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faith communities in
Sri Lanka

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go along with risks
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FOCUS

How to eradicate hunger

The international community produces enough food for everyone. Warfare and social disparities nonetheless prevent about 800 million people from getting what they need. Improving the situation in remote areas of developing countries and emerging markets is especially important. SDG2, “Zero hunger”, is achievable, but requires political determination.

Title: Market vendor in northern Côte d'Ivoire.
Photo: picture-alliance/empics/Samuel Shivambu/
BackpagePix Staff





Our focus section on food security starts on page 20. It pertains to the UN's 2nd Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2): Zero hunger. It also has a bearing on other SDGs.

How to end hunger

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not a charitable programme for a few poor countries that we can afford to neglect in difficult times. They are the key to ensuring a liveable future on this planet, which, in a few decades, must feed 10 billion people. Should the SDG agenda fail, things will turn quite dark even in countries that have so far enjoyed privileges.

Progress towards SDG2, the eradication of hunger, is too slow. Though the international community has been producing enough food for everyone in principle for decades, 800 million people are cut off from supplies because of war or because they are too poor to buy what they need. One tenth of the world population is thus suffering existential need. Their share is too large, though the decline from one sixth around the turn of the millennium shows that success is possible.

In a frightening trend, however, the climate crisis is now thwarting many long-

“The excessive meat consumption that typically goes along with prosperity must decline. Industrial-scale livestock farming is linked to dramatic carbon emissions and excessive pesticide usage.”

standing agricultural practices. Should things get much worse, global harvests will at some point no longer suffice for everyone even in theory. The big challenge is to make farms resilient.

Solutions must be locally specific, so local communities matter very much. It is essential to safeguard and enhance the health of soils. They can be made more productive and more resilient to flooding and drought. Attractive win-win situations arise when soils store carbon. Because tropical

and subtropical ecosystems are quite fragile, modernisation must proceed carefully.

Progress depends on good rural infrastructure. In the lack of it, rural communities stay condemned to traditional practices that make them vulnerable and keep them poor. They need access to markets, facilities for storage, processing and distribution as well as reliable institutions for education and healthcare. Without these things, food security is impossible in remote areas of developing countries and emerging markets. The climate crisis is making this old insight even more important.

The leaders of hunger-affected countries bear a huge responsibility. They must safeguard peace and build essential infrastructure. Otherwise, need and violence become increasingly likely. It is politically explosive when masses of people lack any promising outlook.

We also know, however, that the budgets of low-income countries tend to be over-stretched, particularly where governments have piled up too much debt. The international community must not leave these countries in the lurch. The people suffering the worst need have neither contributed much to the climate crisis nor to the debt problems.

At the same time, the meat consumption that typically goes along with prosperity must decline. Industrial-scale livestock farming is linked to dramatic carbon emissions and excessive pesticide usage. That is a core reason for the so-called conventional agriculture of prosperous world regions being an important driver of the global environmental crisis.

Unfortunately, international solidarity is weakening. Government officials and citizens of high-income nations increasingly seem to believe that it is okay to focus more on domestic problems. They are wrong. In our era of worldwide networks and complex supply chains, all of the most important challenges are global. The EU and other privileged world regions cannot save themselves by leaving the rest of humanity behind. We all need the global solutions that are spelt out in the SDGs.



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INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Building bridges to reconcile religious conflicts

Religious tensions have cost many lives throughout Sri Lanka's history. In order to heal wounds and create a basis for peaceful coexistence, an in-depth interreligious dialogue is needed.

By Rehan Fernando

Sri Lanka is a country with a diverse cultural and religious heritage. Buddhism is the main religion, but Christianity, Hinduism and Islam also have a significant influence and many followers in the country.

Sri Lanka has faced several conflicts over the last five decades, with multiple and overlapping triggers such as nationalism, economic policy and religious dominance. The worst was certainly the Sri Lankan civil war that started in 1983 and lasted for more

than 25 years. The civil war was mainly an ethnic conflict between Sri Lankan Tamils fighting against the Sinhalese-dominated government for an independent state. However, it also had an important religious component, as the Tamils are predominantly Hindu and Muslim, while the Sinhalese – the majority of Sri Lanka's population – are Buddhist.

The origins of these conflicts can be traced back to the 1950s. The then Prime Minister Solomon W. R. D. Bandaranaike introduced a law commonly referred to as the Sinhala Only Act. It replaced English with Sinhala as the only official language of the then Ceylon and excluded Tamil from the Act. This aided his political campaign which focused on the promotion of Sinhala Buddhist culture. The ideology of the “Sin-

hala Buddhist majority” was fostered, giving the Sinhala community authoritative power over the country's most important affairs.

RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS ABOUND

This was seen as an attack on Tamil culture and people's basic rights. In response, many Tamil civilians in the north and east of Sri Lanka engaged in non-violent resistance. However, in the 1980s, under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran and his people's movement, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the situation escalated into bloodshed and warfare.

The civil war ended in 2009 under the regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa. Rajapaksa's stance of “saving the country from terrorism” was supported by the majority of Buddhists and leaders of religious minorities. However, many Tamil civilians still lost their lives that year. There are reports of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, displacement, arbitrary detention, torture, rape, sexual assault and so on.

Even after the end of the civil war in 2009, the ethnic-religious conflicts in Sri Lanka continued. The Easter 2019 bombings in particular were a tragic reminder of the lack of unity between Sri Lanka's religious communities. Three churches and three hotels in the capital Colombo were the target of a series of coordinated suicide attacks by Islamic terrorists. Almost 300 people were killed. Once again, religious fundamentalism took a heavy toll.

JUSTIFICATION OF WAR

The civil war was justified by the religious supremacy of Buddhism, with Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism being emphasised in particular. This did not stop with Rajapaksa. Since 2005, the Rajapaksa family has relied on various Buddhist groups to maintain control of the country.

This actually contradicts the teachings of Buddhism. In fact, most religions are not in favour of wars, as they arise from violence and divide people and communities. At their core, most religions are about unity, peace, reconciliation and harmony.

In Sri Lanka, however, many religions are based on a performative and therefore superficial approach rather than an everyday life practice. Buddhism is enforced by monks in some places through violence



Ethnic Tamils commemorate family members killed in Sri Lanka's civil war.



and coercion, which denies the principles of the Buddhist Dhamma, the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. The peacefulness of this philosophy has been replaced by religious hate speech. Christianity in Sri Lanka is still not deeply rooted in the population, as its authoritarian structures have historically emerged from colonialism.

Meanwhile, the Islamic leaders do not really address the problems of the country or the extremist tendencies within the religion. The same is true of Hinduism, which shows little understanding of the causes of poverty and the struggles of ordinary people in Sri Lanka.

What the country needs is a paradigm shift in all religions towards unity and harmony. We need a profound process of reconciliation. This must come from the leaders of all religions, and they must commit to religious pluralism. Religious exclusivism must disappear.

A REAL DIALOGUE

There are examples of this religious unity within the country that can lead the way on how the religious communities in Sri Lanka should proceed (see box). The self-right-

eousness of recognising only one's own religion as the true one stands in the way of genuine interreligious dialogue. In Sri Lanka, it was also partly the colonial European-Western mentality that served as a bad role model by exalting its own culture.

Part of the dialogue must be to give people who have already been victims of religious conflicts space for inner healing. However, without a genuine interreligious dialogue, such conflicts will continue in future. An appropriate educational process for all sides involved is therefore important. The main goal must be the peaceful coexistence of all religions in Sri Lanka.

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“Dialogue of life”

Michael Rodrigo was a Catholic priest who campaigned for interreligious dialogue in Sri Lanka. He called his efforts the “dialogue of life”.

In the 1980s, the government under Junius Richard Jayewardene opened up the country's economy. As a result, farmers and the working class were increasingly exploited by the elites. The government welcomed multinational corporations and businesses, further marginalising the local population.

In many regions, people were suffering. Michael Rodrigo visited the district of Monaragala in the south of the country to find a solution and initiate a local paradigm shift for people-centred development. He lived among the Buddhist majority of the region and worked as a Christian for their wellbeing.

Rodrigo worked with the local people to create self-

reliant and independent living conditions. He introduced a natural fertilisation system, education programmes, herbal medicine (Ayurveda treatments), healthcare, housing

projects for the poor and much more as part of a Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

He never overemphasised his identity as a Catholic priest or Christian. He wanted to be defined by his work. His practice of dialogue was liberating for the Buddhist community. Rodrigo primarily chose a so-

cial approach, but his endeavours always had religious undertones.

Rodrigo was assassinated during the second uprising of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a local Marxist-Leninist party, against the government in the late 1980s. His assassination signalled a serious decline in civil-society activities in rural areas.

From then on, a different paradigm was introduced by the central government's right-wing approach. During this dark period of the country, many young people, intellectuals and activists were killed or disappeared.

The events were the result of violence encouraged by the central government by invoking the Sinhala Buddhist mentality. The leftist parties also responded with violence. The negative effects of these episodes linger on as the remnants of the misguided paradigms of the late 1980s still influence the country today (see main text).

RF



Representatives of various religions jointly commemorated the fourth anniversary of the serious bomb attacks on Catholic churches in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday 2019.

SANCTIONS

Exerting pressure with risks and side effects

Sanctions are a key instrument of power in international politics. They can help bring about political change, but they can also harm the sanctioning country itself. Political scientist Christian von Soest explains the correlations in his book.

By Dagmar Wolf

Sanctions influence not only international trade flows and relations between states but also global politics as a whole. Major powers and coalitions of states increasingly resort to sanctions in response to violent conflicts or human-rights violations – for example in the wake of Russia’s assault on Ukraine in February 2022 (see box). Sanctions have never been used as frequently as they are today – and have never been imposed on so many targets.

Around 200 sanctions programmes are currently in place against 70 countries, most of them imposed by the US, the EU and the UN, writes political scientist Christian von Soest in his book “Sanktionen – Mächtige Waffe oder hilfloses Manöver?” (“Sanctions – powerful weapon or feeble manoeuvre?”). He explores questions such as: What do sanctions achieve? What are the risks and side effects? Do they perhaps do more harm than good? Von Soest is head of the “Peace and Security” research programme at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg.

He argues that the impact of sanctions should not be overestimated. They may be an important instrument for exerting power and maintaining order in international politics, he writes, but they do not work miracles and they are not the answer to every foreign policy problem. Sanctions cannot be expected to prompt the target to adopt an immediate change of policy; their impact is more medium to long term.

Von Soest distinguishes between three functions of sanctions:

- Coercing: forcing a change of course;

- Constraining: limiting scope for action, e.g. by imposing arms embargoes or halting the supply of important electronic components;

- Signalling: symbolic policy designed to show sanctioned parties and potential imitators that violations of the law will not be tolerated but severely punished.

The type of sanction is also important. Von Soest finds, for example, that trade sanctions have often failed to reach the ruling class of targeted countries. They have found ways to circumvent the sanctions, while the general public – especially the poorest people – have suffered massively from the restrictions. Sanctions should therefore be more targeted.

