Social inclusion
Disabilities matter in fight against poverty

Finance
Multilateral banks must lead transition to green finance

Waste management
Global problems, local solutions and the plastics challenge

Women, men, families
Focus: Women, men, families

Risking one’s life

In strife-affected South Sudan, the bride-price tradition is causing severe suffering. Journalists Philip Thon Aleu and Parach Mach report. Page 12

Results of poverty

Teenage marriage is a problem in Uganda. Moses Ntenga and Angelina Diesch of the non-governmental organisation Joy for Children give an overview of the situation. On the other hand, Uganda’s widows are among the poorest and most vulnerable population groups. According to tradition, women are not supposed to own assets at all, writes journalist Gloria Laker Aciro. Pages 14, 16

Missing role model

In South Africa, many children grow up without their fathers. When teenage girls get pregnant, they are often abandoned. According to Sonwabiso Ngcowa, a creative writer and social scholar, this is only one symptom of a distorted idea of manhood that has taken root. Page 18

All weddings are political

As the first country in Latin America, Argentina introduced same-sex marriages in 2010. Our contributor Sebastián Vargas was one of the activists who campaigned for the reform. Page 22

“All violence and grief everyday”

Thousands of youngsters join gangs in Guatemala or work for drug cartels. Victor Puluc of the youth organisation SODEJU – FUNDAJU discussed in an interview why broken families are one reason that makes youngsters become criminals. Page 25

Advice matters

Access to different contraceptives needs to be guaranteed, and so does access to information about the pros and cons of all contraceptive methods. Good counselling is essential – but all too often neglected, warns Hedwig Diekwisch of BUKO Pharma-Kampagne, a German NGO. Page 29

Short-term relationship

In the Indian city of Hyderabad, prosperous men from the Arab world marry poor Indian girls for a few months, divorce them and then return home without further obligations. Nilanjana Ray of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences has researched the matter. In Indonesia, similar forms of sex tourism contribute to rising divorce rates. Journalist Edith Koesoemawiria assesses the trends. Pages 32, 34

Editorial

Personal growth, not personal service

When I was doing my PhD research in Calcutta in the mid-1990s, I wasn’t married yet. Several friends, mostly well-educated elderly, offered to find me a “good Bengali girl”. I was told again and again that love marriages are fine for some people, but arranged marriages work out better for others. Given that I was in my mid-30s and had not found myself a wife, it seemed obvious to which group I belonged.

Marriages are about love and many other important things. In all cultures, social protection is linked to families. Tradition or codified laws determine what duties and what rights a person has. It would be wrong to argue that any specific rule is right or wrong without taking into account the societal context. What works for nomadic herders, probably does not make sense in a megacity. Families are institutions, and they change in the course of history. Societies learn. What was once obvious, may become obsolete. Traditions such as bride-prices or dowry were useful in the past, but have largely become dysfunctional today. They were supposed to prevent or alleviate problems, but in different circumstances, they now cause harm. It is hard, but necessary to adopt new norms that match new needs.

What Indian friends told me is true: there is not less love in families in India, where marriages tend to be arranged, than in western countries, where people pick their spouses themselves. High divorce rates in Europe and North America show that love marriages often fail. Having had a glimpse of many Indian families’ lives, I know that some arranged marriages work out well. But I have also seen some profoundly dysfunctional Indian families.

In Calcutta, I stayed at a students’ hostel, and I met lots of young people. As young men and women everywhere, they were curious about sex. Some came from open-minded families and were free to gather experience, and in that respect, they did not differ much from their western peers. Others, however, came from more restrictive families, and were rather insecure, troubled and confused. They felt awkward about feelings and desires that are considered normal and natural in EU countries today.

One young student in her early 20s confided in me and wanted to know why she was so unhappy even though she had everything a good Bengali girl was supposed to have. She was beautiful, had good grades and had taken classical dance lessons. She mentioned more things that, in her eyes, proved she was lucky, but could not explain why she was feeling depressed.

It was striking that everything on her list was about how she might please others, without relating to what she herself wanted to do in life. When I told her that, she felt deeply understood and soon claimed to be in love with me. In truth, I did not understand her inner self. I could only tell that her upbringing had been oppressive. That was a sociological insight, not a deep glimpse into her soul.

Sometime later, another very smart elderly friend told me she’d like to arrange a marriage for me and brought up a new argument. When a German man marries a Bengali girl, she said, it normally goes well, because the Bengali girl feels liberated, and the German man feels well served. It may indeed often turn out that way, but I was immediately sure that this was not what I wanted. As I see it, a fulfilling relationship is about equality, with both partners getting the space they need to fully develop their personalities.
Monitor
Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) launches action plan to protect seas / Corruption does not necessarily undermine peace process in post-conflict countries / Why people keep fleeing even after peace agreements are concluded / Global trend of urbanisation / Nowadays: How Zimbabweans express political dissent / Imprint

Focus section: Women, men, families
Philip Thon Aleu and Parach Mach
The bride-price tradition is causing suffering in South Sudan
Angelina Diesch and Moses Ntenga
Early marriages deprive many young Ugandan girls of prospects
Gloria Laker Aciro
Widows are among Uganda’s most disadvantaged people
Sonwabiso Ngcowa
Too many children grow up without fathers in South Africa
Eva Jerger
Girls’ initiation rites and sexual abuse in South Africa
Sebastián Vargas
In Argentina, homosexual people have the right to marry
Interview with Víctor Puluc
Guatemala’s gangsters are often from dysfunctional families
Hedwig Diekwisch
People need access to contraceptives – and advice too
Nilanjana Ray
In Hyderabad, a “sheikh marriage” only lasts a few weeks
Edith Koesoemawiria
Indonesian divorce numbers are rising

Tribune
Rainer Brockhaus
Societies benefit when people with disabilities are not excluded
Nannette Lindenberg
International finance institutions as drivers of “green finance”
Floreana Miesen and Hans Dembowski
Garbage: global concern, municipal solutions

Debate
Comments on the Central African Republic, the World Humanitarian Summit, Britain’s exit from the EU, the EU’s role in achieving the SDGs and the Philippines’ new President Rodrigo Duterte

Inclusion makes sense
Society as a whole benefits from projects that promote the social inclusion of people with disabilities. More needs to be done, demands Rainer Brockhaus of CBM, the faith-based international non-governmental organisation. Page 36

Room for improvement
International financial institutions have a lot to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals – and that exceeds loans for investments in climate protection and adaptation to global warming, according to Nannette Lindenberg of the German Development Institute. Page 38

Time to act
The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit was a good start for preventing and alleviating suffering. Now the various agencies must live up to the voluntary commitments they made, demands Priya Behrens-Shah of Welthungerhilfe, a non-governmental aid agency. She adds, however, that more money will not suffice if crises are allowed to get worse and worse. Page 46
Marine ecology

Saving the seas

The oceans generate half of the earth’s oxygen. They are important sources of income and provide the nutritional basis for more than 10% of all humans, especially in developing countries. But marine ecosystems are severely threatened. A new action plan is meant to contribute to their protection.

The sea level is rising, huge patches of plastic are floating in the oceans, and 90% of the fish stocks are overfished or heavily exploited. The death of corals and mangroves add to the problem. Only 3.4% of marine areas are under protection, and only often on paper, but not in practice.

Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has developed an action plan to protect more marine areas, organise a larger share of worldwide fishing in a sustainable way and let less rubbish end up in the oceans. Coastal towns in poor countries particularly need support to deal with the consequences of the rising sea level, said Minister Gerd Müller when he launched the action plan in May. Furthermore, he wants developing countries to get more assistance for implementing marine protection measures. The BMZ is setting up a new fund for this purpose (see box next page).

The new action plan consists of the following ten points:

1. Create more marine reserves and manage them better
   The BMZ will assist governments that create new reserves, strengthen their administration and contribute to long-term viability through sustainable funding instruments. This way, the ministry wants to contribute to achieving the goal of securing effective protection for 10% of the world’s marine areas by 2020, as was agreed in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

2. Foster sustainable artisanal fishing and aquaculture
   The livelihoods of about 58 million people directly depend on fishing. According to estimates, 10 to 12% of the world population generate their income directly or indirectly in this sector. Small-scale fishery and aquaculture protect marine
resources, generate local incomes and provide crucial food products, including for disadvantaged people. The BMZ will foster better management of fish stocks in partner countries.

3. Foster sustainability and social responsibility in fish processing and marketing

Global fish consumption has grown dramatically. Many fish stocks are being exploited to the brink of ecological sustainability and even beyond. Accordingly, the economic development of affected regions is threatened. Furthermore, labour conditions in many countries’ fishing industries do not meet international standards. The BMZ will support sustainable supply chains in order to conserve fish stocks and improve working conditions.

4. Assist partner countries in the fight against illegal, informal and unregulated fishing

Illegal fishing robs the affected coastal countries of annual revenues worth up to $23 billion. It impedes sustainable resource management, deprives local people of important food and hampers the development of the local economy. The BMZ will assist its partners in setting up control systems and fosters the development of regional approaches to fight illegal and unregulated fishing.

5. Set up strategic partnerships with businesses

Sustainable coastal and maritime tourism is crucial to conserve marine and coastal ecosystems. The BMZ plans to raise awareness in the tourism industry and among the general public in Germany for related issues.

6. Assist partner countries in the reduction of marine pollution

It makes sense to eliminate the causes of marine pollution. For this purpose, the BMZ will further strengthen its environmental cooperation with partner countries. Together, model approaches to integrated waste management are to be developed. Goals include treating waste appropriately, reducing the amounts of garbage and recycling a greater share.

7. Draft strategies to cope with potentially irreversible damages of marine ecosystems

Marine ecosystems are changing irreversibly due to the acidification and warming of the oceans and the overfishing of coastal waters. The BMZ will promote research projects that help to better understand causes and effects and result in options for action. It will also foster alternative job opportunities for people who lose their livelihoods due to environmental damage. In addition, the ministry will support initiatives to help poor people to cope with disasters.

8. Assist coastal regions in the adaptation to climate change

In a few years, two-thirds of the world population will live in coastal regions, mostly in cities. They are put at risk by the rising sea level and extreme weather events such as hurricanes and cyclones, which are occurring ever more often. The BMZ will help cities to adapt to climate change, respond to disasters and tackle the issues in anticipatory and sustainable urban development.

9. Set up more early warning systems for the effects of climate change

More than 600 million people live in low-lying coastal areas. They suffer directly from effects of climate change such as storms, floods, soil salinisation and the rising sea level. The BMZ pledges support for establishing early warning systems in combination with coastal protection and urban development projects. Another goal is to take into account flood protection and disaster protection into development planning.

10. To support cross-cutting cooperation across borders

Cross-border approaches and the consideration of multi-fold interests and needs – including fishing, transport, nature conservation, infrastructure development and tourism – are crucial for effective marine conservation. The BMZ will support the “Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance”, an international initiative that is geared to assisting nations and regional organisations in creating innovative strategies for marine protection.

The BMZ is currently organising a “Tour for the future” (Zukunftstour) through all of Germany’s federal states. The protection of coastal and marine areas is one feature of the tour. The ministry is hosting various events and uses interactive formats to promote its “Charter for the future” (Zukunftscharta). The charter was published in 2014 and spells out eight fields of action for sustainable development.

Katja Dombrowski

Blue Action Fund

Fish don’t stop at maritime borders. Some sea creatures migrate thousands of kilometres. Cross-border conservation areas are needed to protect them from extinction. Therefore, Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will set up a new international endowment fund by the end of this year: the Blue Action Fund. Among other things, it will ensure funding for the management of conservation areas.

German and international NGOs with expertise in coastal and marine protection will implement the measures and sensitise local people for the needs of coastal and marine ecology. The ministry will cooperate with environmental think tanks such as the world conservation union IUCN to ensure the quality of the projects.

By setting up marine conservation areas, the BMZ wants to protect or restore habitats and fish nurseries. According to the ministry, important food chains will thus be preserved, and fish stocks can recover. Fishermen will benefit from higher yields. The BMZ emphasises that linking protection and utilisation is a core issue the Blue Action Fund will pay attention to.

Links

BMZ action plan for marine protection and sustainable fishing (only available in German):

BMZ Zukunftstour (Tour for the future – only available in German):
http://zukunftstour.zukunftscharta.de/startseite.html

Zukunftscharta (Charter for the future – only available in German):
https://www.zukunftscharta.de/infos-zur-zukunftscharta.html
Peacebuilding

Corruption, a necessary evil

Peacebuilding experts are uncertain about how best to handle corruption in post-conflict states. The conventional wisdom is that corruption is a significant obstacle on the road to peace and democracy. A new study, however, claims that corruption is not necessarily destabilising. Sierra Leone is the empirical example the author refers to.

Corruption is generally seen as one of the biggest breaks on development. It is believed to hamper democratisation, thwart the rule of law and hinder economic progress, whilst encouraging crime and terrorism at the same time. Frustration about corruption is often the reason for violent conflict. Donors do not want to support any form of corruption and face the pressure to make sure their official development assistance (ODA) is not syphoned off in dubious channels. 'Accordingly there is a broad international consensus on the relevance of fighting corruption,' writes Franziska Perlick from the Graduate Centre for Development Studies of Universitätsallianz Ruhr.

According to her, post-conflict countries have weak state capacities and are thus usually among the most corrupt in the world. The influx of aid for peacebuilding and reconstruction compounds problems because it offers vast opportunities for illicit gains in a situation of scarcity. This setting is quite difficult for anyone who wants to help build peace, the author argues.

In Perlick’s eyes, fighting corruption should not be the top priority in peacebuilding as there actually may be a trade-off between political stability and corruption. Perlick writes that peacebuilders typically have to tolerate or even support some corrupt activities in order to end or prevent violence, to get potential spoilers involved in negotiations or to gain access to necessary services. The author agrees that this is not desirable, but insists that it is often inevitable. Moreover, corruption can boost an aid agency’s efficiency or effectiveness by speeding up lengthy bureaucratic procedures.

According to Perlick, corruption may serve social and redistributive functions, so it does not necessarily lead to public outrage or complaints. In a post-conflict society, she argues, corruption becomes a survival strategy for common people and does not only result from irresponsible personal greed.

