

Second episode of One World Podcast

Hannah: Welcome to our second episode of our One World Podcast. We are Evelyn and Hannah from year 7. In the last episode we spoke with Mrs Berhane about the current situation of the solar radio project. Today we will look at the background of the project and the motivation to become active. Therefore, a new speaker, Anna Lena also from year 7, will inform about the current situation in Ethiopia and explain what it means for the solar radio project. We will speak with the members of our student group about the reasons to be engaged and what they find interesting about the solar radio project. Then Evelyn will interview Mr Jaehnig about the use of the radios in connection with the civil war and what we from the Max-Planck-Gymnasium can learn from our link to the Mekelle Adventist School and the realization of the project.

Let's start. Anna Lena, it's your turn.

Anna Lena: Since November 2020 a civil war has been taking place in the region Tigray. Because of the battles thousands of people were killed and more than 2 million people were displaced. In December 2021 the fighting was finally stopped for now. The Tigray People's Liberation Front, short TPLF, ordered the retraction from fought over regions outside of Tigray and offered peace talks to the central government. The Ethiopian central government considers this offer to be a tactical manoeuvre but also stops its troops moving towards Tigray. They want to keep the regions which they have recaptured. Additionally, since January 2022 the Ethiopian central government let several members of the opposition go free from prison and the Ethiopian prime minister asked for national reconciliation. All in all, the government would prefer to solve conflicts peacefully with talks.

At the moment, the provision of medicine and food is very low in Tigray because since September no NGO was able to offer support for the region. In recent weeks the red cross have had the opportunity to deliver medication to Mekelle via plane and more flights with relief goods are planned.

These developments mean that it may become possible to distribute the solar radios to the students which has so far failed due to lacking lists of students and the confirmation that the radios will not be misused for the war. Time will show.

Hannah: Before we talk to the members of our student group why they are active and what they find interesting about the project, I asked myself what the devices can do. Mrs Berhane, can you explain that to me?

Frau Berhane: When we tried to decide which radio to use for the situation in Mekelle, we listed different requirements which needed to be met by the device. It was necessary that

you could access a USB stick with podcast tracks. It should be powered by solar energy. And this combination is not easily found. Additionally, we wanted a reliable, high-quality product which will not simply break with the first shake. The model we found was developed by an American-Indian company, which sought for a possibility to make solar technology for countries accessible, where electricity is not reliably available. This would create an independence from central power supply chains. What is possible now? Well, you can listen to the radio, access mp3-files on USB-Sticks or SD cards. You can also charge your mobile phone with the help of the solar energy.

Hannah: And where do the radios come from?

Frau Berhane: The radios are assembled in China and they are distributed through different distribution offices, one for example in Ethiopia.

Evelyn: Let's speak to the members of the student group: Why are you active and what do you find interesting about the radio project?

Emma: Well, I am active in the One World student group because I find it important to support countries in the global south in a sensible way. The projects which we prepare in our group have the purpose to enlighten about the local situation and are helpful to the people according to their interests. It is also important to me that European countries do not deliver relief aid from up above with no long-term improvements. However, it is important that those things will be done that the people who need help ask for. Additionally, I find it interesting that our school has a connection to a school in Ethiopia. I am interested in supporting this partnership. The solar radio project is attractive because the students of Mekelle Adventist School can be taught with the help of the radios due to the Corona pandemic and the war situation. It is central to me that children all around the world have access to education and I am happy that we were able to contribute a little to reach this goal. It is interesting to engage with the situation in Ethiopia especially since the schools' situation in Germany was discussed many times during the pandemic and it for a long time that I have not thought about which consequences this situation will result in for poorer countries. It was interesting to be confronted with the topic and to find out that there are simple solutions or at least that we were able to help with a small effort.

And Lisa, why are you active in the student group?

Lisa: I find it great that we can get into touch with other countries and can get to know different cultures. Additionally, I like it to help people who face more difficulties than

we do and with this project we will have this possibility. It is nice to see that with relatively little effort we can make it possible for children to have a future and access to education. What do you think, Antonia?

