



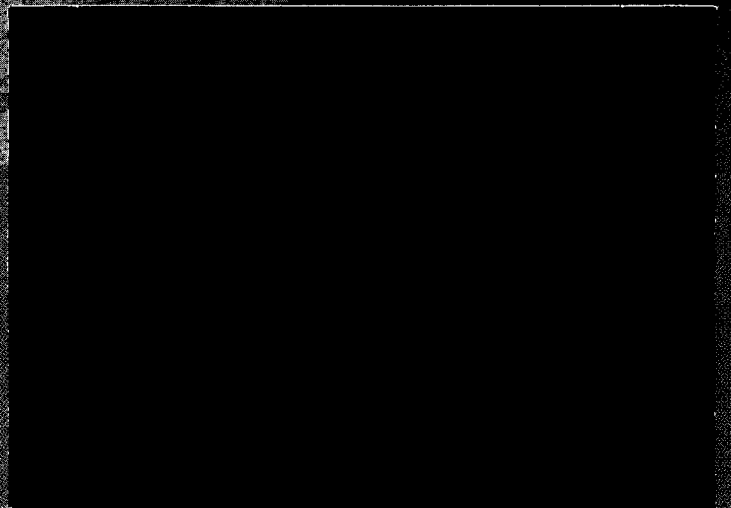
NDI

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**ETHIOPIA FOCUS
GROUP SURVEY**

February 19 - 26, 1994

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report documents a focus group survey project undertaken by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Peter Hart Research Associates Inc. polling firm in February 1994.

Peter Hart Research was commissioned by NDI to conduct training of focus group moderators, oversee the implementation of the focus group survey and to present the findings from the survey in the form of a final report. The "Findings from Focus Groups in Ethiopia" is included in section one of this document. These findings are attached in this report at the permission of Peter Hart Research.

Section two of this report is a memorandum outlining NDI's involvement in and analysis of the focus group survey. This memorandum was written by NDI staff involved in organizing the focus groups and assisting Peter Hart Research in implementing the survey. An appendix to the report is attached, which provides direct quotations from the participants during the focus group sessions.

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National Democratic Institute For International Affairs

conducting nonpartisan international programs to help promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions



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The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was established in 1983. By working with political parties and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new and emerging democracies. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has a staff of 120 with field offices in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet Union.

NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in more than 60 countries. Programs focus on six major areas:

Political Party Training: NDI conducts multipartisan training seminars in political development with a broad spectrum of democratic parties. NDI draws expert trainers from around the world to forums where members of fledgling parties learn first-hand the techniques of organization, communication and constituent contact.

Election Processes: NDI provides technical assistance for political parties and nonpartisan associations to conduct voter and civic education campaigns and to organize election monitoring programs. The Institute has also organized more than 25 major international observer delegations.

Legislative Training: NDI organizes legislative seminars focusing on legislative procedures, staffing, research information, constituent services and committee structures.

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SECTION ONE

FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS IN ETHIOPIA

February 1994

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We used to spend our days in the tunnels
because of fear of bombardment . . . but now,
because of peace and democracy . . . you
[National Democratic Institute] have
come a long way, and we are
pleased to meet you here
because of peace
and democracy.

Tigrayan Woman, Makelle, Ethiopia
February 20, 1994

I. Forward

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) commissioned this focus group survey in order to better orient its democracy support activities to the needs of the Ethiopian people. NDI is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that seeks to promote and strengthen democratic institutions in emerging democracies. Since November 1991, NDI has conducted a series of consultations and training programs in Ethiopia. In October 1993, NDI opened an office in Addis Ababa and initiated a long-term civic education program, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The findings from the research presented in this report will be used to target this civic education program better and guide NDI in developing other programs in Ethiopia.

This research project represents one of the first attempts to conduct politically oriented public opinion research in Ethiopia. Because the research was limited to four of the country's 14 regions, the program's findings should be viewed as initial observations covering only a limited range of Ethiopian public opinion. NDI and Peter D. Hart Research Associates hope that these initial steps will be refined and extended through future research, and that indigenous Ethiopian organizations will play a role in this process. Throughout this research program, NDI and Hart Research consulted with and included relevant Ethiopian organizations. It is hoped that these organizations will take advantage of this training and make their own contributions to the study of Ethiopian public opinion.

II. Methodology

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Peter D. Hart Research Associates, and Lester & Associates collaborated on a research project composed of 10 focus groups among a total of more than 100 Ethiopian participants. The sessions were held in eight locations throughout Ethiopia between February 20 and 27, 1994. A focus group is a semi-structured discussion that last about two hours with approximately 10 to 15 participants. Each session is run by a moderator who uses an outline to guide the discussion and keep it focused on the topics at hand. The questions are more open-ended than is typically the case in a survey; this allows participants to respond in their own way and in their own words. Focus groups do not generate the kind of quantitative results produced by survey research that can be statistically generalized to the larger population, but they do permit in-depth explorations of complex topics and the opportunity to understand issues from the participants' point of view.

Frederick Hartwig of Hart Research designed the project and directed it from start to finish. Ronald L. Lester of Lester & Associates traveled to Ethiopia to train the moderators and translators and to direct the project in Ethiopia. Mr. Lester attended all 10 focus group sessions and conducted the initial analysis of the results from the discussions. This report sets forth the central findings and conclusions, and their implications for the development of democracy in Ethiopia.

The project was designed to draw on a broad range of attitudes and

opinions from the major ethnic, religious, demographic, geographic, age, and gender groups that constitute the Ethiopian population. Young male high school graduates were interviewed in Addis Ababa. High school students were interviewed in Debra Cina. A group of village elders was interviewed in Debra Birhan. Oromo farmers in Ginchi and Oromo women in Ambo were also interviewed. Peasant farmers were interviewed in the countryside outside Debra Birhan, and Dongolo villagers were interviewed in Wukuro village, 35 kilometers outside Makelle, where a women's group also was conducted.

| Ethiopia Focus Groups | | |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|
| <u>Location</u> | <u>Participants</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| Addis Ababa | Young, high school-educated, unemployed males (mostly Amhara) | February 20 |
| Ambo | Women (mostly Oromo) | February 21 |
| Ginchi village | Rural farmers (mostly Oromo) | February 22 |
| Nazareth | Muslim small businessmen (mostly Oromo) | February 23 |
| Debra Birhan | Rural farmers (mostly Amhara) | February 24 |
| Debra Birhan | Town elders (mostly Amhara) | February 24 |
| Debra Cina | High school students (mostly Amhara) | February 25 |
| Makelle | Women (mostly Tigrayan) | February 26 |
| Wukuro village | Rural farmers and Dongolo villagers (mostly Tigrayan) | February 27 |

Participants in the discussion groups were selected to represent different sections of society, such as farmers, elders, students, and businessmen. An advance team of NDI staff members and Ethiopian civic leaders visited each site

shortly before the survey to select participants. Local government officials were made aware of the activity and shown letters of support for the program from the President of Ethiopia and the Chief Executive Secretary of The National Election Board. In some cases, local officials worked with NDI to select individuals for the survey; in other cases, assistance was provided by local nongovernmental organizations. Participants were each given 15 birr for their time.

