



GRAPECA

RAGPEHA

*Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour la paix en Ethiopie
et dans la Corne de l'Afrique.*

*Research and Action Group for Peace in Ethiopia and the
Horn of Africa.*

GRAPECA : ETHIOPIAN CHAPTER

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

1993 - 1994

September 1994.

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I. BACKGROUND

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Organisation of the National Conference
2. Establishment of the Monthly Journal
3. Creation of **Radio Selam**

III. FUTURE PLANS

1. Creation of a Center for Civic Education (february 1995)
2. Creation of a multiethnic association "Brotherly Peoples"

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I. BACKGROUND

Following the may 1992 meeting in Brussels, Belgium, and in accord with the spirit of the consultations made at the same meeting, the Ethiopian chapter of GRAPECA was established in Addis Abeba. The office started activities by recruiting staff that could dispose tasks in line with the Terms of Reference (TOR) as provided by the Head Office and the outcomes of discussions arrived at the Brussels meeting. The effort in this regard was more or less realised by february 1993. The recrutment of personnel (volunteers and employees) was conducted on the basis of commitment to stated goals and professional competence, among others. Despite the fact of our effort encountering series of problems and drawbacks in the process of realising stated objectives and goals, a number of undertakings have been accomplished since then. The details pertaining to these undertakings, therefore, constitute the main body of this report.

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Organisation of the National conference for peace and reconciliation

Since the idea of such a conference was launched in GRAPECA's peace plan most of the group's efforts were deployed in this direction. In line with the attemps made by GRAPECA to realise the entrenchment of genuine and durable peace in the country, the Ethiopian chapter actively participated in preparations of both the Paris and Addis Abeba conferences. After the Paris conference, the GRAPECA Ethiopian chapter volunteered to work as liaison for the **Coordinating Committee-National Conference for Peace and Reconciliation in Ethiopia**. This enabled our Chapter to play a decisive role in the preparation and success of the National Conference.

In may 1993 the Chapter organised a workshop to work out a plan for the preparation and the successful conducting of the conference. A total of 32 participants - workers, teachers, members of the independent press, lawyers - mostly GRAPECA members took part in the meeting which lasted 3 days. The major decision was to set up a Task Force which was to coordinate GRAPECA's efforts. The tasks defined at the workshop were :

- to initiate and actively participate in a public awareness campaign by contributing articles on peace, democracy, the concept of national reconciliation, etc. and by so doing not only raise the people's awareness but also encourage popular support to the proposed conference.
- to contact and encourage political and civic organisations, trade unions, professional associations, business organisations, religious groups, youth and women's movements, local NGOs, etc. to actively participate in the undertaking. Our chapter was thus at the forefront of the successful efforts to register would be participants.
- to promote GRAPECA's proposal to invite Elders to the conference and once the idea accepted to identify and draw a list of such Elders that should be invited.
- to initiate a campaign to gather support to the proposed national conference among diplomatic circles in Addis Abeba.
- to propose to the main office preparation of a **working document** to be published and debated by participants as well as the general public before the convening of the conference. And to present to the GRAPECA main office an outline for such a document.

It was in line with these decisions and by working closely with the coordinating committee headed by the coordinator of GRAPECA that the chapter played a crucial role in promoting awareness and dissemination of information on the aims and objectives of the national conference, in mounting media campaign, public gatherings and mass rallies that expounded the problems and issues of peace and national reconciliation.

After the successful convening of the conference our chapter organised a second workshop in february 1994 and conducted indepth discussions and exchange of views on strategies to be upheld with regard to followup of the december conference. 36 people, most of whom were involved in the previous workshop and the conference preparation process took part in the second undertaking. The most important conclusions and decisions of this workshop which appraised and evaluated the december conference and GRAPECA's role in the whole process can be summerized as follows :

