trust any arrangement. While the Government in official statements invited any party to participate on a free and equal base, the opposition never seriously considered to compete, but insisted that participation would be tantamount to legitimising an election that was manipulated from the outset.

Nor did the election observation take place. We had intended to bring a few foreign observers into the country already during the period of candidate registration, some two months before the elections, because it was at this stage problems for the opposition arose in the 1992 elections. While the election commission assured us we could bring any observer into the country at any time,

when it came to the test we were informed that only observers nominated by the invited embassies would be accredited.

The programme thus ended up being an educational effort dealing with election procedures and democratic principles.

### **Social and political background**

The election report of 1994 described a society torn by conflicts, with very little willingness to understand each other. One part of the opposition accused the government of a hidden agenda, trying to exploit and ultimately to dismantle the rest of Ethiopia to the advantage of the Tigre region. These groups conceived the ethnic policies of the government as a scheme to incite conflict. The Tigreans, a small minority in the population, could only hope to govern Ethiopia as long as hostility continued to split the country. As long as such conflict allowed Tigray to withdraw the resources from all other regions, these groups claimed, they would use all possible tricks to remain in power. Should they face too strong resistance, they were prepared to withdraw to Tigray and let the rest of the country succumb in civil war.

Another line of oppositional prejudices interpreted EPRDF motivations as consumed by the desire to take revenge against the Amhara. Therefore persons of Amhara origin were thrown out of official positions and offices, and even clerical and other jobs. The most extreme proponents of this argument maintained that EPRDF was bent to destroy the Amhara, and with them Ethiopian unity, and to withdraw to Tigray when that job was done.

Another part of the opposition conceived of the present situation as a continuation of colonialism of northern, "abyssinian" groups over the Southern peoples. Whether the Amhara or the Tigre dominated them was immaterial, they insisted, as long as they remained colonised, materially exploited and culturally suppressed. Therefore, only a consequently continued anti-colonial struggle could liberate the Southern groups, particularly the Oromo.

The government, on the other hand, claimed to have instituted a democratic state, against the obstruction of an opposition which had no support in the population, but was only interested in establishing a new dictatorial rule. It claimed to offer the opposition free participation in democratic elections, but the opposition parties used all possible excuses to justify their boycott, knowing that they could never win any election for lack of genuine popular support. Thus the government claimed that the opposition used clandestine or open violence to create instability, fear and distrust against the government.



There was virtually no communication between the different groups: as others were suspected of a "hidden agenda" and of manipulating public opinion, there was little room for argument and discussion. Distrust and uncompromising confrontation dominated.

### **The training programme**

In this situation, I was asked to coordinate a political education programme which introduced people to a democratic structure with an open dialogue, refraining from violent forms of political conflict. Dr. Yakob Haile Mariam, until december 1994 director of the Ad Hoc Peace Committee, was engaged as the executive director of the programme in Addis Ababa.

We oriented our first approach at the model developed by the Kenyan Council of Churches which organised an election observation and voter training programme in advance of the 1992 elections in Kenya. But we soon realised that Ethiopian conditions demanded different accents and approaches. In addition, Kenya had two years to prepare voters, while we started in Addis Ababa only in January 1995, four months before the scheduled election.

Already in the planning stage of voter training, we realised that election organisation and the conduct of voting and of observation were not a sufficient content for our courses. Fourteen years of military dictatorship controlling every part of life in every corner of the country had left people disillusioned, sceptical and frightened, and not easily willing to get involved in anything political. We had to concentrate on explaining what democracy means for each individual, and how it can help to solve differences and problems on local and wider level. We used as a model a flip-chart which the NGO *ABuGiDa (Congress for democracy)* was using in their courses, under the title "*Democracy mindenow?*" (*What is democracy?*). However, we felt several changes necessary, compared to *ABuGiDa's* courses. In *content*, *ABuGiDa's* approach appeared to us to use too abstract a concept of democracy. We felt it was necessary to start where the people are, to engage their experience and to activate their rich traditions of democratic structures in local decision making. In *approach*, we decided to build on discussion: To force trainers not to lecture but to discuss, we put all our messages in the form of questions. In *structure*, we preferred to build our teaching on community involvement, which we hoped the churches would help us to organise. In the *selection of trainers*, we hoped to train persons delegated by the communities, who would after training return to teach in the responsibility of their home community.