The program's moderators were recruited by NDI from among Ethiopian nonpartisan civic organizations based in Addis Ababa. Four moderators were trained on February 19 during a training workshop. Ethiopian news and civic organizations were also invited to attend the workshop as observers. (The list of attendees is included in the Appendix.) The purpose of expanding the moderator training was to illustrate how useful and insightful focus groups can be as a research tool. A mock focus group among some of the participants at the February 19 training session was conducted to demonstrate the value of focus group techniques. A videotape of a focus group conducted by Ron Lester among Ethiopians in the United States was also shown at the training session for educational purposes.

III. Overview

Level of Understanding of the Principles of Democracy. The focus group questionnaire centered on the question, "What is democracy?" and a series of follow-up questions designed to explore participants' understanding of various

elements of the democratic process. Participants' discussions of these questions reveal a number of important conclusions.

- Most focus group participants are conversant with at least some aspects of democracy.
- The majority define democracy in terms of rights and freedoms.
- Very few mention process issues, such as elections or accountability, as being important features in democracy.
- The aspect of the democratic process about which familiarity is the lowest is the role and function of political parties.
- In addition to being unsure of what parties do, some participants also express reservations about the value to Ethiopia of open competition among political parties.
- Most say they would participate in democracy, but few are able to detail specific methods of participation.

Level of Interest. In addition to measuring people's level of understanding, the survey also attempted to assess Ethiopians' level of interest in the democratic process. The findings include four key points.

- Participants are relatively interested in talking about democracy, and they express opinions (even highly critical opinions) freely.
- Participants seem to welcome democracy and feel it is important.
- To most, however, immediate economic issues are of far greater importance than are questions about democracy.
- In addition, most participants do not feel that democracy can be used to address problems in their lives.

Level of Optimism. The focus groups also included an informal poll to assess levels of optimism about the process. The results of this poll produce two conclusions.

- The majority of participants express concerns about the current political process.
- More than two-thirds, however, think things will improve over the next five years.

IV. Discussion

Democracy in Ethiopia is in the early stages of development. A wide range of opinions and attitudes are encountered when the subject of democracy is first raised in the focus group discussions, but it becomes clear that a number of hurdles need to be overcome if democracy is to flourish, the most significant of which is an incomplete understanding of the democratic process.

Some participants are reluctant to discuss the idea of democracy, though their lack of enthusiasm stems mostly from having only a surface knowledge of democracy, with little, if any, practical experience. This lack of a thorough discussion about democracy with most participants cannot be attributed to fear of repression, because many participants offer candid and stark opinions that are critical of the incumbent government. Clearly, the problem instead is sometimes a lack of understanding as to how democracy can or will work in Ethiopia.

Most participants in the focus groups do not understand enough about democratic elections or the democratic form of government to understand what the potential benefits may be to them personally and to their country. There also is a great deal of misunderstanding as to the role of political parties and what constitutes a political party. When the focus group participants are asked what the terms "democracy" and "political parties" mean to them, they usually give narrow answers and prefer to talk about the more immediate concerns in their lives. In short, a great many of the focus group participants dismiss democracy as being basically irrelevant to their lives. This attitude appears to be due more to a lack of understanding of the connections between people's day-to-day problems and the potential benefits of a democratic form of government that would address their concerns than it is a rejection of democracy itself.

Ethiopia is still recovering from the ravages of a protracted war, and there is general agreement among the focus group participants that the country is better off today than it was under the Mengistu regime. Almost all the Ethiopians we interviewed express sincere appreciation and relief at no longer having to deal with the oppressive Mengistu regime. Although they credit the current government for its role in toppling the Mengistu regime, participants stop at that point without giving credit to the current government for steps it has taken toward democracy.

Several participants, however, bring up the problems created by the influx of soldiers into the villages following the war. Although they are happy that the Mengistu regime is gone, their enthusiasm is dampened by what they see as a

new set of problems and an uncertainty about what the new government will do to address these concerns.

Almost across the board, participants feel that Ethiopia is closer to democracy now than it was before, yet they recognize that there is still a long way to go to make the democratic process what most Ethiopians think it can be.

Not surprisingly, the participants remain very much split along ethnic lines. The Tigrayan participants tend to believe the country is well on its way toward democracy. Many participants from other ethnic groups would disagree with that judgment, and some would disagree bitterly. Yet, the majority of the focus group participants are optimistic about democracy's prospects improving "in the next five years," and this runs fairly consistently across the board, among young and old, and across ethnic lines.

The participants are divided as to the country's short-term prospects for democracy and its overall future direction. As is to be expected in a country just coming out of a war, tension and mistrust between various ethnic groups run high. Generally, the majority of participants in these focus groups are pessimistic about the short-term prospects for democracy in Ethiopia, but optimistic about its long-term chances.

At the beginning of each focus group, we asked participants to gauge their feelings on "whether or not things will improve within the next five years." By a margin of nearly two to one, participants as a whole think that "things will improve within the next five years," rather than that "things will not improve" or that they

"don't know." Yet this margin is high primarily because some groups are much more optimistic than others.

The Tigray participants and some Muslim participants believe that Ethiopia has taken significant strides toward democracy. In the women's group in Makelle, participants contend that "democracy" exists in full form in Ethiopia. Comments include the following:

"There is full democracy in Ethiopia."

"There are many political organizations, and people support the ones they want to. There is no force exerted over anyone. People can express themselves."

"There is full freedom in Ethiopia. An individual or an organization can express their opinion. And this is the first time this has ever happened in Ethiopia. You can criticize if you want to, but this is the first time this has ever happened."

In the group in Wukuro, Dongolo villagers express opinions quite similar to those of their neighbors in Makelle: "There is democracy in Ethiopia now. Previously under the Derg, we were tortured and put in prisons. We had no right to go to the offices and discuss our problems. We were helpless."

Muslim businessmen in Nazareth also voice a broad feeling that democracy currently exists in full form in Ethiopia. One Muslim businessman says, "We now have freedom to practice our religion without government interference." The Muslims, who were mostly small businessmen, go to great lengths to explain how the "Derg interfered with and prohibited our abilities to practice our religion." The

ability to practice their religion freely without government interference is clearly the most important aspect of democracy to the Muslim participants.

