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is related to right-wing
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Digital future

The difficult last mile

Copia is an innovative e-commerce company in Kenya. It sells a broad range of consumer goods to people in rural areas and informal urban settlements. Sophia Waweru, a distribution manager, told D+C/E+C about the business model in an interview.

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More demand for fact checking

Facebook and Google have started cooperating with fact-checking agencies to stem the tide of misinformation on their platforms. Much more must happen, argues the Kenyan fact checker Alphonce Shiundu.

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Pressure on media workers

The internet is no longer the wide open space it used to be. Edward Ronald Sekyewa of the Ugandan Hub for Investigative Media assesses how his country's government is responding to web-based criticism. Ika Ningtyas, a journalist, reports why the defamation clause of Indonesia's internet law is problematic.

PAGES 23, 25

Perfidious systems

Felix Lee, a journalist, elaborates the credit point system China's regime wants to roll out throughout the People's Republic to monitor people in everyday life. The Indian government has introduced a biometric ID system, and more than 1.2 billion people have signed up so far. As social scientists Nirmal Dutta explains, there are serious pitfalls.

PAGES 26, 28

Transparent, safe, at eye level

The KfW has created an innovative, block-chain based platform for implementing and monitoring official development assistance. Piet Kleffmann of KfW argues that TruBudget serves partnership at eye level.

PAGE 29

No panacea

Technology euphoria has become more muted in recent years. Big data, surveillance and election manipulation are among the causes of concern. Policymakers, business and civil society must rise to the challenges. That is how Monika Hellstern of D+C/E+Z summarises this year's re:publica conference in Berlin.

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Getting a grip on dangerous trends

In India, the use of the digital biometric identity code was initially optional – and served poor people to claim benefits. The Supreme Court confirmed that the use of the ID system should be voluntary. Nonetheless, it is required for ever more purposes. Civil-society activists warn of privacy breaches and improper surveillance. This is an example of how technology-related development visions have been getting darker in recent years.

From the mid-90s to the Arab spring of 2011, a sense of euphoria was common. Before the 1990s, however, information technology simply did not seem relevant in developing countries. That began to change when international media became aware of the IT hub that had evolved around Bangalore. Next, internet access spread fast, and, though digital divides persisted, the World Wide Web came ever closer to living up to its name. Then mobile telephony conquered much of Africa. Suddenly, Kenya was pioneering mobile money. Digital technology was making a difference in evermore people's lives, and masses of them were poor.

Mobile phones became commonly used devices even in remote villages. People got access to more information than ever before and started to interact with others who were far away. In many ways, digitalisation proved empowering. For example, social media were essential in the Arab spring. As dictators were toppled, journalists spoke of "Facebook revolutions".

That was then. Platforms that seemed to facilitate free communication in early 2011 are now infested with disinformation and propaganda. Moreover, the business models of established media houses are being undermined, to the detriment of quality journalism. Instead of living in "knowledge societies" as we were promised, it is getting harder to understand our world.

As a general trend, both public administrations and private-sector businesses are being computerised. Digital disruption is common, and leaders in both spheres are paying increasingly close attention to what is discussed online. Some are doing their best to manipulate public discourse. Authoritarian populism is gaining ground, while the respect for democracy seems to be waning in many places. China's communist regime is leading the trend of monitoring citizens, but other governments seem all too eager to follow.

At the same time, the corporate powers that dominate the internet today are still largely beyond government control. They are not paying taxes commensurate with their revenues. The top managers cultivate a liberal image, but their lobbyists are really only striving to protect the likes of Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft and Apple from regulation. The algorithms of Facebook and YouTube, which belong to Google's parent company Alphabet, are driving the radicalisation of angry people by offering users ever more extreme content. That trick keeps them on the platform.

Digitalisation is shaping our species' future. We need sensible rules. The forces that dominate the web are far more powerful than most nation states. The only three political entities that still seem able to regulate them are the USA, China and the EU. At this point, only the EU shows a preference for protecting citizens' rights. If other countries want to have an impact, they must forge alliances. That way they can tap technology's still promising potentials and keep a check on the risks. There is no alternative – unless we want to surrender to overwhelming corporate and state power.

► You'll find all contributions of our focus section plus related ones on our website – they'll be compiled in next month's briefing section.



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Photos: Juanchito Torres/picture-alliance/AA, IRC

Debate



Fragile peace

One year after Ivan Duque became Colombia's president, the country is seesawing between peace and civil war. The number of assassinated activists is rising. Duque's predecessor Juan Manuel Santos had made peace with the FARC militias in 2016, but the administration neither has he will nor the capacities to implement all clauses of the peace accords. Political scientist Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón assesses the situation.

PAGE 11

Tribune



Trust is indispensable

The Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not been contained yet. The coordination of humanitarian agencies has improved, writes Tariq Riebl of the International Rescue Committee, and the greatest challenge is now to win local communities' trust.

PAGE 14

Potential hubs of growth

Border regions are crucial in the trade between neighbouring countries. Cross-border infrastructure can facilitate growth. International corridors can make development happen. Felix Haas, a consultant, reports from two small towns on the border between Thailand and Myanmar.

PAGE 16

RIGHT-WING POPULISM

Why offshore financiers stoke nationalist sentiments

The rise of right-wing populism is closely linked to the growth of offshore finance, according to two scholars. In a paper written for the Netherlands-based Transnational Institute (TNI), they even argue that global oligarchs are driving populist agitation.

By Hans Dembowski

Around the world, right-wing populists claim that they must protect their nation from exploitative global elites. Their idea of “the” people is typically a culturally and ethnically homogenous entity, which they define themselves. Their constant clamour is that this entity is not only being taken advantage of by global elites but also threatened by assertive minorities. They suggest that the response must be to reclaim national sovereignty and back off from multilateral agreements.

Political movements of this kind have been gaining strength in many countries. In some, they have risen to power. The USA, Britain and the Philippines are currently run by populist leaders, for example.

Reijer Hendrikse and Rodrigo Fernandez, the authors of the TNI paper, see populist politics in an entirely different light. In their eyes, right-wing populists are actually serving the interests of oligarchic billionaires who hoard their wealth offshore. As the authors point out, right-wing populists tend to say “yes” to free finance and free trade, but “no” to free migration, democracy, multilateralism and human equality. The obvious beneficiaries of that policy mix are offshore billionaires.

The super-rich, the authors argue, are indeed using populist forces, deliberately manipulating nationalist sentiments. After all, the finances of populist organisations tend to be shady. They often seem to depend on foreign funding.

In the meantime, global media barons, of whom Rupert Murdoch is probably

the most prominent, have supplemented “neoliberal narratives with nativist venom, selling the virtues of patriotism while themselves living as true ‘citizens of nowhere,’” as the authors state. The scholars point out that right-wing populists are far more likely to promote tax cuts than to introduce new welfare or social-protection schemes. They may agitate against “elites”, but their policies hardly hurt the privileged few who benefit from tax havens.

SOVEREIGN CAPITAL

Hendrikse and Fernandez state that capital has become sovereign due to offshore finance. A multitude of bilateral and multilateral agreements, which were all signed by the governments of sovereign nations, has given rise to a network of offshore financial centres. This state-created network is now largely beyond state regulation. It protects wealth and financial returns. According to Hendrikse and Fernandez, this offshore world is “a curious sovereign

creature capable of exerting a political-economic authority similar to imperial powers of the past”.

It is obvious that the billionaire elite can shift wealth easily from one centre to another, both in order to avoid taxation and to exert influence. Offshore oligarchs make investment decisions with a massive bearing on national economies. The billionaires like to be able to pit governments against one another, but they have no interest in governments that are strong enough for effective policymaking. Populist rhetoric may emphasise “taking back control”, but their policies hardly interfere with plutocratic interests, as the TNI paper points out.

The authors see humankind split into two groups. Normal citizens must comply with the law of nation states and depend on public infrastructures which tend to be poor in developing countries and have been becoming worse in advanced nations as governments imposed austerity in the course of the financial crisis. The billionaire elite, by contrast, is exempt from paying taxes and bypasses rules and regulations as it pleases.

Hendrikse and Fernandez are not simply inventing a conspiracy theory. Scandals like Lux Leaks or the Paradise Papers prove that offshore finance is of great global relevance. Nonetheless, their paper leaves several relevant issues undiscussed. While the policies of US President Donald Trump generally serve the richest Americans, he is definitely not a free trader. Do offshore



Rupert Murdoch is one of the global media barons who have supplemented “neoliberal narratives with nativist venom”.



Troops in Kashmir are currently serving a Hindu supremacist agenda, but not necessarily the interest of offshore billionaires.

right-wing populists, is currently causing a serious crisis in Kashmir. Yes, it serves his Hindu chauvinist agenda to impose his government's rule on the country's only Muslim-majority region. Displaying strength at a time when the economy is slowing, is what authoritarian leaders do. How it serves the interest of offshore oligarchs is not clear, however. India's business leaders would like Modi to focus on economic reforms, and they resent his plans to increase tax revenues. Quite obviously, Modi's approach to Kashmir is not only driven by capitalists' interests. It would be silly to consider him to be a puppet of offshore oligarchs.

oligarchs really not care about the growing frictions between the USA and China? The trade war that is morphing into a currency war is certainly reducing their room for manoeuvre.

What is entirely left out is that billionaires may have diverging interests. Russian oil oligarchs, Chinese industrialists and Sili-

con Valley corporations alike benefit from offshore finance. So do mafia bosses, corrupt politicians and people who have simply inherited fortunes. Perhaps they all resent government regulation, but they probably do not have a joint policy agenda.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is certainly one of the most dangerous

LINK

Hendrikse, R., and Fernandez, R., 2019: **Offshore finance – How capital rules the world.** Amsterdam: Transnational Institute (a fully referenced pdf is yet to be published). <http://longreads.tni.org/state-of-power-2019/offshore-finance/>



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IPCC SPECIAL REPORT

Destructive land-use

The impacts of agriculture, forestry and other forms of land use on the climate are considerable, but tend to be underestimated, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) elaborates in a new special report. Humankind needs sustainable approaches to land, food and agriculture. The big challenge is to feed a growing world population and stem global warming at the same time.

By Katja Dombrowski

Climate change has a bearing on land use, which, in turn, has a bearing on the climate. In August, the IPCC published a special report which assesses the interlinkages. For this purpose, 107 scholars from 52 countries, including a majority of developing countries, reviewed 7,000 scientific research papers.

Today, 70 % of the earth's ice-free land is affected by human action. Only one percent is used for infrastructure, while 12 % is cropland, 37 % pastures and 22 % commercial forests. The remaining 28 % is basically unused land, including virgin forests, various ecosystems as well as deserts and mountain cliffs.

The share of used land keeps growing. From 1961 to 2017, according to the IPCC, food production increased by 240 %. The drivers of this trend were additional land use as well as higher productivity. Ecosystems are shaped by land use – often in a bad way. Fertile soils are being lost, desertification is progressing, and biodiversity is dwindling. Farms are currently using 70 % of the world's potable water. It is worrisome, moreover, that soils are losing their capacity to store carbon because, next to the oceans, the ground is earth's most important carbon sink. Non-sustainable land use is thus exacerbating global warming.

Global warming is happening faster above land than above seas. The international community set itself the goal of not letting the global average temperature rise more than 1.5 degrees above the preindustrial level. On land, that has already happened. The global average temperature, by contrast, has only risen half as much.

Climate change means that extreme weather is becoming more frequent and more intense. In many places, the consequences include faster land degradation and desertification. Food security and entire ecosystems are at risk. As the authors point out, what is happening in different world regions varies considerably, but the

servation of resources such as soils, water, plants and animals. The ecological services must continue. The report states: "Reducing and reversing land degradation, at scales from individual farms to entire watersheds, can provide cost effective, immediate, and long-term benefits to communities and support several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

The authors are in favour of sustainable agriculture, less fertiliser use and reduced meat production. They point out that 25 % to 30 % of all food either rots before it is marketed or is thrown away later. Reducing that waste would make a huge difference.



Animal husbandry must become more sustainable – cows on display in Switzerland.

general trend is that low income countries are affected worst.