A new teaching material was developed under the title "*ENEWEYAY*" (*Let's discuss*). In intensive discussions, mainly between Yakob Haile Mariam and Siegfried Pausewang, and at a later stage including Kebede Dejele from *AGuGiDa*,

as well as newly recruited staff members, four sections were designed. A team of arts students was engaged to draw simple pictures to the different topics. It began with questions like: How are decisions made in your family? Who participates, who does not? Why not?? - Which organisations exist in your community? How do they make decisions? How are conflicts resolved? Who participates, who does not? Which rules are accepted, which limitations imposed? Who is responsible for decisions made?

The second part generalises the emerging understanding of decision making processes: How can decisions be organised democratically in larger units? How can popular participation work in a state? How can government power rest on the will of the people? How can a majority decide, yet a minority be protected against arbitrariness? How can democracy secure individual rights? How can it guarantee equality of religions, races, gender, social groups?

The third part elaborates individual rights and responsibilities: How can you exercise your democratic rights responsibly? Where do you get the necessary information? How can democracy guarantee the equality of chances and the rights of opposition? What can you do to defend your rights? Do you have a responsibility to defend the rights of others?

The fourth (and tentatively last) part deals with elections: what must be guaranteed to make elections fair? How to secure the independent voting right for women? How to guarantee the equality of all votes? How is an election process working? Which rules must be observed to make it a free, equal, secret and fair election?

The teaching material was produced in two versions: a small booklet (in English; Oromifa translation is being printed; an Amharic version in preparation) and a flip-chart in A 1 format (ca. 85 x 60 cm) (so far in Amharigna and English). The flip-chart is reproduced as blueprint - the only affordable technique for copies of this size in smaller numbers locally available.

At the end of 1995, we collected systematically the experience of the teaching staff with the teaching material. In group discussions we took it up picture by picture and question by question, asking: do the pictures fit to the text? Do people understand them? Which questions do they raise? Are they productive in stimulating discussions? Do the questions adequately cover the topics, do they provoke the discussions we want to lead? Could they be improved to better convey the message of democratic attitudes and behaviour? After that experience, the booklets and flip charts were revised, some new pictures drawn and several questions added or changed.

## **The religious communities**

Already in December 1994, Dr. Yakob and myself took a first round of contacts to the religious leaders in Addis Ababa, together with representatives of the European church aid agencies. The intention was to engage the four major religious groups in Ethiopia - the Orthodox Church, the Moslem Community, the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus - in an ecumenical effort. A "Board of Directors" was to be formed, on which they would serve together with representatives of the Election Commission and independent civic and human rights groups in Ethiopia. In particular, we hoped to get access to local communities through the religious organisations, using their local networks and contacts to the "grassroots". The emerging cooperation, it was envisaged, should be responsible for building up an election observer group, which could later be strengthened by European observers, and for a voter training programme, comparable to Kenya's experience.

Unfortunately, we met some hesitation, if not resistance in some religious communities. The Ethiopian law gives the Churches freedom from state interference in religious issues, on the condition that they refrain from involvement in politics. This clause invites ambiguity: Is involvement in democratic education a civic responsibility of churches - or an illegal political activity? Uncertainty, probably, was the major reason for hesitation in the Catholic Church and with the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and to some extent also in Mekane Yesus. In any case, the proposed "board of directors" never came together.

After the elections, more positive contacts were reached particularly with the Patriarch's Office. Dr. Yakob and myself had in February 1996 a meeting with the Cardinal for development. We were assured that the Cardinal supported our teaching initiative, and that in due time the Patriarch would delegate a person to represent him on our Board.