Perlick wants international peacebuilders to admit that the goal of quickly turning a traumatised post-crisis country into a prosperous and democratic state is hardly realistic. In her view, immediate peacebuilding comes first, and statebuilding, which is a long term task, begins later.

Perlick bases her reasoning on a case study of Sierra Leone, where peace was successfully built from 2002 to 2012 after devastating decades of civil war. The author claims that things went better here than in most other post-crisis countries and examines what effect corruption had on the peacebuilding process. According to her, patronage was deeply embedded in social institutions, and a large part of the population depended on it for survival. She praises the UN peace mission for taking this fact into account and therefore postponing concerns for good governance to a later phase. It only began to deal with the topic in 2008, six years after the war had ended.

The scholar reports that the corruption levels actually rose until 2008, but that political stability was consolidated and tolerance between ethnic groups grew at the same time. Corruption thus did not thwart or undermine the peace process. Perlick does not argue that corruption should not be fought, but she insists it should happen at the right time, not at the start, and that the determination of the local people to improve matters is essential.

The conclusion of her work is that, as long as enough people profit from the corruption system, it will not necessarily reduce the legitimacy of a post-conflict regime. The irony of corruption, according to Perlick, is that “nobody wants it, but it still persists and a lot of people participate.” The author’s recommendation is that donors should work on replacing corrupt practices with viable and legitimate alternatives.

Link
https://inef.uni-due.de/cms/files/wp12_perlick.pdf
All too often, people keep fleeing from strife-torn countries even after a civil war is formally declared to have ended. To stem the outflow of people, it is essential that all people benefit from peace, argue scholars from the GIGA think tank in Hamburg.

A declared goal of development policy is to prevent people from fleeing. Experience shows that it takes more than the formal end to a conflict to achieve this goal. Afghanistan, Nepal and El Salvador are examples of emigration continuing long after peace has supposedly set in.

Making matters more complex, it is often hard to tell whether people are forced to leave their home or go voluntarily. The distinction is actually not clear cut. Fear of violence may compel people to leave even if no one points a gun at them. The mere knowledge that perpetrators of human-rights violations are still at large can drive people from their homes. If people cannot find livelihoods, moreover, they have incentives to leave. Several motives thus have an impact on the ultimate decision.

Felix Haaß, Sabine Kurtenbach and Julia Strasheim of the Hamburg-based German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) assess matters in a recent paper. They point out that real peace is more than the absence of war. Social divides must be bridged after a civil war. All too often, the authors warn, the political system remains controlled by well-established elites and former combatants as well as young people struggle to find decent jobs. Accordingly, migration from the countries concerned is not only likely to continue, but may actually be useful in the sense of reducing the likelihood of fresh violence. This setting is common even among post-crisis countries that get substantial official development assistance.

The authors argue that organised military violence is not the only kind of violence that marks civil wars. After an armistice or even a formal peace agreement, other forms of violence often continue almost unabated, including murder, torture, rape and robbery. Former militias, informal gangs or feuding clans may be involved. The desire to take revenge plays a role too. According to the research paper, many countries are really neither at war nor at peace.

It is generally assumed that institution building serves to involve all parties in the politics of a post-conflict country. In practice, however, that cannot be taken for granted, the GIGA team warns, and the lack of inclusiveness means that many people will be tempted to leave. Even when a country does not slide back into all-out war, the scholars write, old institutions often persist and mark the post-conflict era. On the other hand, they note that fewer people migrate from a country when they see real opportunities to get involved in politics in a meaningful way.

Judicial institutions matter too, according to the scholars, because human-rights abusers will keep wielding considerable influence unless they are tried and punished. For those they made suffer during the war, moreover, it may be intolerable to live in the same neighbourhood even if the criminals are no longer influential. Putting perpetrators on trial always takes time, the GIGA paper states, and the transition to peace will stay incomplete until that happens.

The authors’ message to international policymakers is that donors should focus on peace dividends benefiting the broader population rather than merely aiming to mitigate the direct impacts of crisis and pacify elite groups. Otherwise the formal termination of war will fail to address the root causes of flight and migration, even though donor agencies may make considerable investments in the peace process.

Hans Dembowski

Link
GIGA-study:
Fleeing the peace, emigration after civil war.

Police operation in a gang-controlled neighbourhood of Ilopango, El Salvador, last summer.
Overpopulated, expensive and polluted – cities at their worst are grim places to live. But they also generate jobs for millions of people, present huge opportunities for using new climate-friendly technologies and are fertile breeding grounds for the arts as well as for citizen’s involvement in public affairs.

Promoting the sustainable development of cities and other human settlements is the focus of the Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador in October. The UN summit is set to define a “New Urban Agenda”, spelling out a new global urbanisation strategy for the next two decades.

Over half of the world’s population or 3.5 billion people live in cities today. The number is set to rise to 5 billion by 2030. Cities account for around 70% of global GDP and produce more than 70% of all greenhouse-gas emissions. Their share of global energy consumption is 60%. They also generate 70% of the world’s waste. What goes on in cities is therefore crucial for global developments concerning climate change, economic prosperity, social integration and governance.

“Can cities be sustainable? The answer has to be yes,” says Michael Renner, senior researcher at the Worldwatch Institute, the environmental research organisation. “There are lots of examples, and it can be done, but you need the right frameworks, bigger ambitions, more learning from one another, a combination of social and environmental goals and appropriate citizen participation.”

While representatives of national governments negotiate and sign agreements like the New Urban Agenda, those who carry out their mandate are local government officials. Much hinges on dialogue between these actors – which is not always easy.

Alexander Carius of Adelphi, a German development consultancy, is interested in what “global urban governance” means at a practical level. Cities have been a major driver of this process, he said at a recent event held by GIZ in Berlin. So far, global coordination across sectors and levels of government is lacking.

Günther Meinert of GIZ emphasises that there are “very strong” networks between cities at the municipal level, pointing to the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, an international coordinating group for local governments, and the Compact of Mayors, a worldwide coalition of city leaders. But while these groups drive global strategies on urbanisation, there is “a considerable vacuum” at the national level, he says. According to Meinert, more cooperation is needed in many fields of policymaking, including employment, health care and the environment.

The Habitat process calls for national urban policies to “establish a connection between the dynamics of urbanisation and the overall process of national development.” The idea is to combine a high quality of life for a broad swathe of the people with ambitious sustainability goals.

This is a big challenge. The mere fact that some 900 million people live in slums reflects the failure to provide living wages, affordable housing and solid education.

Because of cities’ complexity, no UN agency can govern “into the cities” to tackle challenges, says Meinert. For example, he notes that 80% of all jobs in Africa are in the informal sector. “We can’t simply have the answer that these jobs must be integrated into the formal sector, because, purely mathematically, 80% can’t fit into 20%.”

Employment is not the only concern. Housing and transport are crucial too. Low earners are often forced to move out of increasingly expensive city centres. As they commute to work, they create a huge carbon footprint. Cities need revenues for infrastructure investments so they can build mass transit systems, preferably running on clean energy.

Many cities are restricting individual car use and encouraging bicycle use and car-sharing to tackle emissions and congestion problems. To reduce pollution, some are also incentivising energy-efficient buildings. Such policy decisions have implications that reach beyond the city walls. Accordingly, says Meinert, cities must be “led politically, not just administrated”.

Ellen Thalman

Reference

Traffic jams are a daily nuisance in Thailand’s capital Bangkok.
Nowadays: Democracy needs more than hashtags

A social media campaign hashtagged #ThisFlag is making headlines in Zimbabwe. Response to the campaign started by Pastor Evans Mawarire has been spectacular.

The campaign is calling on citizens to don the Zimbabwe flag and share this on social media as a sign of unity against the long-standing political, economic and social disintegration in Zimbabwe. Mawarire’s simple words in his first post were: “When I look at the flag, it’s not a reminder of my pride and inspiration, it feels as if I just want to belong to another country. And so I must look at it again with courage and try to remind myself that it is my country.” Through a series of videos, Mawarire has managed to build a crowd of Zimbabwean netizens calling for the elected officials to provide solutions to Zimbabwe’s long-lasting problems.

Zimbabwe is not a big country, so tens of thousands of responses and retweets nationally and internationally show that Mawarire has voiced the pent-up frustration of his fellow citizen with their government. But whether it will have a real impact on Zimbabwe’s acrimonious politics is too early to tell. Real democracy will not magically appear from merely retweeting a hashtag. Social media channels are vital to address issues, but on their own, they are not powerful enough to effect political change. Real changes require action on the ground and not mere desktop or mobile screen political activism.

Internet penetration and mobile telephony has grown rapidly over the past decade in Zimbabwe, but internet access and social-media usage remain elite phenomena. Users are largely urban people and the Zimbabwean diaspora. According to The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe, the country’s internet penetration rate is 48.1% or 6.7 million people, and that statistic probably needs further scrutiny.

Most users access internet via mobile devices, which is expensive. In a country where freedom of expression is highly constrained, however, social media facilitate space for a select few to openly express themselves in defiance of censorship.

Information Minister Jonathan Moyo dismissed the #ThisFlag movement as nothing more than a “pastor’s fart in the corridors of power”. Becoming politically active can be dangerous in Zimbabwe. More than a year ago, Itai Dzamara, a prominent critic of President Robert Mugabe, was abducted, and his whereabouts is still unknown. His case is followed up by Amnesty International.

Pastor Mawarire sparked an emotional conversation about Zimbabwe’s seemingly intractable decline. But the more the demands of the campaign remain unmet, the more frustration the citizens will feel, confronted with a system that is determined to maintain an iron hold on power.

In our column “Nowadays”, D+C/E+Z correspondents write about daily life in developing countries.

Chief K. Masimba Biriwasha
is a digital journalist based in Harare, Zimbabwe.
biriwasha.mj@gmail.com

Executive director:
Oliver Rohloff

Address of the publisher and editorial office:
Frankfurter Straße 79-81
D-60327 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

This is also the legally relevant address of all indicated as responsible or entitled to represent them in this imprint.

Editorial team:
Dr. Hans Dembowksi (chief), Sabine Valk, Katja Dombrowski, Sheila Mysorekar, Eva-Maria Verfürth, Dagmar Wolf (assistant)
Phone: +49 (0) 69 75 01-43 66
Fax: +49 (0) 69 75 01-48 35
euz.editor@fs-medien.de

Opinions expressed by authors indicated in bylines do not necessarily reflect the views of ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL, the publisher or the editor and his team. Individual articles may be reprinted provided the source is mentioned and two voucher copies are sent to the editor unless copyright is explicitly indicated. This does not apply to the photographs published in D+C Development and Cooperation and E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit. The editors request that no unsolicited manuscripts be sent. However, they do welcome proposals along with abstracts that serve to outline submissions.

Prices for print edition incl. mailing charges: single issue: € 2.20 annual subscription, world: € 16.00 annual subscription, world: € 18.00

Printing:
Westdeutsche Verlags- und Druckerei GmbH Kurfürstenstraße 4-6
64540 Mörfelden-Walldorf, Germany
Advertising for family planning in Côte d'Ivoire.
Families are an eternal institution – human life is hard to imagine without them. Institutions change over time however. Cultures differ in regard to rules about who can marry whom and what rights go along with what duties. The quality of people’s lives depends on conventions meeting society’s needs. All too often, that is not the case – but that does not mean that nothing can be done about it.

More than a private matter
In strife-affected South Sudan, the bride price tradition is causing severe suffering. In rural areas, many young men feel compelled to steal cattle because they see no other opportunity of amassing the fortune they need. In urban areas, some men take out loans – and repaying the debt becomes a burden on the young family.

By Philip Thon Aleu and Parach Mach

Jada Tombe is 27 years old and considers himself lucky to still be alive after participating in “cattle rustling”. As in the USA, this term means to steal cows in South Sudan. “We risk our lives to raid other communities so we can pay bride prices,” the young man says.

Not all rustlers survive. Three of his cousins, Tombe says, were killed in the past three years trying to rob animals from other villages. There often are casualties on the defensive side too, as Tombe points out: “Even if you don’t go on raids, other communities will attack you, and you may be killed defending your herd.”

In South Sudan, cows and goats are the traditional currency for paying bride prices. “If you can’t afford to pay many cows,” Tombe says, “that hurts your pride and you will move in public with your head bent.” It is embarrassing to offer less than 20 cows, he reports, and adds: “If I pay 70, 90 or 100 cows for a woman, it will definitely demonstrate that I’m rich and a first class person.”

The tradition is particularly strong among pastoralist communities including the Mundari, Dinka, Nuer and Teposa tribes. Village youths go on rustling raids because otherwise they cannot get the animals they need to be able to marry a woman of their choice. Most often, cattle are stolen from other tribes, but sometimes raids are carried out within one’s own community.

The authorities are unable to control the situation. John Deng works as a police officer in Bor, the capital of Jonglei state. “We lose a lot of young people in cattle rustling,” he reports. Some 2,000 people were killed in this context in the state from 2008 to 2012. Many civilians own automatic rifles, so it is hard for the authorities to apprehend perpetrators of violence.

According to Deng, it would help to pass a law that would limit the level of bride prices. Moreover, the village youths need economic opportunities.

South Sudan is not a peaceful country however. It only became independent from Sudan in 2011, after three decades of civil war. The political system remains fragile, and a brutal spell of civic strife only ended recently. Violence may erupt again. This setting does not facilitate the kind of economic development that would let masses prosper. Moreover, it makes people adhere to traditions. Most rural people have no alternative but to stick to the culture of their tribe.

In any case, the rule of law is weak. Government agencies at the national and state levels would struggle to enforce any new rules concerning bride prices.

The number of cows demanded for a bride has changed over the years. South Sudan is oil rich, but many people live below the poverty line. Today, cash is used for bride prices too, but in rural areas, livestock remains the prevalent currency. After independence, the economic situation improved for some people, and bride prices have been rising accordingly. For illiterate youngsters in rural areas, however, this has only made things more difficult. They make up the bulk of South Sudan’s people, and they normally do not have good, well-paid jobs.

