

Transcript in English of 1st Podcast – current situation of the solar-radio project with Mekelle
Adventist School

Hannah: *Welcome to our first Podcast of the “One World”-Podcast. We are Evelyn, our reporter, and me, Hannah, the host of this first part. We are students of year 7 and we are active in the “One World”-students group. Today Evelyn is going to interview Mrs Berhane to inform about how the project with the solar radios came about, how much money was donated, what has happened since then und what the current situation concerning the solar radios is. And now it is Evelyn’s turn.*

Evelyn: Hello, Mrs Berhane. Could you explain again why the project with the solar radios came about?

Mrs Berhane: For a few years now there have been connections between the Max-Planck-Gymnasium in Germany and a school in Ethiopia in the city of Mekelle. It means that there has been the chance to get in touch because I have had the blessing to visit and to get to know the school in the year 2017. Over the course of time a few moments of exposure to each other were initiated, for example, letters were exchanged between students.

However, then the Corona-Virus hit and interrupted the contact. Both the schools in Ethiopia and Germany went through lockdowns. In contrast to the Mekelle Adventist School, the Max-Planck-Gymnasium had the chance to create online settings of lessons and continue with the education of students. In the north of Ethiopia the situation was often very different because the internet connectivity and the technical infrastructure is mostly not as far reaching.

So the school in Mekelle was very much looking forward to reopening in the fall of 2020 providing that certain hygiene and safety measures were being followed similarly to ours. But a military conflict developed between the regional political party of Tigray and the central government of Ethiopia which created an unstable environment for the parents in Mekelle. Consequently it lead them to not to let their children go to school and the schools stayed closed.

From November 2020 till June 2021 I was in close contact with the organising institution of Mekelle Adventist School using whatsapp, messenger and mobile phone whenever possible. Together we thought about ways to create a learning environment for the students. It was the same time that many reports on Unicef projects presenting distance learning arrangements during lockdowns in many countries around the world with the help of solar-powered radios were published. So the question was raised whether this opportunity to present lessons’ content with solar radios is an interesting one for the Mekelle Adventist School and they responded positively.

And now, we are in the process of implementing the project.

Evelyn: What were the final results of the fundraiser?

Mrs Berhane: All together almost 2400 Euros were donated. With this money 73 radios were bought, including USB-Sticks which are needed to store tracks with explanations for the study topics created by the teachers of Mekelle Adventist School.

Evelyn: What does this number mean?

Mrs Berhane: It means that the students of year 7 and 8, possibly year 6 as well, at Mekelle Adventist School can be equipped with the radios, so they can have lessons at home with the help of the tracks which were created by the teachers.

Evelyn: Where are the radios currently?

Mrs Berhane: At the moment, the radios are with the provider in Addis Abeba, in the capital of Ethiopia. They were purchased.

However, there are several reasons why they have not been delivered yet.

First, it has something to do with the central government, which is monitoring most activities happening in Ethiopia right now. It means that the movements between the north and the centre of the country have to pass check points. Consequently the provider needs to be able to explain his transactions to the government and therefore, they cannot simply hand out their goods without any verification that the products are not being used by rebels. So they have asked for students' lists from the Mekelle Adventist School, showing which student is going to be provided with a radio. This way, those radios become personalised equipment. The challenge is, however, that since June 2021 there has been a communication blackout, so there was no chance to use internet or phone to transfer this information from Mekelle Adventist School, they know about it, but it is still a work in progress.

Second, the question of transportation is still unanswered because at the moment only a small amount of goods reaches the north. So, we will have to fathom the possibilities of delivery in the near future.

Evelyn: So what will happen with the radios in the future?

Mrs Berhane: First of all, the radios need to reach Mekelle Adventist School so that the teachers can store the study tracks on the USB sticks for the students to take home and study in their houses with the support of our colleagues. And when one day the school is reopening again, the radios and the tracks can be used for students who need to catch up as a way of facilitating extra learning chances.

Evelyn: Where are the radios supposed to arrive?

Mrs Berhane: At the school. The radios are in possession of the school. So the institution is responsible for handing them out and having them returned.

Hannah: *We hope that you enjoyed our first part of the podcast-series. If you have questions, additional ideas or interest in becoming active in the "One World"-students group, you can leave comments in the comment section of podcast website or get in touch personally or in a message to Mrs Berhane on TEAMs. So long until our next podcast which is going to be about the question why this project exists and why students and teachers have become active for it. Guess why I am active. You will hear my answer in the next podcast. Bye for now.*