



ETHIOPIA

Serving Ethiopia's Christians

Sahle Tilahun, manager of Globe Publishing, meets the challenges of increased demand for Christian products.

Globe Publishing began in 1957 in Ambo, Ethiopia as an effort of Baptist General Conference Mission. Four years later, in 1961, the organization moved to Addis Ababa to achieve greater distribution.

In 1977, Ethiopia's parliament was dissolved, the constitution suspended, and the country declared a socialist state. A communist regime was established in 1984. Under its rule, Globe was not permitted to publish Christian literature, but operated in secret,

mimeographing literature at great risk. Globe was supported by the Baptist General Conference Ethiopian Evangelical Churches.

In the early 1990's, Globe was again permitted to legally publish Christian literature. Today, it is a self-supporting organization. "As a ministry," says Sahle Tilahun, manager, "Globe Publishing is driven to serve our Lord by supporting his church in Ethiopia."

Globe's main focus is the publication of children's Sunday school materials, teacher's manuals, and Theological Education by Extension (TEE) materials. Globe also publishes tracts, devotionals, and marriage and hymn books. Its target market is the evangelical church, but Orthodox and

Catholic believers also purchase product. Globe publishes Christian resources in the Amharic, Oromo and Qubee languages, three of over 70 languages spoken within Ethiopia.

Globe employs ten staff members, of whom six are directly involved in publishing. Though most have no formal training in publishing, their vision and hard work for the Ethiopian church is paying off.

Each year Globe reprints about 25 of the 90 titles on its backlist. Although no new titles were issued last year, Globe plans to publish three new titles this year and the next. Its average print run per title is fast approaching 4,000 copies. Globe also sells a few titles from other publishers.

Sales for titles increased almost 100 percent from 1998 to 1999. Tilahun expects to double sales again this year, up from 53,000 units last year. Despite the demand for Globe resources, "... there is increased competition and the tendency is to drive book prices down," says Tilahun. "At the same time, costs for raw materials and services available in Addis Ababa are increasing almost daily."

Paper costs are high, as is the case in other African countries. Pricing for survival and for profit is a special concern. Tilahun notes the unit price of Globe's books is very inexpensive, "so that we can distribute more books and serve many evangelical churches in the country. Though competition is not the focus of Globe Publishing House," adds Tilahun, "it is a factor for our future. If we fail to be competitive, the local evangelical church will not buy our products. Today, we have no effective means of going to the customer, physically or through advertising, so we must rely on the customer coming to us." ❖

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians comprise 35-40 percent of the country's population.