The future impacts of global warming do not only depend on how much temperatures rise. Population growth, consumption habits, modes of production and innovative technology all matter as well. It is encouraging that the scientists see several options for land-use systems contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation. In many cases, such change would not imply more competition for land. At the same time, it would deliver co-benefits, the experts state.

A core issue is sustainable land use. Management must be geared to the con-

To redirect land use, governments must adopt appropriate policies, the IPCC demands. Relevant issues include ensuring that all farmers have access to markets as well as to the land resources they depend on. Moreover, food prices should reflect not only production costs, but environmental damages as well. The authors leave no doubt: action is needed immediately. That is true in every of all sectors with a bearing on the climate.

LINK

IPCC special report climate change and land:
<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srccl/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Digital mobilisation, analogue protests

The internet is changing how African citizens are becoming involved in politics. Social media are giving scope to activism, but unfortunately, they have dark sides too. Moreover, many people still do not have access to the web.

By Sheila Mysorekar

According to Nanjala Nyabola, a Kenyan author and internet activist, “social media is an increasingly political sphere.” Her country is a good example. It is a hub for digital development in Africa and pioneered monetary transfers by mobile phone (M-Pesa), for example. What is more important for the political landscape, Nyabola argues, is that Kenya has a large Twitter community. The short-message platform is the space where any political issue is debated hotly.

Nyabola is known for her book “Digital democracy, analogue politics”. It analyses how the internet era is transforming politics. “As censorship rises in traditional media and public spaces decrease, political conversation shifts into online space,” she said in her keynote speech at a recent conference on social media that was hosted by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Kampala, the Ugandan capital.

Citizens demand transparency, justice and accountability. Many are frustrated with how politicians act. Corruption is of great concern. Nyabola points out that “expressions of solidarity” often transcend tribal affiliations. In a nation where politicians tend to pit ethnic groups against one another, this is a major achievement. In the past, public institutions tended to ignore citizens’ complaints, but when they are faced with thousands of comments on social media, that is much more difficult, the prominent author points out.

Leading politicians and civil servants are aware of this trend. Accordingly, some political forces are trying to change

public discourse, for instance by spreading misinformation and using automated computer programmes (“bots”) for this purpose. Online information is increasingly “weaponised”, as Nyabola warns (see Alphonse Shiundu on p. 21 of this issue).

Social media thus definitely has its dark sides. It has also enabled “new forms of situational violence, particularly against women”, according to Nyabola. Her examples include sexual harassment or the publishing of a person’s private information (“doxing”). In Kenya, moreover, xenophobic and anti-Muslim agitation has become frequent online. Typically, the target is the Somali minority, Nyabola says.

In Uganda, politics is not quite as digitalised as in Kenya. Political parties still “mobilise people in an analogue way”, says Michael Katagaye from the Evidence & Methods Lab, a technology oriented civil-society organisation.

Young Ugandans want to have a say in issues that affect them. However, they are “not interested in traditional parties”, but they engage in online activism or follow political personalities on social media, as Katagaye insists.

One of the influential personalities who voice the unrest of the youth is Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, a musician turned politician and member of parliament. He heads the “People Power” movement. At the Uganda Social Media Conference, his spokesman Joel Ssenyonyi explained that since Bobi Wine and People Power was not allowed to campaign physically, “we throw the topics out on social media.” This virtual forum is extremely relevant, as politicians have realised. In response, the Ugandan government introduced a social-media tax in 2018. The idea was to reduce activists’ outreach on popular platforms (see Edward Ronald Sekyewa on p. 23 of this issue). Nonetheless, young people still “mobilise online and then take the protest to the streets”, Ssenyonyi says.

Online activism, however, still bypasses the mass of Africans. The reason is that many people are too poor to afford internet access or live in rural regions where infrastructure is too poor to facilitate web access. As Nyabola, the Kenyan book author, puts it: “How can you have the 4th industrial revolution if people can’t afford data?”

LINKS

Nyabola, N., 2018: Digital democracy, analogue politics. London, Zed Books.

<https://www.zedbooks.net/shop/book/digital-democracy-analogue-politics/>

Uganda Social Media Conference 2019:

<https://www.facebook.com/UgandaSocialMedia/>

<https://www.kas.de/web/uganda/uganda-social-media-konferenz>



Kenyan author and internet activist Nanjala Nyabola in Kampala in Uganda.

AFROTOPIA

A vision for Africa

Africa must free itself from western standards and focus on its own forgotten and repressed spiritual resources, demands Felwine Sarr, a Senegalese economist. In his eyes, that is how the continent can regain its rightful place in the world.

By Dagmar Wolf

About 50 years ago, the last European colonies in Africa gained independence. White minority rule ended in South Africa in the 1990s. Nonetheless, at least some of the continent's 54 countries seem to be in a permanent crisis. This scenario reinforces ancient stereotypes of Africa as a dark place marked by poverty, hunger and war.

However, the criteria by which Africa's development and future perspectives are measured are derived from a western development model, writes Sarr in his book "Afrotopia", which was recently published in German. According to this model, development is primarily understood as catching up in economic terms.

The focus of catch-up development is not set on people's well-being, but on the growth of a nation's gross national product and its position in the global market. The professor of economics at Gaston-Berger University in Saint-Louis in Senegal points out that Africans seemed to have no choice but to play the role of the west's underprivileged pupils in order to be respected. Sarr's name should be familiar to western readers. In 2018, he attracted attention as the co-author of a report that demanded the return of African cultural assets looted during colonialism (see blog post by Hans Dembowsky on our website). The report was written on behalf of French President Emmanuel Macron.

Slavery, colonialism and resource extraction have left marks on Africa and in the souls of the people. The continent lost up to 224 million people through the slave trade and its impacts. According to Sarr, it will take centuries to recover from the loss of labour and natural resources. Among some western observers, the idea still prevails that

"the west brought civilisation to Africa". In Sarr's eyes, it must not be forgotten how much suffering the colonial powers caused and that the current crises, to a large extent, result from their rule.

Moreover, he argues that the western economic model is contrary to African culture and to its tradition of informal economic activity, which feeds more families in Africa than formal jobs do. Unfortunately, western measuring instruments do not accurately take account of the huge informal sector. Accordingly, the gap is wide between the reality people experience and what international indicators say about the continent.

The Senegalese scholar adds that the industrial nations have dramatically lost authority in recent years due to:

- the crisis of their democracies,
- growing social injustice and
- the climate change they have caused.

The growth-oriented western model has failed, says Sarr, so it is not worth imitating. He bemoans that, although African countries gradually won formal independ-

ence, their African rulers unfortunately often turned out to be the puppets of the west, continuing colonial forms of exerting power. This is still evident, according to the author – in the structures of administrative and educational systems, for example. Indeed, elites still tend to use the language of the former colonial power.

Due to Sarr, the point is not to turn back the past or romanticise it. He wants Africa to develop its own model of economic activity and life. Policymaking must suit the given circumstances and be based on African culture and traditions. According to Sarr, they reflect the principles of sustainability, the common good and mindfulness – principles that are becoming ever more important in our fast-changing world.

Africa's time will come, writes Sarr, because of its natural resources and its young population. By the middle of this century, about 2 billion people, more than a fifth of the world's population, will be living in Africa. To flourish once more and reclaim the place in the world that it deserves as the cradle of humanity, Sarr wants the continent to overcome the alienation from its own culture.

BOOK

Sarr, F., 2019: *Afrotopia*. Berlin, Matthes & Seitz (French edition, 2016, Éditions Philippe Rey).



Western development indicators do not cover the large informal sector in Africa: cultivation of watermelon in rural Tanzania.

Reports of torture

Young offenders in Ghana are often denied their rights. The Juvenile Justice Act prescribes that minors in conflict with the law should be kept in remand homes. If there are no such homes available, they should be sent back to their parents for custody and brought to the court each time the case is called. However, the reality is different: young criminals are kept in jails for adults. There are also alleged cases of torture to extract confessions.

A year ago, 15-year-old Issah Yakubu was picked up in his village in Ghana's north-east region for allegedly leading a gang to steal a motorbike. He was put into prison. Recently, he returned home on bail. Yakubu recalls the harrowing experience of his arrest: "I was with my friends at a musical concert. Suddenly, people stormed the place, held me, and asked me about the whereabouts of their motorbike. I told them I didn't know anything about a motorbike," Yakubu says.

"They pulled a knife and kept beating me. Finally, they took me to the police." At the police station, the nightmare continued: "The police used electric shocks and caned me with their sticks to force me to confess," Yakubu alleges. He

was later transferred to Tamale Central Prisons, a bigger prison keeping both adults and juvenile offenders for remand.

Section 1 (1) of Ghana's Juvenile Justice Act says the state has "to protect the rights of juveniles, ensure an appropriate and individual response to juvenile offenders and provide for young offenders". Juveniles are defined as persons under eighteen years. According to the Act, bail has to be offered within 48 hours, and the trial of a juvenile should not be later than six months after his arrest. But Yakubu was kept in prison for close to a year without bail.

According to an assessment by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), "police personnel mostly are unaware of the existing laws and procedures relating to children in conflict with the law and thereby end up infracting these laws." For instance, the law further prescribes that a juvenile should not be put into the same prison as adults. While he was imprisoned though, Yakubu slept in the same cell with adult convicts, he says.

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), a governmental organisation committed to protecting human rights and administrative justice, intervened to secure bail for Yakubu. "He was not supposed to be in an adults' prison," says Stephen Azantilo, CHRAJ's regional director.

There are numerous reports about torture used by security operatives to make suspects confess to crimes. Yakubu's experience is just one out of many. "When they used electric shocks on me I was confused," he recounts. "The prosecutor wrote down things in the file that I didn't even know about." Yakubu maintains that he is innocent.

LINKS

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI):
<https://humanrightsinitiative.org/>
Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) Ghana:
<https://chraj.gov.gh/>



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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Women take on the patriarchy

Tired of suffering sexual harassment in silence, women in Uganda have started to speak up against it. They use the international hashtag #MeToo to make cases of harassment public. But they protest not only online: offline, Ugandan women are taking to the streets.

By Lindsey Kukunda

In May 2019, a member of a group of male university students leaked a list of 230 girls deemed “easy to sleep with”. The list came along with their phone numbers and the universities they attend. There was no action taken by the universities – and neither from the police, although it was a clear case of defamation and breach of data privacy. Only other women noticed what had happened.

If women don’t stand up for themselves, nothing is done against sexual harassment and gender-based violence. But slowly, they are beginning to push back.

Between May 2017 and June 2018, over 40 Ugandan women were murdered or kidnapped. Feminists used social media to organise a Women’s Protest March in Uganda’s capital Kampala in June last year. Literally at the last minute, the police gave their permission.

For the first time, I attended a march where security forces offered protection for the protesters instead of tear gas – a regular occurrence in Uganda when masses get together to exercise their right to protest publicly.

For me, this women’s march was #MeToo in action: the mix of online activism and voices had merged into offline action. It was also the starting point of public action to protest against the rampant violence against women. Now, more and more Ugandan women are speaking out.

Unfortunately, the negative response of society towards these voices is showing us how endemic and systematic sexual abuse is.

It’s not hard to garner sympathy from the public when women are murdered. But when you challenge the “freedom” of men to

harass and abuse women under the cloak of patriarchy, culture, religion and whatever, you’d best be prepared for the “tear gas” of the digital age: social-media bullying. On top of that, we hear the very loud silence of the law. All this reveals that Ugandan



Women's march in Kampala, Uganda.

society is still teeming with anti-women’s rights sentiments.

Tina Musuya, executive director of the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP), says, sexual harassment at the workplace “happens widely”, adding that those who speak up against it are “victimised”.

Case in point: Samantha Mwesigwa is a senior state attorney with the Ministry of

Justice and Constitutional Affairs. She had suffered sexual harassment for ten straight years at the hands of her former director Christopher Gashirabake, now deputy solicitor general. Mwesigwa says she tried “all legal means” to get justice, but to no avail. “The Justice Ministry has let me down,” she reports. Recently she decided to take her story to social media, and finally her claim of sexual harassment and also the denial of the accused get the attention they deserve. Hopefully, her case will now be taken to the courts, after ten years of suffering in silence.