Von Soest distinguishes between three types of sanctions:

- Financial sanctions: e.g. decoupling from the international banking system (“de-swifiting”) and interruption of financial flows;

- Trade sanctions: e.g., interruption of the supply of arms and high-tech products;

- Individual sanctions against persons and organisations.

As the author explains, the coercive instruments have different impacts, depending on the political situation of the country sanctioned. Regimes with a strong ruling ideology have tended to portray external pressure as an assault on the nation as a whole. This can prompt people to ‘rally round the flag’: The public are encouraged to support the government, while the opposition faces repression from the police and military.

However, von Soest finds that sanctions can trigger change under certain circumstances. In South Africa, for example, sanctions helped bring about change by fuelling the economic and government crisis faced by the apartheid regime and fanning the flames of protest in the country.

Von Soest points out that those imposing sanctions must always consider the impacts of the coercive instruments they employ – both on the target country and at home. On the one hand, sanctions have a domestic political dimension, affecting both the national economy and the local population. This was made very clear by the discussions surrounding Germany’s rapid phase-out of Russian oil and gas. On the other hand, sanctions can also prompt countermeasures. What is more, they rarely bring about an immediate change of course in the targeted country. So, they require



Militaristic propaganda of the Islamist government in Tehran.

long-term commitment and support in the sanctioning country.

PRINCIPLES FOR SANCTIONS POLICY

According to von Soest, basic rules for the application of sanctions include:

- They should always be a last resort – and only part of the response.
- Sanctioners should forge the largest possible coalitions so that coercive instruments are effective and legitimate.
- Sanctions need to be explained better to the public; the demands associated with them need to be attainable; and sanctioners need to relax their coercive measures in the event of a change of course.
- The cost to the sanctioner's own economy needs to be considered and local com-

panies need to be prevented from circumventing the restrictions.

- Sanctioners should consider the end of coercive measures from the outset, develop exit scenarios and set milestones.
- Policymakers should be aware of the downsides of sanctions. For example, tough sanctions invariably create a humanitarian dilemma. Coercive action should therefore be specifically targeted at policymakers and selected economic sectors.
- Sanctions that have been approved need to be implemented more consistently.

Sanctions are unlikely to be dropped any time soon as a tool of international influence. They are an expression of conflicts, and there are more than enough of them in the world today: from the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to tensions between the big trading powers, above

all the US and China. This is regrettable, not least because the global community should actually be pulling much harder together – to overcome global crises such as the climate catastrophe and species loss and to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

BOOK

Von Soest, C., 2023: *Sanktionen. Mächtige Waffe oder hilfloses Manöver?* (“Sanctions – powerful weapon or feeble manoeuvre?”) Frankfurt, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Buch*. (Available only in German.)



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Turning point in sanctions policy

Since Russia launched its assault on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the US, the EU and their allies have imposed unprecedented sanctions on the aggressor. In his book “Sanktionen” (“Sanctions”; see main article), political scientist Christian von Soest describes that response as a turning point in the use of international coercive instruments. The coercive measures taken come on top of sanctions imposed on Russia since 2014 as a result of the annexation of Crimea and the non-implementation of the Minsk agreements. The mix of measures includes:

- freezing Russian foreign reserves,
- excluding Russian banks from the SWIFT system,
- various trade restrictions and bans,
- broadcasting bans on numerous foreign and propaganda media outlets controlled from Russia,

- individual sanctions such as asset freezes and travel restrictions.

Von Soest reports that everything modern industry needs is subject to western punitive measures. However, this entails considerable costs for Europeans. Russia is rich in raw materials and has plenty of opportunities to circumvent the sanctions

– partly because by no means all countries have signed up to the sanctions regimes. In 2022, for example, the EU stopped 90% of its oil imports from Russia but Russian oil continues to flow to India, where it is refined and then shipped legally to the EU.

Von Soest notes that EU exports to Russia's neighbours – countries like Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan – have increased massively since the start of sanctions. The reason for the heightened demand

for goods in these countries is that they are in a customs union with Russia: anything that goes to those countries can be exported to Russia without controls. In Kazakhstan, for example, washing machines are cannibalised for microchips on the sanctions list, which are then shipped to Russia. Russia thus acquires electronic components that it needs for the production of precision weapons but cannot manufacture itself.

Von Soest concludes that the massive sanctions imposed by the west did not persuade Russia to change course, but they do have a medium to long-term effect. They make access to the financial market more difficult, cause long-term damage to the Russian economy and thus curb the country's capacity to continue the war of aggression. The individual sanctions imposed also increase the pressure on the Russian regime. Overall, von Soest believes that the sanctioners have sent a globally visible signal for central standards of international law such as territorial integrity and state sovereignty.



Russia should pay for the cost of the war in Ukraine. Banner at a Solidarity With Ukraine rally staged in February in Krakow, Poland.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Addressing gender-based violence in Colombia

Eight years after the peace agreement between the government and FARC, Colombia remains marked by violence. Women and girls suffer particularly. The social enterprise "Proyecto Florecer" provides targeted support.

By Giovanni Puglisi

Gender-based violence unfortunately has a long tradition in Colombia. During the decades-long civil war, at least 35,178 people fell victim to sexual, gender-based and reproductive violence. The latter includes preventing women from making free choices regarding pregnancy and family planning. The number was published by the Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP – Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz), which is tasked with addressing war crimes and crimes against humanity, among others.

Women, girls and people with diverse sexual orientations were particularly affected. Between 1957 and 2016, the year of the peace agreement between the government and the left-wing guerrilla group FARC, nearly 90% of the victims were female, according to the JEP; 35% were children or adolescents at the time of the crimes. The perpetrators belonged to right-wing paramilitary groups, the FARC and security forces.

The JEP has officially recognised that sexual and gender-based violence was delib-



erately used as a weapon in the Colombian civil war. In September 2023, it initiated a new investigation into this matter.

The 2016 peace agreement has not eradicated violence from Colombia at all. Instead, abuses by armed groups have in-

worldwide. The trade in drugs, weapons and people is flourishing. Cross-border violence by organised crime is a significant problem.

The Colombian society is characterised by an age-old machismo culture that oppresses women. Gender-based violence remains a daily scourge. The project Observatorio Femicidios Colombia hosted by the civil-society organisation Red Feminista Antimilitarista counted a total of 525 femicides in 2023 in the country with a population of about 52 million. According to the civil-society organisation The Advocates for Human Rights, the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences registered more than 47,700 cases of domestic vi-



Protests for women's rights in Bogotá, Colombia, during the International Women's Day in March.

created in many remote areas, reaching comparable levels to just before the peace process, according to the civil-society organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW). Gender-based violence is widespread, while perpetrators are rarely held accountable, HRW reports.

While the signing of the peace accord brought hopes of a more peaceful future, the transition to post-conflict society has been marked by ongoing violence, particularly in rural areas. In fact, Colombia is one of the countries most affected by organised crime

olence in 2022, 19% more than the previous year. What's more, many cases of gender-based violence go unrecognised – out of fear of retaliation or stigmatisation, or because the victims do not trust the judicial system.

PROYECTO FLORECER

Given the extent of violence against women and girls in Colombia, it is essential that victims have the opportunity to seek competent help. One of the organisations they can turn to is Proyecto Florecer, which trans-

lates to “Project Blossom”. We are a social enterprise based in Medellín, the capital of the mountainous province of Antioquia. Our main tasks include educating the local population and promoting the integration of disadvantaged people. We work with an international community of volunteers.

Every participant in our programmes has suffered some kind of trauma: domestic violence, neglect or the loss of important caregivers. Proyecto Florecer is providing support to these survivors. We offer per-

“Addressing gender-based violence requires a multifaceted approach that tackles its root causes while providing comprehensive support for women. For example, it is necessary to strengthen the judiciary to hold perpetrators accountable.”

sonal development workshops on various themes such as integration, racism, sexual health and communication. Young women in particular learn to shape their own lives and take responsibility for themselves and others.

WOMEN SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

In our “Women’s Circles”, women and girls meet regularly to share their experiences and support each other. Topics include healthy and unhealthy relationships, setting boundaries, self-confidence, trauma and resilience.

Moreover, Proyecto Florecer works towards changing the underlying societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. We want to help break the vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment and discrimination in Colombia. All women deserve to shape their lives with confidence.

Given the ongoing violence and oppression of women in Colombia, the path to gender equality is still long. Addressing

gender-based violence requires a multifaceted approach that tackles its root causes while providing comprehensive support for women. For example, it is necessary to strengthen the judiciary to hold perpetrators accountable. High-quality education for women is essential too – and so is educating men about women’s rights and appropriate behaviour towards women.

LINKS

Proyecto Florecer:

<https://proyectoflorecer.org>

Human Rights Watch, Colombia, Events of 2023:

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/colombia>



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Modern dowry payment

In many African societies, the payment of dowry is a delicate process that involves elaborate procedures before the groom is allowed to marry the bride.

In Kenya, the largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, refer to the dowry payment ceremony as “ruracio”. Historically, it served as a kind of guarantee for the security of the bride and ensured her well-being in the new family she was introduced to.

Even today, the ruracio, which usually takes place a few days or months before the actual wedding, provides an opportunity to celebrate together and strengthens the cultural identity, customs and traditions that are passed on from one generation to the next.

The event usually begins in the afternoon and takes place in the bride’s family home. The beginning of the ceremony is marked by ecstatic singing and dancing by the groom’s entourage, who try to persuade the bride’s relatives to allow them into the house. This continues until they are welcomed inside.

Once the crowd settles down, the process of dowry negotiations begins. During this time, the bride is not present, but is represented by her father and uncles, while the groom is present with

his representatives. The groom’s family, led by elders and spokespersons, present the dowry to the bride’s family. Both families discuss and agree on the terms of the marriage, including the amount and composition of the dowry.

Some items are obligatory due to their symbolic value: blankets (which both grandmothers of the bride receive), a coat, a hat and a walking stick for the grandfathers. The bride’s mother receives wheat, corn, tea leaves and a water tank as compensation for that her daughter can no longer fulfil her task of fetching water for the household.

David, 31, and Sheila, 26, recently held their ruracio in coastal Kenya, where the bride is from. David explains that the value of the bride varies. Some families give a value that does not burden the groom and at the same time does not devalue their daughter. He further explains that a bride’s dowry is mainly determined by the amount of dowry her father paid for her mother. Some families simply evaluate the bride price by adding the expenses for their daughters’ education from kindergarten to university.

In David’s case, he was asked to pay the value of 100 goats for Sheila, each worth the equivalent of just under 30 dollars. Traditionally, goats and cows were physically delivered, but nowadays most families exchange this livestock for cash.

The ceremony, which is supposed to last until sunset, is characterised by a feast and joyful singing and dancing after the groom has successfully unveiled the bride, who is dressed in a traditional Kikuyu dress.