## **The election observation abandoned**

In the first days of January, the director of ABuGiDa, Dr. Abraham, brought together the civic NGOs, and built a "consortium" for the preparation of election observation with Ethiopian observers. His "Election-95-Group" applied for and eventually received funds from the different embassies in Ethiopia for its election observation. ABuGiDa had relevant experience from the 1994 elections on which it had published a critical report.

In the beginning of March, when the candidate registration for the elections started, we intended to bring observers from Europe, to follow events and to document, if possible, whether opposition allegations of discrimination and obstacles against opposition candidates were justified or not. All the larger opposition parties had already announced they would boycott the elections,

claiming they were prevented from building up party structures and filing candidates in rural areas. The Government invited all political groups to participate and offered fair and equal conditions, provided that these organisations refrained from violence as a tool in political struggle. Opposition groups referred to the experience of 1992 and 94, and claimed fair conditions were not available for them, and the government did little to convince them that its promises were more trustworthy this time.

We had several times received assurance from the Election Commission that our observers were welcome any time. This was repeated on Feb. 27, when we presented a list of six observers to come. But the first one to apply for a visa in Stockholm was refused: the Ethiopian Embassy informed him they needed a letter from the Election Commission before being allowed to issue a visa for election observers. The Election Commission, contacted in Addis, referred to the Foreign Ministry, which demanded a letter from the Swedish Embassy. In a meeting between several embassies and the Election Commission the issue was clarified. We were informed that the new election law accepted only foreign observers invited through the embassies who had received an invitation to observe. Upon a direct question from the Swedish Embassy it was confirmed that the Ethiopian Government did not welcome foreign observers working for NGOs.

Observation had become less relevant for us as a tool for supporting confidence and peace, after the opposition's decision not to run. We expected no serious disturbance or rigging during voting day, since EPRDF faced no serious competition in the elections. So we decided to concentrate on the training programme and confidence building for voters, leaving observation to the Ethiopian observers in the Election 95 group organised by the efforts of ABuGiDa.

### **The permission for teaching**

To be allowed to engage in voter training, we had to work under the guidance of the Election Commission. The Commission welcomed our initiative, and reacted very positively to our teaching material. We were encouraged to start teaching, as the election commission felt they should be doing such courses by themselves, but had too small resources to do so. We were advised to work under the responsibility of a registered civic non-governmental organisation. For our purposes, ABuGiDa was the most closely related NGO to work with. But ABuGiDa had not received its official registration with the Ministry of Interior at the time we started working. Our first training course in Addis Ababa started in February without formal permission, which was not strictly required. But once the trainers wanted to start teaching in their kebele, they were asked for permissions, and only few kebele leaders allowed them to teach without a document from a registered NGO. Thus it was difficult to find halls or school classes for teaching and to assemble people. Only a limited number of classes were taught.

Before we went to Butajira in March 1995, the Election Commission advised us to contact the Society for the Advancement of Human Rights Education (SAHRE) at the Ministry of Education, a registered organisation which would be interested in sponsoring our work. We invited their leaders to one of our classes in a kebele in Addis Ababa, and they participated enthusiastically in the discussions. We came to an agreement with SAHRE. However, its leaders appeared suspicious and unprofessional in their approach. When they understood that they could not expect financial subsidies from us, they oscillated between enthusiasm and tight control. They gave us permission to teach our course in Butajira, limited to one place and one week only, and later complained, accusing us of having cheated them, because we had returned to Butajira for supervision of our trainers after the week's permission was over.

In the meantime, however, ABuGiDa had received their formal recognition. Temporary distrust, when ABuGiDa suspected us of competing for funds, and therefore refused to know of us, were resolved and we got ABuGiDa's unlimited permission to teach democracy classes under their overall responsibility and based on their registration. From middle of April 1995, therefore, we continued our work with ABuGiDa's permission. In May 1995 we terminated our cooperation with SAHRE, at the request of their president.

