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explosion, fundamental
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FOCUS

Meanings of development

From "underdevelopment" to the SDGs

Mahwish Gul, a Pakistani development consultant, tracks the history of international development debate. She also assess what the SDGs mean for women in Pakistan.

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Coherent agenda

The UN has provided leadership on guidelines for international policymaking. In an interview, Achim Steiner, the head of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) discusses the complementary concepts of "human" and "sustainable" development. He spells out why global governance is necessary, but does not undermine national sovereignty. Belay Begashaw of the SDG Centre for Africa insists that Africa urgently needs more development. Otherwise, the continent will fall even further behind.

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Eco-damage and colonial legacies

Ndongo Samba Sylla of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation insists that western countries cannot serve as development models because their lifestyles are environmentally unsustainable. Julia Schöneberg and Aram Ziai of Kassel University refute the very idea of development, arguing that related notions are rooted in the supremacist thinking of the colonial era. Accordingly, strategies for development devised by technocrats often do not match the everyday reality of the supposed beneficiaries. Korinna Horta of Lisbon University accuses the World Bank of not living up to its standards.

PAGES 21, 22, 24

Indigenous vision

Buen Vivir ("living well") is a school of thought based on indigenous world views in the Andes. Philipp Altmann of the Central University of Ecuador assesses how it has evolved and what impacts it has had not only on policymaking in Ecuador, but on international debate.

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Why taxation matters

ODA programmes are supposed to facilitate sustainable development. Given that they sometimes prove dysfunctional, however, new approaches are being tested. Official development assistance must not undermine the quality of governance, demand Hildegard Lingnau, a German government officer who used to be in charge of ODA affairs at the embassy in Nairobi, and Julia Schnatz, who is affiliated to the non-governmental Centre for Public Impact.

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The crucial development challenge

After the devastation of World War II, the reconstruction of western European countries succeeded surprisingly fast. It is only a mild exaggeration to state that they merely required some generous infrastructure lending. West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands – they all experienced three decades of economic miracles.

Back then, western leaders hoped that infrastructure lending could trigger similarly spectacular trajectories in countries they considered underdeveloped. The idea was that this kind of development would inoculate former colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America against communist temptations. Things did not work out that way. Many countries concerned required ever more loans, but did not deliver results in terms of higher living standards. By the late 1970s, many were sliding into debt crises.

Human beings are genetically equal all over the world. There is no natural difference between Africans and Europeans that might explain why development in Africa was so much less effective than reconstruction in Europe.

What was different, however, was how societies were organised. Many of those differences persist. European countries, whether they had fought on the side of Nazis or the victors, were functionally differentiated. This sociological term means that different social systems operate according to their own logic. European nations had formally organised private sectors, professional legal systems, competent civil services, schools for all children, smoothly operating financial markets, research-based universities, reasonable health care et cetera. Feudal lords and colonial regimes do not adequately build modern institutions of this kind.

A handful of developing countries used aid successfully to establish functional differentiation. South Korea is an example, and it is now a democratic member of the OECD, the club of rich nations. The more typical trajectory, however, was that a small elite took control of an unreformed post-colonial state apparatus and exploited the country it now considered its own. Economic life still revolved around commodity production. Corruption stayed widespread. In spite of grand government promises, the health and education sectors were largely neglected.

The plain truth, which some orthodox economists still refuse to accept, is that market dynamics depend not only on market forces. To thrive, markets need to be embedded in a social order which ensures at least minimum levels of the rule of law, good education and social protection, for example. In the meantime, economic growth in the prosperous nations generated new problems. The most prominent one is environmental destruction. Not least due to their excessive carbon emissions, it makes sense to say that supposedly advanced nations are actually “over”-developed. Our species’ survival depends on destructive trends being stopped.

A big step in the right direction was the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN in 2015. Achieving the SDGs is a huge challenge, but feasible in principle. We need strong and competent institutions at national as well as supranational levels. The crucial development challenge we face is to build and empower them. To eradicate poverty, we need dynamic economic activity – and it will not happen unless market forces are embedded in an adequate institutional order.

► 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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Debate



Fundamental change is indispensable

So far, Lebanon was not considered a rogue state, but it is now one of the Arab countries under emergency rule. This measure is supposed to be temporary, but there is a risk of it becoming permanent and leading to totalitarian structures. The country needs a new start, Mona Naggar, a Beirut-based journalist, points out.

PAGE 9

No time to relax

According to an international report, Pakistan is on track in regard to climate action as required by SDG 13. This is an impressive achievement. Nonetheless, the government must not slow down its efforts to reduce carbon emissions, warns Syed Muhammad Abubakar, a Pakistani journalist who specialises in environmental reporting.

PAGE 10

Tribune



Gloomy outlook

The Soviet Union's 1979 invasion and 10-year domination of Afghanistan started the country's descent into poverty and lawlessness. The country still has not found peace. People have lost faith in institutions, tend to only trust persons from their own tribe, and the nation's attitude is now more xenophobic than in the past, writes policy analyst Nawid Paigham.

PAGE 12

SDGS

Indispensable private sector

DEG is the German development finance institution that lends and gives advice to private-sector companies engaged in developing countries and emerging markets. To prove its development impact, the subsidiary of KfW Banking Group publishes an annual report about the development effects. Christiane Rudolph heads DEG's Corporate Strategy and Development Policy department. In a D+C/E+Z interview, she elaborated recent results and discussed the impacts of Covid-19 on DEG clients.

Christiane Rudolph interviewed by Sabine Balk

What is the report's most important message?

In my eyes, it is that the SDGs, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, cannot be achieved without strong engagement of the private sector. Its impact is essential. The DEG portfolio currently amounts to €9 billion. Last year, the companies we supported employed 2.1 million people. Combined, they generated local income of €92 billion.

How are your clients developing?

There are huge differences, but the data we collect allows us to show the dynamism and the progress made in every single case. We are proud of the data. Only few international institutions are able to provide information like this. Moreover we dare to admit that 40 % of the companies we are financing did not manage to improve their development impact. On the upside, 60 % did so. Many different reasons explain both failure and success. We can give every client precise feedback regarding their performance in various dimensions, and we can discuss options for DEG supporting promising new approaches. Consider a pharmaceutical manufacturer in India. This company is now meeting international labour standards, so its rating has improved considerably. By contrast, poor harvests caused by climate change have worsened the situation of a Costa Rican agricultural company. As a consequence, local income has deteriorat-

ed, so the company's developmental impact has been reduced.

How do you measure impacts?

We use a methodology that we call Development Effectiveness Rating (DERa). We have developed it ourselves (see my essay in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/10). We collect quantitative and qualitative data for every client in order to be able to report in five categories:

- decent jobs,
- local income,
- market and sector development,
- environmental stewardship and
- community benefits.

The data serves to make development visible over the years. It also helps to determine what sectors are promising and where action is needed. Resilience to shocks like harvest failures is becoming ever more im-

portant, for example. DERa data also shows us how the novel coronavirus is affecting companies. It will be interesting to analyse the potential private sector companies have for pulling national economies out of the slump.

What do you know about Covid-19 impacts so far?

One thing is certain: the pandemic is hitting developing countries and emerging markets harder than prosperous nations. Many of our clients expect serious shortfalls. The International Labour Organization reckons that 2.7 billion jobs will disappear around the world. Our data tell us that about 35 % of our clients' employment is at risk, and that would affect 830,000 persons. At this point, we can only make rough estimates concerning how serious the impacts will be. In a year or two, our assessment will be more robust. Nonetheless, we have already taken measures in response to Covid-19, and our efforts are supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

What are you doing?



Women working for a Vietnamese car-component producer that has been co-financed by DEG.

We have launched additional support programmes regarding health and paid sick leave. Partners include garment manufacturers in Bangladesh and clients in Tunisia. We are also supporting a newly established health centre in Peru. It has been enabled to respond to the novel coronavirus. Moreover, we offer liquidity support, with companies taking additional loans to pay sick leave or act in a similar manner. Our strong point is that we are in permanent touch with client companies and can ask them what kind of help they need precisely. Even when job cuts become inevitable, we can still offer support, so redundancies are handled according to international standards, for example. Our Covid-19 response is ongoing and will continue.