Young brides, elderly grooms

Apart from cattle rustling, the bride-price tradition has other detrimental consequences. One is that girls get married at a rather young age. According to UN Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), more than 60% of South Sudanese girls are married before they turn 18. In fact, teenage girls are said to be three times more likely to die in child labour in this country than to complete primary education.

Poverty is an important reason: destitute parents are often desperate to collect the bride price and no longer be in charge of feeding their daughter.

The same tradition, on the other hand, forces many men to postpone marriage until the age of 40
and later. After all, they have to accumulate enough cattle, goats or money to afford the bride price. Sometimes, an engagement breaks up after years because a man simply does not manage to come up with the agreed bride price.

That is what happened to 40 year-old Yanta Nicholas. His fiancée’s father demanded 285,000 South Sudanese pounds (about $8000), but the most he could afford was 50,000 pounds. He actually has a comparatively well-paid job, but he still only earns about 2,000 pounds per month. “Even if I was given another 10 years, I couldn’t save that amount of money,” he says. Moreover, it would mean postponing marriage for another decade. His engagement lasted five years.

In South Sudan and around the world, women’s rights activists oppose the mere idea of paying a bride price because it implies that women are something like traded commodities. South Sudanese brides, however, often appreciate high prices. Alakir Jauch, who married two years ago and is now 26 years old, says it made her feel “more worthy” that her husband paid 520,000 pounds. In her eyes, his struggle to raise that huge sum shows that “he really wanted me”.

She has a point, argues Lewis Anei Kuendit, an adviser to the ministry of youth and culture and former governor of Warrap state. He is an expert in history, and he sees some merit in the bride-price tradition. In his eyes, it is a symbol of commitment, allowing the bridegroom to show appreciation of his future wife whilst honouring her parents at the same time. In the past, moreover, the payment of the bride price was a sign of maturity and could indicate that a man was prepared to manage resources prudently. Obviously, this is an essential trait in a breadwinner.

Anei emphasises, however, that people should agree “reasonable amounts”, and the focus should be on “the future relationship of the marriage”. He adds that excessive bride prices are currently distorting the idea of marriage. Many couples, he warns, do not find comfort and love because weddings have been reduced to a kind of business transaction. In his view, many families are too eager to collect some kind of wealth fast, overlooking how fast an economic fortune can erode.

An excessive bride price, moreover, often becomes a serious burden on a young family. The reason is that men take out loans to get married. Having to repay the debt, they then lack resources for investing in the family.

All summed up, however, Anei thinks that matters are toughest in the rural areas. “The worst consequence of high bride prices,” he says, “is cattle rustling.”
Teenage marriage is a problem in many developing countries. Mostly girls are affected. After being married the brides soon drop out of school and become pregnant. Rates are especially high in Uganda. NGOs and now even the national government are trying to make a difference.

By Angelina Diesch and Moses Ntenga

Diana (name changed) seems to have a good life. She is a self-confident young woman who studies at the Uganda Christian University. But the story Diana wants to share is not a happy one. It is hard to believe what this bright and joyful young woman had to go through.

Diana grew up in eastern Uganda, where her mother raised her and her two siblings without any support after her father has left the family. Her mother had inherited some land, but it was taken away by Diana’s uncle (see next essay). When Diana was 15 years old, her mother could no longer afford paying her school requirements. So she married her daughter to a 22-year-old school dropout. The bride price consisted of 50,000 Ugandan shillings (about €13), a cow and a basket of cassava. Her mother exchanged the cow for a piece of land. Diana did not love her husband, but accepted her fate. She worked on community members’ farms and earned 2,000 shillings (about €0.50) a day while her husband was unemployed.

Soon Diana became pregnant. When the labour started, she was in pain for a week, but no one brought her to hospital. In the second week, she was taken to a health centre where she gave birth to a little boy who died the following day. One week later, Diana was back on the farm working.

She joined a youth group at church and shared her story with a social worker. With her support, Diana started going back to school. But her husband wasn’t happy about it, and he beat her repeatedly. In the end, she returned to find shelter at her mother’s place.

New life

Her mother, however, also disagreed with Diana’s decision to go back to school; she refused to give her daughter a bed – Diana had to sleep on the bare soil – and tried to convince her of returning to her husband: “You have a vagina; therefore you should give birth, rather than going to school,” was one of the nicer sen-
tences Diana was told, and she eventually returned to her husband. When Diana became pregnant again, the birth was induced after one-week labour and a healthy baby girl was born.

Today, Diana is separated from her husband and lives in Kampala, where she is studying with the support of World Vision. Her mother has changed her mind and looks after Diana’s little daughter. Diana now is 22 years old and seems to be better off: “Everybody thinks I have a lot of money, but that’s not true, the scholarship from World Vision only covers university fees and my cost of living. My mother can barely survive from her small piece of land, and when my daughter falls sick, I don’t know how to pay the doctor and medicine.” Diana will keep on struggling. In her experience, there always is some kind of solution.

Dire reality

Diana wants her story to inspire other girls. Child marriage is a reality for many Ugandan girls. According to current UNICEF statistics, 40% of the women between 20 and 24 years were married before their 18th birthday and 10% even before they turned 15 years. Uganda’s rate of child marriage is thus above the African average of 39%.

Prevalence is highest in northern Uganda (59%), followed by the west (58%) and east (52%). According to several studies, including the African Human Social Development Report (2013), countries with high rates of child marriage also have the highest rates for maternal mortality, pregnancies and HIV/AIDS infections.

Child marriage happens to both sexes, but mainly affects girls. Girl brides and their families are often trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. Poor parents mostly marry their daughters “off” early because they want to reduce family expenses. Girls who marry young typically drop out of school without even completing the primary cycle. They do not get chance to gain necessary knowledge and skills which could help them and their families to escape poverty.

The girls give birth early, and their children are at risk of suffering the same fate. Teenage brides are thus more likely to be poor and stay poor. Much too young to be ready for marriage and pregnancy, these girls are more often victims of domestic violence and serious complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Diana was lucky because her prolonged labour contractions did not cause permanent damage in form of an obstetric fistula, as often happens. During prolonged, obstructed labour, the sustained pressure of the baby’s head on the mother’s pelvic bone can harm soft tissues, creating a hole, or fistula, between the vagina and the bladder and/or rectum. The women concerned suffer from persistent incontinence and are excluded from social life. Uganda has been reported to have the third-highest rate of fistula in the world.

Many reasons

Under-age marriage has many causes in Uganda. Mainly, it results from poverty and girls’ only limited access to education. According to traditional and social norms, moreover, a girl should be married at a young age in order to fulfil duties as a wife and mother.

But not every girl is forced into marriage as Diana. Some girls choose to marry early because they have difficulties following lessons in schools, where classes

Political will

In 2015, the Ugandan government decided to address the issue of child marriage. In June, it launched its first ever National Strategy to End Child Marriage. Civil society and UN agencies were involved in drafting the five-year plan.

The national strategy is supposed to bring about improvements in the legal environment, change in communities’ mindsets and better access to education, among other things. It makes sense. But due to chronic budget problems, the Ugandan government will hardly be able to implement it without support.

The national strategy was drafted in cooperation with UN agencies and civil-society organisations, including Girls Not Brides Uganda, an umbrella association. Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 500 civil-society organisations from over 70 countries. The Ugandan branch has about 50 member organisations and is coordinated by the local NGO Joy for Children. The member organisations work all over the country and have strong ties to local communities.

Joy for Children, for example, is implementing a project in western Uganda, which successfully combines economic empowerment and education. Vulnerable girls are given goats provided that their parents have signed a memorandum of understanding in which they agree to support their daughter at least until she has completed primary school. Goats are an important source of income in the region, but also symbolise the value of girls’ education.

Ending child marriage promotes not only the empowerment of girls, but is also essential for the general economic and social development of a country. Young teenagers lack the education needed to contribute to the improvement of their communities. Child marriage deprives communities of a potential that would enable them to thrive. The future of Uganda depends on better education of girls.
Ugandan women work on the fields, but they normally do not own the land: winnowing rice in Doho district.

It is common in rural Uganda for young men who are looking for a bride to wait for girls on their way home from school; they make promises or hand out sweets. The prospect of a future with regular meals is often attractive, especially as many girls do not get lunch at school and go home hungry. Marriage does not seem bad. The disappointment is great when the girls realise they have to work as much as at their parents’ home without any support from their husbands. One downside of the bride price, moreover, is that husbands feel they own their wives and expect them to fulfil their wishes obediently.

Agnes (not her real name) is now 17 and married at 14. She regrets her choice: “I wish I hadn’t married and given birth at this age, all my opportunities were buried. I’m still wedged in poverty. I advise all the teenage girls out there to be patient despite of all the hardships they go through.”

Multiple loss

Widows are among the poorest and most vulnerable population groups in Uganda. Usually, they lack rights to land and other kinds of properties like livestock and produce food they grow. According to traditions, women are not supposed to own assets at all.

Among the Luo tribe in northern Uganda, a region which is emerging from two decades of civil war, the situation of widows is particularly tough. The in-laws take everything from the widow after her husband’s death. All too often, they doubt even her ability to take proper care of her and her husband’s children. In some communities, land that actually belongs to widows is sold without their consent. All too often, widows accept that fate because they do not know their rights or cannot afford the legal fees to get them enforced.

Esther Abonyo, whose husband was killed by rebels from the Lord’s Resistance Army in 1999, has resorted to renting land after she lost all the plots she once used to farm when her husband was still alive. After his death, Abonyo stayed in a camp for displaced persons before returning to her original home. In the meantime, her in-laws had sold the land in her absence, leaving Abonyo with only a small plot where her house is located.

She now pays 30,000 Ugandan shillings (about $ 9 ) rent per year for one hectare. This is a high price in Uganda, where incomes are low and farm revenues uncertain because of volatile rains. One has to be very considerate about what crops to plant and when to plant them.

Hilda Angulu, a human-rights activist, says that when a man buys land, the title is usually on his name, leaving out his wife. One reason is that some men don’t trust their wives. Another issue is that children claim their father’s land. Angulu speaks of “big challenges” which often cannot be handled at the family level. She adds that elders and local chiefs often intervene when confusion and disputes rock a family, and they normally contribute to depriving a widow of her land.

According to customary law, the decisions of the elders are what matters, not the pleas of suffering women. Women do most of the farm work in Uganda, but only 15 % of the land is controlled by them. Losing land is especially hard for women who live with HIV/AIDS. Faustine Amutuhaire is one of them. The mother of four lives in Kashari in Mbarara district in western Uganda. She lost her husband to HIV/AIDS as well as his husband’s land and the household properties such as dining tables, chairs, beddings, kitchenware and wall pictures. “We were in the village burying my husband’s remains when my in-laws sneaked back to town, forced their way into our rented house and carried away everything,” Amutuhaire recounts.

She was left shocked and grieving, with no money to seek legal support. Her husband had not written any will. After nights on cold cement in the empty house, her relatives brought some blankets and cooking utensils. Amutuhaire says: “If I had been working, things would have been different. But I had no job, and the entire savings of my husband were spent on his medication and feeding. I even had no land to till. I knew the landlord could come anytime for his money – which I did not have.” With family support, she moved to a cheaper house and started a tomatoes business along the roadside, gradually increasing the range of products. Today, she can meet her basic needs.
Moreover, it is quite common that a girl who has been raped is married to her violator. Families, the police and local authorities often consider this to be the best solution for everyone – and the rape victims do not get a say in the matter. The government has only recently begun to take the issue of child marriage seriously, and civil-society organisations support its efforts (see box, p. 15).

Officially, the Ugandan constitution of 1995 declares 18 to be the legal age of marriage. However, the relevant laws have not been enforced stringently, and according to religious norms and traditions, marriage is possible once puberty has started.

In some cases, widows lose land because they refuse to marry their late husband’s brother. Some traditions in Uganda demand that a widow must choose one of her brothers-in-law to remarry and safeguard the late husband’s land and children. However, this practice is fading out after the government stepped in at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to prevent its spread.

Women in polygamous families suffer twice. Clan elders usually recognise the first wife, but even she is not allowed to independently inherit her late husband’s land. The in-laws appoint a son of the deceased to take care of the land and all properties. The second wife is left with nothing.

Nancy Obita is a politician. According to her, a core problem is that land in the Acholi region in northern Uganda is normally owned by families, and that women and widows are considered external relatives. “That makes it difficult for them to keep tilling the land that they used to use with their husbands.” She adds that traditionally, women are not supposed to own assets even when they have contributed to acquiring them. Making matters worse, women are considered the property of their husband and his clan. This results from the bride-price tradition, which, however, is enshrined in the constitution.

For the sake of gender equality, Obita says that land titles must be held by men and women. Moreover, land laws should protect widows. After marriage, she argues, all properties must be co-owned by husband and wife. Obita calls for legal reforms and public awareness raising.

The problems are not limited to eastern and northern Uganda. Widows in other regions tell similar stories of losing land. Most often, however, the local authorities ignore land cases that women present simply because they are women.

Forty-five year old Anna Wandera from Usuk lost all her land after her husband’s death. “My in-laws told me I was just a woman who gave birth only to girls who cannot inherit any property,” she says. In her misery, Wandera returned to her parents’ home – only to be rejected by her brothers’ wives who accused her of failing to stay in her marital home.

However, not all hope is lost for Ugandan widows. The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA) is one of several civil-society organisations that are campaigning for their rights. In northern Uganda, FIDA has embarked on raising awareness among cultural and local leaders as well as among the general public on how best to protect women, children and their land.

Lillian Ajok works for FIDA in the city of Gulu in the Acholi region. She says that the region is currently at peace, but that the war has left many scars. Land conflicts are a lasting problem. “Women and families headed by girl-children are particularly affected by land conflicts,” she explains. “Many of them live in remote villages and cannot easily access legal services, so they end up losing their land.”

In urban areas, she says, women are better informed and have access to legal services. To fill the gap, FIDA is making assistance available. FIDA also offers mediation services and works with local councils. An important way to prevent problems is to write a testament. The practice is not common in Uganda because most people believe that only very sick and dying individuals write their wills. As a result, people die leaving their families and properties unprotected.

It is obvious that Uganda’s efforts to protect widows and their land are far from being successful because of persisting gender inequalities. The good news is that the government plans to amend land laws to protect widows, and that civil-society organisations are supporting that cause.