The Muslims in Nazareth also talk extensively about the "high cost of living and taxes." They believe there are "too many governmental checkpoints and too many taxes." The concerns they voice about economic issues are not unlike those expressed by businessmen in the United States.

Outside Tigray, most participants approach the discussions with strongly negative attitudes toward the current prospects for democracy and the incumbent government's willingness to oversee free elections and work toward democracy.

Oromo and Amhara focus group members remain quite skeptical about the short-term prospects for democracy and the incumbent government's plan to move the country toward democracy. In the discussion about the meaning of the term "democracy," Oromo women and peasant farmers define democracy in the context of their tribal culture, which they contend is based on democratic principles. Yet they give little--if any--credence to the notion that there is democracy in Ethiopia or that the incumbent government is moving in that direction.

The Oromo participants also connect political parties with the traditional liberation movements in Ethiopia, such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). They believe these institutions are political parties and are organized on an ethnic basis. One participant states the following:

Each tribe has a political party. The Tigray have their own political party, the Oromo have their own political party, and the Amharas have their own political party. It's hushed up, but it's true.

The skepticism and pessimism exhibited by the Oromo participants is consistent throughout the various age groups, from the young adults to the elders, and is also present among several types of non-Oromo participants.

Participants in the remaining groups also voice opinions of democracy in Ethiopia that are dramatically different from those of participants in Makelle and Wukuro in Tigray and Muslims in Nazareth.

The first focus group in Addis Ababa was composed of unemployed male high school graduates. When asked by the moderator to explain what "democracy" means to him, one young man responds, "Democracy is not practiced here." All the unemployed high school graduates express dismay at the prospects for democracy, but they place less significance on the importance of achieving democracy than on their own possibilities for employment. Their interest in and support for democracy seem to be conditional on the connection it would have with their employment prospects.

In general, these young men feel they have achieved their goal of graduating from high school only to be rudely awakened by the stark reality of being unable to find a job. They find themselves forced to live at home with their parents, and are quite disappointed with the current government's general direction, particularly in terms of establishing a democracy. Moreover, these

unemployed high school graduates believe that if democracy existed in Ethiopia, they would have jobs.

In Ambo, participants discuss democracy in terms of what it means to the "Oromo people" within the context of their traditional tribal culture. One participant contends, "If you promise the Oromo people democracy, we will not accept it. We want Oromo democracy, our own kind."

Members of the Ambo group express a great deal of frustration with the democracy's current prospects, but like other groups, they are more optimistic about its long-term prospects. Unlike participants in the Tigray region and in Nazareth, participants in the Ambo group do not feel as though they live in a society in which the usual freedoms associated with democracy exist. A 23-year-old female student argues, "Even under the banner of democracy, we are not allowed to speak our opinions." In the same discussion, participants voice a variety of opinions in defining democracy, yet they keep coming back to a discussion of "Oromo democracy" and not institutional democracy.

The Debra Cina focus group was composed of high school students. Not surprisingly, the most pressing set of problems for these participants concerns growing up. They talk about how strict school policies are and how difficult these policies have made their student life.

The students are well informed about the concepts of democracy and political parties, almost as well as any of the groups. They are also quite partisan in their outlook and express a clear feeling that the government in Addis Ababa

favors the Tigray region over their own. For example, they believe that "factories are being built in Tigray, so the people will have jobs." Although the students of Debra Cina perceive some major shortcomings to democracy in Ethiopia, they are quite optimistic about the future and what it holds for them. Of the 15 participants, only two think things "will not get better in five years."

They are also eager to teach their parents about democracy, and they caution against Westerners trying to do the grass-roots education themselves. These students are very aware of the barriers to educating farmers about democracy, but seem confident that they can overcome these obstacles.

In several focus groups, the better-educated urban dwellers display a greater understanding of the democratic process and democratic elections, yet they too express a lack of trust in the integrity of the process. Indeed, most participants outside Tigray are concerned that elections would be accompanied by intimidation or coercion.

Among some focus groups, such as the peasant farmers (the single largest population group), democracy is almost dismissed as a serious subject of conversation because these people are so preoccupied with day-to-day survival, including impending famine again this year. Among these farmers, illness, starvation, and survival issues work against creating interest and enthusiasm for democracy. For rural farmers, especially, democracy needs to be linked to survival issues if it is to hold any more than passing interest for them.

In Ginchi village, a small Oromo farming community in Ethiopia's breadbasket approximately 15 kilometers from Ambo, a group of men ranging in age from early 20s to 60s talks extensively about the agricultural problems with which they deal on a daily basis. These farmers in Ginchi are much more interested in discussing their agricultural problems than talking about democracy. Their attitudes toward democracy are very much predicated on its relationship to their day-to-day lives. They view their own situation as being so perilous that the concept and/or practice of democracy is very remote. As one farmer put it:

This being a country of farmers, the land has been tilled for many years and is becoming infertile. . . . What we produce is not enough to feed us, let alone sell for money!

While the Ginchi farmers indicate that they prefer the current government over the Derg, they also level several criticisms at the current government for not meeting their expectations for providing agricultural assistance.

Participants discuss democracy within the context of their traditional ethnic and kebele (community) structures. These Ginchi farmers believe they have been practicing democracy for thousands of years. They do not believe democracy is now being practiced in Ethiopia, but they are optimistic about its long-term prospects.

These peasant farmers believe that since they are members of the largest ethnic group (Oromo), they are entitled to a "larger voice" in a democracy than are other groups. This attitude is expressed by both the Oromo women of Ambo and

the peasant farmers of Ginchi. They understand a great deal about the concept of democracy and elections, and the freedoms associated with democracy, such as free speech, free press, and free assembly.

Peasant farmers outside Debra Birhan express views about the critical nature of their agricultural problems that are very similar to those of the Ginchi farmers. They say it does not take a lot for them to get by, but they need "fertilizers and support" from the government. All the participants in this group agree with the farmer who identifies the "most pressing" problem as the lack of electricity, which they describe as the "problem of light." However, they do not express the same intensity of anti-government feeling as do the Oromo farmers in Ginchi. These Debra Birhan farmers seem more content that all they need to get by is "more fertilizers and light." They are much more eager to discuss these two problems and are much less concerned about discussions of democracy.

When the talk begins to focus on democracy and political parties, these participants agree that "with democracy, we will be better off than we were before." They associate democracy with "human rights" and the various forms of freedom. They credit democracy with their new freedom to move around the country, which they could not do under the Mengistu government. Generally, they agree that democracy is something "good," but they do not address this concept with the same level of enthusiasm as they display in the initial discussion of their "top concerns."