One of your priorities is to promote women's employment. Why does it matter?

The promotion of women has considerable positive impacts on social development, as researchers have shown again and again. DEG supports an international initiative

of the development finance institutions based in the G7 nations. It is called 2XChallenge and was launched in 2018. We did a lot of work in recent months. The goal was to jointly raise, by the end of this year, \$3 billion for companies that are owned by women, managed by women or specifically promote female staff. The initiative has exceeded the expectations, having mobilised \$4.5 billion so far. An exciting aspect is focusing on female customers. Many companies do not pay enough attention to this target group and don't offer specific products or services for women. When we assess investment proposals, we always consider the gender potential. Last year, for example, we subscribed to a gender bond that a bank issued in Thailand. Moreover we have started a successful advisory programme called Gender Smart Opportunity Assessment. The programme's target group is financial institutions with an interest in improving their outreach to women. We see encouraging results. A Mexican partner has become so enthusiastic that they

want to redesign their business model with a stronger focus on promoting women. We are now discussing options for doing that with them.

What is the gender bond?

A Thai bank issued it in October 2019. The idea was to give women-led small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) better access to finance. Investors can support that bank's outreach to women by investing in the bond.

LINK

DEG, 2020: Responsible business – adding value.

https://www.deginvest.de/DEG-Documents-in-English/About-us/What-is-our-impact/Development_Report_2019_web.pdf



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The print issues do not include everything we post on our website (www.dandc.eu), but they are useful in terms of documenting important aspects of global debate long term.



SYRIA

Difficult reconstruction

Syria is facing enormous challenges. A recently published study analyses what these are and how the European Union and its member states can contribute to stabilising the country.

By Dagmar Wolf

Although the fighting is still going on, the war in Syria has long since been won by the regime, writes Muriel Asseburg of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP). In the spring of 2020, Bashar al-Assad's regime and his allies already controlled two-thirds of the country, and it is likely that they will also recapture the rest of the territory.

A stabilisation of the war-torn country is not in the offing, however. There is no negotiated settlement of the conflict, nor is there peace and reconciliation. The war, which began in January 2011 with the violent suppression of a democracy movement,

has had disastrous consequences. In addition to the destruction of houses and infrastructure, the losses include a considerable reduction in jobs and skilled workers, the disintegration of the economy and the collapse of state services.

Moreover, it is unlikely that sufficient funds will be available for the reconstruction of the country, due to a combination of Syrian government policies, geopolitical interests of regional and world powers and economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even funds that are available are unlikely to be used to meet the needs of the population.

Some reconstruction is underway, the author writes – but not in the interest of the entire Syrian population. The Assad regime's top priority is to consolidate its power. It aims to build and consolidate a patronage network of existing and new regime supporters, and thus to reinforce a transformation of power relationships.

This selective reconstruction is in fact a continuation of the war on another level. Instead of reconciliation, it deepens existing socio-political fault lines. The regional and global powers active in Syria are also pursuing their own geostrategic interests and continuing the war by other means.

The EU had made its previous commitment to reconstruction in Syria contingent on the country's political opening, and has confined its activities to providing emergency relief for the population and enforcing official sanctions against the regime. However, this strategy has not produced the desired change in policies. Instead, it has actually hindered reconstruction, Asseburg argues.

In view of the catastrophic living conditions in large parts of the country, Asseburg suggests an alternative approach. Among other things, the study recommends that the EU do the following:

- insist on better coordination of international aid,
- become more active diplomatically,
- work toward ensuring protections for civilians,
- reduce sectoral sanctions that hinder reconstruction, and
- support the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure in the education, health, electricity and water sectors, including in areas under the regime's control.

In general, since stabilisation can only be achieved through far-reaching reforms, the EU should continue to promote its "More for More" approach – more European support in exchange for improved regime conduct – which it promulgated in 2017.

The EU should also try to develop a pathway towards national reconciliation. The study argues against full normalisation of relations with the regime. It says the EU should press for a judicial investigation of human-rights violations and war crimes, including the use of internationally banned weapons.

LINK

Asseburg, M., 2020: Wiederaufbau in Syrien. Herausforderungen und Handlungsoptionen für die EU und ihre Mitgliedstaaten ("Reconstruction in Syria. Challenges and options for action for the EU and its member states" – in German only). Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) study. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2020S07_Syrien.pdf



Due to the destruction of schools and the dramatic reduction in the number of teachers, a "lost generation" is growing up in Syria: school east of Idlib, destroyed by a Russian attack in March 2020.



Child soldiers of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone.

CIVIL WARS

Children in terrorist organisations

More and more terrorist organisations are recruiting children. The book “Small arms” explains why this is so, how children are recruited and what tasks they perform in these groups.

By Dagmar Wolf

In the past, children were mostly banned from active participation in wars. But that changed in the 20th century, when children were used in national and colonial liberation conflicts, write Mia Bloom and John Horgan of Georgia State University in their book “Small arms. Children and terrorism”. In the past 20 years, the number of child soldiers and children in armed organisations, gangs and guerrilla groups has grown massively. Children are also increasingly being used directly in armed struggle.

Using children in terrorist groups certainly has its advantages, the authors say.

Compared to adults, children are more agile and flexible and can move more easily between the fronts. They are easier to recruit and manipulate and typically obey orders without question. In addition, they are generally not paid and are therefore cheaper than adult fighters.

As Bloom and Horgan explain, members of terrorist groups often kidnap children or forcefully recruit them from refugee camps. Many of the victims either no longer have relatives to care for them or were forced to kill their own family members so that there would be no option of going back home. The authors cite the example of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Liberia.

Some organisations fill their ranks with children simply because they have run out of adult fighters. Others send children to war for tactical reasons. In the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Iran used chil-

dren as cannon fodder and mine-clearers. The Iraqi troops were afraid to shoot at them – which gave the Iranian troops an advantage.

According to the authors’ research, terror groups such as ISIS or Boko Haram use children as it is easier for them to slip past security controls. For example, these organisations send children – as well as old people and those in wheelchairs – into busy markets as suicide bombers.

Particularly in areas without state assistance, families may also find it useful to voluntarily send their children to an armed group, for example if the group controls the supply of food and medicine.

And children are not always forced into combat immediately. Especially in situations of conflicts that last for generations, some terrorist groups establish youth camps or youth organisations to train and prepare them over time for future service.

As an example, the authors cite the “Cubs of the Caliphate”, the children and youth force of ISIS, which gained notoriety in July 2015 when its members executed captured Syrian soldiers with a shot in the neck in front of running cameras. In online channels that ISIS uses to reach out to children around the world, the Cubs are portrayed as heroes, and martyrs among them are celebrated like rock stars. In this way, terrorists use the internet to recruit children worldwide for their brutal struggle.

Using children in terrorist organisations has other impacts besides military and humanitarian ones. It affects the civilian population and the organisation of power structures. In particular, it calls established hierarchies into question and disrupts social and family structures.

Reintegrating these children into society after the end of a conflict poses serious problems. On the one hand, the children are victims of their traumatic experiences. On the other hand, as offenders they represent a great security risk and are often stigmatised. In most countries, there are not enough qualified personnel to treat the childhood traumas. Accordingly, there is a high risk that these children will end up in criminal organisations again.

BOOK

Bloom, M., and Horgan, J., 2019: Small arms. Children and terrorism. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

Confronting the disease

While Covid-19 runs rampant in Brazil, another, less visible scourge is on the loose: depression, a severe mood disorder.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 5.8% of Brazilians suffer from depression, compared to a global rate of 4.4%. Brazil's rate of depression is the highest in Latin America and second highest in the Americas, behind only the USA. Worldwide the number of people with depression has grown by 18.4% over the past 10 years, reaching 322 million, according to the WHO. It predicts that by 2030, depression will be the world's most common disease.

For the 12 million Brazilians who suffer from depression, life is a daily battle against varying levels of despair. Among the symptoms are mood swings, sadness, anxiety, apathy, guilt, general discontent, hopelessness, loss of interest, uncontrollable crying, irritability and social isolation.