David works as an accountant in Nairobi, while Sheila earns her living as a social-media influencer. When asked why they maintain these traditions despite living as a very modern couple, David replies: “You choose not to let modernisation undermine traditions.” Both explain that despite the pressure of paying the dowry, this act is part of honouring their parents, valuing their relationship and sealing their commitment.



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Culture Special

As every summer, the D+C/E+Z editorial team presents books, music and films that we appreciate and would like to recommend. The oeuvres are tackling issues of developmental relevance, and we would be pleased if our recommendations inspired you to read, watch or listen to them. This year we are presenting our culture special in two Digital Monthlies – in August and September.

FILM

How to kill a tiger

The Oscar-nominated documentary *“To Kill a Tiger”* tells the story of a father and daughter in India pursuing justice after the girl is raped. Their fight involves defying the patriarchal structures of society and the justice system.

By Konstantin Auwärter

Kiran is 13 years old when she is brutally raped by three men from her village after a wedding party. She tells her parents, who immediately go to the police to bring the perpetrators to justice. The documentary film *“To Kill a Tiger”* sensitively charts the emotional journey and legal process that follows.

Kiran’s father Ranjit is a rice farmer in the East Indian state of Jharkhand. He works hard to give his wife Jaganti and their seven children as good a life as possible. Nothing is more important to Ranjit than a secure, self-determined future for his offspring: “I don’t want them to be as powerless as I’ve been. I want people to see that even through poverty, I taught my children well and gave them good values.”

This is where he finds the strength and determination to stand up for his daughter, despite massive pressure from those around him. The village community is against taking the case to an independent court; it wants to settle the matter “internally” by forcing Kiran to marry one of the perpetrators. Ranjit encounters growing hostility and even receives death threats. Conversations between neighbours descend into classic victim blaming; Kiran herself is to blame for the rape – what was she doing at the wedding so late? Shouldn’t Ranjit have done more to protect his daughter?

Sexualised violence continues to be a huge problem in India – as it is in many other countries. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 90 rape cases a day were reported in 2022. Human-rights organisations estimate that the number of cases that go unreported is many times higher. The laws against rape have been tightened in recent years but they are actually rarely applied, partly because victims continue to face social stigma and blame.

Originally, the film was supposed to be a portrayal of the women’s rights activists

who help Kiran’s family. They regularly visited the village and provided emotional and legal support. But during filming, Canadian-Indian director Nisha Pahuja decided to focus on Kiran and Ranjit’s story.

With considerable empathy and striking imagery, Pahuja succeeds in making the horror of the crime, the complexity of its aftermath and the family’s inner conflicts tangible. Ranjit is no foolhardy hero but constantly struggles with himself and his environment. Several times it seems as if he is about to give up. Similarly, Kiran is not reduced to being a victim. Her testimony in court, for which she confronts her deep-seated trauma, is an act of self-empowerment.

HOPE FOR CHANGE

Ultimately, she makes a decisive contribution to the landmark judgement that sentenced each defendant to 25 years in prison. Since it was delivered, the number of rapes reported in the region has doubled.

So, the film gives hope. It demonstrates how functioning institutions and laws can be long-term drivers of gender equality and social change, both in India and elsewhere. But *“To Kill a Tiger”* also shows that justice for rape victims is not something that can be taken for granted. It calls for people with a great deal of courage and perseverance. Which is one of the reasons that in the film, Ranjit compares the road to justice with killing a tiger.

Kiran, whose real name is not revealed, is now an adult and has agreed to the film being released. After its premiere in 2022, *“To Kill a Tiger”* won numerous awards at international film festivals and received an Oscar nomination for best documentary film. In March 2024, Netflix acquired the rights to the film and currently broadcasts it in various languages worldwide.

FILM

To Kill a Tiger, 2022, Canada, 2 h 8 min.
Director: Nisha Pahuja.



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2022: Activists in Kolkata protest against the early release of men convicted of a brutal rape.

MIGRATION

Belonging to more than one nation

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel „The Namesake“ tells the story of an Indian-American family whose members never quite know where they truly belong.

By Maren van Treel

Most people want to belong somewhere. The need for community is not as strong as the one for food, but it is essential for a person's quality of life. The longing to belong is the topic of the novel "The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri, who was born in London to Bengali parents, grew up in the USA and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2000. Like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie, she belongs to the small group of international bestselling authors of Indian origin who write in English.

The novel is about the Gangulis who live on the East Coast of the USA and regularly travel back to Calcutta. The parents, Ashima and Ashoke, migrated to America from the Indian state of West Bengal. They still feel a strong affinity to their old home. The children Sonia and Gogol were born in the States.

From the late 1960s to the year 2000, all four of them are constantly in search of true belonging. They struggle with what it means to identify with more than one culture. Not only in the USA do they often feel as outsiders. On a trip to another Indian state, the entire family suddenly feels alien. The novel considers all four family members, but mostly focuses on Gogol, who is named after the Russian author Nikolai Gogol.

His given name is one reason why Gogol feels outcast at an early age. He later chooses a different one, but never entirely breaks free. Initially, Gogol does his best to keep a distance from his Indian roots. Like his sister, for example, he insists on eating hotdogs at home. To comfort the kids, the parents even start celebrating Christmas.

On the trips to Calcutta, brother and sister feel uncomfortable. American friends never ask about their experiences there.

While Gogol feels accepted, liked and even loved, he never feels ever fully understood or entirely known.

Gogol's first intimate relationships are with American women whose parents are not foreigners. He studies architecture and seems determined not to accept an arranged marriage as his parents did. His girlfriends are interested in his experiences and heritage, but a certain kind of distance always feels unbridgeable.

A traumatic event changes the course of the story. Gogol suddenly finds his Indian roots important, wants to focus on them and ends the relationship with his girlfriend who has become jealous because he is suddenly spending so much time with his family. The next surprising twist is that he marries an American woman with Indian roots, who, like him, has grown up experiencing two different cultures. Marrying her was actually his mother's proposal and wish.

Gogol and his wife, however, keep asking themselves where they ultimately belong. Is a shared feeling of being outsiders and not properly belonging to either this or that culture a solid foundation for the rela-

tionship? Have they really chosen one another? Or have they merely caved into social pressures?

Lahiri's plot leaves no stone unturned. Mixed feelings, wild mood swings, ambivalences of many degrees and the riddles that go along with life result in the protagonists often not only struggling to understand the motives of those who are close to them. They often are not even aware of their own motives. Shortly before the ending, however, a certain sense of inner calm seems to settle in. But will it last when the protagonists must rise to the next challenges?

This novel is worth reading. It elegantly depicts life in its many nuances and its permanently transitional nature. Most people will probably know feelings of not belonging in some way, and that makes it easy to relate to the protagonists' emotions. Apart from conveying universal truths, however, the book also offers a beautiful opportunity to learn about an immigrant family and gain some knowledge of Bengali traditions and culture.

REFERENCE

Lahiri, J., 2003: *The Namesake*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin.



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Jhumpa Lahiri 2022 in Rome.

MUSIC

The desert alliance

Tamikrest combines the music of the Tuareg with elements of western rock music. The band chooses guitars over guns to fight for the cause of a community that has been oppressed in the Sahara for decades.

By Katharina Wilhelm Otieno

“Tamikrest” – meaning “junction” or “alliance” in the Tuareg language Tamasheq – was founded in 2006 by songwriter, band leader and spokesman Ousmane Ag Mossa and a group of friends in the desert town of Kidal in northern Mali. For years, there had been frequent fighting between Tuareg rebels and the Malian government, and in 2012 it culminated in the rebels declaring independence for the region of Azawad. What ensued was a multi-layered conflict involving numerous actors. The independent state, initially declared to be secular, ultimately collapsed due to the intervention of Islamist groups in Azawad.

The history of the Tuareg is defined by the struggle to be recognised as a free people. The community continues to be oppressed today, particularly by the governments of Niger and Mali. Increasingly, attempts are made to link the Tuareg to global jihad, the armed struggle for the spread of Islam, although their fight for freedom is at least 30 years older than groups like al-Qaeda. The conflict between Tuareg rebels and Mali’s army flared up again just last year.

The band members’ childhood and youth were marked and marred by the fighting. Many lost family members. The creation of Tamikrest signalled a decision not to take up arms but to stand up for the Tuareg through music instead.

In an interview with The Guardian newspaper, Mossa said that he had actually wanted to become a lawyer – an advocate for his community – but that becoming a musician was ultimately the same thing.

That perception is reflected in the themes of Tamikrest’s songs. They are wake-up calls to the Tuareg community, calls for them to unite and determine their own future. But they also deal with loss and home-

sickness, while at the same time extolling the beauty of their homeland, the Sahara.

Tamikrest have frequently taken their music to Europe, where they have collaborated with many artists. The band now also has French members.

THE SUFFERING OF MY SISTERS

One subject occupies Tamikrest so much that an entire album is devoted to it. “Chatma” (“Sisters”) is the third of six published albums – and the band’s most powerful piece of work to date. The songs are inspired by the “courage of the Tuareg women, who have ensured both their children’s survival and the morals of their fathers and brothers”.

It is the women who fought for their families in the Saharan refugee camps after large numbers of Tuareg had to flee from northern Mali and other regions. But it is also the women who suffer most under the strict Sharia law that Islamist groups have now enforced in Azawad.

The opening track “Tisnant an Chatma” (“The Suffering of My Sisters”) describes their ordeals in proud but bitter poetry: “Who can estimate the suffering felt by

the soul / one who sees her sisters exhausted from waiting / one who sees her sisters exhausted from waiting between countries, in deep distress / and daily oppression?”

Prominently featured throughout the album is the haunting voice of female vocalist Wonou Walet Sidati, singing in tandem with Mossa against an instrumental backdrop of electric and acoustic guitars, djembe and percussion.

The members of Tamikrest fuse rock music with elements of Tuareg musical tradition. In this, they follow their role models Tinariwen, a Tuareg band that pioneered the “desert blues” style back in the 1980s. But they have developed their own, more modern sound – unmistakable in songs such as “Imanin bas zihoun” or “Djanegh etoumast”, where driving electric guitars clash with the image of a peaceful, vast Sahara.

“Tamikrest” can also mean “crossroads” or “future”. Mossa said in The Guardian that his music was founded on a very precise cause – the Tuareg’s – and that the dream of independence for his people is uncompromising.

LINK

<https://www.tamikrest.net/>



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Tamikrest in Hamburg.

FICTION

A story made up of many stories

The novel "Desertion" by Nobel Prize winner Abdulrazak Gurnah is set in Zanzibar. It is a tale of resistance to social and cultural norms and of the power of love, interwoven in historical, political and cultural contexts.

By Dagmar Wolf

On his way to the mosque, shopkeeper Hassanali notices a shadow, which he initially takes for an evil spirit. But when the shadow sighs and groans, he realises it must be a human being. The deathly pale figure turns out to be a British traveller, Martin Pearce. Hassanali has no room for an invalid in his humble home and hardly any money. Nevertheless, he arranges for the mzungu – the white man – to be taken to his house, where his sister Rehana nurses Pearce back to health. That is until the day the district officer Frederick Turner turns up and has Pearce transferred to his residence.