- Given the great interst shown by the general public in the debates on peace and reconciliation during the 10 months which preceeded the Addis Abeba conference, it was agreed that GRAPECA should do every thing it can to maintain the momentum gathered by the peace process and specially to keep alive the spirit of tolerance, unity and reconciliation that marked the Paris and Addis Abeba conferences.
- To support by all the means at GRAPECA's disposal the Council of Alternativ Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE).
- To continue the public awareness campaign by elaborating the contents of the **working document** and the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the conference by using not only the independent press but also through our Newspaper and **Radio Selam** if and when this project is relaised.
- To reorient GRAPECA's activities towards the long term aspects of the peace building process and to restructure the organisation in line with proposals forwarded by the main office.
- To maintain the Special Task Force which coordinated and supervised GRAPECA's efforts during the preparatory phase of the conference. The task force will work in line with the new terms of reference defined at the workshop, maintain close contacts with CAFPDE, promote GRAPECA's peace plan among council members, provide advise and support to the Council, propose to GRAPECA's leadershiop measures aimed at maintaining and enhancing the peace momentum set off by the Paris and Addis Abeba conferences, etc.

2. - Establishment of the monthly newspaper

It is to be recalled that an Amharic monthly titled "**Selamna Edeget**" (Peace and Development) was launched by the Chapter in 1992. Unfortunately the monthly had to be interrupted due to bureaucratic harassment by the government administration and other problems. Our plan to start the paper in early 1994 again run into difficulties as the government started its campaign of repression and harassment against the free press in an effort to stifle any and all opposition in the run up to the June 1994 elections for a Constituent Assembly which as it turned out gave a near 90 % majority to the EPRDF. Although a publishing house was registered as early as February 1993, the News Paper under its new name "Messenger of Peace" had to obtain legal recognition and this was done in May 1994.

The distribution of copies is effected in the different parts of the country with greater number sent to the big towns and cities for apparent reasons pertaining to larger constituency in terms of readership. Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, organised members of the Ethiopian Community abroad receive periodic issues of the News Paper on the basis of our compiled mailing list.

After having produced three issues, although we have still the financial resources to produce another 3 before the end of the year, we are interrupting the news paper for another 3 months. In fact the launching of **Radio Selam** as of May 1994 and its considerable contribution in the promotion of GRAPECA's peace efforts has led us to reflect on the respective role of GRAPECA's two major instruments of the public awareness campaign. With an estimated audience of 8 to 10 million people in Ethiopia and the neighbouring countries **Radio Selam** reaches Ethiopians of all walks of life and in practically all the regions including the countryside. On the other hand, the profile of readers of the news paper is tilted to being dominated by urban elites from the ranks of university students and lecturers, trade union leaders, professionals and other individuals in the top middle position in the social hierarchy.

So long as **Radio Selam** continues we find it in the best interest of our peace building efforts not only to elevate the overall quality and setting of

the news paper both in forme and content, but also and more importantly to introduce changes with regard to the target group. As millions are being reached by **Radio Selam** we feel it would be more appropriate for the news paper to transform itself and become a forum for community leaders, academics, political and religious groups, NGOs, youth and women associations, minority groups, human rights activists and researchers to deliberate and effect exchange of views on peace, civic culture, reconciliation, modes and manners of democratic governance, etc. Instead of short "agitational" comments and articles (which are dealt with by **Radio Selam**) the news paper will produce well researched (and longer) papers delaing with various themes of relevance to the peace building and democratisation process.

The Chapter has already obtained the approval of the main office on this issue and the news paper (probably under a new name) will start in january 1995.

3. - The creation of Radio Selam

Another important accomplishment of GRAPECA this year is the launching of the Radio. Although compared to the needs of the vast public awareness campaign that the historical, political and cultural context of the country requires a one hour weekly programme may appear to be particularly modest, the feedback we are obtaining depicts that the millions of listerners in all the regions of the country and in the neighbouring countries are receiving the Radio's message with great interest and are benifiting in getting clarity with regard to the issues of peace, democracy and the problems facing the transition process.

The Chapter participates in this endeavour by asiging three of its memebbers to work full time for the Radio and by recruting other staff to deal with administrative tasks. Documents believed to be usefull to the preparation of programmes as outlined in the "**Radio Selam Project**" (which has been submitted to donors) are collected, processed and sent to the main office which prepares articles and comments for the radio. The 15 minutes "News and comments" programme is prepared by members of the Chapter here in Addis Abeba and sent directly by fax to the Radio station twice a week.

III. - FUTURE PLANS

The Chapter will continue to consolidate its activities specially with regard to the newspaper and Radio Selam. At the same time efforts will be made to implement decisions reached concerning the restructuring of the organisation by creating autonomous units specialising in different activities that are in line with GRAPECA's broad objectives.