How can a country typically associated with sunshine, lively and noisy festivities on the beach, samba parades and Carnival celebrations have so many depressed citizens? Psychologist Patrícia Marquizzelli sees socio-economic causes. "Economic instability, rising unemployment, lack of prospects and insecurity about the future are causes," she says.

Depression affects Brazilians regardless of age, skin colour, creed or social class. Increasingly, however, it is

striking young people. "The pressure to choose a profession at an early age is a problem," Marquizzelli says. "Also, families are weakening, which makes young people uncertain about their values and their direction. This causes anxiety and a sense of isolation, and that increases the probability of depression."

For people who seek help for depression, the needed medications are not always available. Brazil's Unified Health System, known by its acronym SUS, makes some drugs available but not all. A prescription must be from an SUS doctor. Distribution is through establishments designated by municipal health departments, but this network is not available to all who need the drugs.

The cost of medications is also a factor. "The drugs I need to take cost about half the minimum wage per month," says Beatriz Amadeu Fernandes, 28, a depression sufferer from Brasília. Fernandes, who was diagnosed with depression when she was 20, says she has little choice but to buy the medications. "I knew there was something very wrong with me," she recalls of the time leading to her diagnosis. "My parents thought it was just the way I am. But I was not able to speak. My eyes no longer focused. The tears just streamed down my face. When I had the deepest depression I finally went to get help."

Withdrawal and isolation are typical symptoms of depression in young people. Ignoring or misinterpreting such symptoms can be dangerous. In extreme cases depression can lead to suicide. In Brazil, suicide is the third leading external cause of death (after accidents and assaults), with 12,500 cases in 2017, according to the Ministry of Health.

The first requirement for depression sufferers is for symptoms to be noticed and correctly identified. The support of family and friends is essential for seeking help and returning to health, says psychologist Ester Ventura. With proper medical help, patients can start the healing process.



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LEBANON

Fundamental change is indispensable

So far, Lebanon was not considered a rogue state, but it is now one of the Arab countries under emergency rule. This measure is supposed to be temporary, but there is a risk of it becoming permanent and leading to totalitarian structures. The country really needs a new start.

By Mona Naggar

The government's response to the devastating explosion in Beirut's harbour was to declare the emergency. The disaster claimed more than 170 lives. Thousands were wounded. Several neighbourhoods were destroyed. Protesters took to the streets expressing their frustration with officeholders. The police responded with brutal repression, while Lebanese state agencies failed to deliver relief to victims. People were left to themselves, and they did their best to support one another. Volunteers have been clearing debris and providing supplies to people in damaged quarters.

The emergency means that the fundamental rights that are enshrined in the

constitution – including the freedom of expression and assembly – are being further dismantled. This trend has been emerging for months, as the state's response to economic collapse and public protests was repression. Security forces and politicians make ever more efforts to intimidate both professional media workers and citizen journalists. This stance is worrisome: clinging to power seems to be the only thing politicians and government institutions are interested in.

In October 2019, it still looked as though a peaceful revolution might force the corrupt political class to step down. Back then, people rose up against plans to boost government revenues by taxing WhatsApp phone calls. All over the country, thousands of people took to the streets, voiced their frustration and raised demands. Tents were set up on the central squares of Beirut and in other cities where protesters, scholars and NGO activists assembled to discuss the country's future and assess a variety of institutional options for replacing the existing system,

which is based on religiously defined identities.

Lebanon's people belong to several different faiths, and its parliamentary democracy has had strong sectarian elements ever since the country gained independence from France in 1943. Seats in parliament reflect the population share of religious communities. One reason is that community leaders now play both political and religious roles. To a considerable extent, they resemble feudal lords. They control resources which the weak state lacks, and they demand loyalty from their clientele.

The protesters wanted to reform this system. As the peaceful revolution gained momentum, however, a financial economic crisis, which had been building up for a while, escalated fast. The Corona pandemic further compounds problems. The euphoria many people felt late last year has evaporated.

Since the explosion, rallies of angry protesters are no longer calling for reform. They put gallows on display. They want vengeance and symbolically hang images of leading politicians. Their rhetoric is becoming rougher and ever more radical.

For many years, Lebanon was a country that kept muddling through one way or another. That is no longer possible. The harbour disaster has destroyed the facade. Fundamental change is needed; superficial reforms will not do.

So far, however, there is no answer to the most important question: what system can replace the old one which is based on religious communities? A transitional period is needed for people to mobilise, political forces to organise and ideas to be developed. What will happen, moreover, not only depends on political forces in Lebanon itself. Regional and global powers wield considerable influence. One must hope that they will act in a constructive way based on the understanding that fundamental change is indispensable at this particular point in history. The danger is that they may use Lebanon as a theatre in their proxy wars. At this point, anything can happen.



Since the 4th August explosion, protesters in Beirut want vengeance.



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Extreme weather events are becoming ever more frequent in Pakistan: flooding in Karachi in July.

SDGS

No reason to sit back and relax

According to the international Sustainable Development Report 2020, Pakistan has met SDG 13 on climate action. That is a great achievement, but does not change the country's vulnerability to climate change nor does it relieve the government from its responsibility to reduce carbon emissions.

By Syed Muhammad Abubakar

The Sustainable Development Report 2020, written by Jeffrey Sachs and a team of experts from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and Bertelsmann Stiftung, was published at the end of June. It provides an overview of the world's implementation efforts concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report also takes into account how Covid-19 has disrupted the SDG process. The poorest people are most affected, particularly women and children, elderly and disabled people, migrants and refugees.

Goal 13 on climate action is the only target Pakistan has met this year. Government, civil society and environmentally conscious people are jubilant about this achievement. However it is important to understand that it does not mean that Pakistan is not vulnerable to climate change

anymore. Extreme weather events as well as slow onset events continue to take their toll. Nor does the good result mean that Pakistan has done enough to fight climate change.

Guillaume Lafortune, the SDG index manager at SDSN and coordinator of the report, says: "In our methodology, Pakistan has achieved the climate action goal, as its energy-related emissions are below two tons per capita." The trend is upward however. Lafortune warns that, if it continues, "Pakistan won't be able to stay within this 'green zone'." He urges the country to remain vigilant and decouple economic growth from negative environmental impacts.

Lafortune also draws attention to the fact that Pakistan is lagging behind in achieving SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy. He urges the government to stop investing any further in coal-fired power plants. Moreover, it should discontinue subsidies for fossil fuel companies. Lafortune wants the government to "pursue efforts to provide universal access to clean energy".

Adil Najam of Boston University agrees that achievement of SDG 13 is no reason to sit back and relax. He views the SDG targets as milestones, not final goals: "They are the minimum targets that every country has to meet and then work to exceed." Na-

jam considers it particularly important to reduce carbon emissions by increasing the share of renewable energy in the national grid and boosting energy efficiency. From his point of view, the government should shelve all fossil fuel projects that are currently in the pipeline.

Najam stresses that Pakistan meeting the climate-action goal hardly makes a difference at the global level. The country accounts for less than one percent of global emissions. "To make a real impact, the major carbon polluters – particularly the United States, China, India and other developed nations – must bring down their emissions," he says.

Malik Amin Aslam Khan is an adviser to Prime Minister Imran Khan on climate change. He says that Pakistan is "willing to take actions which can reduce carbon emissions for itself as well as the world", though Pakistan is not a major emitter. In this sense, the achievement of SDG 13 "just reinforces our role as a responsible global state". Khan says that the government has opted for hydropower projects to replace two coal-fired power projects that would have relied on imported coal and were approved for funding under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Khan confirms Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change. "We have to continue taking action to adapt to the changing climate," he says. Relevant issues include glacial lake outbursts (see my essay in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/06), better flood forecasting, vulnerability mapping, early warning systems and climate-smart agriculture.

The Sustainable Development Report 2020 encourages Pakistan to proceed in the right direction. It is not an excuse to stop fighting climate change. The government must act swiftly to protect its people.