Samantha Mwesigwa is a state attorney. How does a poor woman without that political clout fare?

On the positive side: this is the #MeToo movement in Uganda today. Brave women coming out to demand justice, no matter the consequences, raising the flag for other women to show their support with hashtags and other forms of online and offline activism.

Is it enough? No, it is not. The time it takes to get justice – if you get justice at all – is long enough to frustrate women until they give up. The support for abusers, like men who indulge in revenge pornography, is still unacceptably strong. A woman whose nude pictures are leaked without her consent is held liable for participating in the production and distribution of pornography under Uganda’s Anti-Pornography Act. The police even take the extra measure of issuing a public summons to victims, thereby sending a message to society that it is more acceptable to further harass an abused woman than it is to hold her abuser accountable.

Yet finally, if slowly, it looks like the tide is changing in Uganda. With women speaking up every day, it will be harder to continue to justify sexual harassment and other forms of abuse of power and privilege. Ignore the women’s protests for a time, maybe. Justify sexual violence forever – impossible!



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CIVIL STRIFE

Fragile peace

One year after Ivan Duque assumed the presidency of Colombia, the country seems to seesaw between war and peace. The number of assassinated community leaders is rising.

By Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón

In 2016, Duque's predecessor Juan Manuel Santos concluded peace agreements with the leftist FARC-EP militia. The peace accords include provisions relating to:

- human rights,
- the protection of community leaders,
- the demobilisation of combatants,
- justice and reconciliation,
- rural reform,
- the reduction of poverty and inequality in rural areas,
- political participation of all parties involved in decades of civil war and
- illicit crops (in particular coca).

Not quite a quarter of provisions have been fully implemented to date, according to a recent assessment by researchers from Notre Dame University in the USA. It is worrisome that the implementation has been slowing down. The double reason is that the Duque government lacks both the capacities and the political will for effective implementation.

Indeed, Duque agitated against the peace agreements during the election campaign. Moreover, he is a right-wing politician whose vision of development is basically industrialisation. By contrast, the peace agreements focused on a local-level, pro-peasant approach. In any case, it is a core challenge that Colombia's state has never had a meaningful presence in remote rural areas. Any government would struggle to introduce change there.

The Duque administration has further weakened state capacities in rural areas by reducing funding for relevant institutions such as the National Land Agency, the Territorial Renovation Agency and the Rural Development Agency. It prefers to spend money on boosting industrialisation in urban areas.

The peace agreements foresaw that peasants would voluntarily stop the cultivation of illicit crops, but the Duque administration is in favour of a more repressive approach (see my essay in the Tribune section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/03). It has also tried to veto or block legislation related to the implementation of transitional justice measures, including the truth commission. While the government still speaks of "demobilisation" and "reintegration", it generally avoids terms such as "peace accords", "justice" and "reconciliation". The implication is that the

at least 229 community leaders and human-rights activists. Almost a third of them were indigenous activists. All of them were, in one way or another, demanding that the peace agreements be fully implemented. They were thus challenging powerful vested interests at the local level.

A small number of prominent FARC-EP members have gone into hiding. Some of them were meant to participate in the truth commission and other mechanisms of transitional justice. That they have once again opted for a clandestine life, confirms the world view of the peace agreement's right-wing opponents. A sense of unaccountability and impunity for war crimes is growing.

The forthcoming local elections are very important. They will either consolidate or weaken the power of the government. Armed opponents of the agreements are



Protestors commemorating the dead in Bogotá in July 2019.

FARC-EP is not an equal partner in peace building, but a criminal gang that has lost.

Duque's position is awkward. On the one hand, he depends on a coalition of right-wing forces that either did not support the peace accords or even actively opposed them. On the other hand, he is bound by the law and the agreements his predecessor signed. He cannot by simple decree undo the work Santos did, but he wants to please his base ahead of local elections in October.

Accordingly, the peace is becoming ever more fragile. Since Duque took office, different armed organisations have killed

aware of this fact, and they seem to be stepping up their violent action now. On the other hand, civil-society organisations are campaigning in favour of the peace agreements. The accords are not dead. For Colombians to live in peace, they must be implemented.



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DEMOCRACY

A matter of self interest

Afghanistan will hold elections in an awkward setting in October. Its elected government has been kept away from the negotiations in which the USA and the Taliban are discussing the country's future. The international community should support Afghanistan's young democracy.

By Nawid Paigham

When the international troops led by the USA intervened in Afghanistan in 2001, they inspired hope for a democratic future. After devastating civil war and horrible religious fundamentalism, it seemed promising to have the world's mature democracies on Afghanistan's side. In 2004, Afghans were able to choose their president in free elections for the first time ever. The price paid for the democratic constitution was high – both in terms of human lives and money.

In spite of the typical problems that haunt post-conflict countries, Afghanistan has made considerable progress. Its people do not want to give up the accomplishments of the past 18 years.

It is easy to question the quality of Afghanistan's democracy in view of terror attacks, corruption and organised crime. One must remember, however, that democracy does not take root overnight. It is always the result of long struggles and many sacrifices. So while it does make sense to consider to what extent the western model fits a least-developed country, one should not overestimate current norms, structures and conventions. Change is possible, but it takes time.

According to the Asia Foundation, which has been conducting opinion polls in Afghanistan since 2004, support for democracy is strong. The data even reveal an incremental increase in people's confidence in democracy and elections. Satisfaction with democracy rose from 57% in 2017 to 61% in 2018. Even though people have reason to fear insurgents' violence, moreover, participation in civic affairs, including elections, has been growing.

The transition to democracy is never easy. It was neither easy in Germany, Aus-

tria and Italy after World War II, nor in the course of decolonisation, nor in the former Eastern block after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In many cases, international co-operation and support were needed. In this regard, Afghanistan is not exceptional, but actually quite normal.

The 8th round of so-called peace talks between the USA and the Taliban finished recently in Doha, the Qatari capital. These negotiations have caused anxiety and anger in Afghanistan. From the start, they took place behind closed doors. Afghanistan's elected government was not involved – nor were representatives of civil society. Afghans have the impression that the US administration is only interested in fast withdrawal, while the Taliban want to reimpose the brutal regime they ran from 1996 to 2001. People do not think that their interests are being considered in the talks at all.

Some Afghan leaders support the negotiation process. One of them is Hamid Karzai, the former president. He has suggested that the Doha talks are more important than the presidential elections that are scheduled for October. In this perspective, the talks will usher in a new regime. Karzai is a spent force, however, and does not have

a coherent political agenda. In his 14 years in office, he did far too little to build and strengthen institutions.

By contrast, Ashraf Ghani, the incumbent president, emphasises the election. According to him, the winner of the elections will have a popular mandate to negotiate with the Taliban. Many observers believe that Ghani will win. There are 17 other candidates, but he is the best known. He has, moreover, been accused of using government funds for campaign purposes.

The Taliban have never accepted the legitimacy of Afghanistan's elected policymakers. They insisted on keeping Ghani away from the peace talks. Whether that will change after the elections remains to be seen. It does not seem likely.

Afghanistan's budding democracy is therefore in serious danger. Many people fear it will be abandoned by the USA. Nonetheless, the international community has a moral obligation to support Afghanistan. It also should support Afghanistan as a matter of self-interest. After all, the USA and its allies only intervened after the Al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001. The reason was that the Taliban had turned the country into a hub of Islamist terrorism.



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President Ashraf Ghani wants to be re-elected: campaign billboard in Kabul.

Letters to the editor



LITTLE KNOWN SUBJECT

**D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/06,
Focus section: Mental health**

I was delighted to see that you chose mental health in a global context as the topic of a focus section. The topic deserves more attention than it is getting. This is also my concern. I have been working for three years

on the documentary film “La Maladie du Démon” (The illness of the demon). It deals with mental health in Burkina Faso, which is yet another example of a West-African country where people with psychological and epileptic disorders are traditionally regarded as being obsessed by ghosts and demons. There is no state system to care of the people concerned. To see an innocent person tied to a tree because of his or her illness is an absurd scenario. It is even more absurd that this is still happening in today’s world.

My movie was made to raise awareness for this situation. The film had its world premiere in Abidjan in Côte d’Ivoire at a human-rights film festival. It was launched in cooperation with Amnesty

International and the Goethe-Institute, Germany’s official cultural institute. In Burkina Faso, we also went on a film tour with a mobile cinema. The protagonists took part, and they now use the movie themselves at awareness-raising events. In Côte d’Ivoire, a psychiatrist is using it too. Apart from this, the film has only been shown at cinematic festivals and for educational purposes, for instance at a congress of the German Association for Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics in Berlin. From October on it will be shown in selected movie theatres in Germany, always followed by a panel discussion.

**Lilith Kugler, Konstanz,
filmmaker**

Film: www.la-maladie-du-demon.com



PRECISE AND WELL WRITTEN

**D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/07,
Sabine Balk: Changing roles**

I am a journalist from Ghana, and I like your work. You write well, especially about strategic rape in war. It is very precise and highlights the other side of conflicts which we have all turned a blind eye on. In our part of the world, societies do not help in seeking justice for such victims. Many keep it to themselves for the fear of being marginalised. Keep up the good work.

Edem Gyamesi, Ghana

ODA OR MPA?

**D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/07,
Stephan Klingebiel: The end of certainties**

Interesting: it seems that Official Development Assistance (ODA) from rich countries to poor ones is becoming Migration Prevention Assistance (MPA)!

**Dr. Saleemul Huq, International
Centre for Climate Change and
Development, Dhaka**



The mental wounds of violence do not always heal by themselves: victim of rape in Liberian civil war.



IRC staff at an Ebola treatment centre in the eastern DRC.

EBOLA

A turning point

In July, the prolonged Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) saw its first active transmission in Goma, a city of more than 1 million people. The well-executed response in Goma allows for some optimism in an otherwise dire situation. However, there is an urgent need to extend the response beyond mere medical activities, argues the emergency field director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

By Tariq Riebl

When a diseased priest from South Kivu arrived in the city of Goma on 14 July, it marked a turning point in the ongoing Ebola crisis. Ebola has been plaguing the eastern part of the country for more than a year now. More than 2,700 cases have been registered,

and over 1,800 had died by mid-August. However, so far, none of these cases had reached a city like Goma with a population of over 1 million.

I first heard about the case through informal contacts. The UN soon confirmed it. Like others in the response community, I was not shocked to hear it. We all had expected this to happen – and sooner than it finally occurred.

In fact, the way the case developed even showed some positive elements. The nurses in the health centre that the priest went to did an excellent job. They immediately identified the case and isolated him. It was just as important that the patient, once he arrived in the city, went straight to the health centre. Like other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been training

health personnel for exactly these situations. The health-centre staff were ready.

Unfortunately, the city then saw its second confirmed case. Moreover, active transmission occurred inside the city. A father of ten children had returned home from working in the Ituri province and began showing signs of Ebola on 22 July. However, he was not transferred to an Ebola treatment centre until 30 July. The time lag between when he started showing symptoms and when he was finally isolated demonstrates the need to further ramp up training of health workers. In the meantime, the man's wife and daughter have been confirmed as having the disease, signalling the first active cases of transmission in the city. This is a major cause for concern.

People move around, despite being exposed to the virus. Many do not go to health centres even though they are sick. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), too many Ebola deaths are still happening outside of Ebola treatment centres. One reason is a strong lack of trust, which is typical of any region after extended civil strife. The DRC Ebola crisis is a public-health emergen-

cy within one of the most complex, chronic and long-standing humanitarian crises in the world. The DRC is a war-torn country which has seen an estimated 5 million people killed since 1994, while 4 million have probably left the country. More than 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in DRC, yet assistance is not reaching all those in need.

In response to the first Ebola case in Goma, the attention of the international media rose. What was more important, though, was the response of the WHO. It declared the Ebola crisis in the DRC to be a “public-health emergency of international concern” (PHEIC) on 17 July.