Pearce considers the colonialists, their imperious demeanour and their condescending attitude towards the indigenous population to be an abomination. The plantation manager Burton, for instance, is firmly convinced that Britain's future in Africa lies in the gradual extinction of the African population, who would be replaced by European settlers. Pearce, on the other hand, believes that the colonisers have a duty to ensure the wellbeing of the local people because of the way they have invaded their lives and disrupted their customs.

He returns to Hassanali's house several times, negotiating the maze of narrow alleyways of Stone Town. He and Rehana, who has been abandoned by her husband, become secret lovers. When the shopkeeper learns of the affair, he accuses his sister of having lost all sense of decency – even though he and his sibling are themselves offspring of a socially unacceptable marriage between an Indian and a Swahili. The love affair also draws resentment from the colonists. The couple flees to Mombasa and lives together openly for a while as common-law man and wife, until one day Pearce leaves Rehana, who is pregnant at that time.

From the year 1899, the narrative jumps to the end of the 1950s, when the entire African continent is rocked by uprisings against foreign colonial rule. Siblings Amin, Rashid and Farida grow up in Zanzibar in the midst of this political upheaval. Amin falls in love with the slightly older Jamila.

The couple's secret passionate love affair is discovered and soon the relationship threatens to break apart under pressure from the families and social constraints, because there are all kinds of rumours about the mysterious Jamila: she is said to have been married before, to have been rejected by her husband, to come from a family that is cursed. It emerges that Jamila's grandmother once risked everything for a forbidden love affair. So, the story continues with Rehana's granddaughter.

Rashid, Amin's younger brother, wins a scholarship that enables him to study in London. Due to the political situation at home, he is unable to return to Zanzibar for many years. In London, he suffers from the intolerable sense of being a foreigner. He broods a lot. His brother's tragic love story preys on his mind. At an event on "Race and sexuality in the works of settlers in Kenya", where he talks about Rehana and

her affair with the Englishman Pearce, he is approached by a female participant. She knows the story from her grandfather, who was a district administrator in a small coastal town in Kenya at the turn of the century. The threads come together, destinies and stories are interwoven.

Which is precisely what Gurnah intends: to show that stories do not belong to us, that they carry destinies within them and flow randomly through time like water in a river.

Many of the characters in Gurnah's novel are turned into "deserters" by the times in which they live: Pearce, who rejects the world of colonial masters; Rehana and Jamila, who defy society; people who emigrate to England for a better life.

The author himself is one of those people. Born in 1948 in the Sultanate of Zanzibar, he fled to the UK at the age of 18. In 1964, Zanzibar was rocked by violence, directed particularly against the Muslim Arab minority to which Gurnah belonged. Today, he is Emeritus Professor of English and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Kent.

BUCH

Gurnah, A., 2023: *Desertion*. New York, Riverhead Books.



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A market in Zanzibar at the beginning of the 20th century.

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DEMOCRACY

The sudden fall of a despot

Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's longest serving leader, resigned on 5 August. The step was inevitable after some 800 people including 70 children had died in the bloodiest protests since Bangladesh's independence.

By Ridwanul Hoque

Bangladeshi students were demonstrating for equal opportunities in public employment. A 30% quota was reserved for descendants of freedom fighters who participated in the country's 1971 liberation war against Pakistan. Another 26% of the jobs were reserved for various other groups such as women. Only 44% of public jobs were merit-based. In a society with a high unemployment rate that was untenable.

In 2018, Hasina had actually repealed all quotas in view of previous protests. However, descendants of freedom fighters brought a legal case, and the High Court restored the quota systems. When students again took to the streets this July, the Awami League, Hasina's party, opted for a brutal clamp down on the initially peaceful rallies.

On 14 July, Hasina sarcastically asked whether the children of those who had collaborated with the Pakistan Army in the liberation war deserved quotas. Some protesters responded in an equally sarcastic manner, declaring they all descended from collaborators. Repression became worse.

On 19 July, a curfew was imposed, but not respected. The army was called in. The government issued a shoot-on-sight order. In the next few days, some 70 to 80 people were killed daily.

On 21 July, the Appellate Division of the judiciary overturned the earlier High Court ruling, declaring the quota system void once more. Nonetheless, the rallies went on, now demanding justice for the dead. Parents and the general public joined the protests. The death toll kept rising.

When millions were expected to take part in an all-out march on the capital city Dhaka on 5 August, the army refused to continue the bloodshed. Hasina was told she had 45 minutes to resign, and her son Joy

helped to persuade her to quit. Hasina fled to India, which had supported her increasingly authoritarian rule.

On 8 August, an interim government was formed. Its top leader is Nobel peace



Protesting in Dhaka on 4 August.

laureate Muhammad Yunus, who pioneered microfinance with the Grameen Bank. That the student leaders wanted him in this role shows that they are interested in pragmatic solutions. It is quite evident, moreover, that they enjoyed support from all walks of life as well as the opposition parties.

Hasina is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's independence leader. Mujib and his entire family were killed in a military coup in 1975 – only Hasina and her sister survived because they were abroad. Mujib had turned Bangladesh into a one-party state, led by his Awami League. Hasina spent years in exile, but later returned and became that party's leader in 1981.

In multi-party elections, she became prime minister for the first time in 1996. She returned to power after winning the 2008 elections, which were overseen by a caretaker government. She then repealed the constitutional system of caretaker governments preparing and running competitive elections. She stayed in power by winning sham elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024.

Hasina's regime was ruthless and autocratic, answerable to none. It was known for limitless corruption and laundering money overseas.

Many now speak of Hasina's fall as the "second independence", the first being the victory in the liberation war. It is disconcerting, however, that an unruly mob captured and looted Hasina's residence and vandalised many national iconic buildings, including Sheikh Mujib's historic residence. Even more troubling, there were incidents of anti-Hindu rioting.

It is uncertain what's next for Bangladesh. Law and order are in disarray. Parts of the country are suffering devastating floods. However, the people are resilient and hope to see a better future. Yunus has promised a transition to democracy based on a fair and free, multi-party election. The timeframe for that election has not been announced.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the interim government is to organise at least one credible, broad-based party with a focus on inclusive development. Otherwise, the BNP is likely to rise to power again. It is the Awami League's long-standing antagonist. The BNP ran the country from 1991 to 1996 and again from 2001 to 2006. Its reputation, however, is only marginally better than the Awami League's.



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Justices of the Supreme Court have gone on luxury trips paid by plutocrats – protest in Washington.

CORRUPTION

Corrosion of the common good

No country is immune from corruption. At some point, however, the malpractice of public officials taking money to deliver normal services or demanding personal favours strains any country's social fabric. The topic deserves more attention.

By Glenn Brigaldino

Bribery is always unfair because it means that some people get things that are denied to others – whether an under-the-table payment helps to obtain official documents or even buy a formally illegal building permit. Corruption can escalate to state capture by unaccountable groups. The less people trust state institutions, the more dysfunctional and fragile that state will become, and authoritarian leadership will look increasingly attractive. In a vicious cycle, high-level corruption encourages petty corruption.

Bribery exacerbates the disadvantages local communities suffer. Those who are unable or unwilling to pay, find themselves deprived of public services. Corruption has impacts on access to health services, education, employment opportunities, clean water and electricity. It distorts planning and

policymaking, because office holders see incentives to create new opportunities for taking bribes, but not to deliver public services to as many people as possible.

These dynamics are well understood. The non-governmental organisation Transparency International has been monitoring international trends since its start in 1993. “Accountability” and “good governance” soon became important buzzwords. Around the turn of the millennium, fighting corruption was high on the international agenda.

People at the grassroots of society generally despise corruption and will fight it if they can. Consider this recent anecdote from an African metropolis. A power utility employee abused his position, disabling fuses and then offering to reconnect residents to the grid if they paid him a “quick-service fee”. Local women caught on to his ruse. When he again climbed a power mast to disrupt electricity supply, they gathered below and only let him come down after he promised to abandon the scheme.

It takes courage and community spirit to act this way. Taking a stand against malpractice by officials is no trivial matter. To speak their minds and form alliances with-

out fear, people must know that their civic rights are secure. That is not the case in places where corruption taints public administrations and the judiciary, even if the freedoms of speech, association and public assembly are formally enshrined in the constitution.

For about 30 years, donor governments have been adopting anti-corruption rhetoric. Too often, it has remained mere rhetoric. In Afghanistan, billions of dollars were lost to corruption, and every western government was aware of it. In Africa, especially in resource-rich, conflict-laden countries, donor institutions tend to tolerate endemic corruption. Under the guise of “political dialogue”, aid is provided, often not only for development, but also military purposes. Meanwhile, millions of people in the same countries are caught in seemingly endless cycles of entrenched inequalities, minimal public services and daily survival challenges. Whether at low or top levels, corruption prevents inclusive progress geared to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Donor institutions would do well to do more in support of civil-society groups and democratic forces that demand public accountability instead of propping up irresponsible governments. Sadly, however, we see setbacks in the fight against corruption in supposedly advanced nations.

In the USA, for example, the Supreme Court has recently ruled that only money paid before an official's decision is legally a bribe, whereas it amounts to a gesture of gratitude later in time. It is certainly no coincidence that some of the judges who took this decision are known to have enjoyed expensive vacations and other gifts from billionaires who benefited from Supreme Court decisions. Clearly, they are setting the wrong example on the world stage.

The social fabrics of many countries – not only developing ones – are eroding. Where officials are allowed to expect favours from prosperous persons after taking decisions those persons like, things can only get worse.



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DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Clearing up misunderstandings

Although the reality of development policy has changed significantly in recent years, public and political discourse is still narrowly focused on the field's altruistic or humanitarian goals. More must be done to demonstrate how relevant development policy is to solving global problems, especially today.

By **Stephan Klingebiel**

Development policy has not adequately presented itself as a tool to meet global challenges or as a central approach to cooperating with partners from the global south. The field should be able to define more precisely what it can offer beyond altruistic support.

There are four main reasons why development policy in Germany and the EU has changed significantly in recent years.

1. The new significance of geopolitical and geo-economic issues like systemic competition between the USA and other western actors on the one hand and China on the other, the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and access to central commodities. For example, the Global Gateway Initiative is an important EU develop-

ment project that the EU has been using as an alternative to Chinese infrastructure programmes like the Belt and Road Initiative since 2021.

2. The climate crisis and the relevance of CO₂ reduction and adaptation measures. In 2009, industrialised countries pledged to provide at least \$100 billion per year to help developing countries reduce CO₂ emissions and adopt adaptation measures.

The climate financing architecture is to be put on a new footing by the end of 2024. On the one hand, wealthy countries have taken on a lot of responsibility for providing climate finance. On the other, they are also pursuing an enormous self-interest, since the consequences of climate change are being felt in places like Germany too. Climate finance is an important opportunity to provide global public goods and at the same time serve countries' immediate interests. However, these funds are primarily recorded as development cooperation if they come out of public budgets.

