

Transcript of the podcast no.3 in English

Hannah: Welcome to the third episode of the podcast „Eine Welt / One World“. We are Evelyn and Hannah from year 7 of MPG school. So far in our podcast series, we have dealt with the current situation of our solar radio project and the reasons for getting involved in that regard. In today's episode we are going to talk about Corona Virus. I am going to provide an insight into the spreading of the virus in Ethiopia and Germany. Afterwards, we are going to listen to two boys from Ethiopia, as well as several members of our one world club, who are going to talk about their views and experiences in regards to Covid. But before we delve deeper into that topic, there will be an overview of the current situation in the Tigray region as well as in Mekelle, the location of our partner school.

Evelyn: The situation in Northern Tigray remains rather unstable. Access to Tigray has become easier, yet is still monitored by the government and thus limited. On the one hand, relief organizations having projects in the region can now fly to Mekelle with the help of the UN e.g. to provide financial aid. It also means that NGO members can fly out of Tigray e.g. to Addis Ababa. On the other hand, there are still conflicts between government forces and the TPLF in the Afar region. North of Tigray and in the West, there are military conflicts between Amharas and Tigrays. Nevertheless, the principal of Mekelle Adventist school has informed us that the school has started to resume lessons in April. He also informed us that, unfortunately, conditions remain difficult: teachers cannot be paid, and parents are not able to pay school fees as the banking system is still on hold. Further, there is hardly any electricity which would be important for the latter, as well as communication overall. Other basic goods such as medications and food are not sufficiently available either. Drinking water is distributed to the population via tankers. Additionally, only sporadic contact to other regions of Ethiopia and the rest of the world is possible. The director of Adventist schools in Ethiopia, who is located in Addis Ababa, let us know that there is virtually no contact to the school in Mekelle. All in all, it remains to be seen how the process of re-connection and the situation with the solar radios evolve. Now, I am going to pass the word to Hannah, who is going to provide information about Covid in Ethiopia and Germany.

Hannah: Thank you for the insight, Evelyn. When you compare the Covid-related numbers of Germany and Ethiopia, you immediately notice immense differences. Let's begin with the numbers of how many corona cases were reported to the WHO. For Germany, this number was 25.6 million, which is about 30% of the total population. Included in this figure are the approximately 137000 people, half a percent of infections, who died of the virus. For Ethiopia, the figures are as follows: only about 470000 people, less than 1% of the total population, have been reported to be infected with the Corona virus. Among them, however, there are 1.5% people who have died of Corona - three times as many as in Germany. Also, in Germany more people are vaccinated than in Ethiopia. In Germany approx. 76% of the population are fully vaccinated, in Ethiopia only 18% of people received their first Covid shot. But why do these figures differ so much?

Attempts at explanation can go in different directions. For example, the testing and thus the detection of corona diseases has been approached differently in the two countries. While testing has been organized very strategically throughout Germany and at least 127 million tests reported via laboratories have been performed to date (domestic tests are not even included in this figure), in Ethiopia there have been just under 5 million. Since Germany also offered these tests mostly free of charge to the population, 3.7 billion euros were spent on them in 2021. In addition, access to health care in Ethiopia is much more dependent on where one lives, whether in rural or urban areas, than in Germany. In the capital Addis Ababa, for example, it is very easy to get vaccinated, as two boys from Ethiopia will report later. In contrast to that, the rural population has less access to health care because there is too little medical coverage for the entire country. Further, there is also the possibility that data collection varies between Ethiopia and Germany. There is also the uneven distribution of vaccine doses to different countries around the world. For example, Unicef states that the G20 countries, which include Germany, have received 15 times as many vaccine doses per capita compared to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where Ethiopia is located. We could list many more reasons for the differing figures for Covid in the two countries. But these numbers alone may not give an accurate insight into how the pandemic was experienced in Germany and Ethiopia, and that's why we're pleased to be able to include two voices from Ethiopia in this episode. Let's have them introduce themselves:

Nati: My name is ...

Mod: My name is ...

Charlotte: We have just listened to Nathan Solomon, an 11 year old boy from Ethiopia. He lives in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, with his parents and his older brother Manuhe. He attends 5th grade of a private Catholic school. His brother is 13 years old and goes to the same school, but to 9th grade. In the beginning of the pandemic, the school was closed. During that time, they had to stay at home, could not meet with their friends, and could not play in the places they used to have access to. Later, masks had to be worn everywhere. Learning during this time was through weekly work assignments that students had to complete at home and then send back to their teachers. Ethiopian television also provided educational opportunities, but the boys did not use them. Then both students also described the positive aspects of the pandemic and what they learned from it. For example, they were able to be with their family more, they did more physical activities compared to regular school days, and they became more aware of the importance of washing their hands. Manuhe also described being forced to look at things differently for a change. So the two also made statements about the fact that the situation with Corona in Ethiopia is no longer considered so important nowadays. Many people hardly wear masks in public anymore or no longer use disinfectant. In school, however, they currently still have to wear masks and disinfect their hands. At the end, they thank each other and say goodbye in Amharic, the local language: Dehna Walu - Goodbye.