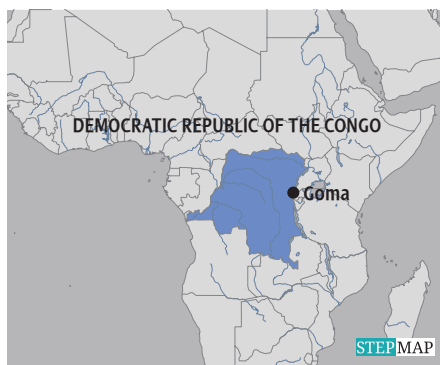
STRATEGIC RESET

PHEICs are only very rarely declared. The WHO does so when things are very bad. Indeed, what is happening in the eastern DRC is now the second biggest Ebola outbreak of all time, surpassed only by the 2014 outbreak in West Africa. To date, there is no sign of it stopping. Many members of the humanitarian community had long called for a strategic reset. We are now seeing it being implemented.

There is a real risk that this outbreak will go beyond the borders of DRC. That would entail serious public health and social consequences. The spillover risk to other countries is high: there are strong trade and family relations with Uganda. Thousands of people living in Rwanda work in Goma and commute back and forth every day, and Rwandan authorities have tightened controls. The outbreak risks are spilling over to other neighbouring countries as well, including South Sudan, Kenya and Burundi.

Ebola cases have indeed been reported in Uganda, but for now they have been contained. As in Goma, such spillovers were expected. Surprisingly, they did not happen sooner.

In this context, the PHEIC declaration basically confirmed what we had already known on the ground. The situation is extremely concerning. On the other hand, the PHEIC does make a difference in terms of media and donor attention. So far, a lot of money has been given, but no one expected the outbreak to last this long. Further funds will be required to sustain the response.



Another important development is the appointment of David Gressly as the UN emergency Ebola response coordinator in June. At that point, the UN spoke of a “level 3 emergency”. “L3” is the highest UN category of emergencies. Currently there are only four “L3” emergencies in the world. The others are Syria, Yemen and the cyclones in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Gressly is now the single point of contact for all international agencies involved in the response. His appointment has led to a change of the coordination structure. A broader humanitarian perspective was indeed needed, as the IRC and others had been demanding.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is especially important. After decades of war and conflict, people in the eastern DRC do not trust the authorities. Nor do they trust foreigners or any people who belong to social groups that are not their own. Mistrust has to a large extent thwarted the Ebola response. We must take into account the perceptions of communities about a response they perceive as being political, with the decision to cancel the national elections in the Ebola-affected areas confirming their suspicions. The use of the army and police force for protection of the government and UN health workers has further exacerbated this fear. The IRC and many other NGOs have called for this to be stopped, and since the appointment of Gressly, we are seeing a change in this policy.

The depressing truth is that Ebola is still spreading even though many international aid workers and international repre-

sentatives were sent to the country in the past 12 months.

To tackle the Ebola crisis, we need the cooperation of the communities – and their trust. The way to achieve this is to respond to their feedback.

A core problem is that epidemic responses for highly infectious diseases such as Ebola are in general very vertical and very structured. Unfortunately, communities sometimes resent this verticality and oppose some of the rules. Good community engagement means that we need to adapt to their attitudes, often in very practical ways.

One example is that the IRC is moving away from big “triage” structures, which serve to prioritise the treatment of patients. The most urgent cases are the people who can be saved by immediate action. In Ebola outbreaks, patients get a first screening in health centres. Those who are suspected of being infected are isolated immediately. Communities find this procedure scary. One example is that in rural areas the IRC is moving away from big “triage” structures and replacing them with more informal pre-triage reception areas which reduces the hesitation patients may have of seeking care.

Furthermore, the IRC is trying to shift its response away from an Ebola-only focus. We notice that people are afraid of going to health centres because they think they are just dealing with Ebola, not treating other sicknesses. Beginning next year, we will offer what we call “wrap-around activities”. As a result, our health centres will support additional primary health care beyond Ebola. Ultimately, the key issues are no longer medical when Ebola continues to spread after months of interventions. The issues are community-related. We have innovative and effective new vaccines and treatments, but these have little impact if people are not accepting to use them. We must win the trust of the communities – and then we will be able to tackle the crisis.



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REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Borderline prosperity

The development of border regions is of crucial importance - for both trade and regional integration. A key requirement is cross-border infrastructure. The border between Myanmar and Thailand is an example.

By Felix Haas

Border regions can be highly dynamic economic spaces – in particular in developing countries. The development of the borderlands depends on how liberal or restrictive the exchange between the adjoining countries is. Innovative development approaches may help turn the remotest periphery of

Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce from 1 October 2018 to 19 July 2019. Agricultural products of smallholder farmers such as watermelons, rice and legumes from Myanmar are exported overland as a primary mode of trade to China and Thailand. A flourishing economy built on trade and logistics has emerged in border cities such as Myawaddy in Myanmar and Mae Sot in Thailand.

While trucks deliver wholesale goods in Thailand, an army of small-scale traders receive the goods at the border in Myanmar. On either side of the border, trade creates abundant income opportunities: in local trading, transport and logistics companies

these small-scale activities as desirable livelihoods would offer considerable benefits – to the women themselves, to trading businesses and the economy in general.

Borders often separate labour markets with different conditions, which shape patterns of labour migration. Some 400,000 migrants from Myanmar work in the small Thai border town Mae Sot. Thailand's minimum wage is very attractive for labourers from neighbouring Myanmar.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NEW ECONOMIC CORRIDORS

Adjoining border regions – in our example Mae Sot and Myawaddy – should be considered integrated systems. Transnational infrastructure is an immediate precondition of success for cross-border cooperation. This perspective could inspire new approaches to regional integration within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – see Doris Fischer in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/07) is geared to enhancing development along infrastructure corridors. That is also true of the Asian Development Bank's initiatives for the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), interconnecting six countries.

The "Reconnecting Asia" project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington-based think tank, has thoroughly documented related activities. It lists almost 14,000 BRI infrastructure projects that are being carried out in Eurasia. They include all kinds of infrastructure, from ports to railways to power plants.

Does transnational infrastructure lead to closer economic ties and subsequently political integration "automatically"? How can administrations of adjoining border regions cooperate to seize opportunities and rise to challenges? European integration provides valuable historic lessons in this respect.

After World War II, a deeply divided Europe needed reconstruction as well as reconciliation. The Schuman Plan (named after the former foreign minister of France Robert Schuman), led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952. It was an essential precursor to what is now the European Union. The ECSC agreement was signed by Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries (Bel-



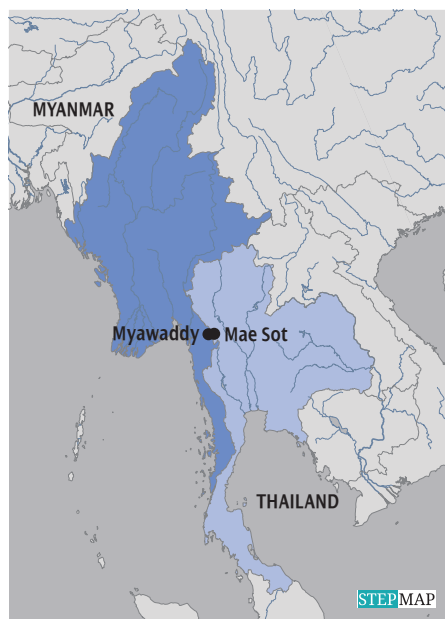
Market vendors from Myanmar in the Thai border town Mae Sot.

a country into a centre of growth. Business, cultural and political exchange are relevant.

Border trade offers income opportunities, not least for family-run small and micro-enterprises. In the case of Myanmar, border trade contributes almost 44% to the country's exports and 17% to imports. These ratios result from cumulative trade data of

as well as for independent carriers and other trade intermediaries.

According to a study of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2019) on the patterns of trade in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, considerably more women than men are engaged in informal cross-border trade. Formally recognising



gium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg). It was based on economic considerations: the production of steel required both German

coal and French iron ore. The tri-national region of Saarland in Germany, Lorraine in France and Luxemburg (SaarLorLux) became an early model of transnational cooperation.

In 1990, the EU introduced an important new policy instrument: INTERREG, in the context of the establishment of the European Single Market. INTERREG supports interregional cooperation of adjoining border regions. Indeed, the EU soon defined new “Euro Regions” which straddle borders. Special cooperation offices serve the Euro Region, and they get extra funding.

The EU experience shows that both is needed. Cooperation does not spontaneously arise by itself. An example is the Danish-German Euro Region of Fehmarn-belt. Projects should be undertaken not only in traditional economic fields like trade promotion, but also in fields like culture, education and sports.

ASEAN states will define their own vision for cooperation at its borders. Decades of European experience in integration and

interregional cross-border cooperation are readily available as help and guidance. New infrastructure is certainly paving the way to broader cooperation: a new “Friendship Bridge” was opened between Mae Sot and Myawaddy in March and will substantially facilitate trade between Thailand and Myanmar.

LINKS

UNCTAD, 2019: Borderline. Women in informal cross-border trade in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=2348>

Center for Strategic and International Studies: Reconnecting Asia.

<https://reconnectingasia.csis.org/>



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Surveillance cameras
in Beijing.

Digital future

Information technology and its multifold applications offer spectacular opportunities in business. They can also contribute to making public institutions more transparent and accountable. In recent years however developmental visions that are related to digitalisation have become darker. The reason is that technology in itself is not a blessing. Vested interests can use it to gain yet

more influence or entrench monopolies – often even in illegitimate ways.



This focus section directly relates to the UN's 9th and 16th Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): industry, innovation and infrastructure and peace, justice and strong institutions. It also has a bearing on the entire SDG agenda.

Solving the last-mile problem

Copia is a Kenyan e-commerce company that provides many different kinds of durable consumer products to customers in remote areas as well as urban fringes. The goods range from staple foods like rice or maize to household items, electronics, farming tools, solar panels and even motorcycles. Sophia Waweru, a sales manager at Copia, told Hans Dembowski about the company's business model.

Sophia Waweru interviewed by Hans Dembowski

In what sense is Copia making life better for members of Kenya's underserved rural communities?

Copia brings convenience to rural communities by delivering quality products that customers want at affordable prices. We spare our rural customers the efforts and costs of travelling to the nearest town to look for what they want. The town can be up to 20 to 30 kilometres away, but even if they go there, they have no guarantee of finding what they desire.

What goods are most in demand?

Our customers need household goods, as well as food items, personal care, beauty products and baby products. They also buy electronic applications, construction materials and many other things. We sell lots of rice and maize, and even about one motorcycle per month.

Where do you source the goods?

We procure them from manufacturers, distributors and wholesale markets. We have also begun the process of directly importing products that are not manufactured locally. The majority of our food items are sourced locally from Kenya.

It is unusual for an e-commerce company to rely on agents with a physical presence near the customers. Why does Copia need them?

The key challenge is to serve customers in remote areas where many people do not have formal postal addresses. Despite a 44% smartphone penetration rate in Kenya, more-

over, poor internet access and the cost of data are barriers. Our agents are therefore the solution to accessing our customers today.

Who are they, and what do they do?

They are micro-entrepreneurs who run a hairdressing business or small grocery shop, for example. In the areas, where we operate, we strive to establish a network of agents so that our customers do not have to walk for more than 30 minutes or so to reach one of them. Today, we have a network of over 4,500 agents servicing over 35,000 customers. They can place orders with the agents, and pick up the goods within two to four days. The agents have smartphones with internet access, but they also use paper catalogues which list the products we offer.

We know where our agents are, we stay in touch with them via phone and use digital applications to ensure the safe delivery of products to our agents. The agents benefit from Copia as their turnover businesses grow by approximately 40% on average. They attract additional customers. We take pride in their commercial development and the growth of their businesses. We estimate that Copia has thus contributed the equivalent of an accumulated \$6 million to the economies of the communities we serve by the end of the second quarter of 2019.

How many end-customers did Copia have two years ago and how many do you reach today?

Two years ago, we served 21,000 customers. Today, we serve approximately 35,000 customers. We are targeting to serve 100,000 customers across Kenya and East Africa in the next two years. Our monthly sales currently amounts to the equivalent of about \$1 million to \$1.2 million per month.