SOURCE

Sachs, J., et al., 2020: *The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020.* Cambridge University Press.
<https://www.sdindex.org/>



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Letters to the editor



NEGATIVE SIDE OF UNIVERSAL BASIC PENSIONS

D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/04,
Focus, Florian Jürgens:
"Africa's demographic transition"

Your article on the elderly in Africa shares the premise of a number of publications that a universal social (non-contributory) retirement pension is an important instrument of social security in Africa. There are many good arguments supporting this view, but there are also arguments against it.

You cite Lesotho and Swaziland as positive examples of places with a universal old-age pension. Last year, I did thorough research concerning the social security systems in the two countries. In both cases, it showed that almost 100% of the relevant target groups (60+ in Swaziland, 70+ in Lesotho) get the universal old-age pensions. By 2018, 67% of Swaziland's social budget was spent on the elderly. Over the years, almost all other social pro-

grammes have been discontinued to the benefit of older people. A similar process is underway in Lesotho and also, incidentally, in my second home country, Bolivia.

Analysis of the social impacts of these systems plainly reveals these processes to be distinctly problematic. All households that include an elderly person receive a pension regardless of whether they are poor or not. Households where there are no older persons present receive no social benefits whatsoever. The continuously rising cost of providing pensions curtails the scope for financing other social programmes. Extremely poor households with many children are left with no public support.

The universal basic pensions you present as groundbreaking can be termed a success only if they are considered in isolation (silo approach). If a country's social security system as a whole is assessed (systemic approach), the negative side of universal basic pensions becomes apparent.

In low-income and low- or middle-income countries



Tanzanian pension beneficiary.

they are not the best solution for social protection. They result in the marginalisation of households without old people. Attempts to reduce the target group of social pension programmes to elderly in need – with an eye to releasing funds for other people in need – are not feasible politically. I would be pleased to discuss this topic with HelpAge and other experts.

Dr Bernd Schubert, partner in Team Consult and consultant on social security in Africa, Berlin and Cochabamba/Bolivia.

WATER SUPPLY IN CLIMATE CRISIS

Focus, D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/06

We are delighted that you devoted the latest D+C/E+Z issue to the topic of water supply. For future issues on water, sanitation and hygiene, however, it would be nice if you contacted the WASH network in advance.

The WASH network is the German Network for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), founded in June 2011. Its members are 25 German non-profit NGOs that focus on development cooperation or humanitarian emergency relief and rehabilitation and are actively engaged in the WASH sector. The member organisations of the WASH network share the vision that everyone in the world should get access to sustainable and safe water and sanitation and independently practices elementary principles of hygiene.

Jona Toetzke, Co-Coordinator German WASH Network,
www.washnet.de.



POPULATION GROWTH DRIVING WATER CONSUMPTION

Focus, D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/06

I read the D+C/E+Z issue on water supply and climate crisis with interest. It covered the subject from many angles. However, I was struck by the absence of an article dealing with population growth and its impact on water consumption.

At the end of the colonial era, in the mid-1960s, the population of Africa was around 320 million. Today, it is estimated at about 1.3 billion and by 2050 it is forecast to rise to 2.5 billion. Population growth is one factor, another is the rising standard of living of elites across the developing world, who have similar resource requirements to those in the "western" world.

I know the issue is sensitive but suppressing it will not make things better – because the climate crisis is also a population crisis. It is time to address this subject and work with developing countries to develop strategies for not just water management but resource management as a whole.

Eberhard Hauser, representative of the NGO Population and Community Development Association, Bonn

FAILED STATE

A slide into war and chaos

The Soviet Union's 1979 invasion and 10-year domination of Afghanistan started the country's descent into poverty and lawlessness. The country still has not found peace. People have lost faith in institutions, tend to only trust persons from their own tribe, and the nation's attitude is now more xenophobic than in the past.

By Nawid Paigham

Four decades of civil war and poor governance – made worse by foreign intervention – have left Afghanistan a classic failed state. The country is plagued by poverty, corruption and lawlessness. Its traumatised people face daily hardship, deficient state services and rampant insecurity.

The roots of Afghanistan's decline into failed statehood can be traced far into the distant past, but the immediate origins of the country's current woeful condition can be found in the Soviet invasion that took place just over 40 years ago, in late December 1979. That invasion followed a coup and was meant to fill a power vacuum, but it led to the 10-year Soviet Protectorate and kicked off the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s. The Soviet takeover was viewed with deep suspicion by the United States, which feared the Soviet Union would use Afghanistan as a gateway to the Indian subcontinent to the south and the Middle East to the west.

In the 1980s, Afghanistan thus became the battleground of proxy war between the two Cold War superpowers. The USA did not intervene directly, but supported the Islamist fundamentalists who opposed the Soviet-controlled government.

When the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989, Afghanistan's troubles were far from over. In fact, they escalated further. The Red Army left behind a vacuum, with no functioning government in place. That meant no one could guarantee law and order or defend the country's borders. A country that once traded peacefully with its neighbours became an international hub for religious extremists.

In 1992 the Islamist Mujahideen (Jihadists), backed by the West, took over the capital, Kabul. By 1996 the Taliban, a faction of the Mujahideen, had captured most of the country. Far from bringing the hoped-for peace and order, the Taliban's rise to power opened a new black chapter in Afghan history. What followed was five years of harsh totalitarian rule by this fundamentalist group.

After the attacks of 11 September 2001 on the United States, Washington forcibly removed the Taliban from power. Nonetheless, the Islamists still control much of the country. The Taliban continue to fight against the Afghan government, and civilians continue to be killed. The administration of President Donald Trump signed a peace agreement with the Taliban earlier this year. However, the muteness of the agreement on the future of power sharing, rule of law and women's rights have ren-

dered the Afghans suspicious with regards to its success.

The casualty figures from all the fighting are staggering. In the years following the Soviet-Afghan War, between 6.5% and 15% of Afghans were killed, about 20% were wounded, and about 33% fled the country. Among those fleeing were the country's most educated people.

AN ECONOMY IN TATTERS

The long and bloody conflict has left Afghanistan's economy and society in shreds. The Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the US government's reconstruction oversight authority, labelled Afghanistan a "failed state" in its 2019 report after evaluating the country's economy, rule of law, governance and security conditions.

For one thing, Afghanistan still lacks a strong and accountable government that can stand on its own. The last 40 years of conflict have caused the collapse of institutions and a severe weakening of the rule of law. The trust of Afghans in their rulers has deteriorated severely. When a state is unable to enforce the rule of law, people face the



In 1988, the Soviet Union began retracting its troops from Afghanistan.

grim choice of either taking the law into their own hands or turning to mafia-type militias for protection. Either way, chaos follows.

Afghanistan's economy is also in tatters. Its infrastructure and communication systems are broken. Food and medical supplies are scarce, as are electricity and running water.

According to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook database in October 2019, per-person gross domestic product in Afghanistan is only equivalent to the purchasing power of \$513. This means Afghanistan ranks 177th out of

up during the Soviet occupation have seen nothing but war and have spent their lives being used by power-hungry leaders to fight against each other.

All this has had a massive psychological impact on the Afghan people. After the Soviet invasion, Afghans needed time to grieve, heal physically and mentally, and slowly rebuild their cities, villages and homes. They did not get that time. Making matters worse, in areas controlled by Islamists, people are forbidden the few simple traditions and sources of happiness left to them, such as music and dance.

taking place in Kabul, most people adhere to traditional, tribal ways of life. Unlike other ties, moreover, tribal identities still inspire a sense of mutual trust.

INWARD-LOOKING

The country has become inward-looking. While tourists were welcomed in the 1960s and 1970s, foreigners are now viewed with suspicion. This attitude was promoted by leaders on both sides during the Soviet-Afghan War. Both were eager to discredit the foreign powers supporting their rivals. The lasting result was an increased sense of xenophobia.

There also has been a marked change in the way Afghans view their religion. Before the Soviet-Afghan War, Afghans practiced Islam in a socio-cultural manner and not as a political movement. The Soviet occupation and the proxy war that followed changed that, making religion a politically defining factor.