3. Active migration management. Since 2015, these kinds of measures have led to development-policy changes. For example,

over the past year the EU has concluded agreements on migration management with Tunisia, Egypt and Mauritania. They are based on the first deal of this kind, which was made with Turkey in 2016. Development cooperation is an important element of these agreements, even if they are controversial for various reasons.

4. Populist and right-wing nationalist movements, which are increasingly represented in parliaments and governments and are strongly influencing public debate and discourse about the utility of development cooperation. This is happening more and more in Germany.

Development policy is a central element of "soft power". This is true for China and Turkey as well as for the USA and Germany. Soft power, according to political scientist Joseph Nye, is a way for actors to exercise power and create opportunities through persuasion and attractiveness. It is demonstrably advantageous for influencing international political decisions, but it also offers a competitive economic advantage. Along with other approaches (like attracting foreign students), a country's development policy has been proven to be a central pillar of soft power.

In an international political environment that is increasingly dependent on "mixed alliances" of countries with various affiliations ("western", "global south", regional attachments, etc.), it makes sense to emphasise how development policy can better use intergovernmental relations as well as non-state networks (like political foundations and think-tanks).

Such potential lies not least with countries like India, Turkey or China, which will no longer be categorised internationally as developing countries in the foreseeable future. It is important to create opportunities for dialogue with these countries in order to be able to discuss norms and standards (for instance with regard to China's development initiatives).



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Flooding in the Lake Constance region: Germany experienced extreme weather again this year. Development policy comprises measures to fight the climate crisis globally.

Farmer in the Indian state of Assam.



FOCUS

How to eradicate hunger

Eco-friendly agriculture must reduce farmers' costs

Interview with Sunita Narain (p. 21)

Local value creation is essential

By Svenja Schulze (p. 23)

The Horn of Africa's triple nexus

By Christoph Schneider-Yattara (p. 25)

Not only starvation kills

By Pamela Cruz (p. 27)

More curse than a blessing: pesticides

By Susanne Neubert (p. 29)

Moderate meat consumption makes sense

By Cornelia Jäger (p. 32)

HEALTHY DIETS

Eco-friendly approaches must reduce farmers' costs

The global food system is not only environmentally harmful, but also makes poverty worse in rural areas of emerging markets and developing countries. It must be turned upside down, as Sunita Narain, a leading Indian environmentalist, told D+C/E+Z in an interview.

Sunita Narain interviewed by Hans Dembowski

What are the main points we must focus on if we want to make sure everyone on Earth gets sufficient food of sufficiently good quality?

Well, from the perspective of emerging markets and developing countries, three issues are crucial:

- We need an agricultural system that is good for farmers, offering good livelihoods long-term.
- The system must also be good for soils and the natural environment at the local level.
- Finally, it must be good in terms of nutrition, ensuring that all people can enjoy healthy diets.

Please elaborate on these three points.

First of all, the system we currently have is failing farmers. In India, they are facing a triple attack. The prices they get are very low, so masses are stuck in poverty. Food-price inflation is a hot topic in India, so the government wants to depress prices. Its response is therefore to import cheap food. As a result, farm-gate prices don't rise, leaving the farmers worse off. At the same time, farmers are exposed to increasing – and increasingly worse – extreme weather events. Some are hit hard by crop losses. But when poor harvests increase food prices, yet more cheap food is imported. This distortion is possible due to the global trade system, which allows India to import agricultural commodities that are subsidised by other governments. This system rewards indus-

trial-scale farming with massive inputs, and the result is that smallholders are squeezed and cannot prosper. At the same time, industrial-scale farming is harming the climate and thus compounding the extreme-weather risks.

So what needs to happen?

We need to turn the global agriculture system upside down. It must become less input intensive, more rewarding and less risky for farmers. The supposedly modern farming system that you have in Europe, North America and other places is plainly unsustainable. It is harming the climate and depleting biodiversity. India is not so far at that point. EU subsidies are atrocious. You have made farmers depend on state aid, but only the largest farms really thrive. Even in Europe, smaller ones are being crowded out. Only the big farms get enough subsidies to thrive. When the EU decided to modify

the system to make it less environmentally damaging, all farmers rose up in protest because they were set to lose money. The reforms were half-hearted to begin with, and now your policymakers have further slowed them down.

In what sense were reforms half-hearted?

Well, consider the organic sector as an example. EU policies have created a high-cost niche market for prosperous consumers. Low-income households cannot afford those goods. For farmers too, however, organic production basically means higher costs. To some extent, additional subsidies cover them, but organic farming still requires more labour and is more expensive. Pesticides are comparatively cheap if you consider how much work weeding requires. All in all, the subsidy system is still geared to maximising high-input production on large land holdings. That benefits the agrichemical industry as well as the food-processing multinationals, which like homogenous commodities.

So, we need regenerative agriculture instead.

Yes, we do, but the trouble is that multinationals keep hijacking terms like this. They modify their destructive patterns slightly and then claim they are now regenerative.



Buffaloes are relevant for natural farming in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

The global food system is incredibly destructive. It is not only exacerbating the global environmental crisis, but also compounding poverty in the rural areas of emerging markets and developing countries because farms there become uncompetitive in view of heavily subsidised products from more prosperous nations.

Who can make change happen?

Change is happening where farmers see the benefits of taking a different approach and then opt for more sustainable practices.

My impression is that this is happening mainly on subsistence farms, which are highly diversified, but hardly allow families to produce enough goods to sell, so they stay trapped in poverty.

No, I don't agree. I am thinking of things like the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming programme. Andhra Pradesh is a state in South India, and the programme is based on science. It is designed to invest in soil capacities in order to make farms more productive. The results are excellent. Farm productivity has stayed the same, but farmers' returns have improved. We need this kind of project to take off in many places. Eco-friendly approaches must reduce farmers' costs and allow their financial situation to improve.

What would that mean in terms of consumer choices?

It may surprise you, but as an Indian environmentalist I am not advocating vegetarianism or veganism. Both are quite popular in our country which has a long tradition of vegetarianism. However, we need to consider farmers' livelihoods. In this regard, cows are very important in India. The farmers need the milk, the dung and the meat. India is the world's largest milk producer, but we do not have huge ranches. Typically, a farming family will have one or two cattle and 10 at most. Without these animals, they would be even poorer, so it wouldn't help them if everyone became vegetarian in India.

But the international scenario is totally different.

Yes, indeed. At the global level, meat production has become very destructive. It is a driver of deforestation. Huge holdings use antibiotics not to cure, but to prevent diseases



German farmers rallying with tractors in opposition to subsidy cuts in January 2024.

es – and the result is an increase of drug-resistances, and that can make the treatment of human diseases unviable too. Ranches are using growth hormones and consuming enormous amounts of fodder, especially maize and soya. Indeed, humankind is now using more land to grow animal feed than to grow food for human beings. No doubt, high-income countries are consuming too much meat, thus setting the wrong example internationally. But let me emphasise, the question is not do we eat meat at all, but how is the meat that we eat produced. Human diets must include protein, and meat is protein rich. If you want to become vegetarian for personal reasons, that is your choice, and your government shouldn't force it on you. What governments must do, however, is regulate agriculture businesses in ways that prevent environmental harm.

The topic of what people should and should not eat is very controversial.

Yes, I know. Your Green party in Germany once fared poorly in elections because it had spoken out in favour of one vegetarian day per week in company canteens. As far as I know, right-wing populists are now agitating for the right to eat meat as though that right was under threat. They deny that consuming too much meat is unhealthy, not only for an individual human being, but for the planet as a whole. We only have one

planet, and we must look at diets from the eco-perspective.

What is your take on sugar?

I would say it is the new tobacco. Medical science shows that eating too much of it has serious health impacts, but the major food-processing industries do not want people to be aware of it. In fact, salt and fat should be seen in the same light. Consumers should be informed precisely of just how much sugar, salt and fat they can eat and at what point they start putting their health at risk. They should be told that, if they drink this large Coca-Cola bottle, that will be their sugar quota for three days, and if they have this helping of Maggi noodles along with it, that will be their salt quota for one day. Unfortunately, the lobbying power of food multinationals is great, and they oppose appropriate labelling. Therefore, people don't get this kind of information in many countries. That is a tragedy because people do make changes once they really understand the issues.



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Female workers harvesting cocoa on a plantation in Côte d'Ivoire.

CREATING VALUE

Women, climate and chocolate

Food security is one of the most urgent issues in global development affairs. Germany's federal minister for economic cooperation and development explains why more added value at the local level is crucial for eradicating global hunger.

By **Svenja Schulze**

Why does added value matter for development cooperation? It's simple: when people in African, Asian and Latin American countries produce agricultural commodities such as soy, palm oil, cocoa or coffee, they often do not benefit much. Though they work hard on the fields, they only get a small share of the profits. Processing commodities tends to generate the most profits, and they end up in the accounts of internationally active corporations, not in the pockets of people in the global south.

Farmers add more value when they not only grow cocoa and coffee, but also process the produce. That value materialises in the form of additional income, additional

jobs and better nutrition, because fewer food items need to be imported. I am therefore convinced that development policy must boost local value chains.

WHY WOMEN MATTER

In the Sahel region, hunger and poverty make many people susceptible to terrorist recruitment. The terrorists promise incomes that are otherwise unavailable. Sustainable agriculture and more local value creation are necessary in the region to fight hunger and to offer local people perspectives. That, in turn, requires climate-resilient agricultural practices, greater productivity, more local processing and better marketing of products. What does that look like in practice?

In Burkina Faso, German development agencies have supported 138,000 farmers apply sustainable methods of soil and water management. Related efforts made the fields more resilient to climate change, so harvests now remain reliable in

spite of droughts and storms. In cooperation with our local partners, we are also assessing how small-scale business can operate in ways that improve their financial returns.

Sabine Nana is an entrepreneur whose company processes two tons of manioc per day to produce couscous. To expand the business, Sabine took part in training courses that were supported by German development cooperation. She learned how to draft a business plan, improved her leadership skills and adopted better technologies to make her manioc dough last longer. In the meantime, Sabine has begun to train young women herself and helps them start businesses of their own.

Sabine is currently supplying couscous to the cafeterias of 300 primary schools. Her annual sales have increased from €120,000 in 2019 to €300,000 now. She used to employ 25 women, and that number has doubled. The wages make her staff economically independent, enabling them to feed their families and send their children to school.

More added value does not matter only in business terms. It is of great social relevance. It boosts women's autonomy and improves the outlook for their children. Moreover, it improves security not only in the region, but even in Germany, by reducing the reach of terrorist agitation.

HOW CLIMATE-RESILIENT APPROACHES MATTER

As in the Sahel region, climate change is one of the main drivers of hunger and poverty in many places around the world. Flooding, droughts and storms destroy farmland, forcing people to leave their homes and find new livelihoods elsewhere.

That was the fate of Suma Begum in Bangladesh. She lost her home to a flood and fled with the family. The informal settlement, where they now live, only offers rather few income opportunities. Suma found a training programme run by German development cooperation most helpful.