### **The training courses and the teaching**

On 24 February 1995 we started the first training course for trainers in Addis Ababa, teaching some 50 young people, with 12th grade secondary school or higher education. They were recruited through individual contacts, from church congregations, and through word of mouth propaganda, as we had not succeeded in using church networks. Only the Moslem Supreme Council promised to send ten to fifteen participants. But three days before we started, the violent clashes in the Anwar Mosque disturbed the Moslem community deeply and made their participation impossible.

In March, after ended training, the trainers contacted their kebele or community leaders. In many places they were invited to teach and allowed to use community halls or school classes. Their teaching was generally received with positive reactions both from authorities and from the public at large. But teaching was sporadic and limited because in many places trainers were asked for "permission". A small staff of teachers was built up in the course of the experience, while we started to train trainers also in rural communities. The attempt at recruiting them through responsible local non-governmental organisations and religious communities had only limited success. We were able to spread the information in this way, but were met with the task to select trainees from a huge number of school leavers who had heard of the programme and come in the hope to find a job. The idea that this teaching was not an employment to be done for money, but

a service to the community, was received but not necessarily accepted. Though we paid a rather low sum per class taught, for a school leaver any income is better than unemployment. So neither the low salary nor the moral and social demands would discourage anyone from trying to be accepted as trainer.

After about a week's training, the trainers were given practical experience through rehearsals and exercises under supervision of an experienced teacher, before they were equipped with a teaching kit and sent to teach in the kebele, in the villages and neighbourhoods. They had themselves to organise their teaching, get the necessary permissions, decide a place for teaching, and motivate people to attend their performances. While in the beginning we accepted all those taught, we later started to screen the applicants according to performance, and only sent out those who were considered well qualified for a responsible job.

Training courses for trainers were held in Butajira (March 31 to April 7), Debre Birhan (April 15 to 19), Wolkite (April 25 - May 2) and Gambela (May 3 to 9). After the elections, a combination of refresher and new training courses were held in Butajira/Silte, Ndeber and Guchirre, and in Addis Ababa. By July 1995, about 300 young people had been trained, and a majority of them had been equipped with a training kit and sent to their respective communities to teach. About 25 000 to 30 000 people had been attending the courses lasting about two hours, and consisting mainly of discussions related to democracy, inspired by the pictures and questions displayed in the teaching kit.

By August 1996, figures have increased considerably. We have trained about 600 trainers, and sent about 400 of them to teach. Many of the earlier trainees have later quit the teaching. But there are still some of the most motivated of the first recruits who continue teaching with good results. Our records show that by early August 1996, about 170 000 persons have been attending our classes. In many places we were asked to return and continue and expand teaching. The discussions in our "Eneweyay" classes were lively and people brought up interesting arguments and astonishing thoughts. There were also controversial discussions, which demanded skill and tact from the trainers conducting classes. All in all, the teaching met enthusiastic response in the public.

### **Some selected examples of issues and questions raised**

The sessions took in average one and a half to two hours. Lively discussions developed, and a wealth of interesting, and sometimes strikingly clever, sometimes also amusing questions were asked. It was not always easy for a trainer to deal with all the issues raised. Most problematic was the situation when questions obviously sought to press the trainer to take a political position either against or for the government.