A Copia agent in her hairdressing shop.



Copia's fulfilment centre in Tatu City.

Are you operating all over Kenya?

No, we currently operate in Central Kenya. This is where we have spent time ensuring we have a successful business model and supply chain, able to meet our customers' needs. We recently opened a new depot in Embu which will enable us to expand further north and east in Kenya. Very soon we will be expanding into western Kenya. The plan is to expand operations further west across the border into Uganda. We've also been building a network of Copia agents in densely populated, informal urban neighbourhoods, where people actually face similar problems as rural communities do in the sense of not having time to shop around and to travel considerable distances to get access to the range of produce they require.

What kind of public infrastructure does Copia need to be able to serve low-income communities?

Copia relies on mobile-phone penetration and mobile money. Today, mobile money transfer is commonly used all over Kenya and its neighbouring countries. One great advantage of mobile money is the security it offers when customers make payments. It also reduces the money interchange between agents and Copia. Everything is done cashless. The road network is critical too –

especially rural feeder roads. Critical to us reaching our agents and customers is the existing road network, especially the interior village roads.

What kind of company-owned infrastructure has Copia built so far?

We have set up a world class distribution and fulfilment centre in Tatu City, Ruiru near Nairobi. It is basically a large computerised warehouse where we have storage facilities to be able to fulfil orders timely. To date, we have fulfilled over 2.5 million customer orders. We also have a fleet of 50 leased trucks that do daily delivery trips to our customers, combined with a workforce of 405 permanent and casual employees.

What difference do micro-finance institutions such as Kenya's Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) make – and do they treat consumer goods (TV sets for example) the same way as they do investment goods (like farm tools)?

The SACCOs are transforming members' lifestyles by providing access to loans that enable the SACCO members to purchase costly assets such as refrigerators, chaff cutters and washing machines that they may not have been able to afford previously. The loans are repaid in monthly instalments. How much

money they can borrow is typically determined by the money they have saved rather than by what they want to use the credit for.

Does Copia have any policy on protecting customers' personal data?

Copia respects the privacy and personal data protection rights of all our customers. We ensure that customer data is stored safely within our enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. Our ERP system was sourced from Europe and is compliant with all EU regulations including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).



SOPHIA WAWERU

is a junior sales manager with Copia. The interview was done by e-mail. She first met Hans Dembowski as

a member of a group of journalists who were invited by DEG, the German Development Finance Institution, to visit innovative private-sector companies in Kenya in April. DEG has supported Copia with a large loan, appreciating that the company is improving disadvantaged people's access to affordable goods as well as boosting microenterprises. DEG belongs to KfW banking group.

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“A multi-tentacular problem”

Facebook and Google have begun to co-operate with fact-checking agencies to reduce the impact of false information spread on their platforms in Africa. Much more must be done.

By Alphonse Shiundu

In Africa, a wide variety of false information is being disseminated online. Sometimes that is done inadvertently, but far too often deliberately. Perpetrators are pursuing financial, ideological, political and other interests. The harmful impacts are real (see box next page). They include loss of money, destroyed reputations and social upheaval. When misinformation stokes religious or tribal hatred, deadly violence can follow.

The political dimensions of fake news tend to attract a lot of attention. The reason is that, in democratic societies, public discourse should be geared to the common good, so disinformation and propaganda undermine good governance.

South Africa and Nigeria, the largest sub-Saharan economies, held elections this year. Before voters were called to the polling stations, Facebook, the social-media giant that also owns WhatsApp, teamed up with several fact-checking agencies. The idea was to get a grip on falsehoods. Moreover, Facebook promised to promote digital literacy in cooperation with journalists and civil-society organisations. The background was that Facebook was confronted with serious criticism for its failure to control the spread of disinformation ahead of elections in other countries, especially the USA in 2016.

In the meantime, Facebook's joint action with fact checkers has been expanded to three other sub-Saharan countries: Kenya, Senegal and Cameroon. One of Facebook's partners is Africa Check, the continent's first independent fact-checking agency with offices in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal (see Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/05). Other partners include the French news agency AFP (Agence France-Presse), the Nigerian firm Dubawa, as well as the Kenyan outfit PesaCheck.

Facebook managers say they are making progress. “These independent groups help us assess the accuracy of news shared on Facebook, and when they determine content is false, we reduce its distribution in news feeds,” states Akua Gyekye, who handles public policy issues for Facebook. “We also show related articles from fact checkers for more context and notify users if the story they have shared is rated as false.”

In principle, the social-media giant thus accepts its duty to clean up its platforms. Gyekye points out, moreover, that Facebook is doing extensive work to:

- remove fake accounts,
- reduce incentives to the financially-motivated actors who spread misinformation,
- promote news literacy and
- provide more context so users can decide for themselves what to read, trust and share.

The challenges are huge, however. Africa has 55 sovereign nations, and an estimated 400 million African people currently

have access to the internet. Fact-checking of the information that is posted on Facebook and WhatsApp has systematically begun in just about 10% of the countries. Even in those countries, the capacities of fact-checkers are quite limited. They are unlikely to discover every falsehood as soon as it is launched, and before Facebook and WhatsApp can delete false entries, they need to be informed of them. The process takes time. The implication is that fact-checking can only reduce the impact of fake news to some extent, but it cannot prevent falsehoods from being communicated in the first place.

DUBIOUS WEBSITES AND BLOGS

Google, the internet search giant, has also started cooperating with fact-checking agencies. Its Google News Initiative is geared to giving trustworthy information high rankings in news searches. As anyone who is familiar with Google will know, however, dubious websites and blogs still pop up on users' screens, and they are often ranked only slightly below – if not above – news sources with strong international reputation like the BBC or Le Monde.

It would be nice if social-media platforms could use artificial intelligence (AI) to detect lies, frauds and inadvertent mis-



Mobile connectivity has become the norm in sub-Saharan Africa.

takes, but such algorithms have yet to be developed. That is easier said than done. AI algorithms basically mimic human behaviour. Given that human beings are all too easily deceived, the software programmes that reflect their mental attitudes are potentially vulnerable to similar deception.

Full Fact is a British fact-checking charity. It is a leader in applying AI. Google's AI Impact Challenge awarded it \$2 million for the task of building innovative tools to help users to evaluate the quality of information.

Full Fact has declared: "In three years, we hope our project will let individual citizens and internet users place trust with confidence, help internet companies make fair and informed judgments at scale and enable policymakers to better understand how they can respond to misinformation while robustly protecting free speech." The charity is cooperating with international partners, including Africa Check and the Argentinian agency Chequeado, for example.

For the time being, however, AI solutions are not available. Peter Cunliffe-Jones, the founder and director of Africa Check, warns that misinformation is a multidimensional challenge. Several issues matter. For example, people may fall for false information

- because they lack access to correct information,
- because they cannot tell reliable sources from unreliable ones, or
- because they have no faith in public institutions.

The demand for fact-checking is growing in Africa. Ever more organisations are setting up fact-checking units. At the same time, the peddlers of false information are becoming more sophisticated.

According to the Africa Check founder, politicians or business leaders who lie should be told in polite, but not uncertain terms why they are wrong. They should also be asked to correct the public record. Journalists of mainstream media should become more vigilant and produce reliable content that discernibly differs from mere web rumours. News consumers, in turn, must know what makes a source trustworthy and how to crosscheck information with other sources. The fight against online untruth must thus be fought on several fronts. In Cunliffe-Jones' words, "a multi-tentacular problem needs a multi-tentacular solution".

The media scholar Siguru Wahutu disagrees. He has recently argued that the real issue is poor standards of journalism. In his view, blaming social media or poor media literacy only distracts attention from jour-

nalism, turning the audience into a malevolent villain even though, in his view, it really is the victim.

The scholar overlooks three important things, however:

- Everyone can be a publisher online, so journalists are not the only ones who matter.
- Social media is a legitimate source of information, and some end-consumers do not use mainstream media at all.
- Regarding some topics, there is actually no alternative to social media, because mainstream media do not cover everything.

If we only expect journalists' professionalism and citizens' media literacy to stem the tide of fake news, this global problem will not go away. Ultimately, digital platforms must bear responsibility for the information they spread, promoting accuracy and free speech, but being careful not to encourage censorship. In Africa, institutions of government are not strong enough to hold internet giants accountable. Even the advanced nations are struggling to do so.



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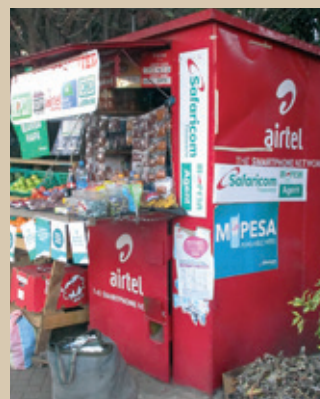
Considerable damage

Misinformation that is spread on the internet is causing serious harm all over Africa. Among other things, people become victims of political manipulation, financial fraud and irresponsible health advice.

During Nigeria's election campaign early this year, a picture triggered broad-based online debate. It showed Abubakar Atiku, the opposition leader, shaking hands with US President Donald Trump. Some read the photo as proof of Atiku's international acceptability, but others argued it proved he

was subservient to foreign interests. Neither position was correct – the picture had been forged, and the two politicians had never met.

In other instances of internet cheating, many Nigerians and South Africans have suffered financial losses. Criminals set up false web accounts claiming to hire new staff for major private-sector corporations or government agencies. They targeted unemployed young people and asked them to transfer money by mobile phone. The promise was that



Informal shop in Nairobi with advertising for phone companies and mobile money.

this "registration fee" would be returned should an applicant not be hired, but that was

as untrue as the web accounts were fake.

Peter Cunliffe-Jones of the fact-checking organisation Africa Check points out that false information can harm people "in different ways in different contexts". An optometrist in Nigeria recently told him that he was treating a patient who had believed in internet hoax. A website had suggested that washing one's eyes with diluted battery acid could heal conjunctivitis. Cunliffe-Jones summarises that "the patient, who was reduced to trying this sort of cure because he could not afford a medical visit, is now partially blind and that is not going to change." (as)



Now imprisoned university lecturer Stella Nyanzi in Uganda's capital Kampala.

Digital surveillance

Uganda's government is uncomfortable with criticism expressed online. By various means, it is trying to limit outreach and impact of internet users.

By Edward Ronald Sekyewa

The “cyber harassment” offence in Uganda – Section 24 of the Computer Misuse Act 2011 – is defined as “the use of a computer in making obscene or indecent requests or threatening to inflict injury to any person or their property”. While intended to safeguard the citizens, many Ugandans actually feel this law puts them at risk because they may be accused of cybercrimes. This is especially true of journalists and other human-rights defenders (HRDs).

The currently most prominent victim is Stella Nyanzi, a university lecturer and feminist activist. On 2 August, she was sentenced to 18 months in prison for publishing messages on her Facebook page. Before, she had already spent nine months behind bars on remand. Her cyber crime was that she likened President Yoweri Museveni and his wife to a pair of buttocks in a post that dealt with gender issues in 2017. The judges now decided that she was guilty.

Eron Kiiza, one of Uganda's leading human-rights lawyers, says that Nyanzi's case shows that the Computer Misuse Act “is part of a policy to curb the freedom of expression”. Joan Nyanyuki of Amnesty International agrees. In her eyes, the verdict is “outrageous”. She maintains that the Ugan-

dan authorities “must scrap the Computer Misuse Act, which has been used systematically to harass, intimidate and stifle government critics.”

Even when repressive state action does not cause lasting harm, its impacts are intimidating.

In 2018, seven journalists working for different media houses exposed a case of corruption in the Bank of Uganda and published pictures of the questionable wealth of some directors in the bank. The journalists were summoned by the police under the Computer Misuse Act to give their statements. Police later lost interest in the case because none of the implicated bank directors came out to accuse the journalists of any wrongdoing, thus the case was dropped.

ONLINE CRIMES, ONLINE CONTROL

The Uganda Police Force has established an Electronic Counter Measure Unit

(ECMU) with the mandate to detect and investigate crimes that are electronically or computer-generated; these are crimes committed using online platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter et cetera. The ECMU is the unit that oversees the implementation of the Computer Misuse Act.

