



Uppsala, juni 2006

## **INBIDA!**

**=VAKNA!**

-nyhetsbrev från föreningen Afarvännen i Sverige  
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### STYRELSEN HAR ORDET

*Kära kamrater,*

*Det har varit mycket händelserika två år. Det började med att fem medlemmar vid årsskiftet 2004/2005 besökte Djibouti och Etiopien, där de deltog i en utvecklingskonferens anordnad av vår systerorganisation APDA. I samband med konferensen förstärktes ytterligare vårt samarbete med föreningarna APDA, UDC och Atu Yoo Fan. Rapporten från denna resa samt resultat från konferensen finns på vår hemsida: [www.afarfriends.org](http://www.afarfriends.org)*

*Därefter, i månadsskiftet april/maj 2005, kom en grupp dansare och sångare från våra systerorganisationer i Djibouti, ATU YOO FAN och UDC, på besök. Denna grupp framträdde i Uppsala, Enköping, Stockholm och Nyköping. Den afariska kulturgruppens uppträdande uppmärksammades mycket av både svenskar och invandrare med rötter på Afrikas Horn. En fullständig rapport av detta fina besök finns tillgänglig på hemsidan.*

*Efter den välförtjänta sommarsemestern började en höst med mycket aktiviteter. Afarvännen i Sveriges egen dansgrupp kom till stånd, som hade fått hårdträning vid Djiboutibesöket. Gruppen gjorde sitt första framträdande på Kulturnatten i Uppsala den 10 september 2005 i två omgångar, först på Kulturhuset och sedan på Stora torget. Gruppen blev snabbt populär och många i publiken ringde och skrev mejl till oss dagen efter för att berätta hur bra dansuppvisningarna var. Det är roligt att få en sådan respons! Det ger oss också energi att vålladdade kasta oss över de nya uppdrag som väntar.*

*Sommaren 2005 blev vi kontaktade av National Geographic Magazine, som höll på att skriva en artikel om afarfolket i sitt oktobernummer. De behövde hjälp med att översätta vissa afariska ord och uttryck till engelska, men vi upptäckte genast att artikeln var full av fördomar om afarerna och därför bad vi dem rätta till felen innan vi gick in i översättningsarbetet. De godtog detta och det är både glädjande och fascinerande att vi har kunnat påverka.*

**Styrelsen har jobbat mycket med att starta olika cirklar i samarbete med ABF i Uppsala län och med att söka projektmedel hos Forum Syd för Afarvännernas första egna projekt, som vi kommer att bedriva tillsammans med UDC i Djibouti. Projektet går ut på att informera boskapsskötande afarer som lever längs transportkorridoren mellan Djibouti och Addis Abeba om Hiv/Aids. Information om detta projekt hittar Du också på vår hemsida.**

**I februari 2006 åkte en grupp bestående av tre personer (Hamad Issa, Peder Thagesson och Åke Söderling) på en ABF-förstudieresa till Djibouti för att diskutera en eventuell start av ett folkbildningsprojekt med Atu Yoo Fan och UDC som samarbetspartner. Gruppen besökte också olika delar av den afariska landsbygden i Djibouti och Etiopien, där man fick ta del av den humanitära situationen för de afariska boskapsskötarna. En mycket informationsrik rapport från denna resa finns också att läsa på hemsidan.**

**Valerie Browning, koordinator för APDA, besökte i månadsskiftet april/maj Norge (där hon deltog i en verksamhetskonferens anordnad av norska utvecklingsfonden) och Sverige, där hon tillsammans med Afarvänner i Sverige och PTPS hade möten med olika arbetskontakter.**

**Det här numret av INBIDA innehåller exklusivt en intervju med Valerie Browning. Intervjun gjordes av föreningens sekreterare, Karolina Danielsson. Vi önskar Er god läsning då intervjun är både informativ och gripande.**

#### **VERKSAMHETSPLAN**

Föreningen **Afarvänner i Sverige**, som har som mål att hjälpa Afarfolket på Afrikas horn, dvs. länderna Djibouti, Eritrea och Etiopien, lämnar följande verksamhetsplan:

**Information i Sverige:** Föreningen kommer att fortsätta arbeta offensivt med att informera den svenska allmänheten om den rådande situationen i afartriangeln på Afrikas horn.

**Utvecklingsarbete på Afrikas horn:** Föreningen kommer att få till stånd ett projekt för kooperativ utveckling i samarbete med APDA i Etiopien. I Djibouti fortsätter föreningen att arbeta intensivt med HIV/Aids-projekt, som kommer igång under maj månad.