Some examples of questions raised are just listed below:

- \* Can I decide on the religion of my wife?
- \* Do we have to be tolerant also towards satanism - or to a politically discredited group, for example if Mengistu were to come back...?
- \* Could a majority decide to expel a minority? If the majority decides, it must also be able to decide on getting rid of a minority...?
- \* Am I allowed to insult another person? Is that part of my freedom of expression? Or is my freedom of speech limited?
- \* is committing suicide a democratic right?
- \* Is it a democratic right to urinate everywhere in town?
- \* Do you really mean we should discuss also with our children? We should not punish them? - Do you want them to become destitutes??
- \* Can my wife turn pentecostalist if I don't agree? Can I divorce her if she insists?
- \* If women are free to go and discuss - who is going to do the cooking? Should I have to go hungry?
- \* Do you think what you tell us fits with reality? Do you think the authorities will accept if we discuss and come with our demands and decisions?
- \* Democracy is disgusting. We have seen it in practice...
- \* On the picture with all the animals in the forest we see also a snake. There are also snakes in human society. Should also the snake be accepted?

The last three questions or statements were probably the most difficult to discuss. Upon the question about the snake, asked in a small village in Gurage area, an engaged discussion started. peasants argued for and against the snake, which bites people. Should it nevertheless be given a right to co- exist and participate? One woman concluded it by saying: Even the snake only bites if frightened or provoked. If we treat him with love and understanding, the snake will not bite...

### **Problems in the training**

In our training of trainers we put some emphasis on neutrality: we insisted that classes had to take a strong position for democracy, for solving problems by peaceful discussion, and for human rights; but had to be strictly neutral between political factions, parties or groups and their positions, as well as towards government policies.

We were often confronted with questions like: "What you teach is theory. Do you think it describes our reality?" - "Do you think we really can express our views, take influence over government or administrative decisions? Do you think we have freedom of expression?" Obviously the conflict between democratic ideals and political practice was felt to be irreconcilable, and the participants were trying to force the trainers to take a clear position.

Such discussions were difficult to handle for young trainers. We encouraged them to explain that democracy is not a ready made standard, but a process which has to be actively developed, an understanding which may grow slowly. Important is not to judge whether democracy exists, but to work for improving it. Democracy is never finished. Even the oldest democratic states can not claim to have realised it in full, but have to work constantly to maintain and improve it.

Another reservation remained: many people feel that the word "democracy" is discredited by the way it was used in the past to justify any kind of unpopular measures, including enforced resettlements, compulsory contributions for the war, and especially the forced recruitment of soldiers from the peasant youth. Many people therefore remain sceptical, and trainers had a difficult task of overcoming their suspicious reservations.

All the more it was a shock for us to realise, after three weeks of teaching in Butajira and surroundings and positive response from the population, that a suspicion was spreading in town, indicating that a majority of our trainers were members of the locally ruling Gurage People's Democratic Front. A quick investigation confirmed that about three out of four trainers were in fact members. Not out of enthusiasm, we were explained, but because jobless school leavers felt they had no chance to get any employment unless they joined "the party". It happened just ten days before the elections, and we were afraid such a reputation would cast our neutrality in doubt. So we immediately stopped all teaching in Butajira, until a new training course could be held after the elections. We were advised we could and should continue teaching in spite of such rumours, but insisted that we could lose credibility. Public opinion is central in democracy. And a partisan reputation would spoil our chances to reach all parts of the population.

Other problems encountered in the teaching were time constraints which prevented many people from attending a class from beginning to end, or which made it difficult to find a time suitable for all people interested; constraints for the participation of women; and problems people have in understanding concepts which may appear complicated and abstract to them. These are dealt with in more detail in the pedagogical evaluation report.

### **A pedagogical evaluation**

We felt the need to have an independent assessment of whether the teaching was pedagogically sound, and able to reach the ordinary people, often illiterate people without school education. Therefore we decided early in March 1995 to have a small evaluation done by qualified consultants, to tell us what needed to be improved, in order to better reach the local communities with a message which could be meaningfully applied by the people.



W/o (Mrs.) Zenash Goshu, a social worker with considerable experience both in administration and practical work in non-governmental organisations (Oxfam, Bethel Handicraft project, etc) and Mrs. Aase A. Pausewang, a Norwegian teacher experienced in special pedagogics, teaching adult students (from academically trained to illiterate immigrants) in a multicultural context, and studying conflicting cultural role expectations in Africa (Ethiopia and Zambia), took a short but intensive look at the teaching programme. For three weeks between April 10 and May 4, they attended a course for trainers, visited several teaching classes, and had extensive discussions with different resource persons as well as people who had attended "Eneweyay" classes in Debre Birhan, Addis Ababa and Butajira and surroundings.