During the Soviet occupation, traditional Afghans rejected Soviet propaganda against religion and many of them became radicalised. The USA along with its allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia encouraged the trend toward religion-inspired fighting. Faith-based ideology obviously proves to be powerful in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Islamist extremists who fought the Soviets received huge amounts of financial and military support.

The Soviets and their Afghan proxies played a part in this trend as well. The so called nouveau Afghan-communists tried to force social change without considering people's religious and cultural sensibilities. Soviet-backed Afghans used harsh methods to impose anti-religion reforms. That made many Afghans receptive to the Islamist message of religion-based resistance.

A country does not fall apart in a year, or even in a decade. It deteriorates slowly over decades. This, unfortunately, is what has happened in Afghanistan. And equally unfortunately, it may take decades more to repair the massive damage done.



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Religion has become a politically defining factor in Afghanistan: Eid Gah mosque in Kabul.

186 countries in this key measure of wealth, right behind Sierra Leone and Togo.

Moreover, the outlook for rebuilding the country is poor. The country lacks skills and leadership. Many educated Afghans have left and not returned. The massive flight from conflict zones created the world's largest refugee population until the Syrian War.

Those who remained in the country have been traumatised by the years of war and are poorly equipped to rebuild the country. Most Afghans were illiterate before the Soviet-Afghan War, and the long years of conflict have impeded education. A huge number of young people who grew

Instead of healing, people continue to be bombarded by war and destruction. They lack the benefits of an effective government that understands their needs in the face of loss, grief and anger. Foreign powers intervening in the country have not been up to task either. The governments they have been supporting and financing were weak. Afghans' willingness to obey laws and assume responsibility has been allowed to keep eroding.

Beyond a tendency to lawlessness, the decades of conflict have fostered a streak of belligerence and aggression in a people that once had been peaceful. There is resistance to change. Although some modernisation is



Participants in an SDG conference in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2019.

Meanings of development

The term development has many connotations. It gained prominence in international affairs after World War II. The idea was that developing countries would use aid to prosper and catch up with the industrialised nations. There has been progress, but the promise of catching up remains unfulfilled. Moreover, environmental destruction has become a huge issue. Accordingly, the term development has been at the centre of many controversies. To clarify the concept, the UN added the attributes “human” and

“sustainable” in the 1990s. Some critics remain unconvinced nonetheless. A big question is whether development is a western notion that ultimately promotes western interests or whether it stands for striving to promote and safeguard the global common good.



The Focus section pertains to all Sustainable Development Goals as adopted by the UN in 2015.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

From “underdevelopment” to the SDGs

Stereotyped thinking still splits the world into a group of a few successful countries and the disadvantaged rest. The clichés are not helpful. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) deserve praise for transcending them.

By Mahwish Gul

Western observers tend to see former colonies as similar entities, which all are in need of progress. In his seminal work *Orientalism*, the Palestinian Scholar Edward Said criticised the cliché according to which “Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant”. This division is actually a matter of perceptions, not geography.

What Said wrote 40 years ago still applies today. The imaginary line he saw demarcates the former conqueror and the conquered, the former coloniser and the colonised, the advanced economies and developing countries. In line with this binary thinking, terms like “Third World”, “Developing World” or “Global South” eventually reinforce negative stereotypes. Typically, they were coined to escape the dichotomy, but eventually they all suggest that certain

countries are successful whereas others have failed.

Third World is still used sometimes, though it no longer makes sense. Initially, it stood for non-aligned countries that neither belonged to the capitalist west nor the capitalist north. Since they were in Africa, Asia, the Pacific region and Latin America, “Third World” became a synonym for “Developing World”.

“Global South” is of much more recent coinage. The term makes sense in political rhetoric, but it still emphasises the dichotomy of a privileged north and a disadvantaged south. Politically correct language only shapes perceptions to some extent. Prejudices and stereotypes often prove enduring – and nothing has changed about the world being divided into a few successful “advanced nations” and many poorer “developing countries”.

Nonetheless, it makes sense to change rhetoric if underlying ideas prove particularly harmful. Marcin Solarz, a Ukrainian intellectual, has noted that only in the late 1960s did the term “developing countries” began to replace the harsher “underdeveloped countries” in UN contexts and then became the most common categorisation

for countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania.

As Katie Willis of the University of London has pointed out, “underdeveloped” and “undeveloped” imply an inability to change, whereas “developing” sounds more dynamic. In people’s minds, nonetheless, it still stands for poverty, deprivation and even hunger.

It is noteworthy, that the concept of “development” has changed, at least among people who specialise in these matters. After World War II, it was basically equated with economic growth and modernisation, which, in turn, meant urbanisation, industrialisation and technology application. Attempts to bring about the desired changes through technocratic aid, however, systematically failed. Accordingly, debate on what “development” means began to heat up.

In 1990, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the notion of “human development”. Apart from income, it included indicators for people’s health and education. The guiding idea was that “development” was supposed to empower persons to take their fate into their own hands. Preconditions for doing so are a minimum of financial clout, physical capabilities and intellectual capacity.

In its annual series of Human Development Reports, the UNDP has since further refined its concept. Its Human Development Index (HDI) was originally developed in cooperation by South Asian economists Mahbub ul Haq from Pakistan and Amartya Sen from India. Their idea of personal freedom has roots in European enlightenment, but it is universal since it has been adopted by the UN. The same is true of human rights, of course.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) largely reflect the spirit of the HDI. Moreover, they are a global agenda that spells out tasks for all nations, not only the developing world. While in common perceptions, the distinction between some privileged and many disadvantaged countries is still in force, the UN has at least conceptually overcome it.



Queen Elizabeth II and President Kwame Nkrumah depicted on a billboard in Accra in 1961 ahead of the monarch’s visit to the former colony Ghana, which was then considered to be an “underdeveloped” country.



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Changing stereotypes

Whatever global assessments one takes into account, women regularly appear to have fewer rights and fewer opportunities in Pakistan than in most other countries. Many Pakistani women, nonetheless, do not think anything is wrong with gender relations.

The latest Human Development Report ranks Pakistan as 146th of 166 countries (for information on history of the index, see interview with Achim Steiner, the UNDP administrator, next page). On average, women have higher life expectancies, more years of schooling and a better standards of living in 145 other countries than Pakistan.

The World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report sees Pakistan in an even worse place, with women only being more excluded from economic opportunities, education and political participation in Yemen and Iraq than in Pakistan. A recent expert poll carried out by the Thomson Reuters Foundation similarly determined that Pakistan is the third most dangerous country for women to live in.

In the eyes of international experts, misogyny thus marks Pakistan's culture. That is not how many Pakistani women see it, however. Opinion polls show, for example, that 42% of married women in Pakistan consider wife beating to be justified. Among men, only 40% think so.

The fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the UN is about gender equality. One aspect is that women and girls must be empowered in

terms of reproductive health. That includes the right to decide how many children they want. Sex education and access to contraceptives matter very much in this context (see my contribution in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/04). Millions of married women in Pakistan willingly risk their lives for child bearing, how-

In recent years, rallies were held to celebrate International Women's Day in Pakistan's cities. A very popular slogan is "my body, my choice". It has gained particular notoriety in Pakistan's conservative circles. They consider it to be a shameful and obscene appeal to be promiscuous.

Men and women alike take part in the organised backlash. Last year, the legislative assembly unanimously adopted a resolution in condemna-

supposedly enlightened global norms sometimes clash with local traditions. People's world view shapes their ideas of what development should bring.

Ultimately, Pakistani society must sort out gender issues in Pakistan. International donors should not assertively engage in this debate, though some non-conspicuous support for civil-society organisations will probably not hurt.

Things are more promising than they seem at first glance. Girls' education has been improving over the years. Women are gradually becoming more assertive. The budding women's rights marches are proof. Moreover, women in positions of leadership serve as role models.

In 1988, Benazir Bhutto became Pakistan's first female prime minister, 17 years before Angela Merkel took office as Germany's first female chancellor. Today, about 20% of the members of parliament are women. That share was two percent in the constituent assembly elected in 1947. It is true that many women legislators belong to political dynasties or have benefited from reservations, but that does not diminish their relevance as role models.