Links
Girls Not Brides:
http://www.girlsnobrides.org
Joy for Children:
http://www.joyforchildren.org

The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers:
http://www.fidauganda.org/

Gloria Laker Aciro
heads the Peace Journalism Foundation of East Africa and lives in Kampala.

glorialaker@gmail.com
Twitter:@GloriaLaker
In South Africa, many children grow up without their fathers. When teenage girls get pregnant, they are often abandoned. This is only one symptom of a distorted idea of manhood that has taken root. For things to improve, it would help if men assumed active roles in parenting.

By Sonwabiso Ngcowa

My mother was 16 going on 17 years when she had me. My biological father must have been about 23 years old or older. He was never my daddy by action. I do not have a relationship with him; I do not even know his birthday.

It was tough to grow up without my father. My mother lacked the comfort of a happy relationship and the support of a breadwinner. As a little boy, I could not do much to comfort her, but I did my best. Moreover, I did not have my biological father as a role model. I could not observe and copy how my father dealt with the challenges of life. In retrospect, I know that it would have been helpful to have him as a male role model to turn to and confide in. I have found my own direction in life, but I know that things were easier for my peers who grew up with their fathers.

I was born in 1984, when it was more of a taboo to have a child out of wedlock than it is today. The number of single mothers is obviously increasing. It does not seem to be a very big issue anymore. At the same time, it is safe to say that, though unmarried mothers are not ostracised anymore, their situation does not get general approval either.

Traditional Xhosa culture, for example, promotes abstinence among young girls. If however, a girl does become pregnant, our ethnic group expects the boy who fathered the child to pay a hefty fine. The Xhosa
saying is: 'Kufuneka uhlawule ngokuwisa ibele lalomntwana.' It literally means: 'You need to pay for letting the breast of this child fall.'

It is a problem, however, that not all youngsters who get girls pregnant are able to pay the fine. Before Xhosa ways were interrupted by colonisation and the introduction of money, the fine was paid in cows. But now, money is mostly involved, and high unemployment compounds the problems. Those who cannot pay are shamed, and their relationship with the expecting mother ends at that point.

Marriage would be an option, but it also involves money. Grooms must pay a bride price called “lobola”. Those who cannot afford the fine or lobola, are not allowed to see the children, and they are not acknowledged as fathers, so their children’s fate is to grow up fatherless. The Xhosa tradition has become dysfunctional in contemporary society, which shows how colonisation has disrupted African lives.

There are other reasons why single parenting has become quite common in South Africa. Labour migration is one. Men historically left their villages to work in mines or urban-based industries, so mothers were left alone. This practice was brutally enforced during apartheid, when black families had to live in the so-called homelands, which were demarcated for black people and deliberately left undeveloped. These areas are still poor today.

### Real sex

Today, young people grow up in a confusing world. On the one hand, sexual abstinence is promoted, at least for girls, but on the other hand, young people are curious about sex and its possibilities, which are celebrated in popular culture. What is the right time to become intimate with a partner? What does one do? And where and when does one find the right kind of privacy? Young people are pretty much left to themselves to find out, and all too often things go wrong.

Contraception is a great challenge. In the age of HIV/AIDS, it is obvious that condoms are an important means of protection, not only to prevent pregnancies. However, outdated ideas of sex only being “real” without a condom still exist. One young man, for instance, told me that he had fathered a child with his girlfriend. He said that they had got “cosy” together and it would have spoiled the situation to go out and get contraceptives.

The sad truth is that young men and women feel insecure, but then experiment with their bodies when the opportunity arises. Shame prevents many from providing condoms beforehand, and doing so would imply that they consciously plan to have sex, which goes against the norms girls are taught. Boys, on the other hand, fall for a macho ideology according to which sex with a condom is not really sex at all. Youngsters of either sex would benefit from more enlightened education.

Data from many countries show that teenage pregnancies are less common where sex education neither emphasises abstinence nor demonises sexual activity. The risks of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases are greatly reduced when contraceptives are promoted, when the pleasures of sex are an accepted fact of life and a sense of mutual responsibility is instilled in people early on. Moreover, sexualised violence often goes along with unreflected macho attitudes. Competent education can reduce the incidence of rape too.

Some people want to enforce traditional norms rigidly. Doing so, however, is next to impossible in the urban settings of the modern world which allows for much individual freedom. People are no longer socially controlled by their village community all day, and in many ways, that is a blessing.

Male teenagers often have distorted ideals of what it means to be a man. The cliché is that being male means to be dominant, and that a strong man simply takes what he wants. To some extent, they believe that is what Africa’s traditional chiefs did in the past. In reality, things were more complicated. Chiefs were celebrated as strong men, but the point was not that all their whims would be satisfied, but that they had to assume responsibility for managing their community well, ensuring livelihoods and settling disputes.

Colonial oppression and organised crime have fostered a culture of unhealthy violence. It is a matter of awareness raising to instil a different idea of manhood. Some non-governmental organisations are doing good work in this respect. One example is the Sonke Gender Network (see interview with Dean Peacock in D+C/E+Z 2014/04, p. 161 ff.).

### New perspectives

The good news from South Africa is that the situation is not hopeless for all young fathers. Some manage to be at least part-time fathers, even though they have not married the mothers of their children.

Siviwe Njamela was fourteen when he realised that, although it had seemed normal to him up to then, it was a disadvantage to be growing up without a father. As a young man, he himself fathered a child with his girlfriend before finishing high school. They considered an abortion, but consciously opted for the baby. Siviwe managed to graduate in spite of the unexpected development, but not with the marks he had anticipated. Supporting his girlfriend took a toll on his studies. Today, he is actively involved in the
Ideas of manhood tend to be distorted.

Sonwabiso Ngcowa is a creative writer and social scientist. The examples of the young men mentioned in this essay are taken from a book he co-authored with Melanie Verwoerd: “21 at 21 – The coming of age of a nation” (Vlaeberg 2015: Missing Ink). His novel Nana’s Love was published in German by Peter Hammer Verlag (Wuppertal, 2014).

Phumelelo Ndlovu was not as lucky. He was determined to support his girlfriend and the daughter she had born him, even though that meant dropping out of school. He now works two jobs. He refers to his beloved daughter as “quite a blessing”.

Marcellino Fillies wants to be a responsible father one day. He is a passionate musician and teaches primary school children to play the marimba. Marcellino’s father died when he was young. His neighbourhood is plagued by alcohol abuse and gangsterism, but he did not become involved in crime. He says he was too busy taking care of his younger siblings.

Growing up with his mother, Marcellino had to look after his younger brothers. After school at around five o’clock, he would go and fetch the youngest one from his creche. He would get home and make him supper, wash him, play with him, and then put him to bed. In between, he did his best to do his homework. His mother worked far away and only got home after eight o’clock in the evenings.

Individual biographies are of course quite different all over the country. It is important to note that some young men have a positive understanding of fatherhood even though they did not marry the young ladies they had babies with.

When boys made the transition to manhood in the past, they were advised, for example at Xhosa initiation schools, on how to manage their lives as well as homes. Today, this often does not play out anymore. All too often, fathers run away after making girls pregnant.

In South Africa, men show little interest in family planning – and they are normally not expected to do so. Contraception is thus the responsibility of their female partners, who, however, feel that their duty is to please the men. This is a recipe for serious problems, including pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. It would help if all young men had fathers who served as good role models right from the start.
“I will never forgive”

Sexual and gender-based violence are widespread in South Africa. In 2012, 17 young girls were repeatedly raped and abused during a traditional initiation ritual in Mahushu on the border to Kruger National Park. It took the district court three years to convict the perpetrators, a traditional healer and his wife. More stringent action is necessary.

“I will never forgive this man; I hate him a lot.” Naledi was 15 years old when she went to initiation school, a traditional ritual during puberty to prepare boys and girls for adulthood. She was excited to go there. The girls were supposed to learn how to dance nicely, and usually they wear nice beads. But Naledi was raped by Mlombo, the traditional healer. She still finds it hard to speak about what happened during what is called the “big initiation”.

The female initiates, aged between nine and 17 years, were enrolled from June to August 2012. Upon arrival, they had to take off their private clothes and were instead given underwear, a skirt and a blanket to wear. Furthermore, they were taught to be submissive. They were given numbers as names and had to recite the rules.

Everything that happened at initiation school was supposed to stay secret. Otherwise, they were told, they would become insane. An essential part of the initiation was to get a burn mark on their cheeks, to indicate that they had completed initiation. The initiates were beaten with sticks when they didn’t obey.

The “big initiation” is the defining moment. It takes place annually in the rural community. For Naledi and the other girls it happened in a dark room. They were told to take off their clothes. Mlombo performed a protection ritual, for which he rubbed “holy water” onto their naked bodies. The girls reported that he sexually assaulted them either by inserting his fingers or his penis in their vaginas. At least 17 girls were sexually violated within 24 hours. Mlombo’s wife used an “initiation stick” to beat the girls, and one of them was severely injured.

In spite of the threats, some girls told their parents what had happened, and the parents asked the local police station to open a case and to seek support from GRIP (Greater Nelspruit Rape Intervention Programme), a non-profit organisation. GRIP workers are based in police stations to provide trauma counseling and support victims of domestic or sexualised violence. The girls were taken to different hospitals to conduct the medico-legal examination as quickly as possible and to give them an emergency HIV prevention treatment. GRIP made sure that the court case was taken forward too.

The police, however, first turned the victims and their families away, telling them to go to the traditional leader because a “cultural practice” was concerned. It was not clear whether a traditional court or the district court had jurisdiction, and it took more than three years before the district court in Nelspruit eventually passed a sentence. Mlombo was handed 17 life sentences for rape and 15 years in prison for three counts of sexual violation; his wife was handed a 21-year sentence for assault.

As stated by the judge, the parents had trusted the traditional healer. They expected him to teach the girls about values. For Mlombo this was an opportunity to rape the girls, and he was sure that the “blanket of secrecy” would protect his abuse of power.

Statistics show that South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women worldwide. This is especially concerning as sexual violence increases the risk of contracting HIV. However, the extent of sexual abuse in South-African society lacks an adequate, publicly funded response system. Support for survivors is severely underfunded, and the respective civil-society organisations are struggling unless they have international funding.

The South-African state must not leave these issues only to NGOs. It is important, moreover, to ensure that no harmful practices are applied in initiation schools and that control mechanisms are in place and functioning properly. Horrifying stories about adolescents experiencing severe injury or even losing their lives are published each initiation season. Traditional rites of passage are a controversial topic in South Africa, as some of its elements conflict between cultural identity and constitutional rights.

There are many different initiation rituals in South Africa.

Eva Jerger
is a sociologist. She works as a consultant in the field of quality management and organisation development for NGOs in South Africa.

Eva.jerger@googlemail.com

Link
Greater Nelspruit Rape Intervention Programme (GRIP):
http://www.grip.org.za/
All weddings are political

As the first country in Latin America, Argentina introduced same-sex marriage in 2010. Argentina’s appreciation of homosexual people’s rights exceeds that of many other countries that legally recognise sexual diversity. Our contributor was one of the activists who campaigned for the reforms.

By Sebastián Vargas

I never thought I would ever get married. As a child, I didn’t expect to because my parents were never formally married. As a youngster – when I had my first girlfriends – I didn’t, because I rebelled against all conservative institutions, and marriage was one of them. The idea of marrying became completely unconceivable when I began to live my bi- and homosexual love life. There was simply no legal basis for getting married.

But we were the generation to challenge conservative prejudices in theory, on the streets and in bed. On the cold winter night of 15 July 2010, we marched with many friends and activists to the parliament when the Argentinian congress voted in favour of same-sex marriage. Thousands of us celebrated on the square in front of the parliament building. It was our victory after many years of struggle.

According to the Federación Argentina Lesbianas Gays Bisexuales y Trans, an organisation for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender (LGBT) people, more than 9400 same-sex couples got married in Argentina since the reform of 2010. The new law and the debate that preceded it has made it easier for the whole of society to live sexuality and gender identity more openly.

The legal achievement and social change are the result of a “process of democratic construction of individual and collective rights,” says Lucas Arrimada, lawyer and professor at the University of Buenos Aires.

One of the first groups to kick-off this process was the Frente de Liberación Homosexual (FLH – front for homosexual liberation). It was founded in 1973. It did not only promote equal rights for homosexuals, but also campaigned for women’s rights. “Love and live freely in a liberated country,” was one of the slogans.

Later, the lesbians’ organisation Safo branched off the FLH. Both groups were crushed after the military grabbed power in 1976. Most members were abducted and remain “disappeared” to this day. Nonetheless, their early fight for sexual emancipation influenced the course of Argentinian history in important ways.

After the dictatorship ended in 1983, the debate about sexuality and institutions resumed. In 1984, Carlos Jáuregui founded the organisation “Comunidad Homosexual Argentina” (CHA – homosexual community Argentina). In 1992, the CHA organised the first Gay Pride March in Buenos Aires. Most participants concealed their faces during the rally because they feared repressions at their workplace. One year later, three times as many people took part, and gay pride events were held in other cities as well. Solidarity with and among homosexual people was growing.

Argentina vs the church

During military rule, the Catholic church as an organisation supported the dictatorship. It assumed a crucial role in defining moral standards. Two months after the 1976 military coup, the Argentinian episcopal office published a letter which stated that “in the interest of common good, certain liberties had to be sacrificed.”

In his book ‘El Vuelo’ (The flight), a landmark investigation about the dictatorship, well-known journalist Horacio Verbitsky quotes witness testimonies of priests. He shows that Church officials considered it a “Christian form” of killing to drug opponents of the dictatorship and drop them into the ocean from airplanes. The reasoning was that the victims did not have to suffer.

But after the end of military rule, the socio-cultural process of transformation and its ideological debates challenged the reactionary forces of society, including the church. As an institution, it continued to fight change. In spite of its opposition, the divorce law was passed in 1987. In the past decade, the church focussed on fighting the rights of homosexuals.
Jorge Bergoglio, who was then the archbishop of Buenos Aires and has become Pope Francis in 2013, started what the Argentinian press called the “crusade against gay marriage”. In July 2010, he wrote that a marriage between two persons of the same sex only served “to destroy the plan of God” and was conceived by “the father of lies, the devil”. He requested politicians not to legalise same-sex marriages in Argentina.