It taught her how to grow vegetables at home, not only in her tiny front and back yards, but also in bags on the roof and the walls of her shelter. Suma can now fend for her family and sells surplus vegetables in the neighbourhood or on the market. The revenues have allowed her to join a saving scheme, ensuring that she stays able to pay school tuition and, if need be, doctors.

Her example shows how innovative and climate-resilient methods enable people to earn reliable incomes in spite of global warming. They make them less dependent

on aid in times of crisis and less likely to flee to foreign countries.

CHOCOLATE, FOR EXAMPLE

Besides vegetables, chocolate can contribute to improving people's prospects. Statistically, every German eats an annual nine kilogrammes of chocolate on average. Only few Germans, however, are probably aware that only six cent per chocolate bar of 100 grammes end up in the households of cocoa farmers.

That is plainly not enough to make a living, and the situation gets even worse when climate impacts diminish the harvest, as recently happened in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. To improve matters, my ministry is cooperating with Germany's Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture, private-sector companies and civil-sector organisations in a multi-stakeholder initiative called German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa. The shared goal is to ensure that at least 90% of the cocoa farmers earn living wages by 2030.

In a joint project of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, local partners are teaching up-to-date cultivation methods, not only with regard to cocoa, but other cul-

tivars as well. This approach allows them to diversify their incomes.

Moreover, the farmers are encouraged to process parts of the cocoa plant that they used to discard. It is possible to make a refreshing drink from the cocoa fruit, for example, or to turn cocoa shells into bio fertiliser. The project focuses on women because there is evidence of mothers investing a larger share of their incomes in feeding and educating their children than fathers do.

More must happen. Sourcing companies from Europe must ensure that those who work in the value chains earn living wages in decent labour conditions. It matters very much that the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) will force companies to improve their sourcing policies in the future. Though its norms are not in force yet, I expect corporations to start implementation immediately. That not only makes sense in ethical terms, but in business terms too. Anyone who practices fair trade, has a competitive advantage.

ADDED VALUE DELIVERS RESULTS

The above examples from the Sahel region, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire illustrate how local value creation helps to fight hunger and poverty. However, the international community also needs structural change. More governments, more international organisations, more private-sector companies and more civil-society activists must cooperate with the goal of everyone on Earth getting sufficient amounts of good food.

The Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC) will offer an opportunity to join forces in this sense. It will take place on 7 and 8 October, hosted by my ministry in cooperation with the City of Hamburg, the Michael Otto Foundation and the United Nations. We are convening leaders who represent politics, business, civil society and academia from all over the world. The idea is to discuss how best to get the agenda 2030 back on track, and we plan to do so in a debate marked by trustfulness and partnership.



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Growing vegetables in climate-resilient manner generates incomes in Bangladesh.



The Nuer, one of the two largest ethnic groups in Gambela, are mainly cattle herders.

HORN OF AFRICA

A triple nexus

The countries in the Horn of Africa face multiple challenges in terms of food security. An example from Ethiopia emphasises that peacebuilding, humanitarian aid and development efforts must go hand in hand in order to overcome them.

By Christoph Schneider-Yattara

Climate change is the driving factor behind more frequent droughts, floods and pest infestations such as the desert locust plague in 2021. Ethnic conflicts, financial constraints, logistical inefficiencies, political instability and security issues are also disrupting food production and distribution in the region.

To ensure food sovereignty, local farmers must be supported in preserving their indigenous plant varieties. This includes resisting the growing dependence on global agribusinesses for seed purchases. The complex interplay between global agribusiness, national food sovereignty and local food production deserves to be examined in more detail in a separate analysis.

The so-called triple nexus approach has become increasingly important in humanitarian aid and development cooperation in recent years. When implemented effectively, it also plays an important role in ensuring food security.

This framework aims to integrate humanitarian aid, development efforts and peacebuilding into a coherent strategy, recognising the interconnectedness and complexity of the three areas.

Given this intricacy, it is critical to form strategic collaborations. Such partnerships can bring together different expertise and resources to enable a more holistic response to issues such as food insecurity.

ACTION BY CHURCHES TOGETHER

The ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) is a global coalition of churches organised in national and regional forums. The alliance promotes a locally led and coordinated approach to advocacy, humanitarian and development issues.

Within the ACT Alliance network in Ethiopia, members have formed consortia to implement integrated triple nexus projects. A special feature of all ACT consortia is that their national and international members work together on an equal footing.

One such consortium is active in the state of Gambela in south-western Ethiopia and comprises four executing and two financing members, with one of the local members acting as the lead agency, which is rarely the case in other constellations. The project is scheduled to run for two years. The budget is co-financed to 75% by donors and to 25% by the members of the consortium.

The region is suitable for agriculture, livestock farming and fishing and has abundant water and forest resources. Nevertheless, the communities are chronically affected by food insecurity.

One of the main causes is subsistence monocultures with very low production. The lack of sustainable agricultural practices such as soil and water conservation, soil fertility management, moisture retention, agroforestry and crop diversification are further reasons for the low agricultural productivity.

Fishing is a major source of income, but little fish is produced each year as there is no access to fishing gear, markets and

transportation. In addition, the catch is poorly processed and can only be sold for a low price.

INTERCOMMUNAL CONFLICT

Gambela is characterised by ethnic diversity and has a long history of inter-communal conflicts. Since the outbreak of the civil war in South Sudan in 2013, many South Sudanese refugees have also been living in Ethiopia. Gambela has a total population of 436,000 people. In addition, according to the UNHCR, 387,155 refugees currently reside in Gambela. The majority of these refugees are Nuer. With their large numbers, they have changed the ethnic structure in the region. This has further fuelled ethnic conflicts, especially between the two largest groups, Anyuak and Nuer. There are also conflicts over resources between the host communities and the refugees. Plastic waste, especially in refugee camps and cities, is furthermore affecting natural resources such as water.

Women and girls are most affected by conflicts and poor living conditions. They face multiple burdens from food production, child and household care and are exposed to various forms of violence, especially gender-based violence (GBV). High unemployment is another challenge for the communities. The unemployed youth are prone to risky migration and are an easy target for recruitment by armed groups.

„The key to food security lies in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the sustainable management of resources.“

Ethiopia has adopted a comprehensive refugee response framework to facilitate the implementation of policies for refugees outside camps, elementary school enrolment, work permits, provision of irrigable land and local integration. These measures need to strike a balance between the above mentioned framework and local, regional and national policies for the development of the entire region, which is even more difficult when resources are scarce. The main problem is that host communities feel excluded

from the economic and social benefits that refugees receive.

The consortium's project combines peace with development and humanitarian aid by promoting dialogue between communities in order to achieve peaceful co-existence between different ethnic groups and with refugees. It also focuses on gender equality to improve the socio-economic conditions of women and men. In addition, disadvantaged population groups such as children, women, people with different abilities, older people and minorities are included in project activities wherever possible.

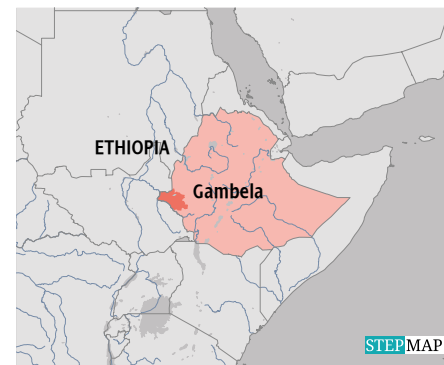
PEACE AND LIVELIHOODS

The project has two main components: peacebuilding and livelihoods interventions in host and refugee communities. Under the first component, a series of trainings are provided to improve the peace- and conflict-management skills of religious and community leaders of host and refugee communities and restore indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. Members of academic institutions and government staff are trained in conflict-sensitive programming and Do-No-Harm. Local radio stations are used to spread peace messages in local languages. Peace clubs are organised in schools to promote the inclusion of peace education in the curriculum. Project staff are also trained in gender mainstreaming and Do-No-Harm. The formation of forums for local government employees and refugees as well as other support structures for the communities is being promoted.

Livelihood interventions include education on agricultural practices such as crop diversification, low external input agriculture, integrated pest management, backyard gardening as well as the provision of native seeds without hybrids. New fishing groups are formed among the youth and existing fishing cooperatives are strengthened through equipment as well as training in fishing practices, marketing and value chain development.

Another measure supports newly founded self-help groups with training, for example in entrepreneurial skills, rearing small ruminants, beekeeping, poultry farming or small-scale trade. Others are supported in setting up waste recycling companies and building latrines from plastic bottle waste in schools, for example.

Women are trained in the use of improved stoves and in food production to increase their income. Community agents are empowered to conduct community discussion forums on GBV, including the establishment of functional reporting structures.



The exchange of experience and the sharing of best practices in the areas of peacebuilding and livelihoods play an important role in all measures. In this way, the knowledge acquired is paired with the experience gained on the ground.

Ownership of the target community is ensured through the full participation of its representatives, religious leaders and elders from the beginning of planning to the selection of beneficiaries and implementation of project activities, in close collaboration with existing and new community-based institutions.

Ensuring food security plays an important role in building a society. Best practice models need to be reviewed for their contextual adaptability. This requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, academia, governments, civil society, the private sector and the UN. Such cooperation can be expanded. The key to food security lies in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the sustainable management of resources. Only a peaceful society can thrive, withstand climate-related challenges and use the abundance of its resources for its progress.



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A street vendor sells fried snacks and soft drinks in Mexico City.

MALNUTRITION

Not only starvation kills people

Mexico is facing an epidemic of obesity and overweight. Across the country, seven out of ten adults, two out of five adolescents, and about 37% of school-age children are obese or overweight. The extent of the problem is due to several factors – not least low incomes.

By Pamela Cruz

The consumption of highly processed foods and sugary drinks has increased significantly in Mexico. At the same time, many people lack access to healthy food and spaces for physical activity. Added to this is a sedentary lifestyle and the influence of advertising for unhealthy foods.

Mexico has been struggling with malnutrition in various forms for decades. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), malnutrition includes undernourishment, micronutrient deficiencies (of vitamins or minerals), overweight, obesity and the associated complications.

A recent study by the National Institute of Public Health (Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública – INSP) examined changes in the diet and health of Mexicans over the last 120 years. From 1890 to 1950, the country struggled with severe undernutrition in children under five years of age and a poorly varied diet with low nutrient intake. According to the INSP and the National Academy of Medicine (Academia Nacional de Medicina – ANM), an estimated 1.3 million children under five years of age are chronically undernourished until today.

In the course of the 20th century, extreme poverty decreased, and rising incomes resulted in the opposite problem: from the 1970s onwards, the obesity epidemic that continues to this day took hold.

However, a higher calorie intake does not mean that people in Mexico are now wealthy. People spend more on high-calorie and low-nutrient foods not least because they are easily accessible and cheap. As a result, the consumption of vegetables, fruits,

legumes and oilseeds is well below recommended levels, and about 30% of calorie intake in Mexico comes from highly processed products, according to studies from the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and INSP.

