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## PAKISTAN

Combined, domestic causes and global trends result in perfect storm

## WORLD BANK

Why and how the research department can do better

## AFRICA

Independence leaders failed to end colonial authoritarianism



# Migrants and refugees

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### FOCUS

## Migrants and refugees

People have always left the places where they grew up. Some hope to make more money – or at least find decent employment. Others must flee violence or suffer marginalisation for political, religious or other reasons. Ethnic and sexual identity matter too. Though migration is nothing new, global rules on the matter are insufficient. The international community needs more welcoming cultures – and fewer bureaucratic restrictions.

**Title:** A young woman from El Salvador training to become an old people's nurse in Thuringia.

**Photo:** picture-alliance/dpa/Martin Schutt





**Our focus section on migrants and refugees starts on page 20. It pertains to the UN's 10<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Reduce inequality within and among countries. It also has a bearing on other SDGs.**

grants. Perhaps it matters that these immigrants slaughtered the indigenous people in genocidal action.

According to market-liberal theory, four freedoms are important: free traffic of goods, services, capital and persons. The international community lacks competent rules for the fourth of these freedoms. In particular, high-income countries must make immigration easier and trim down useless and bloated bureaucratic procedures. It bears repetition that strict border closures breach human-rights principles.

Reducing inequality within and among countries is number 10 among the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs). The agenda explicitly spells out that orderly, safe, regular and responsible mobility must be made easier.

Everybody must have the right to belong to somewhere of their choice. And that somewhere must stay inhabitable, be peaceful and offer opportunities of prosperity to all residents. Where a person chooses to stay, he or she must enjoy equal rights and not have reason to fear discrimination.

## The right to belong somewhere

Everybody should be free to stay where they want to stay. This simple sentence refers to a complex reality. Throughout history, human beings have not necessarily stayed where they were born or raised. People have always tried to escape from war and disaster as well as from persecution for political, religious or other reasons. Wherever human rights are abused, people have ample reason to flee. In our times, moreover, the climate crisis is making an increasing number of places uninhabitable.

People also migrate to earn more money somewhere else or to at least find a job. Young people study in foreign countries, and some stay there.

According to international law, fleeing is the kind of migration that serves survival. This definition is not crystal clear however. Does it apply to the young Kenyan woman who works as a household help in Oman and sends money home to ensure her family's survival? Does it apply to the young Afghan woman who would like to go to university, but can only do so by risking her life and disguising as a male student in her home country? Or does it only apply to the Ukrainian woman whose country is being ravaged by Russian soldiers?

Migration itself can be life-threatening. In the hope of a dignified life, people try to cross the Mediterranean Sea in tiny boats. Others travel by foot through the jungles of Central America or Southeast Asia.

According to right-wing populists, high-income countries are at risk of being overwhelmed. In truth, it is countries like Turkey, Colombia or Uganda that give shelter to the largest numbers of refugees. The biggest refugee camps are not on Lampedusa or Lesbos, but in Kenyan deserts and Bangladeshi wetlands.

At the same time, high-income nations desperately need skilled migrants – not only, but especially in the health sector. Right-wing populists deny this truth. By implication, they are undermining their countries' economic and social future. They are also undermining domestic peace because their aggressive rhetoric attacks anyone who has immigrated, who descends from immigrants and even those who simply feel comfortable with having immigrants as neighbours.

It is often ignored that almost every family has a history of migration. In particular, the Republicans in the USA seem to forget that their nation was built by immi-



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► All contributions to our focus section will also appear on our website [www.dandc.eu](http://www.dandc.eu), where you will find other related content as well.





Chinese loans have facilitated infrastructure projects: passenger on the Lahore metro.

#### SOVEREIGN DEBT

## Perfect storm

**Pakistan's economy is in deep crisis, and things are deteriorating fast. Many problems have domestic causes, but are compounded by global trends.**

By Sundus Saleemi

As any non-resident Pakistani can tell you, calls for cash or in-kind donations for struggling families have been circling and increasing online for several months. Masses of people are obviously in desperate need – and that includes people who believed they had achieved long-term middle-class status.

On 1 April 2023, a Reuters headline read: “Pakistan records highest-ever annual inflation; stampedes for food kill 16.” In-

deed, millions of Pakistanis are struggling to put food on their tables. Emergency centres for food distribution see strong demand, and sometimes crowds there crush people to death. More generally, buying fruit is now considered a luxury, even in the holy month of Ramadan, when most Pakistani families fast in the day time, but normally enjoy special treats after dusk. Women and girls suffer in particular, as typically happens in crisis settings.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the annual food-price inflation rate was at about 50% in March, above consumer price inflation at 35%. The growth outlook is bleak. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects a mere 0.5% for

this financial year. The World Bank forecasts 0.4% and the Asian Development Bank 0.6%.

Only a few months ago, the prognostic figures looked much better. In October, the IMF still reckoned GDP would expand by 3.5% (after six percent in the previous financial year).

The country must also cope with an energy crisis. Even nation-wide power outages now feel common. Pakistan's economy depends on imported fuel, including for the generation of electric power. The dwindling of foreign-exchange reserves is therefore alarming. The current \$4 billion will suffice for at most one month of imports. The government was forced to stop non-essential imports in the winter, which further slowed down industrial activity, as some inputs and components are no longer available.

Moreover, the country is being weighed down by its huge foreign debt. Debt Justice, a campaign group, reckons that debt servicing will cost the government 47%

of its revenues this year. The government owes foreign institutions about \$100 billion. Roughly one-third of the total consists of loans from China, including state-owned commercial banks.

In view of the urgent problems, Pakistan's only recourse is IMF funding and further loans from "friendly countries". But relations with the IMF are difficult. New money from China or the Gulf States, however, would only provide short-term relief at the cost of compounding long-term problems.

### TENSE RELATIONS WITH THE IMF

The IMF is not happy with how Pakistan's economy has been mismanaged and the state of macroeconomic fundamentals. IMF officers, of course, are aware of a long history of bailouts that did not lead to sustainable results.

Pakistan is currently supported by an IMF Extended Fund Facility (EEF). Of \$6.5

billion, \$3.9 billion have been disbursed. The IMF concluded this EEF agreement with the government of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The rules state that Pakistan's policymakers must achieve pre-defined targets of macroeconomic stability, with indicators set for things like fiscal discipline and debt sustainability. These rules required the government to cut spending, which would have meant hardship – especially as a quarter of Pakistan's people lived below the poverty line even before the current crisis struck.

Things did not go according to plan. Pakistan missed several of the macroeconomic targets last year.

To some extent, the reason was global events, which the government could not control. The climate crisis mattered very much. The country first suffered a terrible heat wave and then unprecedented flooding in 2022. There was widespread damage to lives, livelihoods and infrastructure. Among other things, the cotton crop suffered – and that exacerbated the balance of payment cri-

sis. Textile exports are an important source of revenue. The government had to use public funds to provide relief. International institutions are aware of this fact, and donors have pledged relief money. It is also undisputed that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent spike in oil and food prices have added pressure on Pakistan.

However, macroeconomic targets were also missed for domestic political reasons. Prime Minister Khan and his party, the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf), fell out of favour with the country's defence establishment. In a desperate attempt to remain in power, Khan rolled out fuel subsidies and tax amnesties. These schemes strained both the national budget and the forex reserves, but they did not help Khan to stay in office.

The parliament ousted Khan in a vote of no confidence, and a new government came to power in April 2022. It is based on a complicated multi-party coalition. However, under Shebaz Sharif, the new prime minister, the fuel subsidy was not rolled

## Troublesome mismatch

Pakistan's military budget is huge, but its tax revenues are rather small. The mismatch contributes to the country's serious economic problems.

A major challenge is that the military spending is considered untouchable. The official reason is the "existential threats" Pakistan is supposedly facing. From independence on, leaders kept pitting this Muslim nation against India, the big and predominantly Hindu neighbour. The full story, however, is that the military is a very powerful institution. It not only has a decisive influence on politics, but, due to its many businesses, on the economy too. Pakistan has seen decades of military dictatorship, which, to a considerable extent, promoted aggressive identity politics.

Some people downplay the military spending and call it an inevitable externality. It is bewildering, however, that irrespective of the hardships that ordinary citizens face, incentives for the high-level military

officers are never reduced. This aid-dependent country, moreover, found the means to build and maintain an arsenal of nuclear arms.

At the same time, Pakistan's ratio of collected taxes to gross domestic product (GDP) is very low at about an annual 10%. Accordingly, the country's public services are quite

poor. The supply of utilities such as electricity, water and gas is unreliable. Pakistanis generally do not feel supported by state institutions and, when in need, lack social protection. The increasing privatisation of education, health and security services does not help.

Ordinary citizens believe that the government and its agencies misuse tax money. They are aware of the "VIP convoys", which are made possible by public funding and block roads to people's inconvenience. Accordingly, tax avoidance is not considered a malpractice.

Pakistan's tax system is regressive moreover. Revenues are primarily generated via indirect taxes, which disproportionately hurt low-income households. Besides, a large part of the economy is informal, with small businesses and farms being neither registered nor regulated – nor taxed. SS



**Pakistan's expensive military has promoted identity politics.**



back. The new government actually worsened a difficult situation by pegging the Pakistani rupee to the dollar. The official exchange rate remained artificially high, and the black market thrived. People increasingly opt for informal financial services, weakening the formal financial system.

Observers, including at international finance institutions, generally accept that Pakistan was overwhelmed by events that were beyond its control. Nonetheless, IMF

officers are aware of recurring policy failures and have reason to wonder whether any Pakistani government will ever live up to its promises.

The full truth is that Pakistan's military is over-developed, but its tax system is under-developed (see box). State institutions do not enjoy much popular trust. It does not help that the governing coalition looks weak. It may well lose the general election that must be held later this year. How the polls will play out, is difficult to predict. In turbulent times, anything can happen.

### CHINESE LOANS AMOUNT TO ABOUT \$30 BILLION

Pakistan's largest bilateral creditor by far is China. The bilateral debt amounts to about \$30 billion and is linked to infrastructure projects. The "China Pakistan Economic Corridor" is part of Beijing's international Belt and Road Initiative. Some of the projects are of military relevance, though most obviously serve developmental needs. Chi-

na has started to provide balance-of-payment loans. However, the public is not fully informed of the details. Loans come with comparatively high-interest rates.

Pakistan needs all the support it can get. It would help if the IMF and China acted in a coordinated manner. So far, they don't. Some Pakistanis hope that the country's geographic location, size and nuclear arms will always lead to strategic advantages. Neither China nor the USA want to lose influence after all. The current situation, however, is untenable.

Decades of inept governance, political instability and geopolitical manoeuvring have contributed to the current situation, which is exacerbated by climate change and inflation. Global trends and home-made problems have added up to a perfect storm.



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#### MULTILATERAL INSTITUTION

## "The World Bank's research department can do better"

Ahead of the World Bank's upcoming Spring Meeting, Jürgen Zattler told Hans Dembowski how he thinks the institution should change. As director general, he is in charge of World Bank issues at Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In the interview, he discussed climate challenges as well as the sovereign-debt crises of many low and middle income countries.

Jürgen Zattler interviewed by Hans Dembowski

US President Joe Biden's approach to economic affairs is much more interventionist

than what we have seen in the past 40 years. The EU and its member countries also endorse a stronger role of the state. What does the deviation from market-orthodox ideology mean for international cooperation?

I'll try to explain, keeping it brief. From the 1980s on, market orthodoxy was indeed the international paradigm. The examples were set by Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. Germany and other EU members adopted similar, but less radical approaches, typically maintaining stronger social-protection systems. Moreover, in both Europe and North America, agriculture remained heavily subsidised, so that the ideology of the free market economy was

not fully implemented at the national level. Nonetheless, it did inspire the rules for international cooperation, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the context of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), we spoke of the Washington Consensus. I'd roughly summarise it as follows: if and when a government ensures macroeconomic stability by keeping inflation low, budgeting prudently and at the same time liberalising the economy, economic growth will follow, and it will lead to broad-based prosperity. In the past 15 years or so, we have largely stopped referring to the Washington Consensus, but we lack a new paradigm.