#### **Maalika – Valerie Browning berättar**

Den 31 april till 4 maj hade Afarvänner i Sverige besök av Valerie Browning, för afarerna även känd under namnet Maalika. Jag träffade henne hemma hos Hamad Issa och Meriam Mussa, där hon öppenlydigt berättade om afarernas och sitt eget liv i Etiopien – hon berättade om de afariska kvinnornas vardag, om de svårigheter som

möter dem, liksom om de hinder och möjligheter som finns för det afariska folkets utveckling och överlevnad i stort.

Jag frågade henne om kvinnornas situation och hon beskrev analfabetismen som det värsta hindret för en positiv utveckling. "Analfabetismen berövar människor makten över sina liv", säger hon. Kvinnor (och män) som inte får lära sig läsa och skriva blir låsta i sitt tänkande, de relaterar till det förflutna och gör som de lärt av sina förfäder. Det blir svårt att tänka nytt och klara sig i den nya världen.



Valerie visar en affisch som används för att informera om analfabetism

Torkan gör dessutom att många män lämnar sina fruar ensamma under långa perioder, när de måste ge sig av för att söka bättre bete åt djuren. Männerna kan vara borta 1-2 år och kommer då i kontakt med en stadskultur som tidigare varit okänd för dem. De faller alltför ofta för dess negativa ytringar – alkohol, khat och prostituerade – vilket i sin tur gör att hiv/aids snabbt kan spridas. Detta får förödande konsekvenser också för kvinnorna som dels måste klara sig själva långa perioder med ansvar för barnen, dels utsätts för risken att deras män kommer hem och infekterar dem med hiv/aids. Tidigare var mjölk och kött viktiga delar av kvinnornas liv, de hade rikligt med mat och klarade sina graviditeter och orkade sköta hushållen, men så är det inte längre, säger Maalika. Barnen som föds är små som råttor. Och ett helt hushåll kan tvingas dela på en kopp mjölk om dagen.

Hon beskriver glädjande nog en positiv trend när det gäller bruket av kvinnlig könsstympning (FGM – female genital mutilation). Kvinnliga fältarbetare söker upp kvinnor i alla områden där FGM fortfarande praktiseras. En film har gjorts som informerar om FGMs skadliga verkningar och ett två-dagars seminarium ska hållas med muslimska ledare som informerar om att FGM inte har med islam att göra. Anledningen till att FGM fortfarande praktiseras, säger Valerie, är att kvinnorna gör vad de kan för att behaga mannen och för att bära upp klanen, och då är det viktigt med jungfrudom. Det finns en föreställning om att FGM minskar den sexuella lusten hos kvinnan, vilket är fel, säger Valerie, eftersom den inte sitter i de yttre könsdelarna utan beror på hormonerna som produceras i äggstockarna. Följden blir i stället att den sexuella akten blir så plågsam rent fysiskt för kvinnan att mannen måste bråka sig till den, vilket ökar risken att de i stället väljer att gå till prostituerade flickor från höglandet som inte utsätts för FGM.

Att själva ingreppet ökar spridningen av hiv/aids tror inte Maalika på. Även om man använder samma kniv på flera flickor hinner viruset dö mellan varven. Även om det skulle finnas blod kvar på kniven, har viruset hunnit dö innan den används på nästa flicka. Det tar alltid mer än fem minuter mellan flickorna, säger Valerie, och berättar att det behövs flera kvinnor som håller fast flickan under ingreppet eftersom hon självklart slåss och sparkar omkring sig. Det är ingen löpande-band-verksamhet, säger hon lakoniskt.

### **En afarkvinnas vardag beskriver Valerie så här:**

Hon går upp innan soluppgången. Kvällen innan har man bestämt vem som gör vad – vem som ska hämta vatten, vem som ska samla ved och vem som ska valla getterna, kanske ett barn eller en äldre kvinna. Man arbetar tillsammans, två eller tre hushåll. Barnen och kvinnorna arbetar ihop. Männerna går till marknaden eller vallar de större djuren långt från hemmet. Så lagar kvinnorna mat, maler gryn mellan två stenar – det tar tre timmar! Brödet slängs fast på flata stenar i ett ½-metersdjupt cylinderformat hål i marken som man värmt upp genom att elda i botten. Man täcker för, och det ojästa brödet blir klart på 10 minuter. Detta görs ett par gånger om dagen. Finns det mjölk kan man skaka den i djurskinn för att göra smör. Man mjölkar först ner den i en behållare flätad av palmblad. Till tallrikar används också palmblad. Övrig utrustning kan för ett hushåll bestå av totalt en kopp, en kastrull och en tekokare. Kvinnorna arbetar ständigt medan de pratar och umgås, till exempel väver de mattor till hyddorna.