The evaluation was expected to answer two major questions: Firstly, whether the teaching reached the communities, or what we could do to get better access to community structures and to integrate the courses so as to reach people within their familiar social context. Secondly, we wanted to know what could be done to make the message understood, adopted and mentally accepted by people from different social strata.

The reports from the two evaluators are available and need not be repeated here. One is mostly dealing with the pedagogical, the other with the social context. Together, they gave a set of important suggestions and recommendations for developing the programme. In particular, they stressed the need for further community integration and concern for adapting to the social needs of people in each locality; and they gave us valuable suggestions for improving the quality of teaching by intensifying the training. Beyond that, they advised us to expand the programme both in time and in content. They reminded us not to expect results in short term but to rely on a long term process of conscientisation, of awakening self consciousness, and of growing patterns of democratic discussion. And they judged one two-hours teaching session to be too short to have a reasonable impact, and suggested to repeat the teaching and widen its content, to familiarise people with the concepts, to let them experience democratic discussion and adopt participation into their cultural life, and to gain democratic self-confidence.

### **Widening the time frame**

Originally the programme was planned to last for half a year - until the elections. However, with the delays encountered in the beginning, and with the changed emphasis from election observation to democracy teaching, this time frame proved by far too short. After all, the Kenyan Council of Churches had two years to organise a voter education programme; we could only get the first group of trainers trained ten weeks before the elections. Besides, our emphasis turned away from the elections because it proved more important to develop confidence in a democratic discussion, among a rural population used to being ordered and

coerced but not to having any influence whatsoever. It needs time to convince a population which expects from the authorities nothing but arbitrary interference and orders from above. They will not easily accept that participation can be a means to take political co-responsibility and to get influence on administrative decisions. Even worse, if local conditions are such that people experience in everyday practice local officials who consider attempts at democratic participation as uncontrollable and destructive interference with their authority.

As the evaluation team emphasized, such a programme can not expect short term measurable effects. More important than statistically measurable results is the long term effect of contributing to a change of attitudes, which possibly may bear fruit after a generation only.

A continuation of the programme after the initial period, which was to go far beyond the original emphasis on the May 1995 elections, was therefore taken up early. The evaluation team almost viewed the experience up to the election as a pilot project phase, and their task to advise on how to adjust the programme before starting the project proper. And also the initiators agreed that it would be a waste of effort to close down the programme after a good start. Therefore the donor organisations agreed to reschedule the project and to utilise the funds saved from those parts of the programme which were not implemented (such as sending foreign election observers to Ethiopia) to continued teaching.

### **A year of experimentation**

With only marginal additional fund allocations, the programme could continue teaching in Ethiopia for one year. By August 1996, however, funds are exhausted. A definite decision has to be taken on the basis of the experience of the last year, whether to continue the programme. If so, new funds have to be committed for a more permanent establishment.

The last year has been a period of learning by "trial and error". Some adjustments in the programme proved to be necessary, and especially we felt the need for expanding the pedagogical content as well as the geographical extent of the teaching. An administrative leader was employed and a permanent accounting system established. The programme had to establish an own office in Addis Ababa. For one year we rented a house at the Entoto road, since summer 1996 we moved to a new and more permanent office near Mexico Square.

The programme also faced some change in the staff. One of the senior teachers left us in autumn 1995. In March 1996, Dr. Yakob left for Rwanda where he is now engaged as a prosecutor in the UN genocide tribunal. The administrative leader, Sahlemariam Yirga, took over his functions. And End of September, our first teacher Makonnen Gebre Egziabher is going to Holland for further studies,