**What was wrong with the Washington Consensus?**

The big challenge is that the international community is facing several serious and overlapping crises that must be addressed. Examples include not only the global financial crisis of 2008 and its long-lasting repercussions, which encompass today's high interest rates, banking turmoil and increas-



ing debt distress in many low and middle income countries. We also are experiencing an unprecedented climate and biodiversity crisis. Besides, inequality of income and wealth within most countries is on the rise. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has compounded problems. As a consequence, the role of governments in the economy and the relationship between governments and the private sector has fundamentally changed. Market forces on their own do not provide solutions. We need a new understanding of how the private and the public sector should work together – and how governments provide guidance. The World Bank must play a leading role here.

**So the idea is no longer that governments should get out of the way of free enterprise, but actually set the stage for the kind of market competition that will deliver the right results?**

Yes, you can put it that way, but it is easier said than done. There is no blueprint that would fit every country, so it is difficult to spell out what exactly the World Bank should do. What is clear however is, that we need a close co-operation between governments and the private sector. Let us look at the global “Energiewende”. We need the private sector to invest massively in renewable energy provision. In order to make that happen, we need strong governments to provide complementary public infrastructure (such as for grid integration) and the appropriate regulatory environments (like feed-in tariff systems). The role of the World Bank is to help countries in that respect, in particular with comprehensive policy-based programmes. Germany has asked the Bank to set up climate-related reform programmes for a number of key countries. However, this is progressing too slowly.

**What is holding back the World Bank?**

One problem is that the bank is focused to much on individual projects rather than systemic change. Moreover, it does not pay sufficient attention to global challenges that transcend national borders. In its efforts, so-called global public goods must matter more. Consider tropical forests, for example. Humanity as a whole has an interest in their protection, but tropical countries do not have sufficiently strong incentives to do that. At the local level, extending agriculture and over-exploiting forest resources

often look more attractive. To set the right incentives, the World Bank could offer national governments more and/or cheaper loans. For that to happen, it has to modify its operational policies and approaches as well as its research. Financing solutions to global challenges needs to become part of the Bank’s DNA.

**Please explain your point on research.**

Research is the foundation for the World Bank’s policy decisions. If the foundation is not solid, neither will be the implemented policy. In my eyes, the Bank’s research department can do better in that respect. As an example, we have been urging it for years to

The difference is that the IMF is a much more monolithic institution. They have a corporate view on all important issues. In contrast, the World Bank lets a thousand (research) flowers bloom, whereby the research department represents the economic orthodoxy. The diversity does not necessarily help, because clarity and consistent positions guidelines are often needed.

**Do you want the World Bank to become a climate bank?**

I do not think that this is the core issue. The World Bank should stay a development bank. But it should fully absorb the new realities, such as global warming, biodiversity



Climate protest in Washington in 2022.

include climate risks in its economic assessments, but that is barely happening. It has also not addressed appropriately the dramatically growing inequality within most developing countries and their implications for social cohesion and stability. As long as the World Bank research department does not consider reality as it is, we cannot expect it to result in appropriate policy recommendations.

**Your criticism of World Bank research coincides closely with what Iwan J. Azis, an Indonesian economics professor, recently told me about IMF research (see D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2023/04).**

crisis and social exclusion. It should reconcile these objectives with its focus on poverty and inclusive prosperity.

**How does official development assistance (ODA) relate to climate finance? High-income countries are not living up to their decades-old ODA pledges of spending 0.7% of gross national income. They are not fulfilling climate-finance promises either.**

This is a tricky issue. I do not believe that silo-thinking is helpful. It doesn’t make sense to have separate pots for development and climate action. Clean energy infrastructure serves both purposes, and so does the sustainable transformation of agriculture. The

list goes on. The overlap is huge. We call that co-benefits.

**But climate finance is supposed to come on top of ODA. Would it make sense to increase the ODA pledge to something like 1.2% or so?**

It would, but I'm not sure it is feasible. The German public would perhaps support it if we told them that the additional money is being used to climate-proof the planet, and we have been fulfilling the 0.7% promise for the last years. However, many prosperous nations have not, and they are unlikely to

all those parties on board. The good news is that we have the G20 Common Framework on Debt Treatment, so there is a principle agreement on how to react. The bad news is that it has not delivered sufficiently convincing results yet. The IMF and the World Bank have made very useful recommendations how to make the Common Framework more efficient.

**China seems to be very reluctant to forgive any debt. At the same time, its diplomats are adept at pointing out western shortcomings. What is your response?**

Well, the burden must be shared fairly. I agree that China has already shared some burden such as under the G20 debt standstill initiative (DSSI). But given the dire situation in many countries, debt restructuring may also entail real debt relief. Besides, we cannot afford longish processes. It would further put development gains at risk, provoke social and political instability and would at the end be much more costly.

**Would it help to tell China that the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Beijing-based multilateral institution, will be treated like the World Bank, so it will not have to forgive debt?**

In our eyes, it is an equivalent institution which is treated in the same way. Some actually argue that both should forgive debt. I disagree. The multilateral development banks (MDBs) have deliberately been provided so-called preferred creditor status. This is to protect their AAA rating which allows them to refinance relatively cheaply on international capital markets. If this were put at risk, the developing countries would suffer – especially in times of crises, when we need the MDBs' liquidity for anti-cyclical investments. MDBs would be forced to reduce their lending and to charge more for their loans. But the contrary is needed. MDBs must increase lending to achieve the SDGs and to finance the global transformation.

**And in the case of the World Bank, that also means mobilising more private capital for sustainable-development purposes?**

Yes, the World Bank must help partner countries to attract private investors. Setting up wind and solar power facilities, is the job of private companies, in particular given the very low and decreasing costs of renewable energy generation. But they need appropriate regulatory standards, reasonable feed-in tariffs, legal security, skilled staff for grid management and complementary public infrastructure, such as grids.



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Loans from emerging markets contribute to current debt crises: a chinese-financed airport is inaugurated in Ndola, Zambia in 2021.

accept any new binding commitment. Besides, it is not only about ODA. Rich countries can also help by adjusting their own domestic policies, e.g. by granting better market access for developing countries' exports.

**How do you assess the escalating sovereign-debt crises in various low and middle income countries?**

The situation is very serious and complex. Firstly, loans handed out by China and, to a lesser extent, by other emerging markets account for a substantial share of the debt. Secondly, private creditors have become very important too. The challenge is to bring

China has adopted the Common Framework. Now they must also implement it consistently and efficiently – and increase debt transparency. And we all have to increase our efforts ensuring equal treatment by private creditors. Therefore, BMZ has commissioned a study on options how to avoid that individual private creditors block debt rescheduling.

**It has become common to bash China in western media, but I think some of its loans that help developing countries build infrastructure are actually quite useful. I see why China wants to avoid bearing the brunt of debt relief.**





Meeting of the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies in Cape Town, September 2022.

#### SDG IMPLEMENTATION

## Navigating complexity

**Advisory bodies on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have to integrate all stakeholders for sustainable development pathways. Their main tasks are mediation and the coordination of diverse interests. Commissions in Ghana and Germany take different approaches to this – and are confronted with complex challenges.**

**By Beauty Emeffa Narteh, Felix Meyerhoff and Hannah Janetschek**

We are halfway through the period for delivering on the SDGs by 2030. The clock is ticking faster and faster for the global community to act. At the same time, our societies and economies are confronted with an increasing number of multiple and mutually reinforcing crises. Only recently, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, issued a clear warning: “Our world is in peril”. But he insisted: it is not too late to save the SDGs.

With a mandate of the 75<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the UN member states, Guterres has launched a process towards an addition-

al pact for the future to boost the implementation of the SDGs. Within a year, the second SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future will take place. The SDG Summit will be held in September 2023. It serves as a mid-term review on the way to 2030 and focuses on tangible commitments by UN member states to achieve the SDGs after all. As proposed by Guterres in his report “Our Common Agenda”, the Future Summit in 2024 will additionally bring together UN member states and other stakeholders to establish a pact for the future.

The ways to implement the SDGs are context-dependent and as heterogeneous as economies and societies. Large-scale transformation of, for example, national energy or agricultural systems aims to achieve long-term sustainable effects, but it can cause significant losses for specific economic actors as well as for individuals. Such a structural change can therefore only succeed and be socially accepted if people know about alternative ways and can use them for themselves.

Multi-stakeholder platforms such as SDG advisory bodies can serve as an effec-

tive and innovative mechanism at the national level to apply an inclusive and mediating approach to conflicting interests in necessary change. Their rationale is to build consensus and foster social acceptance for transformations to achieve the 2030 Agenda. A multi-stakeholder advisory body has an explicit mandate to engage all sectors of society in the conversation about the path to a sustainable future. They do this by connecting knowledge, values and interests and promoting empowerment of diverse perspectives.

When integrating these advisory bodies into national governance architectures, societies can rely on a permanent advisory forum to tackle the decisions they will have to make in implementing the SDGs. These councils have a compass function: they ensure that all sectors of society are involved in finding solutions and developing national strategies, which reduces the risk of rejection of decisions.

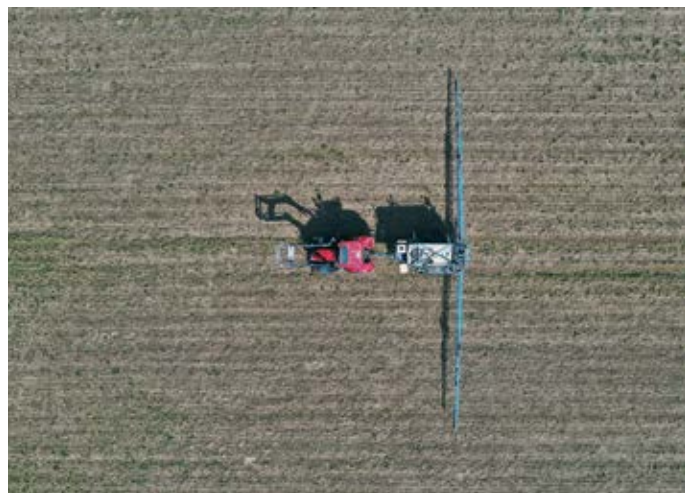
However, such structures require pre-conditions. International comparison has shown that advisory bodies are particularly effective when their national government

- has committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda,
- has created a national sustainability strategy or similar,
- fosters sustained and institutionalised stakeholder engagement and
- can fund their engagement.

The Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies is a network of such multi-stakeholder bodies that aims to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs by sharing experiences and visions of the future from different national perspectives. Emerging from the UN SDG Summit 2019, the Global Forum network collects and explores concrete ideas to strengthen societal discourse and build consensus on sustainable development.

### OVERCOMING STALEMATES

In Germany, two ad hoc commissions set up by the federal government have shown how to deal with the complexity of conflicting interests in the conversion of the energy system and the agricultural sector. Both sectors are characterised by a high degree of conflicts of interest between farmers’ associations or energy companies with trade unions, nature-conservation associations, civil-society organisations (CSOs) and aca-



**In Germany, ad hoc commissions set up by the federal government have worked out compromises, for example on the transition of agriculture to sustainable land use.**

demic actors. The temporary commissions worked out compromises for the phase-out of coal and for the transformation of the German agricultural sector towards sustainable land use.

Since 2002, the German government has established a national sustainable development strategy, accompanied by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) as an institutionalised multi-stakeholder advisory body. The RNE publishes statements on relevant topics related to sustainability and contributes to public awareness and social dialogue on sustainability. It was last appointed on 18 January 2023 for a period of three years. Fifteen members represent economic, social or environmental sustainability according to their professional and personal background. With a mandate to constructively accompany the transformation towards sustainability in all its facets, the RNE is independent in its choice of work. In recent years, for example, the council has helped in the stalemates between stakeholders and the government on the German supply chain law and on approaches to halt biodiversity loss while accelerating energy infrastructure.