These peasant farmers express relief at "not being haunted by the specter" of having their children taken into a war, but they do not equate the end of the war with democracy. They keep bringing the discussion back to the land.

The discussion of political parties does not last long among these Debra Birhan farmers, participants having very little to say on the subject. Interestingly, the group seems to agree that "one party is best." As one participant says:

It is not how many political parties you have, it is the quality of leadership of the political party.

The village elders in Debra Birhan (mostly small businessmen and two religious leaders) are much more opinionated than are their neighbors. Most participants in this group understand the concepts of democracy and political parties very well; these village elders are well educated and have strong opinions about the need for governmental reforms to bring about democracy. However, these participants are skeptical about the prospects for the development of institutions in Ethiopia.

Even though the peasant farmers' current level of interest in democratic processes is low, they would be a major voting bloc on both national and local levels, and as such, potentially would have a great deal of power in the electoral process. But the participants do not understand this connection. They do express an interest in learning more about democracy and believe their children are best equipped to teach them.

V. Conclusion: Implications of the Focus Group Findings for Democratic Development Programs in Ethiopia

The series of extended discussions with a variety of Ethiopians reveals an important window of opportunity for democracy and party-building programs in the country. Participants talk about democracy in predominantly favorable terms and demonstrate an eagerness to learn more about democracy and what it has to offer Ethiopian society. This is especially true among the more urban and educated members of society, whose involvement in democracy building will be crucial to development of both a political culture and a set of institutions that can foster and promote a democratic system of governance. The focus group participants also exhibit a special sensitivity to human rights, which can provide the foundation stone for building a greater and more extensive understanding and appreciation of what democracy is and how it can be implemented in the context of Ethiopian society.

Nonetheless, the National Democratic Institute should not underestimate the extent to which Ethiopia presents three major challenges to the task of building democracy: language, ethnicity, and political culture.

Language. While Ethiopia has a long and varied history that predates many European countries, Westerners should understand that Ethiopia has largely developed apart from Europe, with few points of cultural intersection. Cultural contact and the resulting development of common concepts between Europe and Ethiopia have been minimal, having occurred most notably in the period of time

since the development of European democratic institutions. Indeed, the most intensive contact between Europeans and Ethiopians since the Renaissance occurred during the brief interval of Italian conquest from 1936 to 1941, yet this interaction took place not under a European democracy, but under the fascism of Benito Mussolini.

As a result, democracy building efforts cannot assume that Ethiopians attach the same meaning to such concepts as elections and political parties as do Americans and Europeans. Indeed, the focus group discussions demonstrate the magnitude of the potential for misunderstanding and reveal a greater communication challenge than exists in South Africa or Latin America, for example. As a result, those who would help in the development of democracy in Ethiopia must be especially sensitive to linguistic barriers that go beyond just the difficulties of translating the concepts of democracy and result from different meanings being attached to the same words, even after translation.

The key will be to build a common language for talking about democratic institutions and procedures; this will require democracy-building efforts to go back to the basics and speak in terms of specific behaviors instead of broad concepts. For example, it is not enough to begin with party-building efforts: the education process must start with the act of voting, electoral procedures, and the reason for holding elections in the first place. Moreover, many participants believe they already have political parties, although these organizations are more liberation movements than alternative organizations representing different policy choices for

the country. In other words, political parties that stand for election, mobilize voters, and either govern or become the "loyal opposition" are part of an institutional infrastructure that has yet to be built in Ethiopia.

The focus groups do not tell us specifically how to talk about building democracy in Ethiopia, but they do issue an important warning that democracy building will require a carefully developed communications approach that does not make the usual assumptions about commonly understood concepts. The approach should not talk down to people, but should work to build a language of common understanding from the bottom up.

Ethnicity. The presence of several major large ethnic groups, including Oromos, Amharas, and Tigrays, creates an important challenge for developing democratic institutions on the national level. Indeed, in the final analysis, centrifugal may overcome centripetal forces, with ethnicity winning out over nationalism.

The role that democracy building can play in this drama lies in the development of democracy not as a method for the dominance of one ethnic group over the others, but as a means of conflict resolution among ethnic groups. Yet, as the focus groups indicate, Ethiopians currently do not see democracy as a means for conflict resolution.

Party building can also play an important role in this process. Ethnicity's potential for dominating politics lies in the development of political parties that simply represent ethnic differences, rather than parties that come to represent a variety of interests, each of which cuts across society in a different direction:

urban versus rural interests, upper- versus lower-class interests, and Muslim versus Christian religious interests. The central issue is the extent to which Ethiopian political parties will evolve from liberation movements into instruments through which various societal interests can find common ground, and in turn, develop policy alternatives around which coalitions of diverse constituencies can be built.

Political Culture. At root, democracy is a method by which those who are governed hold accountable those who govern. Hence, elections occupy center stage in a democracy, for they are the means by which the governed can "hire and fire" those who exercise political power; elections only work, however, through the participation of those who are governed.

The difficulty in Ethiopia is the paucity of cultural traditions in which mass participation is used to control the political elite through "participatory democracy." Instead, the focus groups demonstrate an acceptance of "passive democracy," in which the public relies on the political elite to provide rights and freedoms.

Passive democracy is demonstrated in the focus group discussions in several ways. For example, many participants say they approve of the changes the current government has brought to Ethiopia in the past few years, but they talk in terms of a government that leaves them alone, rather than a process in which they are participants. They mention ending the severe travel restrictions of the Mengistu regime and the reign of terror in which people were forcibly arrested and never seen again. The Mengistu government ranked among the world's worst

violators of human rights, so it is not surprising that Ethiopians talk about democracy in terms of human rights. However, these discussions are not accompanied by discussions of democratic procedures as a way in which the Ethiopian people can use the ballot box to defend their basic human rights. There is, in other words, a discussion of liberalization, but little discussion of using the institutions of participatory democracy to secure this liberty.

As a second example of passive democracy, participants in the focus groups held in rural communities talk primarily about government as a means by which they can obtain the seed, fertilizer, and electricity they need for growing the crops to feed themselves and their families. Yet, they do not talk about democratic elections as means by which they can hold government officials responsible and obtain government policies that would help provide the annual supplies of seed and fertilizer.

In other words, the focus group participants consistently talk about democracy not in terms of input, but in terms of output, and not in terms of their own participation, but in terms of what the government does to or for them. As a result, the single biggest challenge to democracy building in Ethiopia is the replacement of a passive political culture with a participatory political culture.