Data can be read in several ways. Some 70% of Pakistan's medical students are female, but only half of them will eventually work as physicians. The reason is that, for many Pakistani women, earning a degree in medicine is more about catching a good husband than about a professional choice. That is regrettable. On the upside, more than half of the medical students who one day will work in this high-prestige profession are women. mg



Women's rights rally in Islamabad in 2019.

ever. The general assumption is that the ideal family size includes at least four children. Mothers and expecting mothers, moreover, have a strong preference for sons.

All SDG indicators that relate to gender issues collide with Pakistan's prevailing norms in one way or another. While some Pakistani women challenge those norms, most do not.

tion of the march. It was proposed by a female legislator.

A principle of development cooperation is "national ownership". It means that international agencies must neither insist on policies nor fund programmes that are not in line with the priorities of a developing country's government. Those governments, of course, pay attention to cultural norms. The plain truth is that



Education matters: a high-school student doing homework in rural Burkina Faso.

UNDP

“Governance is fundamental”

In recent decades, the United Nations (UN) has coined two important terms: “human development” and “sustainable development”. Both concepts have become widely accepted, and they reinforce one another. Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) discussed these matters and more in an interview with Hans Dembowski.

Achim Steiner interviewed by Hans Dembowski

When the UNDP launched the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990, the guiding idea was to empower people to take their

fates into their own hands. Do I remember that correctly?

Yes, but that was not the singular motivation. The Human Development Index introduced a broader approach to advance human well-being termed the human development approach. This methodology is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. The index was a response to the dominant paradigm back then – that is, powerful institutions were simply equating development with economic growth and rising per-capita incomes. That was the era of structural adjustment and the Washington Consensus, both of which were

entirely geared towards market dynamics. Human wellbeing did not get much attention. On behalf of the UNDP, Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, two prominent economists, designed the HDI in a way that took into account important other components that were overlooked – especially education and health outcomes. Both elements are extremely important to a person’s wellbeing. It is critical to measure a country’s progress in these areas to see where there are gaps and address them – to ensure that people can indeed reach their full potential.

Has the HDI changed the development paradigm?

Yes, in many ways the HDI has become mainstream. Consider, for example, the fact that the World Bank launched its own Human Capital Index in 2018, which aims to measure progress in some of the same areas. However, the debate does not stand still, and we strive to improve the concept

accordingly. We are now focusing more and more on inequality. Last year's Human Development Report showed, for example, that more equal societies often outperform more unequal societies. That is true in spite of lower per-capita incomes. For the first time, this year's report will include an assessment of how inequality and environmental problems are intrinsically linked. It is critical to better understand how issues like pollution or the destruction of ecosystems hurt poor people much more than rich people – and design ways to address this imbalance.

Is human development ultimately the same as sustainable development?

The two concepts are certainly converging, but they have a different history. Human de-

velopment is more squarely focused on human beings. It was conceived to counter an understanding of development that purely took economic indicators into account. The concept of sustainable development was formulated for different reasons. It was adopted by the UN at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 after many years of debate. The fundamental idea is that future generations must enjoy the same opportunities as people do today. One implication of this is the principle that business activity must not damage or destroy the natural environment. However, global warming and the

A core element of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the principle to “leave no one behind”. Does it make sense to trace the SDGs back to the Earth Summit?

loss of ecosystems and biodiversity is quite obviously harming the outlook for future generations. The Earth Summit also emphasised that the rich regions of the world cannot prosper at the expense of disadvantaged regions. Every human being deserves the same opportunities in life. The three pillars of sustainability, as understood in Rio – social inclusion, environmental protection and the long-term viability of businesses – remain critically important today.

Yes, and we can trace their germination back to previous international debates as of minorities and other vulnerable groups. However, it is difficult to measure the quality of governance, not least because there are ideological differences. Nonetheless, the SDGs reflect a multilateral consensus. By using them as the yardstick, there is actually some scope to measure how effective countries' governance systems are. Apart from governments, many other actors have to play their part in governance, of course – from the private-sector to civil-society organisations or research institutes. Governance is about more than just government action, and that is especially true at the global level. We do not have a “world government”, but we do have governance systems that regulate many important things from telecoms and postal services to trade and maritime safety. The Covid-19 pandemic proves once again how important global governance is. Unless we work together to contain the virus everywhere, it is liable to re-emerge and spread rapidly again. Indeed, an economic slowdown in one part of the world will have a major knock-on effect and hurt other regions of the world. If we want the world economy to recover, we will need stimulus programmes for every country – not only the prosperous ones.

Is the global governance system up to task?

Let me say first that the system is remarkably strong. Don't forget that its institutions were largely built during the Cold War. In spite of that era's fundamental tensions, multilateral institutions grew, and today, they are managing important tasks quite successfully. It is true, however, that the multilateral system faces considerable constraints. It is somewhat remarkable to consider that the budget of the UN Secretary-General is about the same size as the budget of the New York City Fire Department. It is hard to deny that the multilateral system is underfunded. The UN Security Council should have been reformed many years ago for its membership to better reflect current power relations. Moreover, we need increased respect for international law. Indeed, a renewed commitment to global governance would be a welcome development.

But many governments now emphasise sovereignty and want to put their nations' interests first.

Well, it is a false dichotomy to try to choose between global governance and sovereignty.



International funding – including from Germany and China – has contributed to building concentrated solar-power infrastructure in Morocco.

velopment is more squarely focused on human beings. It was conceived to counter an understanding of development that purely took economic indicators into account. The concept of sustainable development was formulated for different reasons. It was adopted by the UN at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 after many years of debate. The fundamental idea is that future generations must enjoy the same opportunities as people do today. One implication of this is the principle that business activity must not damage or destroy the natural environment. However, global warming and the

well. The UN has a long history of thought leadership in these matters. The Brundtland Commission was very important in the late 1980s, as was the Brandt Commission in the early 1980s.

To what extent is improved governance – at national as well as global levels – essential to achieving the SDGs?

Governance is absolutely fundamental. It is about how we interact with one another. It is about fairness, rule of law, values and so on. The rights of individual persons depend on governance. That also applies to the rights

Global governance benefits all nations – and it does not require a country to surrender sovereignty. On the contrary, global governance results from sovereign countries joining forces to rise to challenges together. The plain truth is that countries can only achieve certain objectives through cooperation – aims which are impossible if they go alone. Indeed, the great challenges that humankind now faces, exceed the capacities of every single nation state. Most notably, no country can manage the climate crisis on its own. And world trade and the global financial architecture require cooperation. The rapid spread of Covid-19 and its lack of respect for borders is a stark reminder of this fact. Crises will keep getting worse unless we can rely on strong, respected and effective global institutions.

I'd like to return to where we started. It seems to me that the paradigm that equates growth with development is still quite strong. To some extent, it even marks the SDGs which emphasise the importance

of private-sector businesses and market dynamics. Does that not fly in the face of human development?

No, not really. It is another fallacy to believe that we must choose between economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. That is something the experts agree on. Economies can – and must – develop further without destroying the environment. Germany is actually a good example of development that is not purely linked to economic growth but rather, it is about fostering green growth and sustainable development. The country's performance in the past ten years or so has been good. There was full employment before the Covid-19 crisis began, but the growth rate was actually very disappointing in comparison with previous decades. The more an economy matures, the less important growth becomes. Nonetheless, many policymakers in all countries, are stuck in the old growth mindset. Too many finance ministries around the world still do not have an office or at least an expert team to assess environmental sustainability is-

sues. Once again, more, not less cooperation in this area, is the best way to make progress.

Some critics say that the entire notion of development is toxic because former colonial powers are imposing their will on the rest of the world. They say humankind needs a fundamental "restart". What is your response?

I think that this is a mostly hypothetical reasoning without much relevance to what happens next in our world. Throughout history, different cultures have interacted with one another. There was a constant exchange leading to both opportunities and risks. It is impossible to go back in history and start from scratch. We must work together to meet the challenges that our species is collectively facing right now – most notably climate change.