Lower-income countries partly use different strategies to implement the SDGs. The Ghanaian government, for example, pursues a multi-actor and multi-agent approach. The implementation of the SDGs has been integrated into Ghana's decentralised planning system so that political and financial resources can be made available for tracking the various SDG indicators. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) provides technical oversight

to the decentralised authorities – the Metropolitan/Municipal District Assemblies (MMDAs) and the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) – for the inclusion of the various indicators in development and sector plans. In this context, the NDPC serves as the secretariat of the Implementation Coordination Committee (ICC), which brings together various stakeholders from the government, the private sector, development partners and civil society. The ICC is composed of representatives from 10 key ministries, departments and agencies, such as the Office of the President, the SDG Philanthropy Platform, CSOs and the National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council (NAPRM-GC).

In addition, the Ghana Civil Society Organisations Platform on Sustainable Development Goals (CSOs Platform on SDGs) was established in 2015 to bring together CSOs working on the SDGs under one umbrella. The platform has contributed significantly to SDG processes at the national level and played a key role in mobilising citizen input to the two Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) conducted in Ghana in 2019 and 2022.

As part of its coordinating role, the CSOs Platform on the SDGs has organised campaigns to highlight the situation of the vulnerable and to advocate with the government at all levels for action and policy reforms. For example, a media campaign on inequality was launched in 2020 and 2021 in cooperation with the CSO Oxfam. The platform and its partners have as well established a Covid-19 response fund to mobilise resources and support governments' efforts. Alongside this, capacity building for moni-

toring and tracking government commitments related to the SDGs was carried out for member organisations in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

In general, it has become evident in Ghana that citizens' knowledge of the SDGs and their indicators is limited. At the institutional and structural level, the challenges associated with Ghana's decentralised local structures affect the implementation of the SDGs. It is therefore important that the Ghanaian government reviews the structures for implementing the SDGs and ensures that young people and private-sector actors can take part in the discussion on the SDGs.

**LINKS**

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[https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Study\\_Pathways\\_for\\_MSP-advisory\\_bodies\\_2021.pdf](https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Study_Pathways_for_MSP-advisory_bodies_2021.pdf)
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GIZ

# Working in tougher settings

**The GIZ's evaluation report for 2022 shows good results, even though the settings Germany's bilateral cooperation agency is working in have been getting tougher. This was the main message at the report's launch in April. There was some self-criticism too.**

By Jörg Döbereiner

On a scale from 1 (highly successful) to 6 (highly unsuccessful), the overall grade for GIZ was 2.3 last year. That was a bit below the previous evaluation report for 2021, but above the level of 2020. The grade results from the assessment of some 200 projects.

The new report's core topic is digitalisation. According to Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven, a member of the executive board, three things matter in particular to GIZ:

- standards for and regulation of the digital sphere, including in regard to ethical questions concerning, for example, artificial intelligence,
- tangible IT solutions for the partners of GIZ and
- digitised platforms for learning.

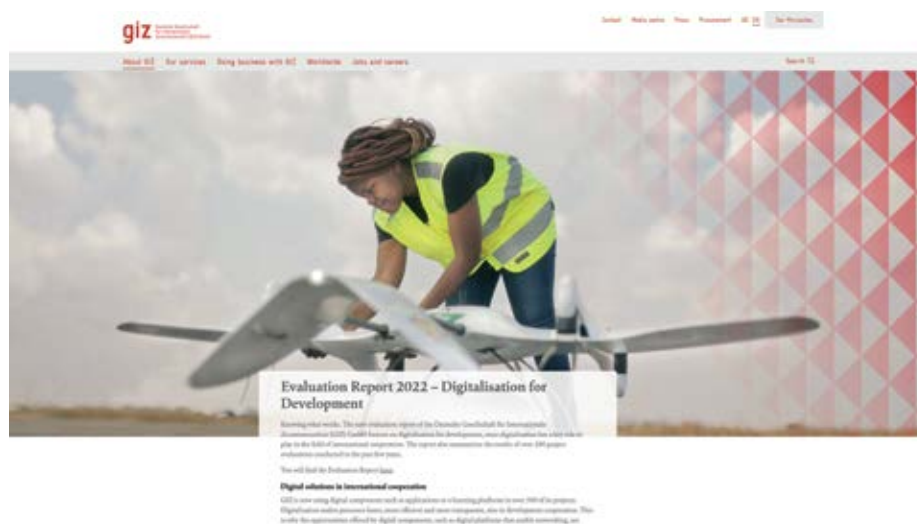
Digitised approaches make GIZ efforts more effective, Hoven says, but emphasises that they must fit local contexts. Whether a specific agricultural project can benefit from technology, for instance, depends on the local infrastructure.

The report states that digital elements figure in more than 500 different GIZ projects. In Ghana, for example, citizens can use an app to give feedback regarding public services. In Mongolia, a platform was set up to digitise penal-law proceedings in court in a way that reduces mistakes and, at the same time, the workload of clerks. In Malawi, digitised registration of patients has helped health centres provide better services, according to GIZ.

Projects in Africa – and particularly sub-Saharan Africa – delivered poorer results than in other world regions. Hoven says that the reasons include difficult contexts, which are marked by refugee movements, for example. Moreover, GIZ tends to have stronger networks with partner or-

ganisations in other continents, for instance Latin America, Hoven points out.

In contexts of fragile statehood, Hoven acknowledges that GIZ should pay even more attention to whether local scenarios are properly understood. She also sees room for improvement in terms of ensuring that established projects remain viable long term. The longer GIZ operates in any spe-



Screenshot – GIZ website

cific place, the more successful its projects are likely to turn out there, Hoven says. Generally speaking, strong results tend to be the fruit of:

- close cooperation with stakeholders,
- the competence of project teams and
- the individual performance of team members.

In regard to digitalisation, GIZ can stimulate developments, but not bring about comprehensive change, Hoven argues. For that to happen, a country's legislative and cultural context must change, so national policymakers must play their role.

In the eyes of Jochen Flasbarth, who is chairman of GIZ and state secretary at Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the agency has recently been facing tougher in-

ternational conditions due to global shocks. Low-income countries, he says, struggle to cope with the impacts of the Ukraine war, for example.

The GIZ must be able to show that it is managing public funds well, Flasbarth insists, and professionally competent evaluation serves that purpose. It is done at several levels. The GIZ's evaluation department assesses projects, but projects also do self-assessment. Moreover, Germany's Foreign Office evaluates some GIZ work and so do independent institutions such as DEval, which focuses on international development, or ZUG, which specialises in environmental sustainability.

The GIZ is headquartered in Bonn and Eschborn. It is a service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development. It gets most of its assignments from the BMZ. In 2021, its turnover was 3.7 billion euros. About 25,000 people in some 120 countries work for the GIZ.

## LINK

**GIZ, 2023: Evaluation Report 2022: digitalisation for development.**

<https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2023-evaluation-report-2022.pdf>



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# Zambia abolishes death penalty

In 2022, the death penalty was officially abolished in Zambia, making the country one of the latest world nations to do away with the capital punishment. Zambia has not had any execution of death row inmates since 1997.

According to local prison authorities, there were at least nine new death sentences in the country in 2021 and 257 inmates were on death row at the end of 2021. Capital punishment has been a legal penalty in Zambia since its independence from Britain in 1964.

Various activists have for long advocated for the ban of the death penalty in the country. Politicians have always been non-committal to addressing the issue. However, Zambia's current president Hakainde Hichilema finally signed into law an amendment on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 2022 banning the death penalty.

"Fellow Zambians, during our campaigns for the presidency, we promised to amend all laws that inhibit the growth of democracy and good governance, impede human rights and basic freedoms. Today we have delivered," Hichilema said.

Various stakeholders have since hailed Zambia's government on its move to abolish the death penalty. "It is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The EU strongly opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and will continue to work for its abolition worldwide," European Union spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy, Nabila Massrali, said.

The death penalty has been criticised as an archaic punishment which is against basic human rights. Activists also argue that the death sentence is inhumane, discriminatory and in many cases, it is used as a political tool to fight dissent and silence opposition. Moreover, there are claims that it has no deterrent effect on stopping crime.

Amnesty International has hailed Zambia for its "progressive" policy that shows the country's commitment to protecting the right to life. The human rights organisation says that executions in sub-Saharan Africa have more than doubled from 16 in 2020 to 33 in 2021. Somalia executed 21 people and South Sudan at least nine, according to Human Rights Watch, another international organisation.

Zambia joins other Southern African countries such as Angola, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa that have abolished capital punishment in recent years. For many African countries, the death penalty was introduced in their constitutions and penal codes during the era of colonialism.

Godfrey Malembeka, the executive director of Prisons Care and Counseling Association (PRISCCA), says: "The death penalty contravenes human rights and the right to life. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, irrevocable and can sometimes be inflicted on the innocent. People need to understand that there is no rehabilitation in the grave."

Some proponents of the death penalty insist that the punishment is necessary because it offers a just retribution for capital crimes, deters crime, protects society and preserves the "moral order." Kelvin Chola, a Lusaka resident who is against the repeal of the death penalty, says: "Why should anyone who kills another human being in cold blood be allowed to enjoy life? This is not justice at all. This law will not deter serial killers in society. People should learn to respect the sanctity of life."



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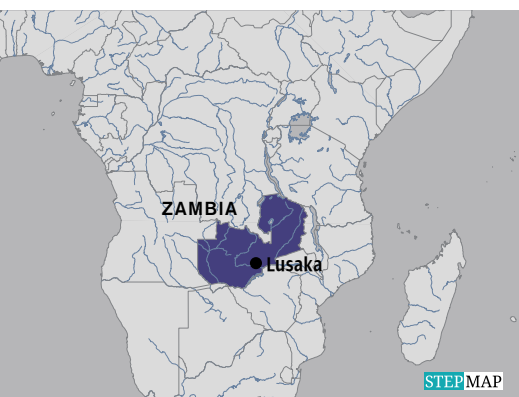
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**Statue honouring Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's less than perfect independence leader, in Accra.**

## GOVERNANCE

## Foster a democratic civic culture

**Too many African people see their president or prime minister as some kind of king who deserves to be worshipped instead of a policymaker who must serve the public. Unfortunately, independence leaders largely failed to establish a democratic civic culture.**

**By Baba G. Jallow**

There is a pattern of explaining contemporary authoritarianism in Africa as the legacy of imperialist European rule in the colonial era. It misses the failure of African independence leaders to abandon that legacy. Colonialism ended two generations ago in West Africa, but many countries still lack a civic culture that emphasises representative democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

The big irony of decolonisation was that, once in power, the leaders of freedom movements adopted European perspectives. Colonial bureaucrats had kept saying that Africans were unable to rule themselves. The independence leaders retorted that this idea was racist and that democracy would certainly prove viable in Africa.

Then they changed their mind and established one-party systems with life-long presidencies. Firmly in office, they opted for

monolithic ideologies with labels like “African socialism” or “Africanité”. Even Kwame Nkrumah, the sophisticated intellectual who led Ghana to independence in 1957, opted for unquestioned personal authority – until the military toppled him in 1966.

In Africa, religion matters. Ideas of human rights and rule-bound government coincide with fundamental principles of the monotheistic faiths. After all, the holy scriptures demand truthfulness, respect for one another and non-violent resolution of disputes. African leaders, however, like pretending to be appointed by God and accountable only to him.

Things do not have to be like this. Some African countries have made considerable progress, Ghana for example. In the 1980s, opposition to military rule grew. Civil-society and faith-based organisations demanded freedom and networked successfully, so Jerry Rawlings, the military dictator, eventually had to run for office in a general election. Since 1992, Ghana has seen regular free elections every four years. Several of them resulted in peaceful transfers of power.