Nonetheless, the Argentinian parliament voted in favour of reform. “The course of history defeated him,” comments psychologist Andrea D’Atri of Pan y Rosas, a women’s/LGTB group.

A further debate concerned whether homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children. The most frequent argument against was that a “real family” consists of a mother and a father. However, that was not even true before the introduction of same-sex marriage. After all, 30% of Argentinian families consisted of single mothers and their children.

Even before the new law, single persons in Argentina were allowed to adopt children, and they did not have to disclose their sexual orientation. Today, same-sex couples are allowed to adopt children, and both partners have the same rights and obligations towards the child.

Despite all, marriage is an institution with pros and cons. D’Atri maintains that marriage is simply “a contract”. She says it is necessary to create a society “where all couples are protected by the state, irrespective of their legal status”. The same-sex marriage plays an important role for the societal change towards more rights, “because here the state treats all its citizens equally, thus diversity is socially legitimised,” confirms lawyer Arrimada.

Equality in law – equality in life?

In Argentina, it didn’t end with the same-sex marriage. In May 2012, the law about gender identity was issued. Transvestites, transsexuals and transgender are not considered pathological cases anymore. Transpersons can have the gender of their choice put

Other states – for instance Germany, Italy and Israel – allow registered civil unions between persons of the same sex. However, homosexual couples are not allowed to adopt children.

On the downside, homosexual acts are still illegal in 78 countries. Transpersons, transvestites and transsexuals are prosecuted as well. In Nigeria, for example, homosexual people are socially isolated and are being incarcerated. Iran has even executed people for the “crime” of homosexuality. Russia under President Vladimir Putin is taking a homophobic stance.
down in their documents. Operations necessary to match the body to the gender of choice are supported by the health system, by the statutory health insurance as well as the private ones.

But due to discrimination, transpersons still have little access to the work market, although 15% of them are sole breadwinners in their families. Many have to prostitute themselves in order to survive. Police harassment is frequent. The troubles result in a much lower life expectancy: for transvestites, it is only 32 years – much less than half of the life expectancy of the average Argentine population, which was 76 years in 2014.

Depressingly, homophobic attacks are everyday occurrences, particularly against youth. The city of Mar del Plata is notorious, where a well-known neo-Nazi gang regularly assaults young gay men and gay activists with extreme violence. It is sad that conservative prejudices are still alive even 30 years after the dictatorship ended.

Nonetheless, the new law and the new rights have created a space of freedom, which will inscribe itself into the cultural genetic code of the nation, into its democratic heart.

A short while ago, I decided to make use of my rights, and I married the man of my choice. This was not a mere political decision, but because I love somebody, and because I love life.
“Violence and grief every day”

Thousands of youngsters join gangs in Guatemala or work for drug cartels. Many have died violent deaths. Victor Puluc of the youth organisation SODEJU – FUNDAJU (Sociedad para el Desarrollo de la Juventud) spoke to Eva-Maria Verfürth explaining that broken families are one reason why young people take this risk.

Interview with Victor Puluc

To judge by homicide numbers, Guatemala is high on the list of the most dangerous countries, and often young people are perpetrators. Why do so many minors turn to crime?

A third of all 13-29 year old Guatemalans face some sort of neglect. Education and job opportunities are scarce, and health care is inadequate too. The state is not doing its job, violating the fundamental rights of children and youth.

Do families matter in this context?

The family is essential. Young people need support in their puberty years, but many do not get this support from their families. All too often, both parents work.
Youth gangs in Central America

Violent youth gangs, the so-called maras or pandillas, have been haunting Central American countries for more than two decades. They are among the greatest problems in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The gangs are mostly based in poor urban neighbourhoods and thrive on drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping and violent robberies.

The members tend to be armed and violent. After passing the brutal initiation ritual, they are usually prepared to kill for their gang. Rival groups fight each other. The gangs and drug cartels are responsible for much of the violence in Central America. According to human-rights organisations, about a dozen people are murdered every day in each of the three countries.

The gangs are possibly spin-offs of the violent gangs that are based in poor neighbourhoods of cities in the USA. In the 1980s, refugees that had fled from civil wars in Central America had to prevail against local US home-boy gangs and founded their own gangs. Members that were deported to their respective countries later built local groups.

The two big gangs Mara Salvatrucha and Mara 18 have grown to become international organisations that are active from the USA to Venezuela and probably even in Europe. Nevertheless, they are most active in Central America, where many young people join the dangerous gangs to escape poverty.

It is a bit better in indigenous communities, where family life is guided by traditional values. These values quickly erode in urban areas, where there are more drugs and alcohol problems. Life is harder here, and people struggle for their daily survival.

The so called “zonas rojas” — informal urban slums — have the highest crime rates. What is going on there?

Most residents are very poor, there is a lack of proper infrastructure and people see no future. The law is toothless. The police no longer dare to go into these neighbourhoods, so gangs and drug cartels have taken control. Criminal activities are often organised by prison inmates who need henchmen. Youngsters in zonas rojas are easy prey: they are poor, alone and looking for opportunities. They get hired as killers, as small drug dealers or couriers, or as extortionists.

What kind of families typically have these problems?

It is a bit better in indigenous communities, where family life is guided by traditional values. These values quickly erode in urban areas, where there are more drugs and alcohol problems. Life is harder here, and people struggle for their daily survival.

A police officer walks past a graffiti depicting gang members that have died in a neighbourhood controlled by the Mara Salvatrucha gang in San Salvador.
Why do young people in the zonas rojas have such bad prospects?
It starts with education. Its level is low in Guatemala and particularly so in poor areas. Education costs money moreover. Even those who go to one of the many government-run schools have to pay for uniforms, books and school supplies. Many young people leave school to find work, or they join a gang. To most of them, earning money and getting something to eat matters more than graduating. Nowadays, it is possible to get an education later in life and graduate from night or weekend school for example. But even if you finish college, it’s almost impossible to find work.

Why is that so?
The zonas rojas are stigmatised, and people who live there have a bad reputation. Companies do not want to hire them. Many young people have to lie and give a false address if they want to get a decent job.

Is that also true of unskilled jobs as the maquilas, the big textile factories, offer?
Maquilas are a problem in itself. I would not speak of decent work there, as they violate so many labour rights. And they don’t offer a lasting perspective either, as most of them shut down after the five-year tax-free period granted by the government. Moreover, the maquilas are indirectly controlled by the gangs too. They force people working there to pay a share of their salary as protection money.

Children in poor areas often grow up with only one or no parent.
That’s right. Everyday, children in zonas rojas experience violence, grief and conflict. One of our youth group coordinators has no father, and her mother died recently. Now she must take care of her younger siblings by herself. Another co-worker lost his father, who worked as a bus driver and was killed for not paying protection money to the gangs. But the stories of these two youngsters also show that our programmes work: we were able to catch their fall. We would like to do more and offer many more young people individual psycho-social support, but therefore we would need more financial and human resources.

What does SODEJU – FUNDAJU do?
We create new opportunities for young people and open up ways to participate in social life. Our youth centres offer computer courses and are eligible for scholarships. In many places, we have established youth groups with up to 50 members. These groups plan and carry out various activities. One group, for example, makes handicrafts and earns money that way. The groups also do educational work and talk with parents and authorities. We have also published manuals on education, including health, sex and environmental education. We are politically active and promote better youth policies. Furthermore, we run a programme for delinquent minors.

What can you do for them?
Most of these youngsters have committed petty crimes, were drug couriers or involved in robberies or perhaps sexual violence. We focus on helping them to find work. We cooperate with companies that have agreed to hire some of them. Finding those companies is not easy however.

Can you do this kind of work all over Guatemala?
Well, it is obviously more difficult to work in dangerous areas. Lo de Carranza for example is a zona roja on the outskirts of the capital. About 150,000 families live there, and they basically must cope without any kind of infrastructure. On average, five people get killed there each month. Gangsters murdered four members of our youth group, maybe to take revenge or because they mistook them for someone else. In another district, Palín, it is becoming a trend to hold people for ransom. It is hard for our youth groups to be active here. Two of our groups in the capital were believed to be gangs, and one of our youth centres was pressured to pay protection money, because gangsters thought it was a business. Luckily, we could make it clear that we are a social institution. Since then, we have been left in peace.

What is it like in rural areas?
Those areas have different concerns. In San Raymundo unemployment is the biggest problem. In San Juan la Laguna, a series of suicides occurred among the young, because they saw no future. There, our youth group started an arts and sports programme.

Do you sometimes succeed in freeing youngsters from the gangs?
We focus more on prevention and do not work directly with gang members. Our aim is to reduce the number of young people who join gangs. In the end, not everyone is involved in mafia activities, and many even want to stay clear of violence – but that’s not easy. Most of them have childhood friends or neighbours who did become gangsters. Several members of our groups were on the verge of joining gangs, but were able to set themselves new goals thanks to our programmes and never took the ultimate step of joining a gang. Many times, we have also experienced that youngsters who initially seem timid and disinterested become confident over time and take responsibility as group leaders.

You also work with parents – what advice do you give them?
We let them consider their own childhood and their children’s situation. Then we discuss what they might do better and what values they want to convey. We tell them, for example, that it is important to care for and be interested in one another, to listen to other family members and to support them, to respect each other and share household work.

Victor Puluc
works at the Guatemalan organisation SODEJU – FUNDAJU (Sociedad para el Desarrollo de la Juventud) in the field of violence prevention. The programme is supported by the German NGO AWO International.

jovipuluc@gmail.com
Follow us on Twitter!

To stay in touch with what is happening on our website, follow us on Twitter. We’ll make you aware of what we post and other things concerning our brand.
Advice matters

Everyone has the right to sexual and reproductive health services. Access to a wide range of contraceptives needs to be guaranteed, and so does access to information about the pros and cons of all contraceptive methods. Good counselling is time-consuming but essential. Too often, however, it is neglected.

By Hedwig Diekwisch

For couples to be able to make an informed decision about contraception, they need good information. That starts with a clear and comprehensive understanding of how bodies function and information on the use, effects and risks of the different contraceptive methods. Good counselling helps people to make the right personal choices. Where these conditions are met, one can speak of genuine empowerment and personal autonomy.

For various reasons, only a limited range of contraceptive methods may be available in any given country. Where choices are limited, it is always worth taking a critical look at the focus of national policies and international programmes. What is their main objective? If it is to lower the birth rate, measures such as female sterilisation may be promoted – sometimes even by coercion. Under a national family planning programme in Peru, some 300,000 women and 22,000 men were forcibly sterilised between 1996 and 2000.

In India, contraception currently means sterilisation for three-quarters of women. For men, the sterilisation rate is just 2.3%. While male sterilisation is normally a straightforward procedure, the equivalent surgery for women carries far greater risks. In 2014, for example, 15 women died in India after undergoing sterilisation.

Exemplary campaign in Uganda

The Choice Campaign which was launched by the Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Protection (HEPS) in Uganda is designed to close gaps in the supply of contraceptives. It addresses politicians and health leaders, calling upon them to secure the budgets and stock levels needed to prevent contraceptive shortages. The fact that people want a comprehensive supply of contraceptives was confirmed by a radio survey carried out by HEPS and the software platform TracFM. In response to the question: “How important is it to have a wide range of contraceptives available?”, 654 of 779 participants sent a text message saying “very important”.

This campaign recently won HEPS a nomination for the Take Stock Award. The international Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) grants the award to member organisations and individuals for outstanding efforts to ensure that sufficient stocks of different contraceptives are maintained.

Link
HEPS:
http://www.heps.or.ug/
The BUKO Pharma-Kampagne, a non-governmental organisation based in Germany, has launched a new E-learning course on contraceptive methods. Targeting international project staff working in the field of women’s health and family planning, it aims to improve local counselling efforts in order to strengthen reproductive rights, rights of self-determination and women’s freedom of choice in developing countries.

Developed with financial support from Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the E-learning course tackles typical problems and pitfalls in a practical manner, providing clear and comprehensive information on the pros and cons of current contraceptives. Understanding risks and side-effects is vital, for instance, for the safe use of hormone-base contraceptives. At the same time, good advice and access to comprehensive information are essential to enable women to make informed decisions on family planning and contraception.

The course conveys basic information on international agreements and regulations concerning reproductive and sexual rights as well as international policy objectives in maternal and child health. The course covers how the Millennium Development Goal of improving maternal health relates to the issues, and what new targets are set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Finally, the course considers various policies and concepts to limit population growth and assesses them in a critical perspective.

**Link**

E-learning course on contraceptives (only in German): [http://www.bukopharma-online-lernbox.de/Kontrazeptiva-Frauengesundheitsprojekte](http://www.bukopharma-online-lernbox.de/Kontrazeptiva-Frauengesundheitsprojekte)
Enshrining and implementing rights

Another crucial factor is the extent to which sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHRs) are enshrined in national and international law. Unfortunately, the UN Agenda 2030 with the Sustainable Development Goals does not specifically refer to comprehensive sex education that deals with gender roles, gender identities and sexual diversity. Nor is there any mention of sexual rights. In recent years, moreover, G7 summit declarations have fallen behind earlier multilateral commitments as were made, for instance, at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, concerning the comprehensive implementation of SRHRs. More needs to be done.

The fact that 56 % of pregnancies in Latin America are unwanted is due not only to factors such as low availability of contraceptives and cultural barriers to contraception. The poor quality of sex education matters too. Good education must be comprehensive and cover all issues that relate to SRHRs. In Bangladesh, a survey of 12- to 19-year-old girls showed that ignorance of their rights was linked to being married early, not attending school or only getting a rather low level of education. Paternalism in families is still common in many countries, so women’s and girls’ knowledge of their right to sexual self-determination is particularly important.