### **Nedan följer en avskrift av del av intervjun med Valeries/Maalika.**

#### ***-What is your worst experience ever?***

*-I've had lots. I have had frightening experiences. I don't know if I can label one as the worst experience. Well, I've delivered a baby, where the mother died, that is horrible if you're a midwife. That's the worst. The baby, it was alive and the mother was so anaemic she started frothing and spitting fresh blood out of her mouth, I've seen that. I've seen plenty of people die in conditions which, in the West, is not accepted. I mean people don't die like that in the West any more. I've been shot at by the military during the war, it was frightening. The bullet went through here (makes a gesture to her hair) but it didn't go through my skull. People have tried to arrest me. They didn't get me, for various reasons. I've run in war with my child on my back. In the Djibouti war, that was the last war....the French reconnaissance flights came up the coast of Djibouti. The Djibouti resistance had almost taken Djibouti, had almost got Djibouti into resistance hands all the way up to Djibouti City. Well, somehow the issue was sold out to the French hands and the French fliers were flying over where the resistance parties were – two or three boys – holding one hill, very clever, and they were telling the Djibouti military "only two boys here, you know, get in and kill them, clean it up and come back", and I saw them coming up the coast, up the coast. We were in Kor Angar, and I was there with my child, and me, with all the town, we ran.... on my back, leaving all my property behind - what property?! – and run, run, run until you get to Ethiopia.*

#### ***-How far did you run?***

*- How far? We were running through the night, several hours. That was frightening. What else do I know? Plenty, I don't know which one to point to but in a sense when I try to remember back, western society, how the West is, you have almost security, so*

*that life is predictable, is that right? Yes, yes, you know roughly what you're doing even in a month's time. Life is utterly unpredictable with us, death is unpredictable, disease is unpredictable, I've just spoke to my husband about one of the boys of ours who died after I left Addis, but people die so young so fast.*

**-Was it sickness?**

*-Oh yes, he was sick. If he was in the West he wouldn't die like that. He was too young to die like that. And, life expectancy is much, much lower, people suffer enormously and accept suffering, western people don't. They don't even accept it when they're old. Wherever you go there is utter injustice, utter injustice, and, in the end of the day, the West has put on countries like Ethiopia what it cannot achieve, what – it's unachievable, democracy! – what are you talking about?! It is mad. But you still... well we have to be positive. Life is good. God is good. And well, for me, I have a very strong belief in God and I have a strong belief in the protection of life. Well, western people say this is fairy stories, uneducated mythology, I am absolutely sure this is wrong. Because if it wasn't wrong, I couldn't do what I do.*

**-But if God is there, why is there this injustice?**

*-I think that you know that humanity is rotten, rotten to the core, a whole lot of selfish buggers, the lot of us, basically. I think that God is incredibly loving and incredibly merciful if he doesn't kill us all out, blot us all out, because we have all done exactly what he's told us not to do, like naughty children, exactly what he told us not to do, and we keep doing it persistently. But, I think the one thing that I've learnt, which you and my sisters and my brothers have not yet had a chance to learn, maybe they will in their life, I don't know, is what I think is an incredible honour as a western person – I know precisely what is poverty. I've lived with it.*

*I married an Afar man, a man who was an African, who, as an African, himself in poverty, not rich. We lived on nothing the first years because they wouldn't employ, he couldn't be employed, and they wouldn't employ me because I was an Afar wife. Yet I worked in the hospital, hoping at one point that they would get the idea and give me a salary. I went through pregnancy with pneumonia coughing up puss, puss, puss all the way and then when I delivered my child she was pronounced dead, she didn't breath for five minutes, she was born two kilos, she quickly went down to 1.5 kilos, she's fifteen now and that for me is a total miracle, they couldn't get the child out, she was by caesarean, they slit me, cut me, but all the fluid had run out of me, it was like a vacuum inside, they couldn't open the cut and the stupid Egyptian doctor operating on me didn't know what to do, and the nurses around said "oh no, the child is dead, now the mother is going to die" so they rushed to get an ambulance to get a second doctor to help him, and when the second doctor came, he saw me, he knew me, he didn't even put gloves on, he didn't even wash his hands, he just slit me up the other way. He said "my god" grabbed the child out, and by this time all my other friends had phoned up these French anaesthesiologists who, when they saw this completely "goo" zero baby, they worked and worked and worked and worked on her until she breathed again, pumping her heart with tubes down her throat and whatever. Otherwise, dead baby, dead baby, and I was close to death, my husband had sent for the death clothes to wrap her up and they had been told also that they should get death clothes for me.*

