



# Our dream: a public library in Ethiopia

By Jean Bailey

**An offer to give a friend a lift to Colindale underground station in 1991 was the beginning of the realisation of a dream. Here I met my late husband, Aysanew. We were from two different countries, two different religions and cultures, yet we had in common a passion for many things and ideas.**

Political involvement in the 1970s Ethiopian turmoil and terrors, horrendous torture in prison, followed by work as a lawyer in Ethiopia, other African countries and Switzerland, all shaped Aysanew. Our passion for the pursuit of social change was the glue that united us. We believed that this could best be achieved through education, especially for girls and high achievers who drop out from school through poverty.

## **Vision plus action**

This was the beginning of the Azezo education project and the realisation of our dream. By the time of Aysanew's death the project supported 20 students in universities across Ethiopia. This was the challenge I accepted. In the words of Nelson Mandela: "A vision with action is merely dreaming. Action without a vision is just passing the time of day. But with a vision and actions you can change the world."

St. Mary's Catholic Church, East Finchley, Justice and Peace group has adopted the Aysanew Kassa trust as their overseas charity for 2010. The aim this year is to build a public library in Azezo. The nearest similar facility is 10km away and transport is expensive.

It will provide a safe, quiet place for children, especially

girls, to study and access books, and also space for older people as an alternative to poor mud houses and bars. There are no other public amenities in the town. The whole Azezo community is excited about this project; the design and much of the labour are being undertaken freely.

*If you can help it would make a huge difference to the people and their hope for a public library.*