Civil-society organisations see themselves as the major targets of this unit, and they claim that it is working in an extra-judicial manner. Under the Computer Misuse Act, security agencies may only conduct digital surveillance after getting the permission to do so from a judge. In most known cases of digital surveillance, however, such a court order never existed.

The Regulation of Interception of Communications Act (RICA) 2010 is another law that gives state agencies powers to intercept and carry out digital surveillance. Once again, RICA 2010 requires that the security agencies first seek court permission, but this requirement is rarely fulfilled, according to civil-society activists.

At the beginning of 2018, Uganda – with a population of 44 million – had 25 million mobile-phone subscriptions. Although the country has signed several international conventions that ensure freedom of expression like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the new laws are being used against individuals and organisations who are seen to be anti-establishment. Of course, those who investigate corruption are affected too.

Unwanted Witness is a Ugandan civil-society organisation advocating for digital rights. Its report "State of security for HRDs in a digital era" states that 97% of journalists and human-rights defenders claim that they face digital threats and are subjected to online surveillance. Seventy-nine percent of them said they had no technical expertise to deal with the digital challenges and surveillance.

Dorothy Mukasa, the executive director of Unwanted Witness, argues that all threats to the enjoyment of online freedoms and rights in Uganda stem from the "existing cyber laws which are retrogressive"; they contravene the Ugandan constitution and do not meet international standards. "These laws are basically a tool used by government agencies to control and criminalise free speech," Mukasa sums up. Together with

other civil-society organisations, Unwanted Witness turned to Uganda's Supreme Court in 2017. So far, there are no results of such legal action.

Powers to gather intelligence and conduct surveillance are concentrated in three institutions:

- the military,
- the police and
- the two secret services (external and internal) that report to the president.

BLOCKING SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2014, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) established a media-monitoring centre, equipped with digital logger-surveillance equipment which record and analyse public radio, television and print-media messages.



Given the great influence social media has in the younger generation, the government is keen to monitor social media. Wilson Muruuli Mukasa, the former minister for security, has said publicly that the government established the social media monitoring centre "to sort out people who tarnish the government's reputation" – meaning, getting rid of them.

On 18 February 2016, during the presidential election, the UCC ordered telecom companies to block all social media. Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter were thus unavailable when voting results were being transmitted from rural constituencies to the Electoral Commission in Kampala. The opposition claimed that they were kept from transmitting the correct results. The intervention, they say, enabled the government to rig the election.

In June 2018, a social-media tax was introduced (see my contribution in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/10, Focus section). Today, anyone who wants to access social media in Uganda must pay a daily tax of 200 Uganda Shillings (UGX) equivalent to 5 US cents. This tax does not control what is posted on social media, but it reduces their reach.

Journalists, civil-society actors and some politicians strictly opposed this tax. Some of them were arrested and charged for expressing their opposition in public. One of them was Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine. His vocal criticism of the tax gives him a lot of clout amongst his young followers. He is now a member of parliament and is expected to run for president in 2021.

Security agencies are able to conduct surveillance on all mobile phone subscribers since SIM-card registration was made obligatory in 2012. All telecom companies and internet service providers are by law forced to ensure that their services are technologically capable of allowing lawful interception of communication in such a way that the target of the interception remains unaware of it, according to Section 8 of RICA 2010. Citizens cannot tell whether these capacities are misused or not – and many suspect they are.

The government has made a huge investment to procure and install CCTV (closed-circuit TV) cameras to monitor public spaces, especially in Kampala, the capital city. Some criminals have indeed been caught because their deeds were recorded. However, the same cameras are being used to track the movements of opposition politicians. Many people suspect that the Chinese government is helping the Ugandan government in this surveillance. The CCTV systems were supplied by the Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE.

LINK

Unwanted Witness, 2017: State of security for HRDs in a digital era.

<https://www.unwantedwitness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/State-of-Security-for-HRDs-In-a-Digital-Era.pdf>



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Pressure on journalists

Civil-society activists and media workers object to how authorities are handling Indonesia's ITE Law. The letters stand for Electronic Information and Transaction (Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik). Critics say that the law's defamation clause is being used to silence voices who express criticism of the government and vested interests.

By Ika Ningtyas

The ITE Law was passed in 2008 and amended in 2016. In principle, it is meant to regulate the exchange of information and other electronic transactions. It spells out what is prohibited on the internet. However, its defamation article has been misused to criminalise journalists. It thus has a negative impact on the freedom of the press. Online defamation can be punished with up to four years of prison.

The defamation article prohibits the distribution of electronic information containing insults and/or defamation. However, various parties now accuse online journalists of doing so when they simply do not like coverage, for example, when it deals with corruption and other criminal action. Offended parties argue that the content of the articles is defaming.

Abdul Manan of the Alliance of Independent Journalists, a major journalists' organisation, sees a trend of journalistic work being criminalised with help of the ITE Law. He is personally affected. As the co-founder of the whistle-blower platform Indonesialeaks, he is facing a defamation trial. The International Federation of Journalists has demanded that the case must be dropped. Manan says that he is confident that his incriminated journalistic work is faultless.

He points out that the situation was always difficult in Indonesia. Physical violence against journalists occurs sometimes, and intimidation is common. In the Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders for 2019, Indonesia ranks 124th among 180 nations.

The defamation clause has an intimidating impact even if no judgement is passed. Last summer, a criminal charge

was filed against Zakki Amali, the former editor-in-chief of Serat.id, an independent website in Central Java. The background was that he had published articles about alleged research plagiarism and stated that one of the chancellors of a state university was involved. Civil-society organisations and journalists have protested, but the legal process is still going on and distracting him from journalistic work. "My time is spent defending myself," Amali says.

Some of the accused are found guilty however. According to the Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet), a civil-society organisation, two journalists were sentenced in the past ten years, and 12 cases are pending. The highest number of cases was filed ahead of the general elections last year, when eight journalists were charged. "The ITE Law has been misused to silence the media," says Damar Juniarto of SAFEnet.

Indonesia only gained press freedom in 1998 after the downfall of the Suharto dictatorship. The new government passed a liberal press law in 1999. Individual journalists and the media thus enjoy some legal protection. Moreover, the national Press Council was made independent. Its members are journalists, media managers and public leaders. Their job is to settle press-related



disputes. Only if they prove unable to do so, can legal action be taken. The ITE Law, however, bypasses the Press Council, so its defamation clause can be misused easily.

Digital media are growing fast. According to the Press Council, there were 43,400 online media outlets in Indonesia in 2016.

LINKS

Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network:

<https://safenet.or.id/>

International Federation of Journalists:

<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/seaju-calls-for-criminal-case-against-journalists-to-be-dropped.html>



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The Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet) tracks cases against journalists.



Cameras monitor what goes on in public places. Here in Shanghai.

No one can opt out

The Chinese leadership is serious about its plan to launch a nationwide social credit system that assesses people's behaviour in all areas of life and rewards or penalises them accordingly. In Beijing, the system will go into operation next year.

By Felix Lee

Haifeng casts a vexed glance at her smartphone. She is sitting in a café sipping a latte, her phone lying at her elbow on the table. Reluctantly, she picks up the device and taps on a bright red icon. The app gives her access to video messages and reams of texts. Haifeng has no interest in reading the texts. But she has to open the app several times a day, she says, because she is a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Like most Chinese of her generation, 25-year-old Haifeng actually likes using her smartphone. She watches Korean operas on it and has downloaded e-books as well as a lot of games. Mostly, she uses her phone to chat with friends and exchange images and videos.

Now, however, her phone has become a source of annoyance. The leadership of the CCP has instructed all members to download a specific app. It is called “Xue Xi Qiang Guo”, which roughly translates as “Study to make China strong”, and is officially said to be an educational tool. But there is a pun in the Chinese name. The first two syllables can also mean “Learn from Xi”, a reference to Xi Jinping, China’s president and top leader of the CCP. The app contains Xi quotes as well as references to the national constitution, the party charter, new party directives

and even old black-and-white propaganda movies such as “The long march”.

For CCP members like Haifeng, it is not enough to install the app. They also have to use it. The time they spend engaged with the app earns them “learning points”. A bonus point is awarded, for example, for a four-minute read of an article. Points are also awarded for sharing an article or a video with friends or family. At certain times of the day, points accumulate faster. They count double when the app is used before 8.30 in the morning, during a lunch-break or after eight in the evening. After all, it is not supposed to interfere with people’s work.

Users who acquire enough points can redeem them for gifts or discounts. Those with low scores face censure in the CCP cell. “If your number of points is small, that shows that you are not an enthusiastic member,” Haifeng says. For a while, Xue Xi Qiang Guo was the most downloaded app in China, outstripping even Tictoc, the latest trending social media app among young people. Haifeng is not surprised. The CCP has more

than 90 million members and they have all been told to install the app on their phones.

SOCIAL SCORING

The app is piloting a kind of comprehensive social scoring that will one day cover the behaviour of every member of Chinese society. Debt defaulters will lose points. Those who dodge public-transport fares will be marked down. Anyone found dumping garbage, parking illegally or letting a child urinate in the street will face similar penalties.

The world was stunned by the Chinese leadership's proposal to launch the social credit system. So far, it has not yet been rolled out nationwide, but only tested in some regions. Now, Beijing's municipal government has announced the intention to implement the personal rating system by the end of 2020. It has published the respective assessment catalogue at the beginning of this year. Beijing's entire population of 22 million people will be registered for the system.

The catalogue lists traffic violations, tax offences, loutish behaviour and even smoking in public places among the actions that will lead to penalties. The internet plays a big role in Chinese life, so people's social-media behaviour, online-shopping history and even messaging-service use will be monitored. Information sources may include reviews on shopping portals, comments on social-networking sites as well as health and court records. If critical comments about the government are shared in a chat group, that could leave a trace in the social credit system and earn the author a black mark. Denunciation is explicitly encouraged.

The aim is to create model citizens – or what qualifies as such in the Communist leadership's eyes. Everyone starts with 1,000 points. Anyone who boosts the figure to 1,300 points through good behaviour gets an AAA rating. An AAA rating means free vouchers for rail or air travel, access to cheaper loans and preferential treatment when applying for places in nursery schools or universities. Anyone whose points total falls below 600, however, lands in the worst category, with a D rating, and will find life harder.

Everyone will be able to check their own rating. But government agencies, banks, shopping platforms, tour operators



and even airlines will also have access to the information. No one can opt out of the system. Everyone will get an account and will be required to register themselves using their social-insurance number.

The Chinese have already had a foretaste of what impacts massive data collection can have on their lives. China's Ministry of Tourism recently revealed that more than 20 million people were denied air and rail tickets last year because their social record was not considered good enough. So far, however, the relevant data was only collected and compiled by private businesses. Now the government is taking over.

China's big internet companies – like Alibaba and Tencent – have diligently prepared the ground. Internet giant Alibaba, which sells more than Amazon through its online retail platforms Taobao and Tmall, has amassed data of nearly 800 million users. Some time ago, it launched its Sesame Credit service, offering a comprehensive credit scoring system that users can opt into. Alibaba does not disclose precisely how Sesame Credit scores individual customers. However, observers have found out that certain product purchases count for more than others. Moreover, it helps to have friends with high credit scores. The management admits that data is made available on request to public authorities and banks. Obviously, the government is planning to make use of this wealth of data for its own social credit system.

The authorities want to get the fullest possible picture of every citizen's behaviour and do not want to rely on random sampling. Accordingly, they are currently flooding the country with surveillance cameras. There are already around 170 million cameras trained on China's streets and roads, and 350 million more are to be deployed in the next few years. That will add up to one

surveillance camera for every three Chinese. Many installations will be equipped with facial recognition software.