As you are already aware the four autonomous units that are proposed are :

- 1) The Peace education and initiative unit;
- 2) Democracy, Human Rights and civic education unit;
- 3) Civil society promotion unit;
- 4) Inter ethnic relations "Brotherly Peoples" unit.

The restructurings drive will be accomplished over a period of two years. In 1995 we intend to establish two of the proposed units. These are the Democracy, Human rights and civic education unit and the "Brotherly Peoples" unit.

Steering committee for convening the founding workshops of the two proposed units have already been set up. Preparations are well under way for the convening of the founding workshop of the "**Center for Civic Education in Ethiopia**" (CCEE) which is scheduled to take place in february 1995. * The founding workshop of the unit "**Brotherly Peoples**" will be held in june 1995. The steering committee is preparing plans for the successful convening of the workshop. The committee will send a detailed proposal concerning this project in late december 1994.

* See document attached "A proposal to establish a center for civic education in Ethiopia" (CCEE).

**A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH
A CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA**

BY

The Steering Committee for Convening a Founding Workshop

August 1994

Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

I. Background

It is now a little more than three years since Ethiopia has made another attempt at getting rid of one of the most ruthless totalitarian rules in the Third World. During this brief period, the new Transitional Government has taken series of measures that have far-reaching implications for the future of the country with regard to socio-economic and political life of society at large. The banning of the defunct "National Shengo" (parliament), the constitution, the military establishment, the ruling party (WPE) along with its client mass organisations, etc., on the one hand, and the instituting of a seemingly Coalition Government (TGE), restructuring of the geographical set up of local government units, initiating a new economic policy orientated to the "free" enterprise model, formation of a constitution Drafting Commission, ... on the other, are some of the undertakings that are more or less accomplished since the overthrow of the *ancien regime*.

Despite these and other similar measures and highly publicised virtues of political pluralism and Politico-economic liberalisation, the transition from autocratic rule to democratic governance is being put to a litmus test. This modest scepticism, among others, could be explained by some alarming practices of the incumbent Transitional Government witnessed in due process of the period of transition. These occurrences relate to abuse and defrauding amply displayed at times of the 1992 local and 1994 national elections and other undertakings corresponding to attempts at exercising rights as sanctioned by the "Chapter for The Transitional Period".

Due to the Challenges that a successful transition towards a democratic socio-political environment poses, it is our firm belief that providing civic education and prompting awareness with regard to constitutional rule becomes indispensable. The committee is of the opinion that, coupled with the breach of trust by officialdom, the breeding ground for forfeiting of rights and neglect of duties also flourish in a situation where illiteracy in civic virtues and culture is prevalent. Hence the need to make eligible citizens and organised components of civic society to be exposed to the basics of civic education and norms and standards of democratic governance.

II. Justification

Ethiopia's attempt at embarking on positive socio-economic and political transformation appears to have encountered a number of challenges some of which could be summarised as follows :

- The growing high handedness and repressive tendencies of the country's ruling elite ;
- The ever present "Culture of violence" as an aspect of the *modus operandi* of the Ethiopian body-politic still expressing itself by way of inflicting damages that approximate gross human right violations ;
- The absence of a formidable and strong civil society contributing to failures in counter-balancing the unmitigated lust for power of political factions in general and the ruling groups in particular ;
- The growing socio-economic hazards accumulated over the years and further augmented since the seizure of power by the incumbent Transitional Government contributing to the prevalence of apathy and in-difference on the part of considerable portion of society ;
- The over politicization of ethnic differences in a manner utterly distorted and designed to serve ulterior motives which eventually could pose a serious threat to the development of a democratic culture unless carefully tackled before it is too late.

We strongly believe that one important contribution to the creation of durable peace and democratic governance in the country is the promotion of civic education that informs citizens not only about their rights and duties but also standard rules and practice of a democratic government and its various institutions. If pursued with conviction and perseverance, one can justifiably hope that this venture can infuse perceptions and values expressed in the form of an advanced political culture as an aspect of everyday practice of informed and conscious citizens. The risk of falling back to the appalling practices of yester-years could be minimised and gradually eliminated provided that all concerned make concerted efforts by underlining on the benefit and legitimacy of the ballot box as opposed to

overcoming differences through the instrumentality of the barrel of the gun. More importantly, such an undertaking of establishing a center for civic education and democratic governance will positively contribute to the on-going debate regarding the making of a New constitution and instituting a government based on the norms of the democratic exercise.

