

Report on the Fire Acts in Mekelle March 2017

During my first stay in Mekelle at the end of 2015, I visited the fire department and found a striking lack of equipment. Both the personal protective equipment and the fire-fighting equipment were almost zero. Only the one emergency vehicle was very good, for Ethiopian conditions.

The first donation consisted of hoses, deviders, jet pipes, protective helmets and gloves. Meanwhile, the airport fire brigade had passed on their used protective clothing to their colleagues, but only for five people. That means the shoes and the jackets / pants they have to share. But still better than before with t-shirt/undershirt and rubber sandals.

On my second visit in April 2016, the material was loaded on the vehicle and an orderly fire extinguish attack was trained with the new material. From now on, they had the first opportunity to do their job as a fire brigade. Since they still had no respiratory protection, an internal attack and the direct control of a fire were still impossible.

At the end of 2016, I visited a conference of the Hamburg Fire Brigade, where fire brigades met with partnerships in “third world countries” to exchange their experiences. There I got in contact with colleagues, who still had 10 breathing apparatus (BA) in their stock, which they gave me free of charge.

At the same time, I looked around for a much needed ladder since Mekelle is now being built up to the 18th floor and the fire brigade did not even have a portable ladder to get into the first or second floor.

By a fortunate coincidence, I found a special vehicle, which was made for Ethiopia. Very high ground clearance, simple technology without on-board computer and by the combination articulated mast with attached ladder a very robust and powerful device with a rescue basket loading of 400kg. German turntables have a max. load of 270 Kg. At the age of 30, the ladder was no longer the youngest, but only 32td km on the speedometer and the care state suggested that the ladder which was at the Robert Bosch factory fire service probably never had seen a real fire.

The vehicle was more like a new car than a vintage car - thanks to the good care of the factory fire brigade.



On my third and last visit in March 2017, I was training the staff parallel on two fronts. The shift leaders and machinists were trained on the ladder while the crew had to get used to handling the BA. Surprisingly, both groups had relatively quickly entered their new task and had a lot of fun with the training. For their life they may have known to the fact that such a technique exists, but adaptation to both, the height in the basket, as well as the struggle with the BA was quickly overcome.

Apart from a few personal protective equipments which are missing, the fire brigade Mekelle made a true quantum leap into the 21st century in only 12 months - thanks to Etiopia-Witten e.V.

From now on, colleagues have to learn to train and refine the material and the tactics. In the future, they will be supported by colleagues from the local airport fire brigade who are familiar with their material through daily drillings.



The second task is structural fire protection and preventive fire protection. These two areas must be linked with the fire brigade by the city administration. Here, too, Etiopia-Witten took the first step with the urban planer Olaf Greve to initiate this important collaboration. Exemplary reference projects in the area of hotel and industrial construction are available and must only be included in the local construction guidelines.

Overall, the city administration is aware of the urgency of the problems and they are very grateful for the help given by Etiopia-Witten e.V..

The future activities will focus on advanced training in defensive fire protection and the linking of the fire brigade with the city administration in order to ensure that the security standard in the fast-growing city grows adequately and that life in such a large city will become safer in the future.



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