A visit to Megvii in the northwest of Beijing shows what the future holds in store for citizens of the People's Republic. Megvii is a company specialising in camera software. A camera registers visitors at the entrance. The software recognises a man but is not yet sure of his age. The indicator on the screen oscillates between 35 and 42. Then it settles on 38, which is absolutely accurate. The software scans the face, creates a movement profile and notes special features such as moles, ear shape and eye colour. If the same person appears before the camera again, all the recorded data is immediately retrieved and presented by the software. "If you stand in front of one of our cameras, we know in an instant who you are," says Megvii worker Ai Jiandan. "Every face has its own unique set of features."

On social-media sites, images are starting to emerge from pilot cities showing what future surveillance operations might look like. In a local police-control room, hundreds of images captured by surveillance cameras on a Beijing intersection appear on a digital wall. Conspicuous behaviour automatically triggers a zoom. The facial recognition software checks the persons' features against the database and identifies them within seconds.

There is little resistance to this kind of social surveillance. It is difficult to start protests in China. And most Chinese have only a limited awareness of data privacy anyway – many mistrust fellow Chinese more than they mistrust the state. The programme for "civilising" the Chinese populace by heavy-handed government action is roundly applauded.

But Haifeng is critical of the way things are going: "They have set up too many cameras in recent years," she says, looking around the café. Only at the end of the interview does she tell us that Haifeng is not her real name. She declines to reveal her identity. What she has told us may cost her points.



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Useful for surveillance purposes

The Indian government has issued biometric ID numbers for more than 1.2 billion people. The system is commonly used, but it causes considerable worries.

By Nirmal Dutta

Aadhaar is a powerful digital tool. It is an ID number with 12 digits, issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). This agency of India's central government was set up in 2009. Anyone who enrolls in Aadhaar must submit personal data (name, address, date of birth for example) and biometric data (photo, iris scan, fingerprints).

To date, UIDAI has issued more than 1.2 billion Aadhaar numbers. The vast majority of people residing in India have registered. This tech application has thus become common. Since it is also convenient, it is being used ever more frequently.

The Supreme Court has ruled that enrolment in – and use of – Aadhaar must be voluntary. It also decided that the government must not share information with private-sector corporations. Nonetheless, it is becoming ever harder to avoid Aadhaar. Government agencies and even private sector companies often tie their services to Aadhaar identification. Typically, the biometric ID is requested when people want to buy a SIM card, for example, or open a bank account.

Glitches occur, however, and they tend to lock out customers. It has also become evident that biometric IDs are not foolproof. For example, an accident may easily change a person's fingerprint. That matters very much in a country where the vast majority of people do manual labour. Misspelling of names regularly causes hardship – and it happens frequently because there are no binding rules on how to transcribe syllables from Indian languages using the English alphabet.

Aadhaar was initially introduced as an empowering tool that would allow poor people to claim the government support they are entitled to, for instance in the context of rural employment guarantees. Today, by contrast, it has become an impediment

for some of the most marginalised people. Those who are severely disabled, too old or too sick to enrol in Aadhaar, for example, find it ever harder to claim public support. People who live in remote areas and cannot easily travel to Aadhaar registration centres face problems as well – and so do people who have lost their ID number.

The government has a point when it maintains that Aadhaar has improved bureaucratic efficiency. However, the system is still not perfect, and its shortcomings must be dealt with. It is unacceptable to further marginalise disadvantaged people because of Aadhaar flaws.

many citizens are not reassured. The problem is that India does not have stringent legislation on data protection yet, so “privacy” has not been defined in a legally binding way. Digital transactions are easily tracked, however, and people wonder what happens with data that was shared in the past.

Another big question is whether Aadhaar is really safe. Like all digital systems, it might be hacked. Tech experts warn that data theft is rather likely.

It is perhaps even more worrisome that the government can use Aadhaar for surveillance purposes. According to the Supreme Court, the authorities are allowed to apply Aadhaar data in all cases involving “national security”. As members of India's many minority groups and opposition groups know only too well, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu-chauvinistic party BJP like to declare anyone who



The vast majority of Indians have had their fingerprints scanned.

Aadhaar was supposed to help minimise corruption, moreover, but new forms of corruption have become evident. For example, middlemen take bribes for helping people to link their Aadhaar IDs with banks. In India, masses of people are unable to handle technological interfaces or uncomfortable negotiating with the officers of public or private institutions. All too often, they give in to the pressures of dubious “agents” and are fleeced.

The Supreme Court also ruled that the privacy of Aadhaar data must not be breached. This may sound promising, but

criticises them to be “anti-national”. Accusations of supporting “terrorists” are expressed fast. Many political activists and human-rights defenders are in jail. In this context, it is deeply disturbing that the Modi government plans to link social media use to Aadhaar registration.

NIRMAL DUTTA

is the pseudonym of a social scientist who is in touch with D+C/E+Z. In the current political climate, he cannot afford to reveal his identity when criticising the national government. euz.editor@dandc.eu

Blockchain technology for partnerships at eye-level

The management and distribution of donor funds is a tricky business. While donor institutions worry about misappropriation, recipients are sensitive about being monitored and restricted. KfW, the German development bank, has developed a completely new, innovative approach that facilitates trust in cooperation. TruBudget is a platform based on blockchain technology, allowing public investments to be carried out transparently and securely in developing countries. KfW is currently testing TruBudget in cooperation with Burkina Faso's Ministry of Finance and other partners.

By Piet Kleffmann

TruBudget (Trusted Budget Expenditure) is a KfW-created digital work platform for partner countries. On that platform, all of the government agencies and donor organisations that are involved in a development project can document and track every action and disbursement. TruBudget is a trust-enhancing workflow tool for business partners who do not have access to a shared IT system.

Every user action is stored in a so-called blockchain, a continuously expandable list of data sets. Once data has been saved in a blockchain, it cannot be changed. Counterfeit and revisions are impossible. Moreover, the data is not stored centrally on a server or on the computers of a single company. Instead, the documentation is decentralised on the computers of all users. That is what makes the system so secure. Information cannot be lost and is protected from retroactive forgery.

These features of TruBudget create enormous advantages. For example, every partner can access up-to-date information about the status of every project in real time. There is no need for cumbersome communication. The new system stops endless e-mail correspondence for requesting updates, sending reminders or exchanging various versions of reports. The agreement process

is vastly simplified by the fact that all partners can base decisions on identical, up-to-date information.

Furthermore all information entered on the platform is reliable. Everyone can immediately see who decided and initiated what and when. Even in cases of fraud (which are still possible), the responsible party can be clearly identified thanks to the fraud-proof protocol. This kind of transparency not only facilitates permanent peer control, it also increases the pressure on whoever is responsible for taking the next step.

TruBudget can significantly lower high transaction costs that arise from cumbersome coordination and control efforts.



As a result, official development assistance (ODA) becomes more targeted and measures are taken more effectively. That is exactly in line with the goals of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (see box, page 31).

With support from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Ministry of Finance of Burkina Faso has developed its own version of TruBudget. Going forward, it may yet be used for implementing all donor projects. Séglaro Abel Somé, Burkina's deputy minister of finance, says he expects the new application to improve information concerning donor funding, leading to more effective budgeting.

TruBudget has been designed to be easy to use. All that partners need is an internet connection, though it neither has to be permanent nor particularly fast. Work steps are processed either on TruBudget's user interface or via partners' own workflow programmes, which are linked to TruBudget through a digital interface (API). The platform therefore makes partners' cooperation not depending on the respective IT systems they use. Moreover, the digital interface eliminates the need for manual and error-prone entries into other databases. Burkina Faso's Ministry of Finance and Planning particularly appreciates this aspect as today's data compilation can be very cumbersome.

Brigitte Compaoré Yoni of Burkina Faso's Ministry of Finance says: „Thanks to TruBudget, we are finally able to compile reliable and comprehensive data on individual donor disbursements.“

TruBudget was designed to serve as an instrument for partner countries. Decisions about governance and access rights are left up to any government that wants to use such a platform to implement donor-financed projects or programmes. Accordingly, KfW designed the application with open source software. The source code of open-source software is publicly visible and usable. TruBudget is available to anyone free of charge (<https://github.com/openkfw/TruBudget>).

TruBudget has been designed to be so flexible that it can serve other purposes. One example is the management of vaccination supply chains. In this case, the software will record stages of delivery, from ordering to transport to arrival in a village. GAVI, the international vaccine alliance, is currently exploring the use of TruBudget in financial management as well as in vaccine supply chains. Other applications, are conceivable as well, for instance the monitoring of contract conditions. The software could also be coupled with other innovative approaches like open data or artificial intelligence (AI).

Alongside Burkina Faso's Ministry of Finance, the Brazilian Development Bank BNDES has become the first institution to use TruBudget in its procedures and IT-systems. The application is being used to manage the Amazon Fund, though only for individual processes for the time being. Ethiopia and Georgia are also planning pilot

applications for KfW-financed programmes. The BMZ is supporting these initiatives. The goal is to ensure access to digital technologies to all countries.

In TruBudget, we finally have a tool that allows donors to use partner systems with an acceptable level of risk. Donor money can thus be included directly and in a safe way in a partner country's budget process.

This approach serves effectiveness and sustainability. The big question now is whether the governments concerned and the donor organisations they cooperate with will consider this technology to serve their interests. More than ever, donors will be assessed according to how much they want their support to actually promote the structural independence of developing countries. This

is a paradigm shift, made possible by new technologies. Unfortunately not everyone has accepted it yet.



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The Brazilian Development Bank BNDES has become the first institution to use TruBudget in its procedures and IT-systems.

TruBudget and the Paris Declaration

In 2005, the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) endorsed the Paris Declaration in order to improve the efficacy and sustainability of development assistance (see Peter Lanzet in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/02, Tribune). All countries agreed that in future, the administration of official development assistance (ODA) should be aligned to the systems of partner countries. The funding would preferably be delivered through partners' national budgets. Budget support became the method of choice for cooperation, including in German development policy.

The Paris Declaration was revisited in 2009 in Accra and in 2011 in Busan. The results were sobering: only one of its 13 goals were reached. Slight improvements could only be detected, if anywhere, on the side of developing countries. The failure of the Paris Declaration was so obvious that most donor governments abandoned the idea of budget support and returned to good old project financing.

The Paris Declaration died a slow death, so to speak, and a resurrection is nowhere in sight. Nowadays, the donor community is in the same position as it was 15 years ago: funding continues to be extremely inefficient. It is hardly aligned to developing countries' systems and typically bypasses their national budgets. For recipients, the world of financing has become even more complex and confusing.

According to the OECD, more than 500 different donor organisations currently offer assistance worldwide. In Burkina Faso, 81 bi- and multilateral agencies are active. Each one has its own requirements, defines its own conditions and pursues its own goals. Burkina Faso must cope with all of the related demands. As a result, its ministries host over 300 different project teams. Acting on the initiative of the donors, these teams sometimes work at cross purposes in the same regions and sectors.

Therefore it is unsurprising that a 2017 report by the Burkinabe government found that, at 63%, the financial absorption of externally financed projects was significantly lower than that of nationally financed projects (96%). The cause was generally understood to be the difficulty of planning and managing the diverse contracts and allocation processes of the donors.

Most donors do not deliver aid through national budgets because they fear losing control and misappropriations. Therefore, governments of developing countries often do not know how much money has actually been spent on public investments. Typically, service providers who work on behalf of developing countries are paid directly by donors. In countries with a significant portion of externally-financed investments, this model has a negative impact on sustainability. All too often, important project do not figure in the national budget at all due to the parallel streams of



KfW's new digital platform guarantees a more effective use of funds.