This is hardly a unique challenge. Indeed, the Peter D. Hart Research Associates' survey of young Americans age 15 to 24 demonstrates much the same problem. In "Democracy's Next Generation," we wrote, "The nation's youth clearly appreciate the democratic freedoms, [but] young people fail to grasp the other

half of the democratic equation: the responsibility to participate in the hard work of self-government." Much the same assessment could be made of the participants in our series of focus group discussions in Ethiopia.

The implication for the National Democratic Institute's program in Ethiopia is that it must focus on programs that help build civil society and engage the citizens in the political life of the country.

It is clear from our research findings that a great deal must be done to improve the climate for democratic elections. Four key recommendations emerge:

- **Civic organizations should fill the demonstrable need for a public information campaign that defines participatory democracy, democratic institutions of accountability, political parties, and democratic institutions for government decision making.**
- **Civic education programs should stress the process elements of democracy, such as the conduct of elections and the means by which the electorate can communicate its concerns to political leaders and parties, and should make use of interactive teaching techniques, such as simulations and role playing, to help people "practice democracy."**
- **Political party conferences should help provide assistance in the development of parties as vehicles for the political involvement of all segments of society and the mechanism by which to hold government officials accountable.**
- **Finally, structures must be found for increasing communication and interaction among the various political factions within the country, including political activists, so that the forces of unification through discovery of common interests can overcome the forces of fragmentation through ethnic conflict.**

Poverty. Notably absent from our list of the challenges facing democracy and party building in Ethiopia is the level of poverty in the country. We do not mean to say that poverty is not Ethiopia's most pressing problem, only that poverty is not in and of itself a major obstacle to the development of democratic institutions and procedures. Indeed, the alleviation of poverty can become one way of promoting democracy as a means by which societies can allocate scarce resources. The National Democratic Institute's program, in other words, should link democracy and party building with economic development and the process of consensus building on the most appropriate goals and economic strategies for the Ethiopian nation.

VI. Appendix

Participants in the Moderators' Training: February 19, 1994

Abraham Abede, A-bu-gi-da
Saile Selassie, A-bu-gi-da
Kabede Kejela, A-bu-gi-da

Jalal Abdel-Latif, Inter-Africa Group
Bedria Muhammed, Inter-Africa Group

Dr. Yacob Haile-Mariam, Ad Hoc Committee for Peace and Development

Ibrahim Idris, Ethiopian Human Rights and Peace Center
Daniel Wobesat, Ethiopian Human Rights and Peace Center

Steve Schwartz, U.S. Embassy

Tafari Wosen, WAAG Communications
Aster Habteab, WAAG Communications

Asegadech Beaine, Tigray Development Association

Ato Germaye, Society for the Advancement of Human Rights

Pablo Henderson, The Carter Center in Ethiopia

Shewan Gezau Khame, Action Professionals Association for Ethiopia
Selashi Tedessa, Action Professionals Association for Ethiopia

Amare Aregawi, Ethiopian News Agency

Fetlewerk Ketsela, Ethiopian Red Cross

Mairegu Bezabih, The Monitor

Jibril Abawari, Public Relations Department, Office of the Prime Minister

Laeke Mariam Demessie, *Ruh Magazine*

**FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE
ETHIOPIA
February 20, 1994**

i. Introduction (15 minutes)

A. Explanation of a focus group

1. A discussion.
2. No right or wrong answers; just ideas and opinions.
3. Be honest and just say what you think.
4. Feel free to disagree with people; I want you to tell me your own opinions, even if they are different from other people in the group.
5. Everyone should participate in the discussion because everyone's opinions and ideas are important.
6. If you want to volunteer an opinion, please raise your hand so I can call on you.

B. This is a nonpartisan project for research purposes.

C. The tape recorder's purpose is so that I can listen to it later and take notes.

D. Ron Lester is a visitor from the U.S. who is here to learn about Ethiopia, and the other person is going to translate for him when necessary.

E. Participant introductions.

ii. Priorities (15 minutes)

A. What are the most important problems facing you and your community?

B. Will the people in your community be better off or worse off or about the same five years from now? (Take a poll.)

C. What one change would do the most to make life better for people living in your community?

III. What is Democracy? (25 minutes)

- A. Go around the room and have people give a short answer. Then probe the responses. For example, if a person says something about freedom, ask them what freedom means and why it is important. Probe the limits of their support by asking challenging questions (i.e., "So people should be free to do whatever they want?"). Get them to give practical examples of the concepts they have mentioned.
- B. How would you know if there was a democracy? What would it look like?
- C. How would a democracy make your life different? What would be positive and negative?
- D. Note: if "elections," "human rights," or "rule of law" are not mentioned at all, mention them briefly at the end of the section to see if people think these concepts are important to a democracy.

IV. National Government (10 minutes)

- A. How do you know what's going on in national politics in Addis Abba?
- B. Does it make any difference to you what the government in Addis Abba does?
 - 1. What difference does it make?
 - 2. How does it affect you and how you live?

V. Decision-making, Fair Representation (15 minutes)

- A. How do you feel your concerns can best be heard in government?
- B. Who would do a better job making decisions about your community: local government or national government?
- C. Would you like to have people from your community with enough authority to make decisions, or should decisions be made in Addis Abba?

- D. If you were aware of a human rights violation in your community, would you talk to someone in government about it? Who would you talk to?

VI. Roles and Responsibilities in Democracies (15 minutes)

- A. What should be the responsibilities of the people you elect? What do they have to do?
1. What should candidates do when they are running for office and trying to get elected?
 2. What should they do once they are elected?
 3. In a democracy, what do people do if the person they have elected is not doing a good job?
- B. What are the responsibilities for someone like you in a democracy? What do people like you have to do to make democracy succeed?
1. Are there things--besides voting--that people should do in a democracy to affect decisions that are made by local and national governments?
 2. Are there ways for citizens to organize in order to influence what happens on the local level, the national level?
- C. What is the purpose of political parties in a democracy? What are they supposed to do in a democracy?
1. Are political parties supposed to do different things in a democracy than in other forms of government?
 2. Is it better to have one political party or several political parties? Why?

VII. Communication Media (15 minutes)

- A. What would be the best ways to teach people in your community more about democracy?
- B. What kinds of material would be most effective in explaining democratic ideas?
- C. Who in your community should be responsible for teaching people what democracy is? Who would you trust? Is it possible for people not in government to organize civic education meetings?

- D. Would the people you know be interested in learning more about democracy, or do you think they are too busy with other things?

VIII. Identities (10 minutes)

- A. Before we finish, I would like ask one final question. Does Ethiopia's ethnic diversity help or hurt its prospects for democracy?