Antonia: I can only agree with you two. I find it also very interesting to witness how such projects are run. Right now, we can experience every step and with this the results of the project. I also find it important that our school continues to raise awareness for the situation in Ethiopia.

Evelyn: And you, Anna Lena?

Anna Lena: I think that it is important that everyone, and that means also the children in disadvantaged countries, has the chance of education. It is nice to see that I can inform strangers to the situation about the topic or at least that our student club can do that and explain.

Evelyn: And what do you think, Charlotte?

Charlotte: I am interested in how such a podcast is prepared with the host, the music and the recording and I am also interested in finding out what happened to our donations for the solar radios.

Evelyn: Thank you very much for your thoughts. Now we would like to hear voices from our teachers. That's why we are talking to Mr Jaehnig, who has supported the project from the beginning and is taking part in conversations about it.

Hello Mr Jaehnig, thank you very much for your willingness to share some of your impressions.

At first, we would like to know why you think that the solar radio project is a valuable endeavour?

Niclas Jaehnig: In the beginning I want to highlight the tragic circumstances for our talk that the students at our partner school in Mekelle, Ethiopia, have not been able to visit their school for months due to the civil war. Now to your question: As Mrs Berhane described within the frame of your first podcast, teachers in Mekelle will have the chance to offer lessons to the students like podcasts for young people which the students at the Adventist school can access.

There is another tragic circumstance that momentarily the solar radios are prepared but due to the fact that the one of the parties involved in the civil war is blocking the distribution of the radios in order to check them, they have not been handed out to the children. But basically, the children and young people will have the prospect in the future after months of school distancing which was a creation by adults, to

receive education by the teachers. Things or a situation, which is given without saying in Germany or in Europe.

However, there is another intention behind the project. In preparation of it Mrs Berhane and I had many conversations and I came to realize that there is this idea – this basic concept because the collaborative project that has been initiated by Mrs Berhane and which you have decided to be a part of wants to contribute to the resistance of the image of Africa as the lost continent with the help of the example of Ethiopia. And there is this chance to raise awareness for the opportunities of the people in Africa for all of us. The project also wants to show that people from Ethiopia facing hunger, disease, poverty and now also civil war and school closures are not giving up, but taking their destiny into their hands at the Mekelle Adventist School. They need our help so that their actions can result in lasting solutions. We can offer this help with the donations for solar radios in one first step. And the good thing about the project is in my opinion that the needs and wishes of the people, colleagues and students have been announced to us and we reacted to them and we will try our best to live up to expectations. We do not think from our perspective which great things can be done for the people in Ethiopia but how can we act according to the needs of the people living there. That is remarkable about the project.

Evelyn: Which use will the radios have in the current context of the civil war in the Tigray Region?

Niclas Jaehnig: I want to try to address not only the present but also in part the future of the people in Ethiopia. Because hopefully one day the weapons will be silent forever, then a time will begin in which education in schools is possible again and there will be educational programs which will do justice to the current student generation. And I do not only think of expert knowledge and competence for certain subjects, I also especially think of education for peace, which will be important sequentially after the experience of the tragic situation. We really have to see clearly that there is this generation of students that has been denied access to education for months, possibly for years because it is not clear when the civil war is truly over. It is a situation which we can only carefully grasp against the background of lockdowns in Germany, where we understand what it means for people not to be able to go to school. We had the chance that we were able to carry on digitally. The people of the region there do not have this opportunity. Hopefully with the help of the solar radios they will have at least a basic way to stay in touch with their students and the other way around, the

students with the teachers, who are always leading by example. The solar radios have the function of bridging the gap to prepare the schools and the community for additional challenges that I have spoken of earlier, in my opinion. The question that arises is how will the school in Mekelle, Ethiopia, deal with education for peace, where the concept of an enemy and injustices can be addressed and overcome. Since this is one of the main issues this civil war is tragically about. I believe that school is a place where this education for peace can be organised in a way that young people learn to develop models of a future in a conflict free dialogue so that there are strategies of how to live together in Ethiopia permanently without wanting to use weapons. That is a great hope that lies underneath the project and that may strongly motivate financing and supporting the project as a whole.