Ghana's civil society has become stronger. It now includes a multitude of organised interest groups. They take part in

public discourse. The consensus is that democracy serves the nation well. Free media reinforce this perspective, and so do educational institutions.

On the other hand, three West African countries – Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso – are currently under military rule again. Democracy is not deeply entrenched in the region, so further setbacks are possible.

Fostering a democratic civic culture is a duty of the state. Citizens must learn what their constitution entails, what free and fair elections are and why democratic rule is not so much about a dominant party imposing its will than about reaching compromise among diverging interests. Such knowledge must be taught in schools.

Where a state fails to fulfil these educational duties, civil-society activism can make a difference, especially when well-coordinated. Independent organisations can promote democratic values and put pressure on governments to live up to their duties. Entrenching democracy in good times is easier than opposing a dictatorship, which is obviously much harder and painful.

The international community, of course, can play a supportive role too. Unfortunately, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies tend to focus too much on their agreements with national governments, and pay too little attention to how civic culture is developing on the ground. That is so even when they fund programmes intended to promote better governance.

Moreover, high-income countries must do more to set the right example themselves. Africans see how right-wing populism is threatening western democracies. They notice that Donald Trump, the former US president with strong autocratic tendencies, so far enjoys impunity even after the insurgency of 6 January 2021. Africa needs democratic rule and must defend it. That applies to high-income countries too.



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NIGERIA

## Eerie sense of post-election calm

**To judge by the officially declared elections results, Bola Tinubu, the president-elect, could be expected to be able to govern Nigeria comfortably, with strong support from the parliament as well as state governors. That impression is misleading.**

By Adaze Okeaya-inneh

The political climate in Nigeria appears to be calm, but storm clouds are building up. The results of recent elections were not as clear as the official numbers suggest. In particular, the presidential election was marred.

According to the election commission, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC) won. The APC is the party of Muhammadu Buhari, the incumbent president. The APC also won more than half of the seats in parliament. In state elections, which were held a few weeks later, APC candidates fared well too. Most state governors belong to the party.

Nonetheless, Tinubu does not have a strong mandate. Despite 24 years of uninterrupted democracy, this oil-rich nation continues to suffer violent conflicts and crime. The economy is weak, unemployment is high and infrastructure is poor. Nigerians are hungry for law and order, integrity and a leader that might unite the country. Especially young people hoped they would see change.

Tinubu officially got 37% of the vote, while the second most successful candidate, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), got 29%, and third-placed Peter Obi of the Labour Party got 25%. Voter turnout was surprisingly low at 29%.

In view of technical glitches and evidently incompetent management of the presidential election (see my essay in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2023/04), many Nigerians do not trust the official results. The two main opposition candidates have filed court suits, calling for the election to be declared null and void. Judges in Kenya and Malawi have done that in the past, and many voters hope that may happen in Nigeria too. Feelings about the judiciary are mixed however.

Its integrity declined during the Buhari administration, as cases of corrupt judges and biased judgements stayed unchecked.

Tinubu expects to be sworn in on 29 May. No matter how the judges will decide, his personal reputation is damaged however. He claims to be in his seventies, but some suspect he is older. He has a reputation of being linked to criminals and corrupt officials. Moreover, the stain of having won a flawed election without an outright major-

however, some of the party's policymakers cannot be expected to stay loyal to Tinubu and Shettima.

Buhari was president for eight years. During that time, things kept deteriorating. His predecessor Goodluck Jonathan was also a disappointment. His government too was known for corruption and abuses of power.

Barry Andrews, who led the EU's observation mission during the elections, has mentioned failure of political elites, many Nigerians' disappointment and the resulting voter apathy. He declared on Nigerian TV that "it is difficult to point to progress in terms of democracy in Nigeria". By contrast, the USA and China have sent congratulatory messages to Tinubu after the presidential election. However, the US embassy also ad-



Even according to the official results, APC candidate Bola Tinubu only won 37% of the vote in the presidential election.

ity will stick even if judges dismiss the opposition's accusations of wrongdoing.

Nigeria is a highly diverse country. Deep fault lines run along religious and ethnic affiliations. Depressingly, the APC has a pattern of stoking related animosities. In view of lingering insurgencies in the north as well as the Niger Delta, that is very dangerous. It matters that both Tinubu and his vice-president-elect, Kashim Shettima, are Muslims, whereas only about half of Nigeria's people belong to their faith. The current coherence of the APC can fast prove elusive. If and when problems escalate,

monished the election commission to shore up its act before the state elections.

Nigeria's partners in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are happy that the country, so far, has not blown up – and content that the future of their regional block was not a controversial issue in the election campaign.



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WEST AFRICA

# When democratic appearances matter more than substance

**Benin's President Patrice Talon is tightening his grip on power. Recent parliamentary elections did not make a real difference.**

By Karim Okanla

Nourenou Atchadé is a member of parliament and belongs to the Democrats, the main opposition party. In his eyes, Benin has been suffering democratic decline since 2019. President Talon took office in 2016 and Atchadé accuses him of manipulating laws before the parliamentary elections three years later. As a result, opposition parties could not run. Atchadé is also appalled by the Talon administration's pattern of locking up opponents and forcing them into exile.

Amnesty International sees things in a similar light. According to this international human-rights organisation, cases of arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment were documented in Benin in 2022. Moreover, the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly were restricted.

After this year's election, a single opposition is represented in the legislature again. However, the Democrats remain too weak to make a real difference. They only have 28 of 109 seats. The two parties that support the sitting president, by contrast, command a two-thirds majority – enough to amend the constitution.

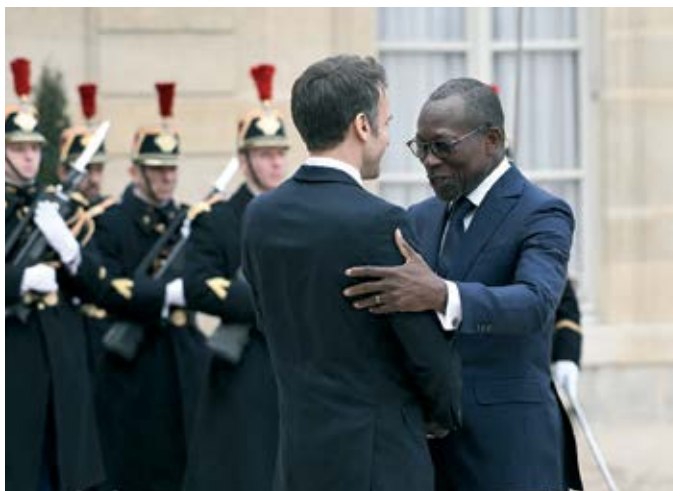
Louis Vlavonou, the speaker, has been confirmed as leader of the parliament. All important committees, including those in charge of financial, legal and defence matters, are controlled by Talon allies.

Analysts had predicted a high voter turnout since more parties took part in the election of 8 January. However, it was merely about 38%. Apparently, the largest share of the electorate did not expect polling to have an impact. As often happens in Africa, moreover, there were allegations of fraud, ballot stuffing and election rigging.

Under Talon, it has become extremely difficult for politicians to run an opposition

party. Indeed, the Democrats came close to being excluded once more after the leader of the country's Revenue and Tax Service accused them of shady operations. Only a last-minute decision by the Constitutional Court ensured that the Democrats could field candidates this time.

Benin's Parliament is still controlled by the president's men. The two pro-government parties will continue to receive public



**Benin's President Talon is welcomed by French President Macron in March in Paris.**

funding to carry out their activities across the nation. By contrast, the Democrats must rely on their own resources. Things might improve if parliament recognises them as the official opposition. Observers say that is rather unlikely.

Under Talon, election laws have been designed to the benefit of well-established and financially-endowed parties. Some say that Talon and the men he appointed will never give the opposition a chance. Talon's attitude is typical of post-colonial authoritarianism.

In spite of the Constitutional Court's ruling, the judiciary is believed to be under tight government control. By law, the president appoints judges and magistrates.

Moreover, court officials get instructions from him and the minister of justice. The national media regulator is also placed under the president's authority.

In these circumstances, it will be hard for opposition forces to prosper before May 2026, when Talon's second and last term in office is set to end. Whether he will respect the constitutional term limit, however, is an open question. Other heads of state – not only in Africa – have modified such rules in order to stay in power.

To put a check on the administration, members of parliament must not only have a solid understanding but also the audacity to contradict government ministers. Moreover, they must dare to investigate claims of corruption and malfeasance. Many people in Benin doubt their MPs will do so even though candidates had to demonstrate basic

legal knowledge and French language proficiency this time.

In spite of some obvious problems, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has “welcomed the peaceful, secure and inclusive conduct” of last January 8 parliamentary poll. Western diplomats and observers have made similar statements. Apparently, formal democratic appearances matter more than substantial democracy.



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**S. Jaishankar, India's minister of external affairs, addressing a meeting of G20 foreign ministers in New Delhi in March.**

al mindset. State agencies prevented screenings in public universities.

Even the British government failed to stand by the BBC in this crisis. When western diplomats fail to insist on human-rights principles when dealing with India, however, their rhetoric rings hollow. At the very least, they must defend media productions that meet professional standards of accurate reporting, factual truth and respect for all sides of a controversy.

In bilateral and multilateral settings, western diplomats should keep issues of human rights and democratic principles on the agenda. To do so convincingly, they must improve their own performance regarding those universal standards themselves. How the EU and USA are treating desperate migrants in search of a refuge is denting their moral authority.

What happens inside a country, moreover, has an impact on its foreign relations. That is particularly true as diaspora communities experience western values in daily practice. If immigrants feel accepted, well treated and even actively included in public life, they will tell their communities back home. And if they feel unwelcome, exploited and intentionally excluded, they'll spread that information.

Modi is keen on approval by western governments as well as non-resident Indians. He wants to be perceived as a democrat. Diplomats should tie their appreciation to all relevant criteria. To make diaspora communities their partners, western nations must treat them well, and that will serve better business relations too. Mutual respect does not result only from the interaction of top policymakers.

In all relevant areas, western governments must apply universal standards rather than merely their own. S. Jaishankar, India's minister of external affairs, has said: "Europe has to grow out of the mindset that its problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems are not Europe's problems." His sentence resonates with many people around the world. He spelled out quite nicely what kind of diplomacy does not work.



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GLOBAL AFFAIRS

## The Indian conundrum

**India is a difficult country for western diplomats. They must find ways to cooperate with New Delhi, but they must not accept authoritarian tendencies.**

By Suparna Banerjee

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is inspired by the right-wing vision of a Hindu Nation. This ideology results in an aggressive agenda against minorities, particularly Muslims, but often Christians too. Since Modi became prime minister in 2014, India has witnessed more lynchings and riots, with perpetrators typically enjoying impunity and often getting praise.

For several reasons, India is nonetheless an indispensable partner for western countries:

- Its population of 1.4 billion is huge, and with a middle-class share of about one third, the country also constitutes a giant market.
- Western countries need immigrants – and members of India's well educated middle class are prime candidates for filling their labour-market gaps. Moreover, migrants' contributions to social-protection systems help to stabilise those systems.
- Global challenges such as the climate crisis or disease control require global solu-

tions – which are not feasible without Indian contributions.

- India still has a democratic constitution and an independent judiciary.
- The country is seen as a potential counterweight to China, which is increasingly taking an adversarial and even hostile stance to the USA and its allies.

Disengagement from India is thus not an option. Moreover, it would be impossible to isolate the country. India's relations with foreign governments are shaped by mutual needs and specific demands, so western calls to back off from India would, in many cases, fall on deaf ears.

For the sake of their own credibility, however, western governments must not shy away from publicly discussing worrisome trends. The human-rights situation, which was never good, is worsening. India's minorities are being marginalized, and the freedom of expression is under attack.