SECTION TWO



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Ken Wollack, Jean Dunn, NDI Colleagues, Interested Persons

FROM: Ethiopia Team

DATE: March 15, 1994

RE: Trip Report-Ethiopia Focus Group Program

I. SUMMARY

From February 19 to 26, 1994, NDI conducted a focus group survey on the level of understanding among Ethiopians of the democratic process. Ron Lester, a polling consultant with Peter Hart Research Inc., Field Representatives Kevin Johnson and Steven Lutterbeck, and Program Assistant Benjamin Feit prepared and implemented the program.

Ten focus group sessions were conducted in four different administrative regions. A total of 100 Ethiopians participated representing a range of backgrounds including peasant farmers, urban unemployed youth, students, Moslem and Christian church leaders, town elders, and rural and urban women. A team of five trained moderators led the discussions under the guidance of Lester and NDI staff. The discussions followed a carefully planned outline of questions developed by Peter Hart Research Inc. in consultation with Ethiopian civic leaders and NDI staff in Washington and Ethiopia. The outline focussed on eliciting information from the discussants about how they understand democratic concepts, and it explored the possibility for improved citizen participation in democratic processes. NDI intends to use these findings to better target its civic education program.

II. PROGRAM GOALS

The objectives of this program were:

- to gather a range of opinions and ideas that will contribute to NDI's deeper understanding of what Ethiopians think and understand about democracy;
- to provide information to NDI and to Ethiopian civic organizations that can contribute to more effectively targeted civic education programs;
- to provide training for members of Ethiopian civic organizations in using the technique



of focus groups;

- to introduce the basic technique of focus groups to other relevant organizations, such as government agencies, news media and development organizations; and

- to prepare a report for general distribution, which can contribute to a greater understanding among Ethiopian political leaders of popular perceptions of democracy and also contribute to a greater awareness of the importance of researching public opinion in the democratic process.

III. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The program was implemented in the following steps:

1. Formulation of the Focus Group Outline

In order to focus the discussion and elicit appropriate information for the study, an outline was developed by Ron Lester and Fred Hartwig in consultation with NDI Washington and field staff. The outline served as a guideline within which the focus group discussion took place. The outline underwent repeated revisions and continued to be changed after the first few focus groups revealed some discussion questions to be effective and others ineffective.

2. Recruitment of moderators

Four Ethiopian moderators were selected to assist NDI in the research. Bedria Muhammed, a former journalist now working for the Inter-Africa Group, moderated three focus groups in the Oromo Region 4. Saile Selassie, Vice President of NDI's partner civic group A-Bu-Gi-Da, moderated three focus groups in the Amhara Region 3. Fetlewerk Ketsela, who has extensive experience in working with the Red Cross, moderated two groups in Tigray Region 1. Finally, the practice session in Addis Ababa was moderated by Dr. Yacob Haile Mariam, the president of the Ad Hoc Committee for Peace and Development.

In selecting the moderators, several factors were considered. First, it was necessary that the moderator speak the language in which the focus group was conducted as his or her mother tongue. Second, the political orientations of the moderators were varied so that, when taken together, their views would give balance to the program. Third, all chosen moderators work with non-governmental organizations that have expressed an interest and will find great use in using focus groups to gauge public opinion in the future.

3. Roundtable with Moderators and other interested individuals

The roundtable served to elicit reactions from the moderators and others regarding the draft outline. In addition, the meeting contributed to the overall transparency of the research by informing and involving interested parties of NDI's activities. The roundtable discussion was

productive and the quality of the outline was greatly improved as a direct result.

4. Advance Trips

Four advance trips were conducted. NDI staff and the moderator who would be leading the focus group for that particular site went on each trip. The moderator served as interpreter and facilitator for each trip.

NDI staff conducted advance trips to every town or village in which focus groups were held. At the field site, the same routine was followed in preparing for each group. The team met with the local government officials to let them know of NDI's research. Given the danger that the effort be perceived as governmentally controlled, NDI staff emphasized that officials remain supportively uninvolved. Focus group participants were generally recruited with the help of a local NGO operating in the area that had contact with people at the grassroots level. If such an NGO could not be found, participants were randomly selected. Venues ranging from bars to school houses for each focus group were also secured.

5. Moderator Training

To kick off the implementation of the focus group research the planned moderator training session was converted into a larger forum for training the moderators and for the other invitees to discuss the focus group technique in general. Apart from the four moderators, attending the roundtable discussion and presentation were roughly 25 journalists, civic organizers and government officials.

The agenda at the meeting included introductions given by Kevin Johnson and Ron Lester; Lester's explanation of the focus group technique and the differences between quantitative polling and qualitative polling; a general discussion and question period; the presentation of videotaped practice focus group sessions in Washington DC; and, finally, a practice focus group, using the discussion outline that was used to guide the following focus groups.

In many respects the moderator training forum was a great success. During this one-day session the NDI team was able to introduce focus groups to a number of individuals who may use the technique in the future. In addition, comments and suggestions were solicited about the focus group technique as applied to NDI's activities in general, and, more specifically, how to further improve the discussion outline. Given the indiscriminant labeling of groups as either pro-government or pro-opposition, a particular effort was made to invite a balanced group of participants thereby adding to the overall transparency of the research process. This inclusive approach should be beneficial to the program when the findings are released and discussed. The training session participant's names will be listed in the final report as people who contributed to the development of the research method and their association with the program should lend it credibility.

6. Focus Groups

In almost all respects the focus groups were easier to implement than expected, especially once letters were obtained from President Meles and the Executive Secretary of the National Election Board giving NDI the written authority to conduct the research. It was generally easier to recruit the groups than expected and also easier to get the participants to open up and talk.

Almost all of the people recruited during the advance trips attended the focus groups and most sessions took place roughly on schedule. Anticipating possible delays, extra time was built into the program, which perhaps could have been used to conduct one or two more groups.

7. Report Writing

The final report will be drafted by Peter Hart Research Associates Inc. The tape recordings of the focus group discussions will be fully transcribed and will provide the basis for writing the report. As outlined in the Peter Hart Research proposal to NDI, Ron Lester is responsible for analyzing the collected information and writing the report.

IV. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The task of evaluating the data and presenting a comprehensive report lies with Ron Lester and Fred Hartwig. Nonetheless, it may be useful at this point to note what seems to be some of the major findings of the program.

1. Most of the people appear to have a higher level of understanding of democracy than initially presumed. Almost every participant was conversant with at least some basic principles of democracy, yet felt there was a great need for teaching Ethiopians about democracy.

2. The overwhelming majority of participants defined democracy in terms of rights and freedoms. Very few people mentioned democratic process issues or showed familiarity with common democratic institutions - such as elections or representatives - without prompting.

3. The aspect of the democratic process about which familiarity is the lowest is the role and function of political parties, particularly opposition ones.