Evelyn: What can we from the Max-Planck-Gymnasium learn from our co-operative connection to the Mekelle Adventist School and from the realization of the solar radio project?

Niclas Jaehnig: That is a very complex question, which I can only try to answer. Personally, I think it is great, admirable, simply awesome that you have started to walk the way with your project, to show children, young people and adults an approximately accurate image of everyday life and everyday troubles of persons of your age in Ethiopia and with the help of this podcast series instill curiosity within your listeners for the life of the people in Ethiopia. Maybe together with fellow students, friends and acquaintances who or whose parents arrived in Germany from Africa. However, there is another quality that makes your work and effort especially valuable, in my opinion: For sure you will often have to consider the question which image of Africa does exist in Germany? And is this image of Africa that we currently have a modern one, an effective one for the future, a humane one – an image facing each other eye to eye? I want to try to describe my impression of the current image of Africa that still encompasses deficits. Africa is still behind in the public interest and the consideration is still determined by clichés in Germany. Underdeveloped still means not as developed as we are and this hierarchical view from up above is counterproductive for living together with people with an African background here in Germany but also, when working together with people from the African continent especially south of the Sahara Desert. I remember one sentence of my youth which I would like to cite: Think of those poor children in Africa. How often have children in Germany heard that sentence? Even though my belly is full, I am supposed to empty my plate and remember the children in Africa. Often the maps in the school atlas show a distorted

picture of the size relations between Europe and Africa, the second biggest continent on earth with more than 1 billion people and hundreds of languages. We think geographically in a very Eurocentric way, almost selfishly. Also, the common news outlets, newspapers, radio, TV stations, even news websites concentrate on reporting the dramatic, spectacular, mainly negative news. There is little information about the daily life. This is a moment when you can contribute greatly with your podcasts. Often you look down on people from Africa, you may consider the poor in order to help them somehow. With this project, I have already said it in the beginning, you show that you have a good idea how to help the people in Mekelle because you have listened and reacted to them. Up to today the image of Africa is mainly influenced by colonial and also racist stereotypes. Direct contact to people inside and from Africa is still a rarity. You will develop this direct contact and publish about it in your series. There is the following message that I read in your project: Africa is not some far away continent, it is coming closer to Europe via media or via migration. In our neighbourhoods and in our public life. With your project you are building bridges, where people can meet eye to eye. I am thankful for this in the name of the Max-Planck-Gymnasium. Thank you.

Evelyn: Thank you for talking to us.

Hannah: Evelyn, how about you?

Evelyn: I think education is very important in general. Especially in poor countries like Ethiopia. It is good that children can go to school. Now during the times of the pandemic it is especially difficult because you cannot provide internet access and equipment for everyone in moments when schools are closed. Therefore, it is crucial that there are possibilities like the solar radios. And also that there are people who know about those circumstances. And that is the reason why I am active in this student group.

Hannah: This is a good transition to our next podcast-special. In a moment I will say more about it. At first, I would like to describe why I am engaged: I am active in the One World student group because I became interested with the call for donations to finance the solar radios and I wanted to report on it. About the radios I find the idea great that it was not money that was sent because then the students would still rely on us. With the radios we helped so that they can help themselves. And the electricity is free.

And there is one more voice saying that she thinks it is important that students are supported who are facing greater difficulties and it is interesting to experience how such a project of collaboration with its challenges, problems and solutions is realized. We hope that with this episode of our podcast you gained some insights into the background to the project and would be happy about feedback in the comment section below or in a message to Mrs Berhane. With those comments you can influence which questions or topics will be addressed in the episodes to come. And now we have a question for our listeners: What do you think do hygiene measures look like at Ethiopian schools in times of Corona? You can write down your ideas in the comment section. Till next time. Hear you soon.