In the last 30 years, obesity in children and adolescents has increased by 120%, as a study for the World Obesity Federation shows. According to the INSP and ANM, there are an estimated 14 million children and adolescents in Mexico who are overweight (body mass index of at least 25 according to the WHO) and obese (body mass index of at least 30). A study on the prevention and reduction of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents in Mexico estimated that these and other health and nutrition problems cost an average of \$1.8 trillion over a lifetime, or \$30 billion annually. In addition to healthcare costs, this also means indirect costs due to reduced productivity and loss of life.

FOOD ENVIRONMENTS AND INCOME INEQUALITY

Obesity and overweight are widespread in all social classes in Mexico. According to official estimates, over 70% of the total adult population is obese or overweight, with lit-

tle difference between poorer and richer groups. Junk food is available everywhere and its consumption is normalised.

However, access to healthy food and a varied diet differs according to income and socioeconomic status. Nutritionists refer to the varying prevalence of healthy food as food oases or food swamps. Food oases have a diverse and nutritious range of products, including organic food. In Mexico, they are mainly found in high-income neighbourhoods. In contrast, food swamps are environments where there is little access to healthier foods, and a lack of financial resources limits people's ability to afford them.

A study conducted between 2010 and 2020 in poorer urban areas in the Valle de México metropolitan area found that the proliferation of convenience stores is one of the factors contributing to the increase in food swamps. Most convenience stores in Mexico offer less nutritious, calorie-rich and cheap food. A worrying trend is that schools are also increasingly becoming food swamps (see box).

The same study found that low-income households spend a larger propor-

tion of their total income on food, but not necessarily on a healthier diet. Higher-income households invest more in healthy eating, but with a lower proportion of their total spending budget. According to data from the 2022 National Survey of Seasonal Household Income and Expenditure and the Mexican Association of Marketing Research and Public Opinion Agencies, low-income households received an average monthly income of around \$260 and spent between 42% and 52% of this on food. In contrast, the richest households had an average monthly income of around \$3,800 and spent around 28% of it on food.

A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

According to the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), it is estimated that in the first quarter of 2024, almost 36% of Mexicans did not have enough income to cover their basic food needs. The cost of basic foodstuffs amounts to around \$126 per person in urban areas and about \$98 in rural areas. A family of four living in the city therefore needs around \$507 per month to cover their food

needs, while a family in rural areas needs approximately \$390 per month. Global inflation is making the situation worse.

Food security is not just about the availability of food. Its quality matters too. According to the World Bank, food security means that all people have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their daily dietary needs and preferences in order to lead a healthy and active life. In this sense, Mexico faces serious challenges in the area of food security. Although there are some programmes and efforts to change habits and lifestyles, it is important to recognise the collective responsibility of the government and society to protect people's right to health. This includes regulating the prices of healthy food and creating sufficient income opportunities so that everyone can afford it.



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Junk food in school

Schools in Mexico contribute to children and adolescents having access to junk food, exacerbating the already grave epidemic of overweight and obesity (see main text). A nationwide survey on school meals conducted over the last two years by the Mexican Network for Children's Rights (Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México - REDIM) and El Poder del Consumidor (Consumer Power) has revealed that nine out of ten schools offer sugary drinks, sweets and fried foods every day, while only two out of ten schools offer drinking water and natural foods. According to the 2022 National Health

and Nutrition Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Salud y Nutrición - ENSANUT), 82.6% of pre-school children and 93.6% of schoolchildren consume sugary drinks. As a result, schoolchildren consume more than 500 extra calories on average, as another study by El Poder del Consumidor estimates.

Social organisations are trying to limit access to junk food in schools. Following a reform of the General Education Law approved in December 2023, the Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública - SEP) had to draw up new guidelines to ban the sale and advertising of non-

essential food and drinks in schools. The National Institute of Public Health (Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública - INSP) estimates that the number of cases of childhood obesity can be reduced by 500,000 within a year if these guidelines are applied effectively in the next school year. However, they have yet to be published.

On 26 June 2024, the Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria, a coalition of civil society organisations and professionals concerned about the obesity and malnutrition epidemic in the country, called on the SEP to publish these guidelines before the start of the new 2024/2025 school year. It also suggests that these guidelines be expanded to include the following:

- a ban on the sale of junk food in schools,
- the obligation of schools to offer healthy food at affordable prices,
- priority for local agriculture in school meals,
- structured nutrition education and
- a guaranteed access to water, sanitation, adequate food and a healthy environment.

PC





Herbicide application on a German field.

HARMFUL PRACTICES

Curse disguised as blessing

Proponents of what is called “conventional” agriculture in high-income countries claim that global food security depends on the use of pesticides. At first glance, this statement may seem plausible. However, there is no empirical evidence. Hunger and under-nutrition have many reasons, so they do not simply result from too little agricultural production. Moreover, pesticides cause serious environmental harm, but are neither the only, nor a foolproof way to increase production.

By Susanne Neubert

Humankind has been producing enough food to feed everybody on earth in recent decades. Nonetheless, hunger and under-nutrition persist, and they tend to be worst where wars are raging. Both phenomena also haunt remote areas of low- and middle-income countries, where small-scale farmers struggle to make a living. The climate crisis is compounding problems.

It is a fallacy to believe that food imports from high income nations would somehow alleviate their plight. All too often, such imports strain national budgets. They also have huge social costs by crowding local producers out of local markets. Food imports thus thwart rural development.

For hunger to be eradicated, peace is the top priority. The next major issue is to re-balance urban and rural development. It is essential to boost farms’ innovative potential. In recent decades, the typical pattern in Africa was that governments’ subsidies primarily serve urban elites (including with food imports), whilst keeping smallholder farmers poor or even destroying their livelihoods.

This pattern must be turned upside down. Government spending must benefit smallholders. It should guarantee rural education, build infrastructure (roads, water and power supply) and provide good agricultural-extension advice. Such advice can do several things at once: increase farm profits by improving farm practices in ways that serve not only productivity, but also farm’s environmental resilience, both in terms of climate action and biodiversity protection. Advice must promote multi-target optimisation.

In this context, pesticides are of only minor relevance at best. Quite often, they will prove harmful. It also matters very much that pesticides are typically sold in packages with other farm inputs that pre-determine agricultural practices without much regard for locally specific conditions.

Pesticides are certainly not what smallholder farmers need most. Better soil

and water management are essential, and so are smart crop rotation and appropriate diversification of cultivars.

At the same time, farm prosperity depends on the general development of rural regions. Farming families need access to markets, which, in turn, means they need good local roads. Education will help them grasp opportunities, and reliable health-care is needed to restore a persons’ ability to work in cases of illnesses or accidents. Power supply, water availability, mobile-phone connectivity are important too. Hard and soft infrastructures matter very much.

Smallholders will often find pesticides attractive, of course. These agrochemicals look like a magical way to reduce crop losses. There are, however, hidden costs which smallholders are not made aware of, and especially not if they are illiterate. Pesticides are toxic and cause serious harm to human health, including cancer, for example. Far too often, protective gear is not available or used.

Even in high-income nations, the application of pesticides is actually far more problematic than its advocates will admit. This was true right from the start.

The first industry-made toxic agrochemical was DDT after World War II. It soon became clear that it not only eradicates pests, but affects other organisms as well. Moreover, its effectiveness declined fast wherever it was applied.

For complex reasons, pesticides typically lose effectiveness over time. Relevant issues include:

- To some extent, pests develop resistances to pesticides.

- Pesticides kill beneficial organisms which support farm productivity, for example by keeping a check on pests.
- Innovative high-yielding cultivars are often particularly susceptible to being damaged by pests.
- Invasive exotic pests may become prevalent in places where domestic pests have been diminished.
- The health of soils is compromised by monoculture cultivation which, in turn, depends on chemical inputs.

DDT seemed promising at first, but the experience was so bad that the substance has now been banned for several decades in high-income countries. Nonetheless, it is still in use in developing countries and emerging markets such as India, for example.

The chemical industry came up with other kinds of pesticides. Typically, however, some kind of downside eventually becomes apparent (see box).

In the 1980s, scientists realised that unlimited preventive pesticide application was not an option. They therefore developed the concept of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). It is a holistic approach which relies on sound farming practices such as crop rotation and diversification of cultivars. It only proposes a limited use of pesticides as a remedy once a specific pest affects a specific field after a diligent cost-benefit analysis. It does not permit pesticide use for preventive purposes.

According to EU law, IPM is mandatory. Nonetheless, only ten to 15% of European farmers adhere to this best practice. The sad truth is that European authorities mostly tolerate the preventive rather than curative use of pesticides within certain limits. The other methods of plant protection are not practiced as prescribed by law. The reasons are that they tend to be more laborious, not well known and depend on a holistic approach. The general pattern is thus that

farmers routinely spray their fields. Typically, they do not assess costs and benefits of pesticide application at all. That makes sense from the farmers' perspective since pesticides are comparatively cheap.

IPM, on the other hand, is cumbersome and labour-intensive. Farmers must pay close attention to what is happening in the fields. They must closely monitor the weather which has an impact on what kind of pests can thrive. They must also stay aware of whether populations of beneficial organisms are thriving. It is more convenient to plan the application of pesticides long term. As long as farms are permitted to stick to their conventional practices, they will not switch to healthier pest management, and that is particularly true of capital-intensive farms with large-scale monocultures.

Things differ from country to country, however. Sweden has brought down pesticide use radically without farms or consumers suffering harm. Since the 1980s, pes-

The problems with Glyphosate

Pesticides have often caused controversy because their detrimental side-effects were initially ignored and later intentionally played down. The most recent example is probably the herbicide Glyphosate/Roundup.

Bayer, the German multinational that produces Glyphosate insists the substance does not pose any risk to human health. According to the World Health Organization, however, it probably causes cancer. Some law courts in the USA have made Bayer pay hefty compensations to farmers who suffer cancer and argue that their illness was caused by the pesticide.

The full truth is that scientists so far do not fully understand the impacts. Resent research suggests, for example, that it has an impact on

humans' hormone system and may actually play a role in so many men becoming infertile.

It should also be noted that Glyphosate is not suitable for Integrated Pest Management (IPM). This is the best pesticide practice recommended by scientists and mandated by law in the EU. IPM only permits pesticide use as a crisis intervention when a specific pest threatens the harvest on a specific field (see main story). In principle, precautionary use is thus illegal in the EU, though it is tolerated within certain limits.

Glyphosate is definitely not designed for crisis intervention, however. This toxin kills off all kinds of weeds. It protects gene-modified crops but exterminates all other plants. It cannot be used as a targeted remedy for a specific pest. It serves a precautionary purpose

in a very radical way – and thus, it systematically diminishes biodiversity.