4. In addition to being unsure of the function of parties, some participants also expressed reservation about the value of open competition among political parties in Ethiopia.

5. Most people seemed to focus on a number of local concerns (the price of fertilizer, unemployment, the opportunity to build a mosque). They were mostly optimistic that these situations would improve in the next five years.

6. In addition to focussing on issues of the democratic process, civic education in Ethiopia should also explain the limited role of government. Many people seemed to over estimate the

role of government in addressing their daily problems.

7. Many people expressed concerns about lawlessness and about human rights abuses but knew of few outlets for expressions of these grievances and, in some cases, would have feared disclosing such abuses.

8. Most people seemed open to the idea of a federal government structure, although there was considerable uncertainty about how that structure is currently being implemented.

9. We found fewer regional differences than we had expected between the Amhara and Oromo regions, but significant differences between the Tigray and the Amhara and Oromo areas.

10. There was a high level of disillusionment among some groups toward the current government and the democratic transition it is leading. Many people indicated that the Transitional Government has promised democratic reforms for a long time without delivering on those promises.

11. People gave vague answers to questions about how civic education should be implemented. These answers, and data collected during other field trips, suggest that there is very little local level civic activity, (with the exception of that which exists in the Tigray region) which could be utilized to implement civic education.

12. Because of a much more personal involvement in the war and the liberation movement, Tigray is a region apart in terms of political orientation and awareness. Levels of volunteerism seemed far greater and apathy far lower.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

A. The Methodology of the Focus Groups

It is probably true that most research raises as many questions as it answers. The Ethiopia focus group program was no exception. Although much information was gained about many important issues, the program did not sufficiently address some pertinent questions. For example, it became evident what subjects should be included in civic education, but less so about how civic education should best be conducted. Also, questions about local versus national government and the possibilities for citizen participation in democracy yielded generally vague and confusing answers.

There were several reasons for this inability to acquire practical information on certain issues that would provide NDI with insights on how to better target the civic education program. First, the program was based on a broader, vaguer subject than the focus group program in South Africa. Querying how much people know about democracy - a very abstract subject - and how best to teach people about democratic concepts is naturally harder to focus than questions on specific topics, such as what people know about voting. Second, the outline was too long

and too ambitious precluding the possibility of exploring all questions in depth. For example, questions were included to delve into issues of federalism and ethnicity, which tended to distract attention from more central issues. Lastly, focus groups, as Lester had explained in the training session, are a qualitative method of conducting research - not quantitative. In other words, in qualitative analysis, researchers can only gain general impressions of public opinion concerning broad topics rather than hard data on specific questions. With more time, other areas of the country and a wider demographic range of participants could be surveyed in order to get a more complete picture of public opinion. Ten groups of 100 participants are far lower totals than in either the Mozambique or South Africa surveys. Given that Ethiopia is twice the size in population than either of these countries, more groups in other regions of the country could have been included in the survey that were excluded due to the limitations of Lester's schedule.

B. The Moderators

As Ron Lester pointed out, the moderators were extremely effective for the advance work - which included identifying participants, translating conversations and providing useful local contacts - but were not always good moderators. Because the moderators had their own ideas about civic education issues, they were not always willing to respond to Lester's instructions. Some of the problems with the moderators could have been avoided had more attention been focused on fully training them.

C. General Impressions on the Political Landscape

The focus group research was generally very well received both by the Ethiopian focus group discussants themselves and the local government officials. Within Addis Ababa and Washington DC, however, Ethiopians seemed at times suspicious and other times cynical that such a technique could be useful. This is understandable given that Ethiopia is a country just emerging from 17 years of repressive top-down rule. The very idea of asking Ethiopian citizens of their views - while seemingly a harmless exercise for Americans - is a big step for Ethiopia, particularly when the survey concerns politics. In Ethiopia, government has always been something citizens submit to, not an institution that can be directed and participated in.

There is a stark contrast between the view from the city and that from the interior of Ethiopia. Ethiopians in Washington DC and Addis Ababa seem to be politically polarized when in fact this may not be the case in the countryside. Thus, international support is met with substantial suspicion from the most vocal elements of Ethiopian society creating a stifling effect on projects that probably could move easily forward. Just as the reality of the situation in the Ethiopian countryside may be distorted by the Ethiopian community in Washington DC, so too is it distorted by residents of Addis Ababa.

Both the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopians themselves seemed to be more open to the focus group survey than NDI was lead to believe - both by the international community and Ethiopian leaders living in Washington DC and Addis Ababa - before the survey was initiated. In spite of fears that the current government represses dissent and other democratic

freedoms, the officials that were informed of NDI's activities were surprisingly helpful, unrestrictive and completely unintrusive. In addition, most of the Ethiopian civic and political leaders with whom NDI staff consulted felt it would be difficult for the participants to speak openly and honestly. Although there may have been some reticence among some participants, in general people were willing to talk and were eager to exercise this relatively new freedom. This fact argues for further use of focus groups and other survey techniques by news organizations, civic groups and political parties to provide a deeper understanding of popular attitudes and opinions.

VI. WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Largely, the success of the focus group program depends on what use is made of the findings. In some respects NDI Ethiopia is not as well placed as the South Africa or Mozambique projects to use the focus groups as a basis for major program decisions. The decision to delay the program - based in part on the Christmas retreat and on initial problems securing authorization - means that several steps had already been taken in the interim to develop a civic education program with A-Bu-Gi-Da. The focus groups will help in making adjustments to the program - such as emphasizing democratic process issues - but it will probably not lead to a major overhaul of the program.

Instead, the most useful results of the program may lie in other areas. First, the international community now knows that such a survey can be done. This is no small conclusion in a country where contrasting perceptions of the extent to which freedoms and repression exist confound both the international community and Ethiopians alike. Despite the reported atmosphere of suspicion and disbelief in "neutrality", NDI has shown that this kind of research can be conducted by any group presuming to speak for the Ethiopian people. Second, this survey has provided more conclusive evidence to add to the impression that the weakest link in Ethiopian democratization is political parties. There appears to be widespread misunderstanding about the role of parties as well as considerable suspicion of existing parties. These findings can help NDI convince people here that political party work is necessary, and will help NDI better tailor the program.

Before NDI proceeds to conduct work with political parties, however, it may be necessary to wait for a change in the current political stalemate between government and opposition forces. At this point, it could be detrimental to work with political parties when the only ones that are actively involved in the transition are EPRDF coalition members.

Another possibility for follow-on work could be conducting training of trainers workshops, an activity for which we are funded in the original budget. As NDI's contact with Ethiopians on the grass roots level continues to build, (both through the focus groups and the fundamentals of democracy presentations with A-Bu-Gi-Da) NDI is positioning itself to identify community leaders who are interested in civic organization and education. It would be extremely beneficial to bring in some of NDI's African or East European trainers for such an effort.