The most recent set-back for the freedom of the press was Modi's campaign against a BBC documentary. It closely scrutinised the anti-Muslim riots that left some 1000 people dead in Gujarat in 2002, when Modi was that state's chief minister. According to the BJP, the sober documentary was anti-Indian propaganda marked by a coloni-



GERMAN POLICYMAKING

# Stuck in a European mindset

Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) intends to "shape the future with Africa", as its recently published Africa strategy spells out in its title. Unfortunately, the strategy is trapped in conventional European thinking, and that includes a tendency to impose values and dictate norms.

By James Shikwati

The BMZ strategy should have prioritised a partnership model that enables Africa to do away with the constraints that block prosperity. Most were caused by European powers. The African market is fragmented, and inadequate supply chains date back to the colonial era. Investments in indigenous African food systems have long been neglected, while European exports of subsidised agricultural goods crowded out local farmers. It fits the picture that African markets are flooded with foreign-made consumer goods.

The BMZ strategy fails to assess what has gone wrong in Europe's relationship with Africa. European powers have shaped life in most African countries for more than a century, maintaining a strong influence after independence. Nonetheless, trade with China has fast overtaken trade with Africa in recent decades. According to the BMZ, the EU is exporting almost twice as much to

China as it does to Africa, and importing almost four times more from China.

The BMZ strategy neither makes precise statements on how many miles of road and rail nor on how many seaports and airports Germany intends to build. It is full of ideas regarding how Africa could become more attractive in European eyes, but says nothing about how German attitudes must change – regarding, for example, investing in Africa and managing related risks.

Africans face a huge dilemma today. We see the high-income nations that used to be citadels of free-market rhetoric retreat into protectionism. The USA and the EU are adopting industrial policies with little respect for the market-orthodox ideology that they preached for decades. Structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s were supposed to make African economies competitive, but that liberalisation drive did not trigger major productivity gains and prosperity. It opened African markets to multinational interests, but African economies still depend on commodity exports.

Africans know two things: Europe needs skilled immigrants, but also wants to keep refugees away. The BMZ strategy does not state what it is supposed to achieve in either regard. How rigidly are African governments expected to close their national borders for Germany's sake? And to what extent does Germany hope to poach profes-

sionals and skilled workers from Africa? In the mind of sub-Saharan readers, that desire explains a large part of the BMZ's focus on education and vocational training.

The strategy promises to support democracy and human rights, and even to monitor their state in Africa. This arrogant approach is not backed up with proposals regarding how to deal with the challenges democracy is facing internationally.

Insisting on a democratic process does not prevent financial capture by the wealthy. Psychological manipulation abounds in the public sphere. All over the world, voters often wonder whether they were misled by digitised information. Just consider that a majority of British voters now regret Brexit.

In close cooperation, German and African institutions should explore what to do about the algorithms that organise public discourse for users of social media and search engines. These algorithms have contributed to rendering democracy into a fiction.

Instead of rising to challenges like this, the BMZ strategy promises to monitor Africa. Well, the greatest problem – not only in Africa – is that voters too rarely see good political and economic results, no matter who they elect.

The World is changing. Nationalism is rising, and the big power competition between the USA and China is polarising the global arena. Western countries, so far, have failed to convince a substantial number of governments of their narrative in the Ukraine war.

Europe needs Africa to be a close partner. The big questions are: what is Europe offering, and how does it expect to regain lost trust? The BMZ strategy does not provide satisfying answers.

## LINK

**BMZ, 2023: Shaping the future with Africa. The Africa strategy of the BMZ. (Also available in French.)**

<https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/137602/bmz-afrika-strategie-en.pdf>



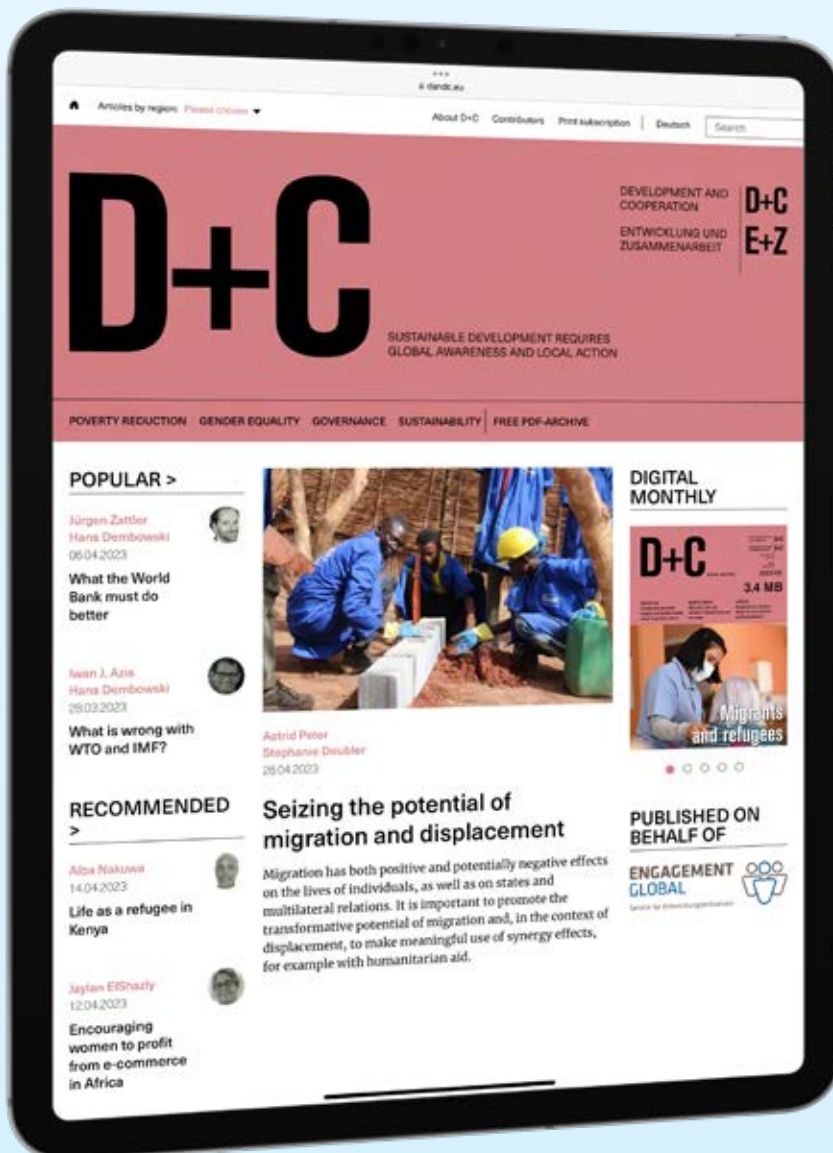
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[www.irenkenya.com](http://www.irenkenya.com)



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Migrants crossing a river in the dangerous Darién Gap between Colombia and Panama.

FOCUS

## Migrants and refugees

“Under EU pressure, Senegal has equated migration by boat with criminal human trafficking.”

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“Kenya has a long track-record of providing asylum and protection to South Sudanese.”

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“Venezuelans make up almost six percent of Colombia’s population.”

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“In 2022, according to the EU, more than 90,000 migrants arrived via the central Mediterranean route.”

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“Senior white men do not always welcome unconventional thoughts from a brown young woman.”

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ECOWAS

## Criminalising migration

**Fundamental needs often remain unmet in West African countries. Accordingly, many people migrate to other places. The dominant economic powers of Europe and North America want to prevent that. To the detriment of Senegal's people, their government supports the approach of the high-income countries.**

By Fatou Faye

To judge by international media coverage, migration mostly occurs from developing countries to high-income countries. The truth is that people from member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) tend to stay in their own world region. These migration patterns have evolved since independence. They actually conform with the ECOWAS goals of free traffic of persons and goods.

For about two decades, EU policies have put a break on such traffic. For domestic reasons, the EU wants to restrict migration to Europe, with some exceptions made for high-skilled persons. Accordingly, the EU has put pressure on African countries to tighten border controls. While the EU officially supports regional integration in Africa, its insistence on border controls is an obstacle to integration.

In economic terms, migration matters very much in West Africa. The survival of entire communities, especially in rural areas, depends on it.

Migration is often a family effort. People help relatives to grasp opportunities in a faraway place, and in return, those migrants send home money. Destinations include urban centres, neighbouring countries and places overseas. Only few Senegalese families do not have any relatives abroad.

Young people opt for migration in order to save themselves. All too often, they simply cannot find prospects at home. Traditional sectors such as fisheries and agriculture do not provide attractive livelihoods (see box). These sectors are struggling due to international competition, which EU policies have helped to foster.

Attractive formal employment opportunities are scarce. Neither Senegalese policymaking nor international development cooperation have changed that. Education opportunities are poor too. Private institutions charge expensive tuition, and state universities are overcrowded.

Young people try to adapt as best as they can. Many end up as informal traders in

tions, moreover, have been shaped by European ideas.

People are constantly told that they can succeed at home and should therefore stay in Senegal. Young people who die of thirst in the Sahara or drown in the Mediterranean in attempts to reach Europe are no longer considered to be victims. They are accused of being unambitious, under-achieving and suicidal.

### MIGRATION SEEN AS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Under EU pressure, Senegal has equated migration by boat with criminal human trafficking. Accordingly, many young peo-



Those who drown trying to get to Europe are no longer seen as victims: MSF rescue operation on the Mediterranean Sea.

agglomerations like Dakar. Competition for promising locations is very tough, however, so many fail to gain a foothold. It is deeply ironic that they are classified as “informal” workers even though they pay taxes.

Senegal thus retains a reputation for being a country from where migrants leave, through which migrants transit and where migrants from abroad arrive to stay. Legal migration to Europe or North America is hardly possible anymore. Public percep-

ple opt for other life-threatening options. Even the intention to leave the country is now considered to be illegal. This is deeply problematic. After all, the accused persons are entitled to being in Senegal due to their citizenship of either Senegal or another ECOWAS member.

European Frontex agents, moreover, are supporting controls along Senegal's land borders. They are making migration within ECOWAS more difficult and isolating the



country from its neighbours. So far, the government has not concluded a formal agreement with Frontex, but the mere presence of European agents raises concerns.

Government action remains non-transparent moreover. Civil-society organisations do not know what negotiations the government is involved in and what it wants to achieve in its relations with EU partners. To fulfil their role as public watchdogs, independent organisations need more information. They should take part in international talks as observers.

The policies of Senegal’s government obviously serve European interests. The EU’s approach to migration, however, focuses entirely on security issues, but disregards many other important things such as inequality and social justice, abuses of human rights and democratic principles, non-transparent administration and the discrimination of women. All of these things, of course, feed people’s desire to leave.

Indeed, grievances are so serious that Senegal’s reputation as a democracy looks questionable. Public opinion is being manipulated and policymakers do not live up to election promises. The law entrenches gender inequality. The vast majority of people are farmers or working in the informal sector. They all lack social protection, including, for example, old-age pensions. That the livelihoods of millions of people is called “informal” is evidence of how dysfunctional the postcolonial state really is.

The rules of international migration are made by the dominant economic powers. They consider migration to be a threat

even though they need it. They claim the authority to decide who is a good and who is a bad migrant. The needs of disadvantaged communities in low-income countries do not count. This attitude is racist and xenophobic.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, masses of Europeans left for America. Their exodus eased the poverty that marked the industrial revolution. Today Africa needs that kind of support. In view of strong population growth and overburdened economies, migration is a natural phenomenon. The EU should facilitate it. Instead, it is interfering in the domestic affairs of African countries in attempts to prevent it as much as possible.



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## Dead-end sectors

Artisanal fishing and traditional farming do not offer attractive long-term livelihoods to Senegal’s youth.

Senegal has signed a fisheries agreement which permits foreign trawlers to operate along the country’s coasts. The National Union of Senegal’s Artisanal Fisherfolk (Unapas – Union nationale des pêcheurs artisanaux du Sénégal) was not asked for advice and the exact text of the agreement was not made public. Unapas represents its members, including in relations with the government.