The quality of counselling services is crucial for the implementation of SRHRs – and it is not only about contraceptives. The yardstick of a project’s success must therefore not be the number of contraceptives distributed. The quality of the advice given is just as important, and it can depend, for instance, on whether both partners are included in counselling, whether all methods of contraception are discussed and whether necessary medical examinations are conducted.
Short-term relationship

In the Indian city of Hyderabad, prosperous men from the Arab world marry poor Indian girls for a few months, divorce them and then return home without further obligations. The brides get a short glimpse of a wealthy life – and their parents save the money they would have to spend on dowry for a regular marriage.

By Nilanjana Ray

Hyderabad is a city of almost 7 million people in southern India. It used to be the capital city of a feudal state that was ruled by a Nizam, a Muslim king. Hyderabad’s historical centre, the Old City, dates back to medieval times. Its population is a mix of long-established elites and migrants, who have more recently arrived from rural areas and tend to be rather poor.

A community with an elite lineage is that of the Choush Arabs. They first came to Hyderabad from Yemen in the 18th century and held high positions in the Nizam’s army. This diaspora community has maintained its links with the homeland through marriage alliances. As other local communities soon noticed, the Choush Arabs do not have a dowry tradition. Rather, their custom is to pay a bride price. While bride prices have downsides too (see Philip Thon Aleu and Parach Mach on p. 12 f. and Angelina Diesch and Moses Ntenga on p. 14 ff.), they at least imply that a young woman is an asset, whereas the dowry system means that they are a burden (see box next page).

The bride price tradition is still alive among the Choush Arabs, and it has given rise to a bizarre kind of marriage market that is actually a kind of sex tourism, though it is not generally perceived as such. What happens is that women from the Old City’s slums temporarily marry Arab men who later divorce them and return home to the Middle East without them.

The poor people who move to Hyderabad from rural areas tend to lack labour-market relevant skills. Most struggle to survive by doing daily labour in the informal sector. They generally stay destitute and asset-less, but they nevertheless expect marriages to go along with dowries. No matter how pretty a girl is, her parents must afford a dowry if she is to find a husband from her own community.
Local bachelors consider the amount they get as dowry a reflection of their own value. I have been told that an auto-rickshaw driver will currently expect 100,000 rupees (about € 1,300). Young men say they “feel like beggars” unless they are paid. Their families certainly reject any such arrangement. In this setting, the civil-society organisations’ campaigns to abandon the dowry tradition are falling on deaf ears.

In view of the distress of destitute Muslim families, a perverse system has emerged. Men from the Middle East come to Hyderabad and stay in hotels near the Old City slums. These “sheikhs” pick a short-term “wife” from a shortlist of Muslim girls, and a formal marriage ceremony is soon held. The divorce papers are prepared and signed at the same time. The groom specifies the time he will spend with the woman right from the start – usually one to three months.

The men come to Hyderabad on visitor’s visas and leave without any liability. Contact is normally established by migrant workers who have left Hyderabad for the Middle East. They make some additional money by arranging this kind of tourism.

The girls are told they will have a good life with regular meals at the hotel. Moreover, they get nice new clothes and can go on outings with their “husbands.” They get a short glimpse of a wealthy lifestyle, but that kind of bliss is short-lived.

The girls’ families are happy to collect the bride price, which normally tides them over for a few months. The other upside is that their daughter is now officially a married woman, so there is no need to pay a dowry. The downside, of course, is that she will be abandoned after a few weeks and is no longer eligible for a normal marriage. Socially, there is no stigma against second marriages, but only elderly, divorced and widowed grooms will be interested in marrying her.

Sheikh marriages are a depressing phenomenon. As a community worker puts it, there is reason to doubt that a marriage is a real marriage if the intent to get divorced is stated from the very beginning. Community-based organisations say they are helpless. “She is their daughter. If they want to marry her to a sheikh, what can we say?,” the community worker says. “For the sake of a few thousand rupees, they destroy their daughter’s life.”

It is easy to blame the families for knowingly leading their daughters into short-term marriages, but that would mean stepping into the blame-the-victim trap. The underlying problem is that many people simply cannot afford dowry. This is the main reason why prosperous men from the Arab region are in a position to exploit poor young women in India for a few weeks.

Sheikh marriages are really a commercialised transaction, with young women serving as mere commodities. In formal terms, the marriages seem to resemble the Choush Arabs’ tradition. But while that tradition has kept this particular community in touch with its homeland for more than a century, sheikh marriages are never meant to last.

“Amount given to the groom”

The practice of dowry is seen in many cultures across the world. In India, it has been linked to violence against brides and even murder.

Newspapers use terms like “bride burning” or “dowry deaths” in this context. The background is often that the woman’s parents refuse to pay the additional dowry in-laws demand after a wedding. The good news is that the incidence of such cases has been going down in recent years. Nonetheless, the dowry tradition still has a very negative impact on Indian society.

Dowry implies that daughters are a burden. Parents have to compensate the groom’s family for taking their offspring. In Sanskrit, dowry is called “varadakshina”, which means “amount given to the groom”. The implicit meaning, however, is that an unmarried daughter is a matter of shame.

According to tradition, it is a father’s duty to ensure that his daughter gets married. In ancient times, marrying off a daughter who was less than five years old was called “prithvidan”, and the father’s reputation would benefit from this practice. Even today, child brides become married on a special day called “akshaya triitiya” in some rural areas in northern India. According to UNICEF, India accounts for one third of the world’s child marriages. The need to invest in dowry causes great sorrow. From the moment of a girl’s birth, her parents worry about being able to afford it, and many fear future bankruptcy. Parents prefer setting money aside for the dowry to investing in a girl’s education. Daughters thus grow up deprived – and they stay deprived after marriage. Husbands and in-laws benefit from the dowry, but not the women themselves. Wealth is transferred from their old to their new families, but they are bypassed.

Parents’ priority is to invest in sons who will take care of them when they are old, not in daughters who only cost money when they leave. Female foeticide is one result of the dowry system (see my contribution in D+C/E+Z, 2014/04, p. 156 f.i.). Another consequence is that girls are often not only deprived of education, but of health care and even food as well. If women’s status is to improve in South Asia, the dowry system must be discontinued.

India is a predominantly Hindu society, but dowry is equally pervasive among the Muslim and Christian minorities. This dysfunctional tradition similarly affects neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.
Marriage is highly regarded in Indonesian society, and divorce can be a strong stigma for both women and men. Nonetheless, the number of divorces is rising, and the government has now regulated issues of alimony and child care.

**Ida’s story**

“Oh my God, that rich old man is going to ask the girl to marry him in exchange for paying her family’s debt,” Ida says watching a popular Indonesian soap opera with a few friends. As it turns out the man does ask for the girl’s hand in marriage – but for his just graduated grandson, not himself. Canvassing the college for someone suitable, the matchmaking grandfather had seen the girl help an elderly vendor sell food. He later learned that the vendor was the girl’s grandmother, who had single-handedly raised her orphan grandson, not himself.

Media report these matters and spell out warnings about permissive and liberal lifestyles. Workshops and seminars are held – mostly for women – on how to save marriages. There is a lot of self-help marriage advice in print media and on the internet.

Marriage is being vehemently promoted from many sides. That includes the polygamous Muslim variety that allows men to have up to four wives. For a long time, polygamy was considered pre-modern and politically incorrect, so the members of the civil service are not permitted to opt for it. Women’s rights groups oppose polygamy too, but the traditional practice is nonetheless becoming more popular.

Several counties offer dates for mass weddings. They say that many couples could otherwise not afford to pay the administration fees to marry.

This trend seems to be related to growing conservatism, but there are no solid data. Most Indonesians are religious. Marriage has always been regarded highly by the vast majority, often to a point where divorce becomes stigmatising for couples even if they have no children. Even today, many middle-class women still prefer to maintain their married status, even when the marriage has become a farce.
In Indonesia, it is still an act of bravery for a woman to ask for divorce (see box). Divorce negatively affects a man’s reputation too, but not to the same extent.

Asosiasi Advokasi Perempuan, a woman’s advocacy association, reports that even in cases of marital violence, most women leave their men only for short periods, and then come back an try anew. Often, that happens several times. According to the non-governmental organisation, women return to their marriages up to eight times before they decide to finally end the broken relationship.

Financial concerns are the most cited reason for divorce in Indonesia, above infidelity and sexual problems, with the inability to reproduce or the overabundance of children being core issues. Lack of communication appears to be the last reason to dissolve the formal union.

Research done by the Ministry of Religion in recent years found that the highest number of divorce cases occurred in the regions of Aceh, Padang, Cilegon, Indramayu, Pekalongan, Banyuwangi and Ambon. Labour migration was indicated as an important reason. Financially securing a future for oneself and one’s family is a priority for the Indonesian majority, as it is for most people around the world.

In view of high unemployment and constantly rising prices, many Indonesians search more lucrative employment abroad. This applies to blue and white collar jobs. Distance then takes its toll on families. In very rare cases, a man who lives in Indonesia has four wives who work abroad and send their savings home. At some point, divorce becomes unavoidable.

### Soap operas and sex tourism

Two other trends that add to the rise of divorce rates are pop culture and growing sex tourism. Regarding the former, the Ministry of Religious Affairs warns it is wrong to copy the model of TV soap operas, with young and inexperienced couples marrying as if a wedding was a form of dating. On the other hand, tourists “marry” and sexually exploit “wives” for a limited time. In the eyes of religious communities, however, such marriages may appear valid for the time being, and the women are shamed after their tourist “husband” leaves. It is obvious, of course, that this is a form of prostitution.

Important issues regarding divorce, including the payment of alimony and child care, have been regulated by the government. However, the rule of law is weak in Indonesia, and laws are often not enforced, so the divorced parties’ personal sense of responsibility matters very much.

Both sexes can legally apply for a divorce, be it through Islamic or state courts. Regulation and procedures for divorce can be found online, with women and legal non-governmental organisations taking the forefront in disseminating information and advocacy. Albeit still looked down upon, the option of divorce is a reality in contemporary Indonesia. It fits into the daily life of mainstream society, though not necessarily into its conservative worldview.
People with disabilities

Let everyone benefit

Inclusion is not a niche issue. Around the world, there are more than a billion people living with disabilities. Approximately one out of every seven people is personally affected. Conditions for making inclusion happen in development cooperation have improved over the past few years. It has also become obvious that projects that promote inclusion serve society as a whole. Nonetheless, inclusion is still not seen as something that concerns everyone.

By Rainer Brockhaus

Approximately 80% of the world’s people with disabilities live in developing countries, and a disproportionate number of them are among the very poorest people on earth. This is not a coincidence. The relationship between poverty and disability is well understood.

People who are poor or who live in impoverished countries must frequently cope with bad working conditions, nutritional deficiencies, unhygienic facilities and a lack of health care. These are the conditions that make illnesses and (preventable) disabilities more likely.

At the same time, people with disabilities and their families are excluded from economic and social life in many ways. They spend more money on health care, have worse access to education and are more likely to be unemployed. Accordingly, disabilities increase poverty risks. Development agencies must do their best to disrupt this cycle. Individuals affected by disabilities are not the only ones who suffer. There are serious consequences for all of society.

A 2004 study by the World Bank showed that a lack of inclusion hurts the entire economy because human capital cannot bear full fruit, national productivity suffers and governments are forced to increase spending and lose tax revenues at the same time. According to other studies, disabilities reduce global GDP by five to seven percent.

A study published by the International Centre for Evidence in Disability (ICED) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 2014 points at this fact with particular force: excluding people with disabilities from important areas of life results in significant economic costs. For example, the economy of Bangladesh loses an estimated $54 million per year due to a lack of education for disabled

This water pump in Bangladesh is wheelchair-accessible.
people and their caretakers. The government of the Philippines loses tax revenue amounting to between 8.8 and 9.8 million just because of the high unemployment rate of those with uncorrected cleft lips and palates.

Thanks to such insights, the conditions for development work on inclusion have improved in recent years. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was passed in 2006. It requires that participating states consider people with disabilities in all international development programmes and disaster relief efforts.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the UN agreed last year, is another important step in the same direction. The 2030 Agenda condemns every form of discrimination and mentions people with disabilities explicitly in this context for the first time.

Ensuring success will require more than government action. Civil-society organisations must also help to ensure that daily life for people with disabilities truly improves. Many donor agencies, aid organisations and NGOs still unintentionally exclude people with disabilities from their work. Building sanitation facilities that are not barrier-free, for example, only benefits a share of the population, but not everyone.

It’s not enough for aid organisations to simply identify a new group to help. People with disabilities must become actively involved at all stages of the projects, from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. To identify disabled people in project areas, it is not necessary to conduct expensive research. They live in every community. All that is needed to tap their potential is networking with local people and asking the right questions.

Self-help and advocacy groups are especially good sources of information on where disabled people live and what kind of help they require. These groups can also provide advice on how to address the people concerned and interact with them appropriately. Other relevant sources of information include government agencies, hospitals, charity organisations and schools. The leaders of faith-based organisations often know a lot about the disabled members of their communities. It is useful, moreover, to learn the terminology concerning disabilities, especially in local languages.

In everyday interaction, it is important to see disabled people as independent individuals and treat them as such. There is still a tendency to focus solely on their need for help. Development agencies should stick to the principle of not judging people by what they can’t do, but by what they can. Agencies must create the conditions for them to realise their full potential.

### Overcoming barriers

Disabled people encounter many obstacles. This is especially evident in natural disasters and armed conflicts. A deaf child has no chance of escaping a tsunami if there are only sirens to warn of its approach. A blind woman cannot find the food aid station or the emergency shelter if only signs point the way. Someone in a wheelchair will not be able to reach aid facilities that are only accessible via stairs.

Every humanitarian organisation must take accessibility into account. Doing so benefits other people as well: loudspeaker announcements help illiterate people; ramps serve children and the elderly.

Accessibility matters in everyday life – regarding, for instance, public transit, schools, workplaces and government offices. It means more than simply building escalators. Schools need teaching materials for visually impaired children, and government bureaucrats need training on how to interact with disabled people.

Sensitivity training and education, moreover, create opportunities for disabled people and improve their lives. Changes in attitudes make obstacles easier to overcome. Since last year, CBM and its local partners have been teaching regional authorities in Sri Lanka how to interact with people with disabilities. This project is funded by the EU and is yielding results. The district of Batticaloa has earmarked a share of its budget for creating new opportunities for disabled people, including a specially equipped reading room and accessible stands at the local market. These facilities give them better access to employment and education and thus allow them to lead more independent lives.