APPENDIX
SELECTED QUOTATIONS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

On problems and priorities:

"The people in our community are farmers and their annual yield is not enough for subsistence. People live in poverty. Farmers need fertilizers so that their annual yield would increase but they cannot afford to buy fertilizer."

"The farmers do not receive insecticide. Most of the farmers do not have oxen. There is no one who could protect our domestic animals from diseases."

"The land is occupied by the people who settled earlier while the population is growing. The youths who completed grade 12 are returning to our community to be farmers and demobilized soldiers returned to our community to farm too. There is not enough land to farm. There is nobody who is responsible for the equal distribution of land in our community."

"Drought is our major problem. Farmers cannot produce and, therefore, they cannot bring crops to the city."

"We have many socio-economic problems. Those who could produce were previously engaged in war. This combination of war and drought is the major problem."

"Famine"

On life after the fall of the Derg:

"Now there is no one who will send our children to the war front, because the Derg has been defeated. This makes us happy."

"The Derg government was stronger than the present one. Now anybody can kill anyone because there is no law and order."

"In the past, life was expensive because of the war. It is still expensive even after the war. With regard to peace we are in a better situation."

"The war has ended. Consequently, there is no one to force our children into the army. However, there are so many problems in our community. . . demobilized soldiers are jobless and farmers refuse to give them land."

"We are here discussing because we are free. Had it been earlier, we could not have come here together under a tree."

"In five years our life will be better. During the Derg, everyone was engaged in war. Everyone can work now that they are not fighting."

"Now that there is peace and democracy, we can begin the conservation of soil and water. We expect a good life."

On what is understood by democracy?

"It means the right to have a free forum where one can express any issue."

"Unlike the preceding government, the right for anybody to move from a place to another place without an identity card is respected. This is democracy."

"[The government] tells us there is democracy, but there is no one who gives security for the people. If this is democracy it is useless. We are not free to express our opinion."

"Democracy is when one is rewarded according to his labor."

"In democracy there must be justice."

"Respect for each other's rights. Otherwise, there will be conflicts."

"Democracy means freedom. What is freedom? It is the right to speech, live with a job, satisfying one's desire, etc. This is what I understand by democracy. But is democracy now reigning? This can only be answered by testing it."

"The term democracy is different from its practice. If the concepts of democracy are put into practice correctly there is no better form of government. But there is fear among the people now. People are worrying that one day they would be dismissed from their jobs. Our government has rights, not the people."

"Today, positive trends are observable towards the use of Oromo language for all practical purposes. They say that rights of Oromo are affirmed. Now it makes me happy when they say that Oromo is guaranteed the right to preserve its identity, promote its culture and history, and use and develop its language."

"I personally do not have any knowledge about democracy."

On democracy in Ethiopia:

"Now we are free to teach our religion in public."

"We started to practice democracy in Ethiopia for the first time. However, we should not compare the democracy in western countries and other African countries with ours. If one has the right to freedom of expression, work, elect and be elected there is democracy. The Muslim society is using these rights. Therefore I say there is democracy. Anyhow, the people in collaboration with the government must exert effort to develop the existing democracy."

"The public does not use [democracy] for it doesn't have any confidence in it. [The public] thinks that if it uses [democracy] and expresses it, they would be subjected to any form of action."

"There is full democracy in Ethiopia. Everyone fought for democracy. People can reject or support one organization over another."

On what type of government preferred by respondents:

"I prefer a government that would be democratically elected by the people."

"We wish that a government of Oromo peoples be established."

"I prefer to have a monarchy because it can administer the country in unity."

"I prefer a government that would be elected by the people and administer the people in unity."

"[The advantage of democracy is that] it gives me the right to elect someone who knows my language."

"It is very important to have multi-party democracy. If there is only one party, people will not have a choice. There must be competition among political parties."

On elections:

"An election is the right to vote for someone who is beneficial for you."

"If the last election had been free and fair, I would have been happy. If elections are put into practice correctly it is an important feature of democracy. Otherwise it is be a worthless word."

"People should elect candidates freely and fairly without any coercion or subjugation."

On minority rights:

"Since there is difference in knowledge, if the minority put forward an idea which would be useful for the people, it must be taken into account."

"The opinion of a minority should also be taken into account."

"If we take only the decision of a majority and neglect the opinion of a minority we will invite problems."

"There are regions in which different nationalities live. The indigenous people of some regions are suppressing the minority settlers. The central government must teach the indigenous people to respect the rights of the minorities. If the government does not do this, there will be problems."

On responsibilities of the citizen in a democracy:

"To elect a person who would serve the people properly. To work for the development of our country too."

"To struggle so that human rights are respected."

"To remove a person who did not serve us after getting elected and assuming office."

"I instruct children to behave well so that in the future we will not be blamed for any wrong doing."

"We elect a person who is just, who can solve our problems. If the person is irresponsible, we gather and carry out an evaluation."

On the purpose of political parties:

"To educate the people."

"We do not know what a political party is."

"As far as I understand, political parties are problem creators. They do not seem good to me."

"Political parties incited people against one another earlier. If they start to function in our community, our life will be messed up."

"Political organizations have divided the people ethnically. It is not bad to have political organizations based on ethnicity. "It is their policy which they promote in order to divide the people that should be condemned."

"Political parties can educate people through the mass media about different political opinions."

"I only see the need for one party."

On teaching about democracy:

"It would have been better to teach through the radio. But the people who have radio are few in number. Even if we have radio, it would be difficult to listen to it attentively because we have to work for our daily bread."

"Let the government teach."

"Let the political organization teach in the language of the people."

"I oppose the involvement of the political organizations in teaching about democracy. They are only running for power. They are the ones who create problems among the people."

"Let the educated ones go to the rural area and teach about democracy."

"Let the nonpolitical organizations and nonpartisan organizations teach about democracy."

"The woreda or kebele leaders can organize the people and teach them through basic education."

"If they [independent political organizations] are truly neutral, the people will accept them."

On access to information:

"We receive information from the radio."

"We also receive information from kebeles as they gather us to orient us about the directives from government."

"We know that when there are government directives our kebele association chiefs would bring it for us."

"If there is a demonstration, say of seven men, the mass media will say it was of 700 people."

On responsibilities of elected officials:

"Once [the official] has assumed office, he has to see and investigate applications and appeals."

"The people who are elected must serve the people who elected them. They have to identify the problems of our community and find solutions."

"We expect them to hold to their agendas and duties."

"They have to improve the conditions of the people and the country."



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