The fisheries agreement and the abusive fishing practices of foreign parties has caused serious discontent. According to Unapas, there have been accidents involving foreign trawl-

ers and small local boats, with Senegalese people dying or disappearing at sea.

Fish stocks are being depleted along Senegal’s shores moreover. Fishing boats must now travel 150 kilometres per day, which is expensive and dangerous. Typically, investments that would be required are unaffordable. All too often, boats do not return from fishing tours.

At the same time, fish prices are rising in Senegal. Many households can no longer afford this protein-rich food. The livelihoods of thousands of women who conserve fish by traditional means such as drying are at risk. Exports of dried fish to neighbouring countries used to be important, but are now dwindling. The govern-

ment, however, is not responding to such grievances.

Traditional smallholder farms are under considerable pressure too. Climate change



Landownership tends to be insecure: smallholder fields in Senegal.

often means failing rains. Fertile soils are being diminished. Moreover, imported fruits and vegetables are flooding local markets. Part of the problem is that French supermarket chains are increasingly crowding out traditional food markets.

Smallholder families typically lack enforceable titles to the fields they traditionally own. Things are similar in many African countries, and there is a pattern of governments selling such land to multilateral corporations. In Senegal, many families are aware of potentially being dispossessed at any time. It is common for them to sell their land to private bidders in fear and haste.

In view of these things, neither fishing nor farming offer young people attractive long-term livelihoods. Accordingly, many are eager to leave the country. **FF**



In 2018, Kenyans and South Sudanese rallied in Nairobi to demand that assets of leaders who benefit from civil strife be frozen.

## MIGRATION IN AFRICA

## Being a refugee in Kenya

**Kenya offers refugees from neighbouring South Sudan, a country torn by seemingly endless war, safety. But although integration into Kenya's multi-ethnic society should be easy, most South Sudanese find themselves in dead-end situations, unable to find work or even open a bank account.**

By Alba Nakuwa

I came to Nairobi in 2005 fleeing the civil war in South Sudan. I was eight years old. Now I am one of the 140,000 refugees from my country who, according to statistics of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), currently live in Kenya. I knew from the start that my life in this new country would not be easy. But the horrific situation we fled from prepared most of us to be ready for pretty much anything.

We refugees are not the only link between South Sudan and Kenya. The two neighbouring countries have always had quite a lot in common. Several ethnic groups have a history in both countries, especially Nilotic speakers such as the Luo and Dinka. Today, moreover, both countries belong to

the East African Community and thus have close political and economic ties.

Kenya has a long track-record of providing asylum and protection to South Sudanese. In 1983, a civil war between the central government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army broke out. That war ended in 2005, and South Sudan became independent. Nonetheless, the country is not at peace. Violent clashes between official security forces and rebel militias continue. According to the UNHCR, a total of 2.4 million people have been displaced.

Some South Sudanese have lived for decades in the infamous Kakuma refugee camp and its extension, Kalobeyei settlement, near the border between Kenya and South Sudan. I was lucky, because my stay there lasted only about a month and I could move to Kenya's capital soon.

I felt privileged as well to be among those who had the opportunity to receive a full formal education, from primary school to university. Of course it was not easy to study in a foreign country. We refugee children typically spoke Arabic or local languages like Didinga or Laarim. The more

English and Swahili I understood, the more things began to make sense to me. I also began to make more friends at school.

At first, I was scared of the new school and the new environment. Kenyan culture, however, is quite diverse, comprising at least 43 ethnic groups plus refugees from other countries like Somalia. Everyone is a stranger here from time to time and in different environments, so the interactions at school were quite natural. I soon felt well included.

### VIOLENCE AS A NORM

Refugees receive UNHCR support to enrol in school. Many struggle nonetheless because they lack documents and proper guidance on how to proceed in the new system. Among refugees in Kenya, the number of school dropouts is indeed quite high. Financial stress is another reason for this. Although education in Kenya is mostly free at the primary level, it becomes difficult at the secondary and tertiary levels, where tuition charges cost considerable amounts of money. Here, too, I was lucky. I – and several other refugees – managed to complete a diploma course with the support of a German nun. But not everyone is that fortunate.

I consider peace and stability in Kenya a blessing. Most of us feel safe here. The Kenyan constitution contains clear guidelines and democratic principles, which in



most cases serve to avoid conflict. The history of South Sudan, by contrast, is marked by war and violence.

In Chukudum, the village where I was born, most people own one or two unlicensed guns. I have seen heated arguments among neighbours turn into cases of murder. Violence is a norm in South Sudan. Therefore, to live in Kenya freely without feeling threatened is Kenya's greatest gift to me.



In Greater Nairobi, most South Sudanese live in rented flats. We are proud to be able to cater for the roof over our heads despite our refugee status.

However, our status has some downsides. Unemployment remains a major problem for many South Sudanese, even after getting university degrees, integrating into everyday life as much as possible and mastering Swahili and other Kenyan languages. Work permits are hard to get, and when jobs are available, Kenyan nationals are typically given preference.

The lack of legal documents makes it difficult to open bank accounts and receive medical services. Access to public health care is particularly difficult. We often end up paying more for treatment than would normally be expected. Unfortunately, there is discrimination in Kenya's multi-ethnic society as well. We experience open neglect and isolation, but people also tell jokes or call us names to remind us where we come from.

Kenya's 2021 Refugee Act inspires some hope that problems faced by South Sudanese and other refugees may be solved to some extent. For example, the bill affirms that refugees should be able to enter employment and also trade freely if they have the necessary qualifications.

The situation of refugees must certainly improve. Most refugees are young people with great potential. Kenya, South Sudan and other countries of origin could all benefit. It is a shame that this potential remains largely untapped. The refugee status keeps them from making a meaningful contribution to African society – and to the future of our planet in general.



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### FLIGHT AND DISPLACEMENT

## A scourge of humanity

In his book “*Flucht – eine Menschheitsgeschichte*” (“Flight – a story of humanity”), German historian Andreas Kossert examines a recurring drama. He focuses on the experiences and histories of the refugees themselves, as well as the potential benefits they offer host countries.

By Dagmar Wolf

“There is a refugee in us all”, Rupert Neudeck, founder of the aid organisation Cap Anamur, has famously said. He established the organisation in 1979 in order to rescue Vietnamese refugees from the South China Sea. Today, Cap Anamur is involved in activities around the world. Neudeck, who died in 2016, traced his engagement back to his own experience. As a child, he was forced to flee Danzig shortly before the end of World War II. The refugee experience shaped his life. It also became clear to him

that migration is part of most people's backgrounds.

Neudeck's quote is mentioned in the book “*Flucht – eine Menschheitsgeschichte*” by historian Andreas Kossert. Stories of people who had to leave their homes are as old as humanity itself, Kossert writes. They are a central theme in all cultures, languages and world regions. Indeed, they are found in almost every family.

Kossert's book covers a wide arc: from the expulsion of the first people from paradise, to the banishment of Jews, to the expulsion of Muslims from Spain in the Middle Ages, to the enslavement and abduction of people from Africa, to the terror fuelled by nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, up to the refugee movements of the present, which are being driven by civil wars, terror and the climate crisis.

Kossert focuses on Europe and the Middle East, though he also mentions Asia,

Africa and Latin America. While the causes and circumstances that make people flee vary very much, refugees' experience is quite similar, according to him. It is marked by violence, humiliation, fear, loss, pain, stress and hostility.

The author is not interested in presenting or examining the historical background of refugee movements. His topic is how the refugees themselves experience and represent their situation. He lets their voices be heard in personal testimonies, including interviews, diary entries and literary publications.

### DISRUPTION AND LOSS

Flight always means a disruption that splits life into a “before” and “after”, Kossert writes. It is a break with one's ancestors' lives. What is left behind includes investments, land and even intangible values that had been passed on for generations. Obviously, the loss of neighbours and friends, the places of one's previous life, even the cemeteries where one's forebears are buried, matter too.

Many refugees leave their homes forever. Their previous lives end when they



Flight out of German territories in Eastern Europe in the spring of 1945 from the advancing troops of the Red Army.

lock their front door. As Kossert explains, the key becomes the symbol for everything that was left behind. It is often carefully retained for the day of return, which – in all too many cases – never comes. A considerable number of people pass keys on from generation to generation. That habit was already common among Sephardic Jews in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Other refugees take along a symbolic handful of earth. That is what the Ukrainian Anna Sudyn did, when she was expelled by the Polish army after World War II, not wanting to be laid to rest entirely in foreign soil.

## REFUGEES CHANGE SOCIETIES

Even after finding supposed safety, the experience of losing one's home and becoming a refugee is deeply traumatising. Humiliation and violence, as well as forced labour and physical stress, foreignness in the country of arrival and grief over losses weigh heavily on people. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable.

“Whether they come from Syria, Silesia or Myanmar, refugees serve as projection screens for those who fear to fall behind or see their personal security threatened in the countries they arrive in,” Kossert points out. In such contexts, refugees' individual fates do not count. According to Kossert, “the” refugees are turned into a faceless hoard that deserves no sympathy. Terms like “flood”, “avalanche”, “wave” or “stream” promote the perception of them being a kind of natural disaster that must be held back with high walls and dams.

What xenophobia neglects is that refugees can enrich and modernise host societies. Kossert illustrates this aspect by referring to German history. After World War II, 14 million displaced persons fled to the allies' four occupation zones in Germany. They brought along knowledge and skills, maintaining traditions regarding, for instance, music and food. Indeed, refugees enrich the menus of their host countries almost everywhere.

For individuals, flight and displacement are a human tragedy. Seen on a larg-

er scale, they're a global catastrophe. But as Kossert shows, the refugees are not the cause – whether in the Mediterranean Sea or elsewhere. Political decisions turn people into refugees. It might happen to anyone – and it is happening to more and more people, Kossert emphasises. He wants the causes of flight to be tackled in cooperative efforts. That includes ostracising the perpetration of the violence that leads to flight and displacement. The author considers it important to raise international awareness.

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Apprenticeship workshop on masonry in the premises of displaced persons in Mali.

#### GERMAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## Tapping the potential of migration

**Migration has both positive and potentially negative effects on the lives of individuals, as well as on states and multilateral relations. It is important to promote the transformative potential of migration and, in the context of displacement, to make meaningful use of synergy effects, for example with humanitarian aid.**

By **Stephanie Deubler and Astrid Peter**

Seen from an economic standpoint, migration is double-edged. Money transfers from migrants to their families boost the economies of their countries of origin. Desperately needed skilled workers fill gaps in host countries, but are often lacking in their countries of origin.

Development cooperation must therefore tap the potential of migration for the socio-economic development of the countries involved and at the same time minimise risks. Measures must create as many benefits as possible for countries of origin and host countries, but also for migrants

and their families. Safe, orderly and regular migration is therefore also anchored in the tenth UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Apart from the universal human rights that apply to all migrants, there is no international legal framework regulating migration on a global scale. Displacement across international borders, on the other hand, is a special form of migration undertaken for an individual's survival and is defined by the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The declaration paved the way for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, both adopted in 2018. The Global Compact on Refugees is based on the so-called humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, which establishes humanitarian aid, development and peace as cornerstones of refugee aid measures.

Thus, the role of development cooperation was clearly defined in the context of displacement, for instance with regard to the integration of refugees in social security systems. Previously, humanitarian aid typically provided care to refugees and internally displaced people. However, in view of rising numbers of people on the run and, in particular, increasingly protracted displacement situations, many different actors need to work together in a coordinated manner.

In addition to administering humanitarian aid, which is designed to provide short-term help, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH creates longer-term prospects for affected people and makes use of the synergy potential of other actors. In northern Uganda, for example, GIZ is working together with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on a project financed by the European Union (EU) and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to support refugees and host communities.