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GLOBAL TRENDS

In urgent need of development

According to the UNDP, the vast majority of countries marked by "low human development" are in Africa. For the sake of its people, the continent needs more than only economic growth.

By Belay Begashaw

The past six decades have seen unprecedented economic development. Per capita, world GDP is now 25 times bigger than in 1960. By comparison, global per-capita income only increased by a factor of 15 from the 11th century to 1950. These figures are from a book edited by three prominent economists (Kanbur, Noman, Stiglitz, 2019). Africa, however, is lagging behind. Its per-capita income is now only 12 times that of 1960. This continent has a lot of catching up to do.

Not only environmentalists warn that some growth achievements around

the world may not be sustained. The world population is growing (see Focus section in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/03), on average people live longer, and consumption levels are increasing. Natural resources are being depleted and ecosystem services overused. Market transactions all too often do not reflect the true environmental costs, and one must ask at what point a consumerist lifestyle becomes irresponsible.

The global conditions for economic expansion have deteriorated in other ways as well. Protectionism promoted by populist governments is making it difficult, if not impossible, to follow the example of export-driven growth that benefited many East Asian and some African countries. Great disparities mark not only the global community, but also world regions and even individual countries. Far too many people must do without access to health care, formal

education, decent employment and good housing. The Covid-19 pandemic shows how important these matters are. The people most likely to suffer from this disease are those who are deprived of basic amenities.

In recent decades, African growth was impressive. Six of the world's fastest expanding economies were African in the years 2000 to 2020. The growth, however, was uneven – both across the continent and within countries. Another downside is that it largely resulted from commodity exports to one single country: China. That shows that African economies do not add much value, are not diversified and lack sophistication. That makes African economies vulnerable to external shocks. They have so far failed to create broad-based prosperity, and social-protection systems tend to be particularly weak in this world region. Things are particularly bad where violent conflict and war block development.

Generally speaking, productivity tends to remain low in Africa, and the informal sector still accounts for the lion's share of employment. Economic growth, in itself, is obviously not enough for the continent to prosper (see Hans Dembowski in Focus sec-



Growth in itself will not solve urban infrastructure problems: small shops on the outskirts of Nairobi.

tion of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/03). Economies must diversify, and in order to do so, they need a facilitating institutional surrounding. For formal industries to flourish, for example, social services must improve. People's access to health care and education is essential. Otherwise, companies will be unable to build the kind of skilled workforce on which high productivity depends.

The Human Development Index, which the UNDP compiles on the basis of indicators for health, education and income (see interview with Achim Steiner, p. 17), shows that Africa is a comparatively poor continent. Of 36 countries in the "low human development" category, 33 are African.

World Bank statistics show the same trend. Sub-Saharan Africa now accounts for most of the world's poor: of the world's 28 poorest countries, 27 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty has been reduced fast in Asia, but has increased in Africa. The World Bank reckons that the number of extremely poor people (with a purchasing power of less than \$ 1.90 per head) grew from 278 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015. It expects 90 % of the global poor to live in Africa by 2030.

Such figures are alarming and prove that Africa needs development: its countries must diversify their economies and build capable public institutions. The need is urgent because largely unplanned and chaotic change is happening fast. Masses of people are moving from rural to urban areas. According to estimates, Africa's urban population will double from 400 to 800 million people in the years 2010 to 2030. It is then expected to grow by another 400 million to 1.2 billion by 2050. It is worrisome to see that far too little is being done to build the infrastructure and establish the social services that liveable cities need. At the same time, rural areas also lack infrastructure, but they are getting even less attention from policymakers. Action is needed – and economic growth alone is not the answer.

For two other reasons, policymakers who focus exclusively on growth are misguided anyway:

- GDP only counts monetary transactions. Non-monetised value creation, for example in subsistence farming or care work within families, is important in people's lives, but it is not figured in economic statistics.

- Per-capita GDP does not reflect wide disparities of income and wealth. To a large extent, per-capita GDP measures the progress made by affluent urban people and makes the public believe that everybody is involved, even though the lives of poor people may not have changed much or perhaps even got worse. According to UNU-WIDER (World Institute for Development Economics Research), the bottom 50 % account for less than 10 % of national income in Africa, while the top 10 % account for over 50 %.

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DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

Unsustainable western exceptionalism

We only have one planet, so the levels of consumption and waste that mark western Europe and North America are not achievable everywhere. The idea of development must be de-westernised.

By Ndongo Samba Sylla

The term “development” has a long and troubled history. Before World War I, the colonial powers claimed to bring civilisation to the regions under their control. Then they began to speak of “developing” them, while the west was seen as the model of how to do so.

The idea was to promote economic growth and – after the collapse of the Soviet Union – representative democracy. The promise was that the western way of life was not only desirable, but also achievable. That is a myth, as the Brazilian economist Celso

Furtado pointed out long ago. Nonetheless, bilateral as well as multilateral aid agencies still cling to this myth.

The truth is that the “developing countries” will never obtain the same standard of living as the “developed countries”. The reason is not any racial, cultural or institutional difference. Catching up is impossible because the economic trajectory of western Europe and North America was always based on “ecological exceptionalism”. It still is, and it simply cannot be reproduced everywhere.

Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, western Europe has made considerable material progress. It was long the centre of the world system until it passed leadership on to North America in the first half of the 20th century. For people in Asia, Africa and Latin America to achieve the standard of living enjoyed by

the average European or North American would mean a similar level of consumption – or more precisely: waste of global resources. Such a feat is plainly impossible. If all the inhabitants of our earth were to consume as the average EU inhabitant does, we would need 2.8 planets, as the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) pointed out in 2019. We only have one. According to the international environmental NGO, the EU only has seven percent of the world population – but it uses almost 20% of the planet’s biocapacity.

Does the impossibility of economic catch-up mean that the majority of the world’s inhabitants are condemned to live in poverty and under the weight of inequality? No, not at all. Instead, the appropriate conclusion is that the ecological exceptionalism of western civilisation is unsustainable. It cannot be the model for the rest of the world.

Stripping western-centred materialism from the idea of development will not be easy. More needs to be done than merely adding politically correct adjectives like “sustainable”, “inclusive” or “pro-poor” to the noun “development”.

That does not mean that we should drop the guiding principles of the Sustainable Development Goals. They include “leave no one behind”, “end hunger” and “ensure public health”. They are valid, but the point is that none of it can be achieved by turning every country into something like Germany, France or the USA.

The idea of development must be dewesternised. We need a different kind of human civilisation. It must be based on the rational management of environmental resources, solidarity among the world’s peoples, and – most important – on the equality of all human beings. Despite the pressing challenge of climate change, the beginnings of such a political-ethical revolution are evident around the world. It is encouraging to see the statues that celebrate the legacy of slave traders and imperialist oppressors fall in many countries, especially in western Europe and North America.



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On 7 June, protesters in Bristol pulled down the statue of slave trader Edward Colston and later threw it into the harbour.

"DEVELOPMENT"

False promises, questionable term

The West's promise of "development" is contradictory and unachievable. The term itself perpetuates colonial notions of domination and superiority. Strategies for development devised by technocrats often do not match the everyday reality of the supposed beneficiaries.

By Julia Schöneberg and Aram Ziai

The term "development" originally comes from biology and suggests an evolutionary process. In the context of policies concerning social, economic and political matters, "development" is seen as a linear maturation process culminating in an ideal state. The term has had this normative meaning since US President Harry Truman stated in 1949 that the "development" of "underdeveloped" countries was a central goal of his foreign policy.

To criticise a term and its impact, one first needs a clear definition of it. But for the past 70 years, the term "development" has been filled with various, often contradicting meanings.

Strategies of "development" have ranged from modernisation and structural adjustment with a focus on industrialisation and economic growth, to a focus on satisfying basic human needs (Basic Needs Strategy) and reducing poverty (Millennium Development Goals – MDGs). More recently, "development" has also embraced sustainability (Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs). The SDGs apply to industrialised countries as well. They conceive of all nations as developing nations that must continue to develop according to shared but differentiated responsibilities.