*So, I mean, we've lived through that, and after that, I mean, I was badly chocked. They had left me open for three hours on the table, so they pumped me through with all these terrible antibiotics, you know, rotten antibiotics, very, you know, knock you stupid, and I could hardly recognize myself, let alone the baby, and, eventually, I came too, and I went into this frenzy, I was the child's nurse. I wasn't the child's*

*mother in my mind. I had terrible post-natal depression for three months, four months, I nearly went crazy because I was so worried about this child. I was alone without my people. I wrote my family, we told my mother the child was born and she went "oh, how lovely, I dreamt you had a baby girl", she says, "How lovely! I'm sure she's gorgeous and you're playing with her." Ah, didereedee... Oh, I said, if only I could tell her how worried I am, I'm not sleeping, I'm looking on how much urine she's passed, I'm weighing the nappies as a nurse thinking "is her kidneys working or not working?" I'm checking her neurological responses because her brain must be dead by now, and thinking, I had this screen chart, you know, "what is her screaming like? Is it high pitched?" Didididi, I was mad, I was going crazy, I kept saying to my husband, "I have to talk to somebody about this, I don't know what to do." I eventually said to him "Look, I'm tired of this baby, could you tell the mother to take it back." He said "Look, you're the mother, look at your stomach, split, you've got to keep this child." I said "No, no, I can't, I can't take it any more. I can't take this responsibility. No way!" I was nearly nuts.*

*Yeah, life goes on, to work again. I only had a maternity leave and I had to go back because I didn't have a salary and I was hoping for a salary! (laughing) So, I had to go back and still keep working. So, I took the baby with me, and my job was delivering mothers and I was, you know, the woman would scream in labour and I'd yell out to the baby, shut up, come on, woman, quickly, push, push, push to get this baby out, I've got to breast feed my baby, running between breast feeding and delivering babies. What a mess, what a mess. And then running home and finding a house full of Afar men, and hew! Those first years were very, very hard, I could have walked out, I tried.*

***-For how long have you been married?***

*- Eighteen years..... Yup! Still in there! In that sense it's easy for me, in a sense, I mean not easy, but I can relate directly to those women and their problems, I've lived through it, I know the Afar household, my husband, even recently, he said to me, "oh, no we don't think like that, that's European thinking." I said "What? What? What?" I said, "Are we a little more compromising." "No, no, no, no, no, we're in an Afar household here", he says. Meaning, I mean, some people say with some sort of idealistic way "oh, how nice to be married into another culture." I say, "What a pain in the neck! Don't give me that." Joking!*

*The point is you've got two rationales, two ways of thinking, two ways of approaching things, two ways – everything, you know. And somebody in this relationship has got to make the compromise some way. I've met people, and I've met plenty of people because I've gone around in UN offices and stuff, and I met them all over the place, UNICEF and all sorts of places. People who are married to West Africans, to East Africans, to somebody, well, even to Ethiopians. They say "oh, no no no it's no problem for me, you know, couple of months in France, two months in Ethiopia and then we're in Geneva" and I think to myself "my dear friend, you are no more an Ethiopian than flying to the moon", life is very protected for these people, they're on their western contract, UNICEF or the World Bank or they could be working for an embassy with their African husband or wife living by these contracts. They have a very high house where they don't even see the local people, they have guards on the door, they have cleaners in the house, you know, somebody is driving the children to the school in a protected taxi, they never go to the super market, or the shop, you know, somebody else is going and getting the food, and they get most of the stuff they want over the internet, you know, European life style, basically. European protection, insurance, ladila, ladila.*

*I mean if you look at us, I mean, what type of insurance policy have we got? Well, nothing, nothing! Not even heard of in our society. If I ask my husband for that he'd say "I beg your pardon? What are you talking about now? What's hit you today?" Well, this doesn't work. And even a bank account doesn't exactly work because money is for the community. I once said to him, foolishly, this was when my brain was not feeling very well, wanting a break, I said that "Ismail, if we ever, I mean, we haven't, but if just imagine, we got money, just imagine, somehow, what would you do with it?" He said, "What sort of question is that?" I said "Well, I just want to know what's in your mind. Are you planning for your daughter's university or something? You know, what are you going to do?" He said, "Oh, there's Afar around here isn't there! The money will be spent. If it arrives, it's already spent. We know. So don't even think about that."*