Inclusion is possible when politicians and civil society see it as an issue that concerns everyone and take it into account in development projects right from the start. It is high time for this to happen. A billion disabled people must no longer be ignored.

---

**Accessibility is not an expensive luxury**

Accessibility is essential for the social inclusion of people with disabilities. It should be considered in infrastructure development from the very beginning.

The advantages of this approach are evident – for example, at a new eye clinic in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, the construction of which was supported by the CBM. The cost of making the building accessible were only slightly higher than a less accessible building would have been, and they were significantly lower than the cost of retrofitting the building later.

Talking with local workers, moreover, the planners discovered that many of the patients’ family members spent nights sleeping outdoors when they came for a visit. The reason was the lack of affordable lodging. A donor helped to solve this problem by funding the construction of a small hotel.

This is a good example of the fact that the best way to meet the needs of people with disabilities and their family members is to take into account the interests of diverse groups of people.

---

Rainer Brockhaus

has directed the Communication and Programmes Division of the Christoffel-Blindenmission Deutschland e.V. since 2009 (CBM). rainer.brockhaus@cbm.de

http://www.cbm.de
Coordinating the willing

International financial institutions are best placed to drive the needed global transition to sustainability in the financial sector. There is need for decisive action in three distinct fields.

By Nannette Lindenberg

The international community made major environmental commitments last year by adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris climate agreement. Limiting global warming to at most two degrees and striving to keep it below 1.5 degrees will require the radical decarbonisation of national economies, which in turn has implications for the financial sector. If the multilateral goals are to be achieved, green finance will have to become the priority.

Green finance is not just about funding public and private-sector investments in climate mitigation and adaptation, though that is important. Nor is it enough to focus on preventing and reducing environmental damage in general. The financial sector’s impact on real economies is so substantial, however, that more is needed (Lindenberg 2014). Green finance must fund public policies geared to sustainability in environmental, economic and social dimensions.

In this context, international financial institutions (IFIs) must play three essential roles. They must:

■ be pioneers in considering sustainability issues when making funding decisions,
■ build coalitions with the ultimate goal of improving global governance in the financial sector and
■ mobilise private-sector capital for investments that serve sustainability.

Of course, every IFI has a specific mandate and must rise to the new challenges in a way that fits that mandate. To keep things simple, however, I will not delve into those details in this essay, but focus on what applies to all IFIs.

Consider shadow prices

IFIs must be at the forefront of putting green finance into practice. They need strategies to mainstream sustainability concerns in their day-to-day business. One way to do this is voluntary commitments to assessing the climate risks and carbon footprints of any investment before granting loans. IFIs should explicitly promote low-carbon investments.

Decisions made by financial institutions have a bearing on the survival of coral reefs – and that needs to be considered.
It would obviously be useful if the international community introduced some kind of global price or tax so carbon emissions became a core component of business calculations. Unfortunately, such global carbon pricing is not politically feasible yet – and it will probably not be feasible for a long time. IFIs should therefore use notional “shadow prices” for carbon when calculating investments. Shadow carbon prices will automatically make polluting investments look more expensive than greener alternatives.

Some IFIs are already taking this approach – and so are some bilateral development banks and private-sector companies. It is a good way to ensure future investments become more climate-friendly.

Green finance must not only take climate change into account however. Other aspects of environmental sustainability matter too, including the protection of biodiversity, for instance, or the health of soils. Moreover, sustainability is not only about the environment, but also about the long-term viability of enterprises and the social inclusion in the sense of no one being left behind by development. Accordingly, financial institutions must pioneer, experiment and develop new approaches for tackling all related issues. The IFIs must rise to this challenge. So far, it is only a niche element of their business. It must become a core issue.

Now is a good time to revise IFI governance and align it to the SDG agenda. After all, the group of 20 leading economies (G20) is set to consider IFI governance in coming months. The main reason is that emerging markets demand more say in multilateral institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund. This is an opportunity to align the IFIs to the multilateral SDGs rather than to merely improve the status of individual national governments.

Coordinate the willing

The second thing IFIs are predestined to do is building coalitions of green financiers. It has become evident again and again, including at the climate summit in Paris, that the best way to escape from multilateral gridlock is to form coalitions of the willing. The IFIs are the best placed agencies to convince central banks, commercial banks and institutional investors of the merits of green finance.

Collective action is indispensable. The problem is that an individual financial institution’s competitive position is weakened if it uses ambitious shadow prices in internal calculations, implements ambitious internal sustainability guidelines and thus internalises costs that the market, so far, tends to ignore. These costs are real, so they need to be considered, but they are invisible in market exchange because they are not part of the price-defining dynamics of supply and demand. Only a coordinated alliance can avoid competitive distortions.

Some observers even worry that competition among established and new IFIs such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank will distract from sustainability (see Horta in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2016/03, p. 17 ff.). No doubt, the transition to sustainability will prove impossible unless IFIs cooperate closely and apply consistent criteria that are in line with the SDGs.

It needs to be emphasised that doing so is not an expensive deviation in the pursuit of economic growth. Paying attention to sustainability will actually boost the resilience of the financial system as a whole. So far, the financial industry is not even taking climate change into account sufficiently, as Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, keeps pointing out. Ignoring dramatic trends of these dimensions is obviously a recipe for disaster.

Engage the private sector

The third thing IFIs must do is to mobilise private capital for green investments. It is well understood that the need for investments in climate mitigation and adaptation is too great to be met only by government spending. Climate mitigation and adaptation, however, are only two of many issues that need to be dealt with in the transition to global sustainability.

Some progress is already evident. In 2014, for example, a total of $391 billion was made available in climate finance internationally, according to the non-governmental Climate Policy Initiative (Buchner et al 2015), and private investors contributed more than 60% ($243 billion). Nonetheless, well-known barriers to more private-sector engagement in green finance persist.

One of them is that investors face a host of uncertainties regarding green technologies and project types. Quite often, they perceive risks in an exaggerated manner. IFIs could serve a facilitating function by spearheading green-technology projects, spreading the information they gain that way and then leveraging private capital for scaling up the projects.

Moreover, IFIs can work with risk-mitigating instruments. Examples include:
- guaranteeing private investors a certain percentage of risk assumption in the case of credit default,
- bundling several green projects to spread risks or
- using structured funds in which public shareholders bear initial losses.

IFIs can – and must – be leaders in designing green financial products and introducing them to markets. Moreover, they should contribute to drafting regulations and designing corporate-governance systems for such financial products. Once more, a coalition of the willing would help. Joint action by several IFIs would speed things up.

Humankind has no time to waste. We are facing huge sustainability challenges, of which climate change is only the most obvious. The international community has acknowledged things and adopted the SDG agenda and the climate agreement in Paris. Good intentions will not do however. For change to happen, the financial sector must take new approaches – and multilateral IFIs should be driving forces.

References

Nannette Lindenberg
is a senior researcher at the German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).
nannette.lindenberg@die-gdi.de
Local action, global purpose

Garbage challenges are similar all over the world, but every municipal entity needs solutions that fit its particular needs. International experience can help to draft appropriate policies.

By Floreana Miesen and Hans Dembowski

Cities that do not manage waste well normally fail in other fields too, including health care, education and transport. This is what a World Bank publication of 2012 argues. Accordingly, it considers the modernisation of waste management one of the most effective approaches to improving municipal services in general.

Waste results from urbanisation and industrialisation. Garbage volumes, however, are rising faster than the rate of urbanisation, as the World Bank authors point out. This trend affects all world regions, but is particularly evident in China and other Asian countries. More waste generation, moreover, is said to go along with more emissions of climate gases and more water pollution. Given that more people are expected to live in cities by 2050 than inhabited the earth in 2000, garbage problems have global dimensions.

One of the World Bank’s important messages is that it is impossible to actually throw waste “away”, since it always ends up somewhere. Up-to-date waste management is about preventing waste as well as reusing and recycling. Landfills and incineration are technologically demanding and will lead to pollution and health risks if handled incompetently. They are only options for waste that can really not serve any other use anymore, the report states.

According to the World Bank experts, waste-collection systems tend to be inefficient in less developed countries even though waste collection normally is the biggest item in municipal budgets. Up to 60% of garbage, the authors reckon, is not collected at all in the least developed countries, whereas the respective share is a mere two percent in advanced nations. In developing countries, moreover, the informal sector matters in garbage collection, with workers mostly not enjoying any kind of social protection. According to the study, the indirect costs of inadequate waste management normally exceed what an up-to-date service system would cost. The implicit good news, however, is that the patterns of how waste management develops tend to be similar, so policymakers can learn from experiences made in other places.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) argues along quite similar lines in a study of 2015. It points out that effective waste management is essential for the functioning of a society. Acute problems – such as infectious diseases due to poor waste management – require action. According to UNEP, the costs that arise due to the informal handling and neglect of waste are five to ten times higher per head than what it would take to run a well-regulated system.

Experience shows that waste-management systems develop incrementally over decades, the UNEP authors write. Once a problem becomes obvious, authorities can draft policies, enact laws and start building the necessary infrastructure. Waste only becomes a priority of national policymakers at a rather late stage of development, according to UNEP, but it nonetheless makes sense to consider long-term prospects when rising to acute challenges. The experience of other cities and nations often proves valuable in this context.

Generally speaking, effective waste-management systems depend on a coherent mix of direct regulation, economic incentives and awareness raising, the UNEP authors argue. They explain the three-pronged approach as follows:

- Laws and official regulations are needed to protect common goods such as the environment and public health. Laws and regulations define the basic approach, allocate responsibilities, set standards and spell out sanctions for non-compliance. Policymakers must act proactively. Moreover, strong institutions with sufficient authority are needed. In order to identify and punish infractions, good monitoring and data collection matter.
- Economic incentives help to guide the conduct of private households and businesses. For waste reduction, reuse and recycling to become attractive, waste generation must cost money. Therefore, it is wrong to fund landfills or incinerators from general taxation, whereas pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) systems are useful. Especially anyone who generates larger quantities of waste should bear the disposal costs. When donor agencies financially support the development and operation of waste systems, they must ensure sustainability and efficient cost-recovery once the project ends. Operation and maintenance costs can usually be covered with local fees, but funds from the national government or donor agencies may be needed to build and expand infrastructure.
- Finally, it is indispensable to raise general awareness and mobilise various interest groups. Information alone will not change behaviour. To get people to actually start sorting waste, one must understand their daily lives, take account of their interests and provide the necessary infrastructure. A lively exchange between people, politics and the state is essential.

In the eyes of UNEP, conceptual rigor and an understanding of local settings are both essential. No strategy will be effective without taking into account climate, culture, customs, the local waste composition and the local commodity demand. Technical expertise and funding matter too, of course. The cheapest option is often not the best option, UNEP warns.

Ultimately, waste governance is about responsibility being assumed, the study
Defining legal and financial obligations is not enough. A good waste policy must evoke a sense of ‘ownership’, the authors insist, so the public becomes interested in the cleanliness of parks and public open spaces as well as in the environment and prudent resource use in general. Everyday street cleaning and garbage collection matter, but they are only starting points. Up-to-date waste governance deals with issues of production and consumption long before garbage collection even becomes necessary.

**Links**


---

**Floreana Miesen**

is a freelance author. She studies geography at Bonn University.

floreana.miesen@gmx.de

---

**Hans Dembowski**

is editor in chief at D+C/E+Z.

euz.editor@fs-medien.de

---
Fragile hope

The people of the Central African Republic hope their recently elected president will bring about reconciliation and economic recovery. The international community should help him do so.

By Philipp Hedemann

The data speaks a harsh language. The average life expectancy is only slightly above 50 years in the Central African Republic (CAR). Of 1000 children, 139 die before their fifth birthday. Almost half of the country’s population is malnourished. Needs are countless after the end of the civil war, but it seems as if the world has forgotten this landlocked country. Even the security of humanitarian workers is far from guaranteed. Attacks are still frequent, and in May a staff member of Doctors without Borders (MSF) was killed.

The Central African Republic should not be left to fend for itself. Unless the standard of life improves quickly, new violence looms. Unfortunately, there is no lack of weapons in the country, and many former fighters do not know how to earn a living by peaceful means.

Civil war had erupted in 2013 with Muslim Seleka rebels fighting Christian Anti-Balaka militias. The struggle was not so much about religion itself, but about the Christian south having neglected the Muslim north in the exploitation of commodities including gold, diamonds and timber over decades. Expected oil and gas revenues further fuelled the conflict.

Thousands were killed or raped. About one quarter of the people had to flee their homes. In December 2013, France, the former colonial power, intervened. A UN peacekeeping mission was deployed in September 2014. It currently has almost 13,000 troops, police officers and civilian staff. However, trust in the peacekeepers has suffered, as French soldiers and UN troops have been accused of raping women and children.

In February, Faustin Archange Touadéra, a Christian, was elected president. The election was surprisingly peaceful. Touadéra was supported by Karim Meckassoua, a Muslim who had tried to become president himself. The rival in the run-off conceded defeat. Touadéra has promised to govern without bias.

He is facing tremendous challenges however. Even though his government does not control large swaths of the CAR’s huge territory, it must reconstruct a state, the judicial, health and education systems which had floundered even before the strife began, in a country where mere survival is a constant struggle for masses of people. The long neglected north must benefit from any upturn, and unless the president gains the trust of Muslims, there may be more violence soon.

Some 10,000 child soldiers fought in the war, according to UNICEF estimates. Many have never been to school. Demobilisation and reintegration programmes for combatants are hardly gaining momentum.

In the conflict, both sides systematically used rape to demoralise the enemy. Today, thousands of women and girls are not talking about their suffering – they feel ashamed and fear discrimination. Many other atrocities were committed, and impunity makes reconciliation difficult. The lack of a judicial system that could deal with crimes compounds the problems.

There is hope, nonetheless. The Koudoukou school in Bangui, the capital city, is one example. It was destroyed in the strife and has now been rebuilt by Weltlungerhilfe, a German humanitarian agency. Christian and Muslim children are now learning together – reading, writing, arithmetic and tolerance are on the curriculum.