The goal is to promote the Ugandan strategy for local economic development at decentralised level and to strengthen district administrations. The cooperation of GIZ teams with local UNHCR representations and Ugandan authorities facilitates the preparation of district development plans and ensures that refugees are taken into account.

### INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IS A STATE MATTER

The protection of internally displaced people is the responsibility of the countries of origin themselves, and according to the principle of territorial integrity, international aid is only possible with the consent of the government in question. The UN's guiding principles on internal displacement were adopted in 1998. They are based on international humanitarian law and human-rights agreements, but are not legally binding; they are only an international standard.

Furthermore, in 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres established the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. The recommendations of this panel form the foundation of the UN Action Agenda on Internal Displacement from 2022, which presents a vision for better prevention and management of internal displacement crises. GIZ supports the implementation of



this agenda worldwide on behalf of various commissioners.

Gender-specific disadvantages can be exacerbated in all refugee situations, for instance due to a lack of shelters. In that scenario, the risk of gender-based violence increases particularly for women and girls, but also for men, boys and LGBTIQ+ people. Increased vulnerability can lead to dependency and exploitation. In accordance with the guidelines for feminist foreign and development policy of the BMZ and the Federal Foreign Office, which were presented in March, GIZ therefore supports the establish-

ment of women's centres in refugee contexts with funding from its commissioners, which provide protected spaces and offer needs-based training, courses and leisure opportunities.

In this way, a refugee situation can also have transformative potential. Traditional roles can be questioned in a new context and gender relations can be renegotiated. This process offers opportunities to break out of traditional gender roles, though it is often accompanied by violence and conflict. GIZ's empowerment approaches and awareness-raising measures therefore think

about gender relations from the outset and include men wherever possible.

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## GIZ projects on migration and displacement in Africa

In the horn of Africa, GIZ – financed by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – has advised the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) since 2017 on how to improve implementation of regional displacement and migration policies. The IGAD member states of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda – Eritrea's membership is currently suspended – are facing numerous challenges. Fragile statehood, internal and cross-border conflicts and increasingly severe impacts from the climate crisis are factors that are contributing to migration and displacement within and out of the region.

The countries are typically countries of origin, transit zones and destinations all at the same time. In 2021, East Africa hosted over 4.1 million refugees and around 11 million internally displaced people. GIZ helps IGAD offer lasting solutions to migrants and refugees and implement regional policy

goals in relation to migration and displacement.

Additionally, GIZ works with IGAD to strengthen the capacities of local governments in border areas within the region in order to improve basic services for migrants, refugees and host communities. More generally, GIZ's project should help member states to better learn from experience as well as to harmonise regional migration data in an effort to base policy decisions more firmly on facts.

In Mali, with financing from the BMZ and Canada's foreign ministry, GIZ is strength-

ening the socio-economic participation of internally displaced people, refugees and vulnerable local people in host communities in the regions of Kayes, Ségou, Mopti, Gao and the greater Bamako area.

Violent extremism, assaults and organised crime have increased here in recent years. Together with growing ethnic conflicts, these situations are leading to more internal displacement and therefore to major challenges for the communities that take in the people. There is also a flow of refugees from neighbouring countries into Mali.

Conflicts over food and water resources are increasing accordingly. Humanitarian aid can only act selectively here and does not offer long-term solutions. Another problem

is the low rate of employment among internally displaced people and refugees. What's more, these people are often suffering from the physical and psychological consequences of the violence and displacement they have experienced. The situation is even more precarious for women and girls due to pre-existing inequalities and discrimination.

State structures are not capable of appropriately meeting these manifold challenges and promoting social cohesion. For that reason, the GIZ project in Mali focuses on the following three areas:

- professional and social education,
- cooperation with the private sector and
- strengthening social cohesion and municipal development.

The approach rests on building individual and organisational capacities and strengthening cooperation and networking structures. In implementing it, the project is working with organisations like the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as well as regional authorities and other decentralised services.



**Somali delegation during a conference organised by IGAD to promote data-driven migration policies.**



Migrants queue in Bajo Chiquito, a Panamanian community in the Darién region, after crossing the jungle.

though research has shown that their presence cannot be conclusively linked to this. Nevertheless, there are Venezuelan criminal groups that have expanded their activities to other countries such as Colombia through migrant networks, and migrants and refugees have been involved in criminal activities that were already taking place in Colombia.

### MINORS CROSSING THE JUNGLE

The resulting stigmatisation and general resentment further limit the opportunities of the law-abiding majority of Venezuelan migrants. Having left their country of origin, where infant mortality is high and living conditions are low, the rejection of their neighbouring countries forces them to continue looking for greener pastures – mostly beyond the Darién Gap.

And it is not only young men who venture on these dangerous treks. All over Latin America, pregnant women or families with infants are crossing the jungle or mountains like the Andes. Twenty percent of the people who get across the Darién Gap are minors. The risks that parents and families take underline their tragic situation.

A whole industry has emerged, mostly run by illegal organisations, offering services such as transport, food, bribing officials and access to information about routes. This is another reason why more and more people are trying to travel through dangerous terrain in Latin America in search of protection or a better life elsewhere – preferably in North America.

And they will most likely continue to do so as inflation has risen in the region and economic growth has stalled in many places. Those Venezuelans who have already managed to emigrate to another Latin American country find themselves forced to return to



#### MIGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA

## A dangerous trek

**The exodus of people of all ages from Venezuela persists steadily. However, their migration comes on the heels of changing macro-economic dynamics, showing that they are increasingly seeking access to North America.**

By Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón

With different Latin American countries showing varying degrees of hostility towards Venezuelan refugees, the already existing popularity of North America as a migration destination is increasing. The government of Panama recorded 250,000 migrants and refugees crossing the so-called Darién Gap between Colombia and Panama in 2022. Crossing this jungle area is considered particularly dangerous, however, the route has always been used not only by migrants and refugees, but also by drug traffickers and smugglers.

Most of those crossing the jungle in the Colombian and Panamanian border region are Venezuelans on their way to the US or Canada, although people from other countries are also taking the dangerous route. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are currently more than 7.13 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela worldwide – a quarter of its population.

Countries on the receiving end of people leaving Venezuela have been lukewarm at best in their obligation to protect refugees seeking shelter. Even in Colombia, where a leftist government is now in power, the new government has toned down its support for Venezuelans and has hardly any reporting system to track the number of refugees and migrants.

At the same time, however, the case of Colombia illustrates how internal tensions and global challenges collide with a country's capacity and resources to protect people. Colombia, like the rest of Latin America, has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, although some economic indicators seem to be recovering. This, combined with dwindling support from the international community, leads to limited protection of already vulnerable migrants and refugees.

The Colombian Bureau of Migration estimates that there are currently almost three million Venezuelans in Colombia. This means that Venezuelans make up almost six percent of Colombia's population. Their presence has led to xenophobic rhetoric from populist politicians calling for the deportation of Venezuelans, as well as to the impression that Venezuelans are directly responsible for the deterioration of the security situation in Colombia, al-

Venezuela as they are no longer able to cover their own growing expenses while supporting their families at home. The only other option seems to be to continue their journey and look for places with higher wages and better living conditions. Most of them believe such places can be found in Canada or the USA.

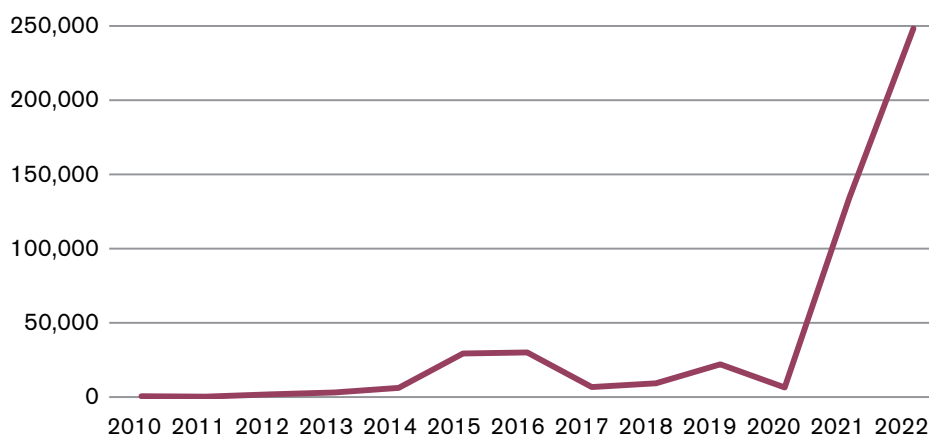
From a macroeconomic perspective, the US pressure through the Federal Re-

serve System does not help the situation. By raising interest rates, there are several domino effects. First, this increases the debt service of developing countries (which reduces the funds available for social programmes). Second, it crowds out international investment (which leads to higher exchange rates). And third, it increases the cost of importing goods (which directly af-

fects countries that rely on imports of basic products such as fuel or grain). This makes life unsustainable in the face of weak social-protection systems.

The only way to stop people from embarking on deadly routes is to improve their living conditions at home. This requires enabling and promoting equitable economic growth in the countries of the region. As things stand now in Venezuela, the yoke of the authoritarian regime and international sanctions will continue and the outlook for the international economy remains bleak. The US Federal Reserve's actions continue to fuel the dynamics that will lead to an even greater exodus of people and the decline of more economies in the region.

**Number of migrants and refugees crossing the border between Panama and Colombia**



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Chart: Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón

## Closing the jungle

According to recent reports, the US Department of Homeland Security has negotiated an agreement with the Colombian and Panamanian governments to prevent migrants from crossing the land bridge between the two countries. This is also to stop them from crossing the dangerous jungle in the border region (the Darién Gap, see main text) and would ultimately stop the increasing flow of people heading north to the US or Canada. The question is whether this US-brokered agreement is now driving a militarisation of the border.

While it can be argued that the presence of state

armed forces can be helpful and necessary, it must not be forgotten that states must use other means than armed forces if they want to help migrants. Weapons are pointless. The crisis in the Darién Gap requires humanitarian assistance and support, as well as recognition of its causes and the inadequacy of current measures.

Approaching the migrant crisis from a military perspective inevitably leads to the migrants being caught in the crossfire between armed forces and drug traffickers. As drug traffickers and gangs exert control over migrants crossing the border, it is likely that greater

numbers of armed forces will lead to clashes as the gangs and traffickers seek to maintain their control over the illegal migration business and defend their drug trafficking routes. It will also lead to an increase in the income of human traffickers and mafia structures. They will only make crossing the Darién Gap more expensive given the higher costs of trafficking. This will also mean that migrants will try new (and more dangerous) routes, e.g. via the Caribbean or the Pacific Ocean.

Institutionalised migration channels need to be expanded more (such as the US government's promised expansion of humanitarian entry permits). Such measures also enable the building of institutions capable of handling the

increasing influx of people from other continents (mainly Asia and Africa).

African and Asian migrants accounted for 21,000 of the people crossing the Darién Gap in 2022. These include people from Senegal, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Somalia and other countries. The migration of Africans and Asians through the Colombian jungle is a response to the lack of access of migrants to formal migration routes. It also shows the increasingly transnational character of flight and migration. The fact that this path is becoming more and more attractive for people from all over the world once again makes it clear how important it is to ensure that they can make a living and lead decent lives in their home countries. FP



EUROPEAN UNION

## Tighter border controls

**More people are fleeing across the Mediterranean to the EU, which is responding by strengthening its border agency Frontex. A number of EU countries are tightening their refugee policies – often at the expense of human rights.**

By Oliver Harry Gerson

After a few comparatively quiet years, the route from North Africa and Turkey across the Mediterranean has once again become very busy. In 2022, according to the EU, more than 90,000 migrants arrived via the central Mediterranean route. That was over 50 % more than in 2021.