III. General Objectives

The establishment of the center for Civic Education is expected to facilitate the realisation of the following objectives :

- 3.1. Bring together community leaders, academics, political and religious groups, NGOs, youth and women Associations, minority groups, human rights activists and researchers to deliberate and effect exchange of views on civic culture and modes and manners of democratic governance ;
- 3.2. Organise workshops, seminars and symposia in which those listed 3.1. above could participate with the objective of bolstering their knowledge as regards the benefits of developing civic culture and practice ;
- 3.3. Solicit the support of government institutions and functionaries (Courts, administrators, the police, schools) to contribute towards the entrenchment of awareness on the part of the general public by emphasising on the advantages of civic education and prevalence of the rule of law ;
- 3.4. Work towards the inclusion of Civic Education in the curricula of the different levels of educational set ups ;
- 3.5. Sponsor the undertaking of research on the various aspects of the subject and facilitate the dissemination of research findings in the form of brochures, proceedings and text books ;

- 3.6. Organise panels and public lectures on themes and topics that are relevant to the various aspects of the ongoing drives to institute a popularly elected democratic government.

IV. Immediate Objectives

- 4.1. Organise the permanent Center for the Promotion of Civic Education and Awareness on Democratic Governance in Ethiopia ;
- 4.2. Work out a Memorandum of Association for the Center and seek official recognition and registration ;
- 4.3. Organise workshops and seminars on such themes as :
 - Democratic Rights and Democratic Government
 - Constitution and Human Rights
 - Standard norms and practices pertaining to elections and electoral procedures
 - Challenges in Multi-ethnic and Multi-religious societies
 - Conflict Resolution Mechanisms
 - Pluralistic Democracy and Economic Development
 - Alternatives and Options in Identifying Appropriate Forms of Government Structures (Unitary, Federal, others ...)
- 4.4. Launch media campaigns to popularise the objectives of the Center through and invite potential members and Associate Members to contribute towards the attainment of stated objectives of the center.

The steering committee has already approached academics and researchers interested in the venture from the Addis Abeba University and the Ethiopian Teachers Association. Attempt is already underway to enlist the participation of representatives of professional associations, mass

organisations, the NGO community, academic and religious circles, Jurists and political parties by posing as an adhoc committee and facilitate the launching of the Center.

The establishment of the center is to be announced at the founding workshop tentatively scheduled for february 1995. The timing is purposively selected to precede the instituting of the national legislature that would allegedly create a constitutionally elected Ethiopian Government. It is anticipated that the duration of the Workshop would be 4 days. A total of about 100 participants are expected to attend the workshop sessions. The steering committee looks forwards that about 15 well researched papers relevant to the various themes of relevance would be presented serving as focal points of discussion and deliberation. It is anticipated that a complete proceeding of the workshop will be published and this is hoped to be used as one of the texts for the subsequent undertaking of promoting Civic Education in the various fora and platforms anticipated to surface as a result.

COST BREAKDOWN
(in Ethiopian Birr)

II. Estimates of Expenditures Pertaining to the Anticipated

Workshop to be convened February 1995

Auditorium fee for 4 days	=	700 x 4	=	2,800
Telephone/fax/photocopy Bills (lump sum)	=		=	5,000
Lunch for 100 participants	=	20 x 4 x 100	=	8,000
Snacks, coffee/tea, Soft beverages	=	15 x 4 x 100	=	6,000
Flip charts, overhead projector charges (lump sum)	=		=	500
Stationary / badges	=	20 x 150	=	3,000
Honorarium for 15 resource persons	=	1000 x 15	=	15,000
Cost for publishing 500 proceedings including secretarial service and printing material	=	50 x 500	=	25,000
Other follow-up expenses (lump sum)	=		=	20,000
TOTAL				<hr/> 85,300
10 % contingency				8,530
GRAND TOTAL				<hr/> <u>93,830</u>

NB : 1 US \$ = 5.75 Ethiopian Birr.