This input makes us wonder how we are doing with the situation here in Germany. I pass the word back to Hannah.

Hannah: Thank you for summarizing the contributions of the two Ethiopian students, Charlotte. It's exciting to hear how the students in Ethiopia fared with the pandemic. What was it like in our country? What happened? I would like to let a few students have their say:

What did learning look like for you during the last two school years? Were there periods of distance learning? How was it organised? How did you experience it? How did you study during this time?

Evelyn: Yes, there were periods of distance learning, which took place online. Those who didn't have a suitable digital device were provided with one by the school, like me. It was often boring and the meeting chat was spammed and people were muted. At certain times, you could join the meetings from home or be at school. I was at school. That was convenient, as there wasn't as much interference. What was it like for you, Charlotte?

Charlotte: Because of the lockdown happening at the beginning of the pandemic, schools were closed. That's when distance learning started. During this time, we first received work assignments from our teachers via Microsoft teams, had to work on them and send them back to the teachers by a certain date. What I thought was cool about it was that I could schedule my assignments and didn't have to get up as early because the classes weren't at school. And when school was over, I could just go downstairs for lunch and not have to wait for the bus. It was a shame, though, that I couldn't see my friends at school as I would usually do. Digital classes required a lot of self-discipline and sometimes the assignments felt never-ending. Sometime later, we had live video conferences with our teachers and received homework afterwards, just like in normal lessons. I found this phase better because you could ask the teacher directly if you didn't understand something.

Hannah: The pandemic seems to be playing less of a role at the moment. What is your impression of Covid? How did you experience it?

Charlotte: At the beginning, one didn't quite realize the dangers, but we were still very cautious in our family, wore masks and severely limited our contacts. At times I did not like that, because I really wanted to meet my friends, but I understood my parents' concerns. Especially when there was no vaccine, you didn't know how to deal with the pandemic at all.

Until recently, I haven't felt the effects of Covid in my family. But not too long ago my grandmother came down with Covid and it took a lot out of her (she was hospitalized while she was infected and is now still short of breath).

Evelyn: It can be a deadly disease, but it has similar symptoms to the common cold. I was personally never affected by it, but often had to be quarantined because of friends or family.

Hannah: What restrictions or hygiene rules do you currently have to follow at school or in everyday life? How do you feel about them?

Evelyn: At the moment, there are not many rules. There are only social distancing, voluntary testing, sneezing etiquette, ... There is a lot more freedom now in regards to disease prevention. After all, masks were required and so on until recently.

Charlotte: Masks are no longer compulsory on the entire school grounds and I don't wear one because you can breathe more easily and think more clearly. In addition, you don't sweat as much when it's hot in the classroom. But you still have to wear a mask on public transport, which is okay, but unfortunately not everyone does it.

Hannah: What do you think about vaccinations against Covid? Would you get vaccinated as students or are you afraid of such a vaccination?

Charlotte: I have already been vaccinated against Covid and have not had the disease yet. When the vaccine was new, everyone was unsure about it, but since I am also vaccinated against illnesses, such as tick borne encephalitis or tetanus, I am not afraid of it. The side effects of this vaccination are slightly heavier than after others but they were not unexpected and the next day I was fine.

Evelyn: I am not a fan of the Covid vaccine because it has not yet been researched enough and it has also only been around for about a year. I am afraid of the vaccination because there can be side effects. I am pretty much the only unvaccinated person among my friends, but that doesn't bother me.

Hannah: It is very interesting that your opinions are so different.

Thank you very much for listening. We hope you can take something away from this podcast episode. As you may have noticed, there are several differences between Germany and Ethiopia, but also some similarities. I found it particularly interesting to hear from students from Ethiopia.

In the next podcast episode, we would like to learn more about the two students from Ethiopia and their everyday school life.

How long do you estimate their way to school takes? How long is your daily commute to school?

You can post your answers in the comments below.

Also, feel free to suggest other topics that we would include and discuss here on the podcast. What are you interested in? Post it in the comments below. We look forward to your contributions. Until next time, your Hannah.