*So you live in this sort of communal life where somebody knocks on the door and says "Hello, is this an Afar house?" and if I say yes, in walks one Afar. He might say, "Look I've come on a long journey", and I've got to feed him, and must give him a bed, and I must give him what he needs until he leaves. I must give him his transport on and whatever. If I can't, I must ring another Afar and say, you know, "I've got this person in my house and he's got these problems". We have to do all problems internal to the Afar society. They're not supposed to ask anybody external, so we are supposed to be totally self-supporting. So, I mean it's a bit like that. It's a totally different concept to the European concept where you are an individual, aren't you, and, if you marry, you might choose to have a joint bank-account or choose to have an individual bank account, you can choose to do as you please. I'm under the clan as an afar woman. And if I do anything the clan will watch me. And if anything happens to me, I'm protected by the clan.*

***-What are your rights as a woman?***

*-My rights are to be part of Afar society, I suppose.*

***-Is there no problem with you working?***

*-Oh, no, no, no, no. The Afar totally accept that, and they are very funny. I once, there is a thing called Afar Mablo – or judgement – and a couple of times they have asked me to get into it and to talk, and I say "I can't, I'm not a man, what do you think I am? I'm not going to get into this. Don't put me in a trap like this." And one old man said, "Listen, don't upset yourself, we don't see you as a man, that's sure, but we don't always see you as a woman either." I said, "Well then, let's get this straight, what am I? He said, "I don't know. So, don't embarrass yourself, get in the discussion", he said.*

***-Why are you called Maalika, not Valerie?***

*-Valerie doesn't work because "v" is impossible in afar, we don't have a "v"-sound, I mean, I don't know Swedish or Scandinavian countries but you have some things that is not in English, isn't it? They have a "ca", "qa" and a "xa", which is not in English. So they can't say Valerie. And it doesn't mean anything, I mean, all names mean something, so it doesn't mean anything to them, it's a useless name to them. So some old man gave me this name I keep, I mean the Afar know me by this name, it's, I mean, I don't care what they call me.*

*But now on the reverse, I mean, I don't know, I mean, nobody knows, their future, their destiny, but I assume I'll die in Ethiopia, and I don't ever think of going back to the West to live, I don't think I could. I mean maybe that's being lazy, maybe I could push myself and adapt myself back to the West, but I think I would be always angry*

*and always having a fight with, what do you call him, John Howard, the prime minister of Australia, that idiot, and their policies are mad.*

***-Your daughter, does she have Australian citizenship?***

*-Yes, I get it for her, because I've travelled three times with her to Australia.*

***-Does she have any wishes to..?***

*-Oh, she has a lot! She'd love to see the world backwards. She would have come with me right now if she'd had the opportunity, her passport is just about out, and I'm, my husband said to me on the phone this morning "I hope you haven't forgotten your daughter's passport." It's nearly expired. She couldn't have travelled on that.*

***-Is she going to school?***

*-She is going to school in Addis. She's somehow, well, she is like any teenager, they jump in their brain from what they want to be, I mean, she jumps all the time, she wants to be an entertainer, she wants to be a singing doctor, and the latest is she'd like to be a journalist. She is a very up-front girl; she'll make her way through life.*

*I've probably painted things in a very negative way, but I stay and I work and I get my energy from the positive things that do happen. They are very committed people these field workers, they do some incredible things to change the situation in the households and get people moving. I mean, they're amazing. And I think, for example, this FGM will stop in Afar and I think now people are determined to see it stop. There are a growing number of people who see it as abhorrent, as the most terrible thing, I mean worse than the crime of killing, because the girl is deformed all her life, she lives by fear and pain. This is Afar people, the people working with us, and they are working very very hard to make sure that this thing gets stamped out of the society.*

*And again, it's another very energetic group of people working about, I mean, working with this issue of hiv/aids, that we don't just, without thinking, make relations in town or make relation outside marriage. That we should think about this one because, I mean, if it's a consequence that perhaps the man, his wife and his children are infected, this is awful, he could be infected by any number of diseases, this is possible, so the problem with this wretched HIV is that it affects the wife and maybe the unborn child, and leaves all their children without their parents, awful! This is the problem!*



Efter intervjun väntade fler möten för Valerie. Afarvänner hade ett digert program för henne under besöket Sverige. Hon träffade flera biståndsorganisationer och andra samarbetspartners för möjliga framtida projekt för en positiv utveckling i afarområdet.