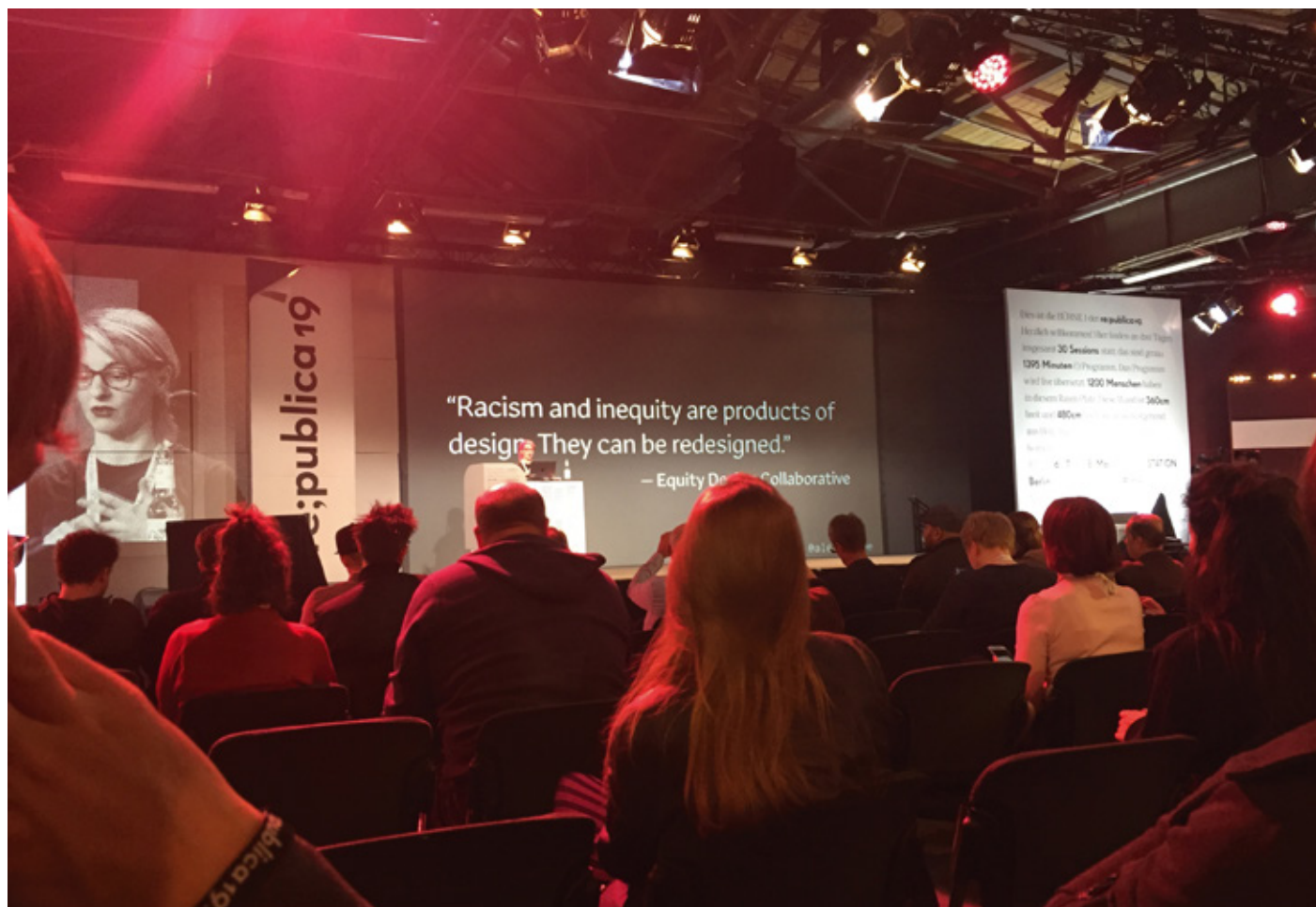
donor funding. Without precise information on revenues and expenditures, however, every attempt at budgetary planning will just be a waste of paper.

But why was not more progress made after the Paris Declaration? The answer is that budget support did not meet high expectations. Alongside political overload, a lack of governance on the part of many developing countries mattered. Scandals like Malawi's so-called "cashgate" had a long-term impact on the this aid modality's credibility. After all, some \$32 million were misappropriated. That was possible thanks to an abuse of this very electronic system that had been installed to improve public financial management.

Up until now, there was no way to curb the risk of financial mismanagement. New technologies like blockchain or artificial intelligence make a difference however. They can make long-standing problems suddenly look surmountable. However, they have not been used much in development cooperation so far.

Blockchain is a perfect way to make processes transparent, traceable and secure. That is why KfW came up with the idea to tap its potential and develop the TruBudget application (see main essay). TruBudget makes it possible to manage the use of donor funds in a transparent, secure and traceable way.

(pk)



Alexis Hope presenting her project “Make the breast pump not suck” at Republica 2019.

Technology is no panacea

Techno-optimism has generally subsided in recent years. Big Data, surveillance and election manipulation are only some of the catchwords that stand for downsides of digitalisation, including on the internet. Policymakers and civil society must rise to the challenges.

By Monika Hellstern

Currently, only about half of the world population have access to the internet. Experts doubt that the international community will reach the goal of connecting everyone to the web by 2030. In the face of numerous problems, many of those who were technology enthusiasts in the early 2000s have sobered up.

The internet has connected people all over the world. At the same time, it has created a new arena for persisting offline problems. The internet is increasingly being used to spread disinformation, collect masses of personal data and monitor people. It even serves to manipulate elections, organise violence, wage cyberwar and stimulate mass consumption with little regard for the social and ecological consequences.

“Is this the same space we want to connect the other half of the world population to?” asked Nanjira Sambuli, a Kenyan researcher and activist, in May at this year’s Republica, an annual conference tackling digitalisation issues. She focused on the

conference motto “tl;dr – too long, didn’t read”, which is internet slang to express that someone found an article excessively long and is replying without having read it.

According to Sambuli, the acronym is indicative of a far-reaching cultural phenomenon. In a time of information overload, attention has become a scarce resource. tl;dr is not a personal attitude, it is a common coping mechanism. “It would take 70 hours to read through the terms and conditions of the most popular internet services,” says Sambuli. “Who has that much time? On the other side, fun and our friends are waiting for us, so we agree.”

The consequences of our actions are coming back to haunt us. According to Sambuli, new forms of exercising power are emerging. Big Data and algorithms serve corporations, governments and non-state actors as innovative means of surveillance, manipulation and control. These technologies are human-made, and therefore they

are susceptible to human errors. Nonetheless, their proponents declare them to be fair and objective.

ALGORITHMS ARE NOT NEUTRAL

Algorithms have become part of our daily lives, offering step-by-step instructions to solving problems and tasks. They are used in the development of artificial intelligence and machine learning (see Benjamin Kumpf in the Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/10). Artificial intelligence means that computers take decisions that people took in the past. Such abilities can also be used to generate insights from extensive data sets.

Algorithms are changing the world of work. Alex Rosenblat, a Canadian ethnographer, has studied the US-based company Uber, a digital platform for the provision of driving services. Drivers work as independent contractors and use the app to find customers.

According to Rosenblat, they are controlled by an "algorithmic boss". The app records detailed information concerning their driving behaviour and how many trips they take. Drivers then get suggestions on how to improve their behaviour and make more money. The algorithm is actually a management tool.

Uber unilaterally decides on the prices for rides. Anyone who has poor ratings or refuses too many rides will eventually not get any assignments anymore and lose their job. If, on the other hand, a driver disagrees with a bad rating, it is quite cumbersome to communicate by email with far away Uber customer service agents, not least because they respond with a set of standardised, pre-written answers.

Contrary to much Silicon Valley rhetoric, algorithms, data and digital platforms are not neutral, Rosenblat insists. Uber presents itself as a technology company rather than a transport company. That way it is not bound by labour laws and can avoid payroll taxes. Nonetheless, the corporation micro-manages the performance of its supposedly independent service providers. It is in control of the smallest detail. It even experiments with changes in its pricing system without informing the drivers.

Algorithms, moreover, can compound discrimination. Face recognition software is an example. Caroline Sinderson, a researcher

and artist from the USA, says that such programmes typically do not recognise darker skin tones well. The reason is that the data sets that programmers use to train algorithms are insufficiently diverse. Should such software be used at a national border to decide who is allowed to enter, non-recognition can become a problem.

Sinderson adds that some companies have questionable intentions. The Israeli company Faception assigns character traits to facial features with the aim to identify potential terrorists. Here, racism seems to be embedded in the design.

According to Sinderson, another problem is that users have no influence on whether and how algorithms affect them. They are exposed, but cannot agree, decline or make changes. They also lack sufficient rights to have their data deleted.

Sinderson insists that human rights should always be carefully considered when products are designed. Transparency is the most important requirement. Products should be designed in ways that allow users to understand them, modify them and give feedback.

Enhancing the diversity of development teams leads to better results. Innovation must be geared to serve the most marginalised groups, says Alexis Hope, a designer from the USA. It makes sense to involve everyone affected in the process, she adds. She presented her project to improve breast pumps for mothers of babies. The ideas were developed in a collaborative and inclusive process.

CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY

What information users get from search engines and social media is also decided by algorithms. Large data sets about users make it possible to manipulate elections. A case in point was the data analysis company Cambridge Analytica, which became known worldwide for its role in the US election campaign of 2016.

Cambridge Analytica and its partner companies have also been active in many developing countries. Solana Larsen, a Danish-Puerto Rican researcher, and Renata Avila, a Guatemalan human-rights lawyer, have studied such cases in Latin America. One company surveyed members of the poorest communities around Mexico City. Those who answered all questions were giv-

en free internet access. They did not know that their data could be abused. Even data of people who are not online can be used for election manipulation.

Cambridge Analytica started operating in Kenya in 2011, influencing the parliamentary elections in 2013 and 2017. According to Nanjala Nyabola, a Kenyan political scientist, many voters were affected by the deliberate dissemination of fake news on social media.

Because of the use of voting computers, the Kenyan election in 2017 became the most expensive in the world, with the equivalent of \$28 per capita, says Nyabola. Yet, the attempt to foster transparency and credibility through technology failed. For Nyabola, this experience shows that technological solutions are no panacea for political and social problems. What is needed, is an active citizenry and independent media. Otherwise, governments cannot be held accountable.

According to Cory Doctorow, a Canadian author, the underlying reason of many problems is the monopoly position big technology companies have acquired. In some countries, people hardly use any other internet platform than Facebook. That setting increases the opportunities for manipulation. Not only by Facebook itself, but anyone who uses its platform skilfully can take advantage. Around the world, 2.3 billion people access Facebook every month.

According to Doctorow, the major internet platforms have established monopolies. They are increasingly doing things one would normally expect governments to do. For example, they are expected to prevent hate speech or enforce copyright laws. In Doctorow's eyes, the concentration of power represents a danger to democracy, and the solution would be to break up the monopolies. For example, it should be harder for leading companies to buy up competitors as soon as they emerge.

LINK

Republica 2019:

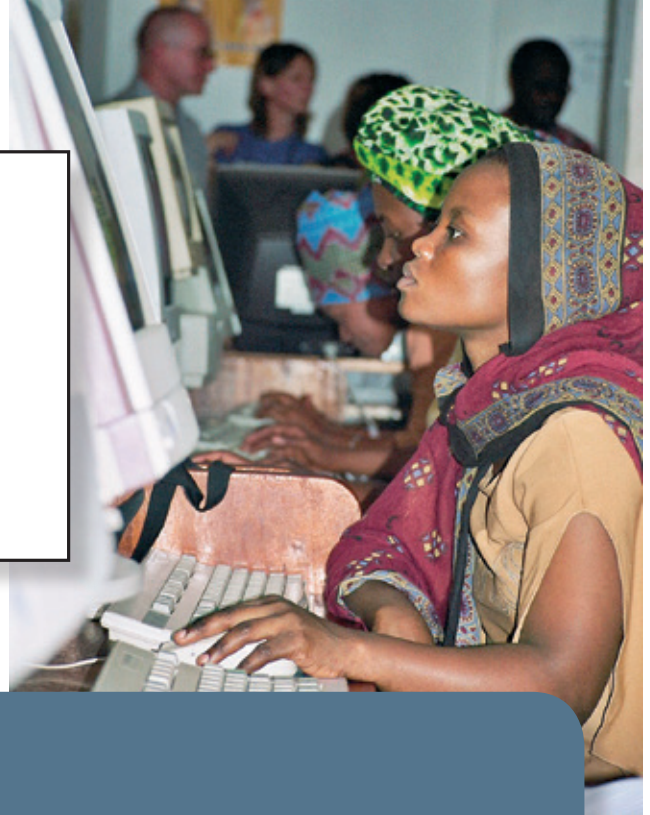
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