Glyphosate was originally developed by Monsanto, a scandal-ridden US-based corporation. Bayer bought Monsanto in 2018 because the top

management wanted to make Bayer a key player in agrochemical industries. They achieved that goal – but that success has since led to considerable headaches. Especially the lawsuits in the USA have proven to be very costly. SN



Anti-pesticide protest in Berlin in 2020.

ticide application dropped by about 75%. Several national action plans made it happen. Sweden's government set incentives for eco-friendly farming and also improved the technical advice it provides to farmers.

Unfortunately, the EU as a whole is not following the Swedish example. Indeed, pesticide sales have been increasing in many member countries since the turn of the millennium, even though they had declined a bit after the introduction of IPM in the early 1990s. The main reason for the resurgence is that pesticides lose their effectiveness over time, as explained above. If farmers want to stick to their practices, they must apply increasing amounts to achieve the same results.

As Sweden shows, alternative approaches make sense. The very least European policymakers should do is therefore to revisit IPM, a concept that was developed in the 1980s and 1990s in response to the shortcomings and dangers of pesticides. Those downsides are even more obvious today, given that insect populations are in

rapid decline. It is alarming that bees and other pollinators have become endangered species. By pollinating plants, they provide indispensable ecosystem services. Even people who only think in business terms must understand that these services have considerable monetary value.

Experts warn, moreover, that we are running out of innovative pesticides. Some liken the situation to the one with antibiotics. As multi-drug resistant varieties of infectious diseases emerge, it is becoming increasingly impossible to treat patients who suffer from those diseases, and the pharmaceutical industry is failing to develop effective new antibiotics. As pesticide-resistances increase, reliance on pesticides is becoming risky for similar reasons.

Organic farming, of course, makes sense too, and it does not require any toxic agrochemicals at all. It delivers good produce as well as good profits. Anyone who visits a European supermarket will see that organic fruits are not much more expensive than the conventional varieties and look just

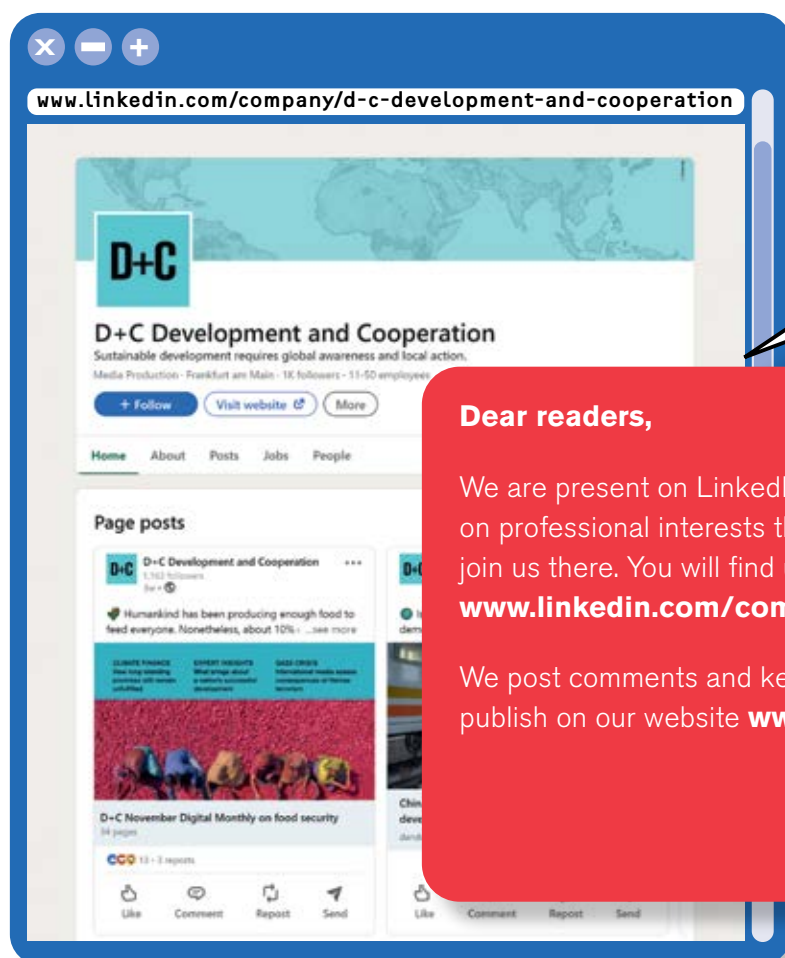
as nice. The statistics reveal, moreover, that the financial returns to farmers are better. An important reason is that organic farming is a multi-target approach that does not focus on maximising the cultivation of one single crop, but also on soil health, humus enrichment, agrobiodiversity and other goals.

Policymakers who want to improve the situation of rural areas in low- and middle-income countries would be well advised to learn from history. They should not listen to what the lobbyists for industrial-scale farming say but pay attention to what works and what does not. Competent farming advice and rural infrastructure work. Pesticides are unconvincing.



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Cattle auction in South Sudan.

NUTRITION

Moderate animal husbandry for sustainable agriculture

Farmed animals have many advantages – and not just because they are a valuable food source. They have an important role to play in sustainable global agriculture. However, there is an urgent need for a switch to livestock farming that does not compete with human food crop production.

By Cornelia Jäger

How does global agriculture need to change to feed a growing world population on a sustainable basis? The debate on this issue is dominated by two camps. One calls for food production to be made more environmentally friendly and resource efficient. Its advocates focus on cutting-edge technologies such as precision fertilisation systems, higher-yielding varieties and more feed-efficient animals.

The other camp prioritises the need to change food consumption. Their goal is to establish a plant-based diet worldwide wherever possible – or even dispense with

livestock farming altogether and create a vegan lifestyle.

However, there is much to be said in favour of a third approach: retaining livestock farming and aligning it so that it does not compete for land and resources needed for human food crop production. Livestock would be exclusively fed foods that are neither fit nor suitable for human consumption. This third approach would avoid many of the negative impacts of intensive land use, especially those resulting from industrialised livestock production. At the same time, the advantages of moderate livestock farming would be preserved.

At present, at least 280 million hectares of arable land worldwide is used exclusively or predominantly to grow feed crops for animals – and that does not include the problematical cultivation of soya. Much of the land used for feed production could be put to more efficient use, either by growing food for humans, helping mitigate climate change or preserving biodiversity.

Studies show that the least amount of agricultural land is required for human nutrition if a small proportion of this nutrition consists of animal-based food. However, the feed of these animals must not compete with human food. Less arable land would be needed than at present and even less than with a vegan diet. The reason for this is that in the vegan system, large quantities of biomass such as grass and crop residues are not processed into food by animals. The food thus lost would therefore need to be grown, which would require additional, suitable land.

Moreover, where populations are growing, more low-yield land needs to be harnessed for food production. In many cases, however, the land that is available is not suitable for arable farming; it can only be used for animals.

If livestock farming were to be practised without competing with food crops, important high-quality proteins would still be available for human nutrition. However, the number of farmed animals would decline sharply over the long term, so high-quality proteins would be available to a much lesser extent than at present. Consequently, dietary behaviour would need to change considerably, especially in the global north (see box).

HIGH-QUALITY FOOD FROM GRASS AND LEFT-OVERS

Livestock farming's critics put forward various arguments. Apart from voicing ethical concerns over animal welfare, for example, they insist that animals – especially ruminants – are poor feed converters. The nutrient input required to produce meat, milk and eggs is too high, they claim; those nutrients would be better used directly for human consumption. This is basically true if one looks only at energy or protein conversion rates from feed to food.

However, it is also important to consider how much of the feed would actually be edible for humans. Ruminants in particular, such as cattle, sheep and goats, can utilise feedstuffs such as grass and crop residues that cannot be digested by humans. So, to produce the same amount of dietary protein as pigs or chickens, ruminants require only one third of the feed that could be used for human consumption. Generally, pigs and chickens can convert feed into dietary

protein more efficiently than ruminants; however, they are more demanding in terms of feed quality.

Studies also show that pigs and chickens in backyard farms – as can be found in many regions of the global south – present relatively little competition for human food resources. After all, they are also fed largely on waste and scraps. Industrialised livestock farms, on the other hand, need to add more feed protein, which could be used for human consumption.

Another criticism of livestock farming concerns greenhouse gas emissions. Ruminants, in particular, produce methane, a gas that has a highly harmful impact on the climate. If animal feed did not compete with food, however, there would be fewer animals, so greenhouse gas emissions would at least be lower than at present. In addition, climate experts are currently re-evaluating ruminant methane and do not call for net-zero emissions for methane from living organisms.

Nevertheless, it is of course important to take every opportunity to make livestock farming's climate and environmental footprint as benign as possible. The practice of systematically building up humus on agricultural land offers great potential for this. Humus is formed by incomplete decomposition of organic matter in the soil. It stores CO₂ and improves soil fertility. Livestock farming offers a number of opportunities for supporting humus formation. Examples include certain forms of pasture management and the use of perennial clover-grass mixtures in crop rotations.

Another argument in favour of moderate livestock farming is that it can increase food security and productivity as part of an agricultural mix. In lower-income regions of the world, many rural households derive their income from mixed forms of farming, including livestock production. Another important aspect, which also applies to Europe, is that livestock maintains valuable bi-

otopes such as meagre meadows and floodplains, thereby promoting biodiversity.

Moderate, non-competitive livestock farming could one day help reliably feed 10 billion people, make efficient use of land and protect the environment. However, the industrialised agricultural system is still a long way from achieving that – not least because of eating habits in affluent parts of the world.

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Better nutritional habits

Livestock farming that does not compete with human food crop production (see main article) would result in substantial reductions in animal numbers. This would have environmental benefits – such as lower greenhouse gas emissions – but would also entail a significantly reduced supply of animal-based foods. If animal feed worldwide consisted exclusively of grass, crop residues and food processing by-products, it is calculated that the supply of dietary protein from livestock production (excluding aquaculture) would fall to a global per capita average of nine grammes a day. That is around a third of the daily supply available at present and around a sixth of the total protein intake required.

The quantities of animal-based foods would remain

largely within the limits of the Planetary Health Diet, which is hailed as a benchmark for a healthy and environmentally friendly diet.

Calculations that additionally include food waste as feed arrive at a figure of over 20 grammes of animal protein a day – around a third of the protein intake required. Food waste is more suitable for pigs than for ruminants because it is more highly processed. This is why the proportion of pork increases when more food waste and less grass is used as feed, for example because the waste is available locally.

In contrast to veganism, both the Planetary Health Diet and non-competitive livestock farming consciously include animals in their concepts and focus on a flexitarian diet. They do this for different reasons.

The Planetary Health Diet gives emphasis to food security for disadvantaged population groups. Non-competitive livestock farming is primarily concerned with economical land use and upcycling grass, crop residues and waste into food.

Both concepts call for different developments in dif-

ferent parts of the world. In North America and Europe, the average consumer should eat significantly less meat, eggs and dairy products to have a healthy and sustainable diet. In Africa and Asia, the consumption of such foods could – and in some cases should – be increased. CJ



Consumer behaviour needs to change, especially in industrialised countries: cold cuts on display in a German supermarket.

The reign of Sheikh Hasina has ended in Bangladesh.

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