Humanitarian agencies are currently taking on many tasks that should normally be handled by the government. “Unfortunately, the government is not yet able to deal with the people’s humanitarian needs,” says Peter Eduard Weinstabel, a German diplomat in Bangui. He expresses “cautious optimism” that the government will successively assume more duties. The incidences of violence have gone down considerably since Pope Francis visited Bangui in November 2015 and appealed to all warring parties to lay down their arms.

Weinstabel says the people are tired of warfare and hope the president will bring reconciliation and fight poverty. The international community can – and should – help him do so.

Philipp Hedemann is a freelance journalist and recently visited the CAR.

philipp.hedemann@gmail.com
Comment

Chains coming?

Rodrigo Duterte, the new president of the Philippines, loves to swear and threaten to kill people. The populist looks set to become a dictator.

By Alan Robles

“...We Filipinos need disciplining,” a taxi driver told me a few days after Rodrigo Duterte won the presidential elections. The man the electorate chose to administer the discipline is heavy-handed indeed. During his campaign, Duterte often addressed unseen criminals with the words “I will kill you”, vowing to fill the waters of Manila Bay with thousands of corpses.

Decrying the country as riddled with crime and corruption, he used the slogan ‘change is coming’, which some followers with uncertain English skills phonetically spelled as “chains is coming”. Perhaps they were prescient.

The new president has promised a lot, including to:
■■ restore the death penalty and hold public hangings,
■■ impose a nationwide curfew on minors,
■■ have speeding motorists stripped naked,
■■ limit families to three children and
■■ ban firecrackers.

He also plans to ban public smoking, drinking and late-night karaoke sessions. He has pledged to improve internet speed and compels taxi drivers to give exact change.

The 71-year old populist, former mayor of Davao who was sworn in on 30 June, will be a new kind of president:
■■ the first to come from the conflict-torn southern island of Mindanao,
■■ the first to invite hardline communists into his cabinet,
■■ the first to express belligerence towards the Catholic Church (he cursed the Pope and said the Church was full of hypocrites) and
■■ the first to be stridently anti-American.

As Davao mayor, Duterte was linked to the city’s death squads. These assassins murdered more than a thousand suspected criminals, including women and children, according to human-rights groups. Duterte, who started as a public prosecutor, himself has calmly admitted to killing at least three people.

Philippine elections are hardly genteel tea parties, but Duterte’s campaign was marked by vulgarity and oafishness. He entertained cheering audiences with bloodcurdling promises, boorish jokes and insults. He called a rival candidate a queer and railed against the USA, Singapore and the Vatican. His speeches were laced with obscenities. His favourite imprecation is a Spanish-Tagalog expression that literally means “whore mother” but is just as rude as the ‘f-bomb’ in English.

He pretends to be a simple persona and said he would abolish algebra, calculus and trigonometry as school subjects. He admitted to being a womaniser, joked about raping a long-dead Australian missionary woman and warned the public not to vote for him because “it will be bloody”. When, in one presidential debate, he was asked for his economic programme, he cracked crude jokes instead.

He behaved like no other candidate, and the response was excitement and enthusiasm. His supporters’ devotion bordered on the religious. Frantic fans struggled to grab the towels he tossed into admiring crowds after wiping his face.

Voters lapped it all up, giving the avowed strongman a winning margin of 6 million votes over his nearest rival, the lacklustre candidate of the outgoing administration. Now that Duterte has won, he claims his over-the-top remarks were simply a campaign trick.

His critics are doubtful and wary. They remember his constant promise to kill and his actual record. They remember that his campaign was marked by a crude, ugly and vicious social media component. On Facebook, which Filipinos love, Duterte supporters bullied critics. There is a rumour that people were paid for posting such messages.

Duterte appointed mostly traditional politicians to his cabinet. Some worked for former President Gloria Arroyo who had a reputation for corruption. Where is the change?

Although Duterte seems to stand for the poor, exit polls suggest most of his votes came from the rich and the middle class. The implicit deal seems to be that better-off citizens will not be expected to pitch in. They can sit back and enjoy the benefits of a death-dealing big daddy administration. Given that Duterte’s avowed intention is to change the constitution and the country’s form of government, critics feel the populist is set to become a dictator.
Bad news from Britain

The majority of the citizens of the United Kingdom have decided in a referendum that their country should leave the European Union. For several reasons, this will have detrimental impacts on global development.

By Hans Dembowski

Combined, the EU and its members are the international community’s most important donors by far. Their efforts and their spending could be coordinated better, but EU action could also be much more incoherent. In the past two decades, Britain was an important force for raising aid levels and improving aid effectiveness. Without Britain, European policymaking is likely to become more fragmented and less focused.

Brexit is harmful in a more profound way as well. The idea of national sovereignty is outdated. Nation states, on their own, cannot rise to the many challenges humanity is facing. No government can tackle climate change, infectious diseases or tax evasion on its own. Global commons – from the protection of biodiversity to governance of the internet or a stable financial architecture – require global cooperation.

After World War II, regional integration in the EU set an example of making peace by pooling sovereignty. Later, the EU contributed to managing the transition from Soviet style communism peacefully by letting central and eastern European countries join. Allowing this continental order to unravel is the wrong message to a world that needs more international cooperation, not less.

In Britain’s referendum, the dangerous romanticism of nationalist populism has trumped sober-minded analysis. Populism, according to the political scientist Jan-Werner Müller, is an ideology that pretends that there is such a thing as a homogenous people who make up a nation and who know what is normal and how things should be. This nation, it is assumed, is not affected by internal conflicts of interests, but is exploited by elites who have teamed up with undeserving minorities and the anti-social under-class. Populists, according to Müller, claim to represent the people’s will directly and dispute the legitimacy of all other political forces.

This kind of nationalist populism is currently affecting many countries. Donald Trump in the USA or Marine le Pen in France are examples, and so are Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey or Narendra Modi in India. Germany’s AfD, Austria’s FPÖ and Poland’s PiS are parties that thrive on this kind of ideology as well. They all have in common that they do not engage in reasoned debate with opponents, but prefer to demonise their opponents and make promises of national grandeur that don’t give scope for cooperation with others.

The irony is that they can express frustrations felt by many people, but they cannot deliver on their promises. The imaginary nation they promote does not exist since every community on earth has its internal divisions and conflicts. The immediate result of the Brexit vote will not be some kind of liberation for the UK, but economic volatility followed by complicated and frustrating negotiations of how to undo the regional integration already achieved. We’re likely to hear more simplistic and nationalist rhetoric from Brexit proponents who have no simple answers to the complex questions that arise from their referendum victory.

The Brexit camp has fostered a climate of fear and anger. It must accept some of the blame for creating the political climate in which a madman murdered Jo Cox, a pro-EU Labour MP. Asked to say his name in court, Cox’s killer answered: “Death to traitors, freedom for Britain.” The mere idea that someone who has a different vision of one’s country’s future is a traitor is anti-pluralistic and anti-democratic. But it is typical of populism.

The EU is not a perfect union. It has serious downsides. It could perform better in terms of living up to human-rights principles, for instance. Moreover, instead of ensuring social protection for all its people in times of need, member states have been forced to dismantle welfare institutions in the course of the euro crisis. No doubt, the EU needs reform. But does anybody really believe that weakening the EU will somehow boost human rights or welfare-state institutions anywhere in the world? The truth is that Brexit is bad for global aid efforts, undermines international cooperation and promotes an irrational fantasy of nationhood.

Source
Jan-Werner Müller, 2016: Was ist Populismus? What is populism? – only available in German Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Populism has triumphed.
The EU needs new confidence

In the UN context, the European Union and its member countries made considerable contributions to defining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Now they must implement the agenda convincingly.

By Adolf Kloke-Lesch

The UN adopted the SDGs in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. This planetary plan of action is meant to mark all continents and is in line with European values and interests. The EU should set a strong example in implementation, but it so far is only acting half-heartedly. This applies to agreements made at the Paris climate summit in December too, for example.

For many months, EU summits have been tackling seemingly unrelated topics – including refugees and migrants, Britain’s possible exit or the euro crisis. In the meantime, economic disparities are growing in Europe, and so are social tensions. Populists are benefiting from increasing euroscepticism. Are the SDGs not a priority for the EU?

There actually is some action behind the scenes. By mid-year, a special adviser on sustainable development is scheduled to make proposals to the European Commission on how the EU can best implement the SDGs at home and contribute to achieving them internationally. In Brussels, however, there is hardly any talk of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy anymore. It was last updated in 2009. It is irritating, moreover, that the EU is working on an update of its growth strategy (“Europe 2020”), apparently without any discernible concern for the SDGs. The same is true of its new “EU Global Strategy”.

The EU’s heads of state and government and the presidents of Commission, Council and Parliament should pass a joint declaration to ensure that the SDGs serve as guidelines for all EU policymaking. Sustainable development – whether at the global or European level – can no longer be considered just one of many topics. It concerns all areas of domestic and foreign policymaking, not merely environmental policy or cooperation with so-called developing countries. The EU and its members are among the parents of the narrative of sustainable development. To leave no one behind, to live and do business today in a way that permits future generations to enjoy the same quality of life – this agenda is a global one.

At the same time, the SDGs address core issues of Europe’s domestic worries – from youth unemployment and social disparities to growth and infrastructure to sustainable agriculture and biodiversity. The EU needs new success, new confidence and new legitimacy. The SDG agenda has the potential to set in motion a new and innovative dynamic of prosperity in Europe and all over the world.

Is it not obvious, for example, that the industrialised nations must press ahead with the transition from fossil energy fast if the global climate is to be stabilised? Huge investments are needed, and they will boost technological competitiveness. Instead, Europe’s economies are currently suffering a lack of private and public sector investments. One result is extremely low long-term interest rates. The lack of innovation and investor dynamism matters more in this setting than monetary policy does. In spite of the Juncker Plan, the €315 billion programme for public and private sector investments in Europe, EU policies have not made investors substantially more confident since the start of the euro crisis, and they have not achieved much in terms of taking a new, sustainable approach to ensuring prosperity.

Our non-sustainable lifestyle is causing irreversible damage in important respects. Not to work on the needed transformation full throttle is irrational and reckless. If the EU wants to stay credible in the eyes of its citizens and the international community, it must set convincing examples in rising to the global challenge of sustainable development.

At the global level, the UN’s new High-Level Political Forum will begin assessing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in July. The EU members Germany, France, Estonia and Finland have submitted their policies for discussion. The EU itself should be on board next year and present a convincing strategy.

Adolf Kloke-Lesch

is the executive director of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Germany. This comment is based on a German essay he contributed to Forum Wirtschaftsethik (Berlin, 2016).

adolf.kloke-lesch@die-gdi.de

http://www.die-gdi.de/forschung/sdsn-deutschland/
Comment

Mere exchange or real change?

After the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May, the glass looks only half full. The summit was a good start, but more needs to happen.

By Priya Behrens-Shah

Three years ago, Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, began to make plans for convening policymakers, aid organisations, business leaders and civil society in order ‘to stand up for our common humanity and take action to prevent and reduce human suffering’. His decision was forward looking: this year, 125 million people are expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance. The number is expected to keep rising.

The summit brought together a multitude of actors and changed the prevailing jargon of a ‘humanitarian system’ to one of a ‘humanitarian ecosystem’. This paradigm shift emphasises collective responsibility to meet humanitarian needs. It recognises the diversity of established and new actors as well as the need for them to work better together. Donor governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, the business community and others have finally started to consider urgent challenges together. Relevant questions include:

■ How to deal with protracted crises?
■ How to meet the humanitarian as well as the developmental needs of vulnerable communities and countries?
■ And how to better prepare for emergencies?

While no binding declaration has emerged from the summit, it resulted in a wide range of voluntary commitments from various actors. These commitments include more multi-year financing to deal with protracted crises, new approaches for more efficiency and effectiveness and increased transparency and accountability.

One of the most prominent results of the summit is the reinforced recognition of just how important local organisations and actors are in humanitarian assistance. They respond first, and they are agents of change. The summit recognised that their role must be further strengthened. There was also consensus that affected people must be at the centre of humanitarian action, and agencies must be accountable to them more than to donors.

Issues like this are included in the ‘Grand Bargain’, a package of some of the most relevant commitments arising out of the summit. It is currently supported by approximately 30 mostly western international aid organisations and donor governments. It is intended to generate savings of up to $1 billion within five years by improving efficiency to meet more needs. In addition, it commits to channel 25% of all humanitarian funding to local organisations by 2020. However, the Grand Bargain currently lacks an institutional home, doesn’t deal with the responsibilities of vulnerable and affected states and lacks tangible commitments to empower civil society.

Violent conflicts result in 80% of total humanitarian needs. More can be done to monitor these crises and intervene. It is well understood that the number of armed conflicts is growing, and this is the main reason for the mass displacement of people. Mass violations of international humanitarian law are worrying. Ever more aid workers and civilians are killed or wounded in terrorist attacks and military accidents. Humankind should invest more in preventive action, including in early diplomatic action and conflict mediation. Moreover, humanitarian needs are also provoked by extreme weather events and climate change. It makes obvious sense to link humanitarian action to long-term development when tackling these issues, but for good reason, some organisations worry that this could imply an erosion of humanitarian principles.

The summit failed to tackle related issues such as reforming the UN Security Council, redefining the mandates of various UN agencies or holding accountable those who violate international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, only 55 of 173 UN member states were represented by their heads of state or government in Istanbul. Angela Merkel, Germany’s federal chancellor, was the only top leader from a G7 country at the summit. While civil-society representation was strong, the interest of governments was disappointing.

According to the official Chair’s Summary, the summit was a wake-up call that has generated global momentum and political will. This is often said after international events. Most of today’s disasters are human-made, so political solutions which adhere to humanitarian principles are required. The international community must rise to the underlying challenges. Pledging more money and attempting to make humanitarian aid more efficient will prove utterly inadequate if crises are allowed to keep getting worse.

Priya Behrens-Shah

is Welthungerhilfe’s humanitarian policy advisor.

priya.behrens-shah@welthungerhilfe.de
Join us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/development.and.cooperation
Please visit our website www.DandC.eu