In response, scepticism towards migration is growing in the EU. In January 2023, the EU Commission unveiled a strategy to significantly increase the number of migrants who are sent back to their countries of origin because they do not have the right to stay in the EU. In recent years, the EU tried to increase the repatriation rate by motivating people to return voluntarily. Now, the EU seems to be keen on closer cooperation with the authorities of its member states.

Frontex, the European border-control and coast-guard agency, is affected directly. It is in charge of monitoring the EU's external borders. It operates at sea, on land and in the air. Since its launch in 2005, it has, among other things, provided support for EU member states' management of the EU borders. It also maintains relations with third countries with an eye to enforcing the repatriation of persons obliged to leave the EU. In light of growing migration flows, Frontex' duties are increasingly important.

In 2019, the EU extended Frontex's mandate. Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 gave the agency the power to carry out border checks and register migrants. It also gave a green light to the development of a "standing corps" of 10,000 border guards. It is to be set up by 2027. Its staff will include officers of Frontex as well the member states.

It is similarly important that cooperation with third countries is changing. Fron-

tex is now allowed to assist certain countries with border-related tasks anywhere on their territory, not just in areas bordering the EU. Such an agreement with the Republic of Moldova, for example, took force on 1 November 2022. Northern Macedonia followed

ined once. When a person crosses a border without the required documents, the state concerned is examining the application for protection.

Particularly large numbers of refugees arrive in countries on the Mediterranean Sea, especially Italy, Greece, Spain and Malta. Under the Dublin system, their authorities are responsible for registering the arrivals. That entails administrative effort and expenses.

To avoid this burden or at least reduce it, the national governments have two op-



Italian Coast Guard rescuing refugees in the central Mediterranean.

suit on 1 April 2023. The EU wants to discuss similar agreements with Mauritania and Senegal.

### EFFECTS OF THE DUBLIN SYSTEM

Some of Europe's current border management problems are rooted in the so-called Dublin system. It is named after the "Dublin III Regulation" which applies in all EU member states as well as Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland. The system is designed to ensure that any asylum application filed in the EU will only be exam-

ined. One is to prevent refugees from reaching their shores, which can result in increasingly drastic action by border agencies. The other is to forgo official procedures, and transporting refugees, as soon as they arrive, to other EU states or at least allowing them to travel there. This is called "secondary migration".

Other EU members have repeatedly volunteered to help their Mediterranean partners by taking in refugees or supporting them financially. However, the EU has not been able to agree on binding rules regarding the fair distribution of refugees.

Countries that are particularly hard hit by illegal migration thus increasingly act on their own.

### TIGHTER REGULATIONS

Italy, for example, is making civilian rescue operations on the Mediterranean more difficult by adopting legislation that is questionable under international law. Italy forces ships that have rescued people from distress to head for an assigned port immediately; they are not allowed to provide assistance to other boats in distress, even if they are nearby. The rescued persons must be asked to fill in asylum applications on board of the ship and indicate in which EU country they wish to get protection. If rescue teams fail to observe these rules, they face heavy fines. Vessels may be confiscated.

Moreover, ships that do arrive in European ports with rescued migrants can be detained for weeks or even months. The fugitives concerned are thus often left to

themselves in destitution. The cruel calculation is: the fewer people step ashore, the less administrative work looms.

EU citizens have become used to horrific images of refugees and stranded migrants. Right-wing populists fan fears with the narrative of governments implementing plans for “ethnic replacement”. They want people to believe that a “blocco navale”, a naval blockade of North African shores is the obvious solution to all problems.

Frontex is currently both part of the solution and part of the problem. A coast guard can only fight the symptoms, but not the causes of displacement. The agency’s budget is growing, it is getting more equipment and its jurisdiction has been expanded. This trend raises concerns that the scope for humane treatment of refugees and migrants is narrowing.

The humanitarian situation is tense. It can only be eased if the Mediterranean EU members have a strong say in defining so-

lutions. Instead of criticising the way these countries are dealing with migrants, the EU and less-affected member states should do more in support of their disproportionately burdened neighbours. For example, they should help them to cope with the huge financial and humanitarian tasks.

### LITERATURE

**Regulation (EU) 2019/1896:**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1896>

**Dublin III Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013):**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R0604>



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## Protection guaranteed by law

In Frontex, the EU has created a European border-control and coast-guard agency. Nonetheless, the member states still bear the main responsibility for protecting external borders. Frontex operates within an extensive regulatory framework.

If they lack required documents, people from third countries are generally not allowed to enter the EU. But that does not mean that they have no rights at all. Border protection must comply with international law and meet minimum standards. At sea, for example, operations must be in line with both international and European law.

International law includes the International Law of the Sea and the Geneva Conventions. Article 33 of the Geneva Refugee Convention

spells out the principle of non-refoulement. In simple terms, this means that no person may be sent back against his or her will to a country where he or she faces persecution.



Refugee rights activists in front of the German federal parliament, 2022.

European law includes the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Every EU institution and every member state is bound by it. It protects non-EU citizens when they are confronted with authorities of the EU or its member states.

The European Convention on Human Rights is an interna-

tional treaty. It does not only apply to the EU, but requires all 46 member states of the Council of Europe to observe minimum human-rights standards in dealings with all persons subject to their jurisdiction.

Even beyond the EU and the Council of Europe, European task forces cannot simply ignore human rights. The treaties generally have extraterritorial effect.

In theory at least, these agreements and charters create a seamless protective space for all persons and all places where “European authority” is exercised.

Nevertheless, the treatment of refugees by individual EU states can violate fundamental human rights, for example when countries bordering the Mediterranean keep refugees off their shores by disproportionate means or when refugees are detained in inhumane conditions (see main article). OHG

## HIGHER LEARNING

# Two countries, two university systems

**Political scientist Suparna Banerjee went to university in India before moving to Germany to get a PhD. In this essay, she gives a personal account of how she experienced the two different education systems.**

**By Suparna Banerjee**

I grew up in Eastern India in the city of Kolkata – formerly Calcutta. In the western world, it is popularly known as the poverty-haunted place where Mother Teresa lived. In India, it is widely recognised as the cultural capital of the country.

I obtained my bachelor's degree in sociology from the prestigious Presidency College followed by a master's degree in the same subject from the University of Calcutta. Both are government-run and date back to the colonial era. With a scholarship of India's Ministry of External Affairs I also obtained a master's degree in foreign policy studies from the University of Calcutta.

In 2016, I began a PhD programme in political science at Bonn University's Centre for Development Research. It too is a governmental university. The German Academic Exchange Service supported me with a scholarship. I wrote my dissertation on internal violent conflict in India, assessing how the Indian state has been responding to Maoism over several decades.

The most striking difference is obvious. German universities are generally better equipped. The libraries offer more resources, the buildings are in a better shape and the student-lecturer ratios are more favourable. The reason, of course, is that Germany is a richer country. Accordingly, it does not make much sense to compare the performance of both systems. In one sense, however, Indian colleges are certainly superior. Their teaching staff is coping with greater numbers of students in more challenging institutional contexts.

A big difference is that university politics in India currently tends to be about

protecting democracy and human rights in opposition to the right-wing national government of Narendra Modi. In Germany, things are far more tranquil.

Regarding the approach to teaching social sciences, I see similarities as well as differences. I am sharing my personal perspective here and expect that other people's experience may well be different.

Throughout my time in tertiary education in India, professors and lecturers largely focused on teaching theories. Understanding them is certainly important and a pre-condition for any in-depth analysis of society. However, little attention was paid in India to how the theories explain current social life. How they can contribute to solving problems, for instance in terms of drafting and implementing policies, was not on the agenda.

While Indian students are expected to memorise theories precisely, their German counterparts are supposed to test their merits in regard to new questions and assess how they compare to other theories. The

German approach is more exciting intellectually and actually leads to a deeper understanding of theories studied. Moreover, it equips students for professional life outside university.

In India, this hands-on approach is lacking. Accordingly, an increasing number of students opt for medicine, natural sciences and engineering. Commerce and business administration are also considered to be more promising in terms of job prospects than sociology or political science.

It fits the picture that German universities do more to promote writing skills. Social sciences require people to express themselves precisely. Nonetheless, writing skills are not considered a priority in Indian universities. The sad truth is that students' writing often remains amateurish and dull.

## LOOKING BEYOND THE IVORY TOWER

If social studies are to have an impact on society, what happens in academia must somehow reach a wider public. In my experience, German universities tend to be more aware of the need. However, there is a major snag, particularly regarding international-affairs studies.

German academia mostly uses the German language. This habit often delivers somewhat provincial results. On the one hand, too many German scholars take too little account of what is written in other languages. On the other, German-language



The author in front of Bonn University's main building.



publications do not attract a large international readership.

It is patently absurd that various German universities still force PhD students to write their theses in German, even when they are tackling topics in far-away countries. To have any impact in South Asia, Africa or Latin America, they would have to write in English, French, Spanish or maybe Portuguese. Nonetheless, the PhD theses submitted to German university all too often spell out methods, research data, theoretical concepts and cutting-edge conclusions in German.

The Centre for Development Research in Bonn expects students to write in language regionally relevant to their research. Unfortunately, that is not the general norm.

Even in Bonn, however, I sometimes felt a sense of parochialism. My research required specific understanding of India's socio-economic and political atmosphere. Unfortunately, it could not be taken for granted at Bonn University's specialised centre. My supervisors had hardly been to India had acquired most of their knowledge through peer-reviewed papers and books.

Bookish knowledge, however, does not provide keys to understanding India's forest regions. Precious little research has been done there, and the tribal Adivasi communities, who live there, have distinct cultures of their own. In the end, I was unable to include all the research insights that mattered to me in my PhD thesis. I therefore wrote another book, which was accepted by Routledge, a publisher with a strong international reputation.

Preparing for exams is less stressful in Germany than in India. Indian students try to memorise as much as possible by heart. In Germany, that is not very helpful because one will not be expected to replicate classic works, but to apply their basic concepts to a new context.

In India, marks and grades are very important. Good results become a social spectacle of pride, while mediocre and poor grades often become breeding grounds for depression and frustration. The general idea is that public exposure will lead to better results because it rewards excellence.

In Germany, excellence is understood in a different way. The focus is less on showing off knowledge and more on whether persons come up with interesting ideas. Whether that becomes evident in discussions,



Student protests in Kolkata in 2020.

presentations, homework or exams matters less. Generally speaking, German professors and lecturers tend to pay more attention to students' overall performance than their Indian counterparts do.

### HIERARCHIES MATTER IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Hierarchies matter in both systems, however. Professors do not like to be contradicted. In India, that means students are expected to reiterate what the professors say. In Germany, they are supposed to come up with ideas that coincide with the professors' thinking. In my experience, senior white men do not always welcome unconventional thoughts from a brown young woman.

In both countries, governments invest substantially in education – from the primary to the tertiary levels. Universities in particular are held in high esteem. However, in India corruption, inefficiency and inadequate supervision have made many people lose faith in public schools. If citizens have the choice (which means they are able to pay tuition), they mostly prefer private schools over public ones. However, faith in public-sector colleges has not declined in the same way. Young people long to be admitted, and if they are, that boosts their social standing.

Indian education, moreover, faces language problems of its own. Government-run schools focus on vernacular languages and Hindi. English, however, is more important than Hindi – not only in tertiary education, but equally so in formal-sector business, public administration, law and politics. Many parents therefore opt for private

English-medium schools. An unwarranted side-effect is that urban middle-classes perpetuate educational advantages by spending on their kids' tuition.

In Germany, there are a few private international schools too, and they probably perpetuate privilege too. Most parents, however, do not see the advantages they offer as indispensable for their children's future success.

Private universities exist in both countries. Nonetheless, the institutions of higher learning with the greatest esteem generally tend to be run by governments.

Both nations still have a long way to go to fulfil the vision of Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian Noble Laureate in Literature. In a poem, he depicted a world „where the mind is without fear where knowledge is free“.

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Kenya provides asylum to refugees from South Sudan – but many of them struggle to find work.

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