All these strategies have something in common, despite their shifting focus on different aspects: "development" points out deficiency and prescribes a universal way to fix it.

COLONIAL LEGACIES

The long history of the "development" debate is marked by some consistent features:

1) "Development" was always regarded as normatively good and universally desirable. The term implies a promise of prosperity with consumption levels matching the western model. At the same time, the negative consequences that development projects have for the intended beneficiaries are typically neglected. For example, even well-intended programmes and policies often weaken social systems and local economies, thus creating dependencies and vulnerabilities. Infrastructure projects such as major dams, for example, cause displacement, resettlement and loss of livelihoods. An estimated 10 million people lose their homes in the name of "development" every year (see Peripherie No. 154/155, and also note article by Korinna Horta on p. 24).

2) In the decisionmaking apparatus concerning "development", only people with western education can claim to be experts. Local and indigenous knowledge usually counts for nothing. However, the employees of development agencies often have only a vague understanding of life in

the societies they want to change. Typically, they do not even speak the languages of the people concerned.

3) Development-policy action is typically an intervention in societies that are defined as foreign. The promise of "development" makes interventions seem necessary and morally imperative. Technical projects and apolitical programmes are presented as solutions to problems of inequality. Though power relations matter very much, they are typically ignored. Aid agencies pretend that the dominance of social forces that benefit from large land holdings, for example, or from global capitalism do not matter.

4) The west's standard of living is posited as the ideal and universally desirable. Other societies are regarded as backward in relation to it. Such thinking essentially reflects a colonial mindset and perpetuates colonial hierarchies. Indicators such as gross domestic product or the UN's Human Development Index assume that a "good life" is measurable. Other important factors such as hospitality, wellbeing, equality are swept aside – as are institutionalised racism and the imperial mode of living, that is dependent upon systems of production, extractivism and consumption that depend on cheap labour and resources from far-away places.



Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visiting Washington in 1949: US President Harry Truman declared "development" of "underdeveloped" countries to be the goal of foreign policy during the Cold War.

In sum, Eurocentric paternalism has always tainted the “development” debate. Colonial notions and assumptions about power continue to shape “development” rhetoric. Critical scholars, on the other hand, question the entire development narrative with Europe at its centre. The current globalised world order is historically rooted in colonialism, imperialism and slavery. Moreover, many “development” projects are designed mainly to serve the interests of donors in the global north.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In spite of all the “development” talk, the gap between the global rich and poor has been widening year after year. This is true in spite of some progress in areas such as literacy or maternal mortality. In view of the climate crisis, moreover, the consumer lifestyle seen in the west is becoming ever less sustainable. The more other countries copy this model, the more impossible it becomes to achieve global sustainability.

The SDGs are supposedly a list of goals and indicators for people, societies, nature and the environment to interact sustainably, but they are riddled with inherent contradictions. The growth goal of SDG 8, for example, is plainly inconsistent with global sustainability. European policies relating to the economy and “development” typically measure success in economic terms. As long as the growth paradigm persists, “development” will never lead to sustainability. Worse still, the term “development” is used to legitimise the overexploitation of nature.

There are, however, alternatives to the western way of life and its economic paradigm. A collection of essays titled “Pluriverse – A post-development dictionary” (Kothari et al, 2019), edited by Ashish Kothari and others, presents a variety of views from different parts of the world on what can be considered the hallmarks of a “good life”. Relevant issues include:

- interpersonal solidarity instead of permanent competition,
- interdependence between human and non-human beings and
- autonomous communities and societies.

These critical scholars condemn the overextraction of resources and demount the unthinking faith in economic growth. They question the wisdom of perpetuating

development policies that have turned our geological era into the Anthropocene in which human activity is changing the climate and the global environment.

ALTERNATIVES TO “DEVELOPMENT”

If we assume for a moment that the goal of “development” was ever really to eradicate poverty and global inequality, then one thing is strikingly clear: “development” has failed miserably, in both vision and practice. What we need now is a radical policy change. We must address the historical roots of global inequality. We need systemic and structural solutions. In the words of



Colonial ideas of dominance live on: German officer in East Africa around 1910.

Gurminder K. Bhambra, a professor of post-colonial studies at the University of Sussex, “inextricable combination of the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, growth) and the logic of coloniality (poverty, misery, inequality), has to be central to any discussion of contemporary global inequalities and the historical basis of their emergence”.

Focusing on global inequalities shows that change is most urgently needed in the global north. Its current level of consumption perpetuates injustice – and so does its continued claim to hegemony. Colonial legacies are at the root cause of the power asymmetry of north and south.

Jason Hickel, an economic anthropologist and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in London, has spelled out tangible proposals to achieve a fairer global economy (see Sabine Balk in Focus Section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/11). Among other thing, he calls for:

- the democratisation of international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF),
- global tax justice and transparency,
- fair trade and fair wages,
- debt relief for highly indebted countries, and
- the re-regulation of intellectual property rights concerning pharmaceuticals and agriculture to the benefit of the poor.

Simply redefining the term “development”, or extending it as in the case of the SDGs, will not do. The world remains mired in thinking based on competition and the notion of western superiority. To overcome global inequality, these modes of thought must be replaced. In their place, we need an ethos of global justice and solidarity.

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INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Paying the price for development

Entire communities are often displaced to make room for large development projects. The World Bank, which supports many such projects, fails to meet its own standards of adequately compensating those affected.

By Korinna Horta

Large-scale development projects such as hydro-electric dams, power plants, mines and transport corridors are supposed to benefit entire economies. But ample evidence shows that vulnerable communities pay a heavy price when they must make way for such projects.

Displacement translates into untold pain, impoverishment and wrecking of entire communities. This expropriation continues today despite decades of Bank promises to minimise the impact on displaced people.

Big infrastructure projects require a great deal of land. Even benign-sounding projects such as upgrading urban slums, planting forests to absorb carbon and creating conservation areas for biodiversity typically involve taking over large tracts of land. Almost inevitably that land is occupied by people whose lives and livelihoods depend on it. When those residents are forced to leave, women, children and indigenous peoples suffer disproportionately. Their poverty is made worse, not alleviated in any way.

The total number of people displaced by development projects – whether supported by the World Bank or not – is unknown. Reliable statistics on the matter are simply not compiled. The most frequently cited estimate is 15 million people a year. Michael Cernea, a development sociologist and a leading authority on forced displacement, provided this estimate in a 2007 analysis titled “Can compensation prevent impoverishment?”

Cernea came to the attention of the World Bank and wrote its first policy on compensating victims of involuntary resettlement, which the Bank adopted in 1980. It requires avoiding resettlement whenever

possible and posits that people should not be left worse off after resettlement (see my contribution in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/07).

Yet forced and under-compensated evictions, and the threat of such evictions, continue, despite large-scale protests. Along India’s Narmada River, for example, protests against dams that would flood entire villages have lasted for over three decades.



Rural people protesting against their village being submerged because of Omkreswahr dam on the Narmada river in 2012.

In the face of those protests, the World Bank established a commission to investigate its support for the Narmada dams. The commission concluded that the Bank was violating its own policy on involuntary resettlement. This finding led in 1993 to the creation of the Bank’s Inspection Panel, tasked with investigating complaints related to World Bank projects. More than two thirds of the complaints have concerned involuntary resettlement, according to a panel report in 2016.

Those complaints are only the tip of the iceberg. For the most part, the impact of displacement remains seriously underreported. Severe power imbalances combined with repression, remoteness and exhaustion caused by the daily struggle to survive, make it difficult and dangerous to protest.

In 2015 the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists estimated that in the decade between 2004 and 2013, 3.4 million people were displaced physically or economically in World Bank supported projects. Not only did the Bank fail to ensure that displaced people were adequately compensated, it did not even know about their fate.

Since then the World Bank has shifted more of the responsibility for meeting its projects’ social and environmental standards to borrowers. Experience shows that this is unlikely to improve the situation. Governments of low and middle income countries tend to be prepared to sacrifice welfare of marginalised communities for the sake of “development”.

When the United Nations launched its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it pledged that “no one will be left behind”. Zero tolerance for projects that displace people without adequate compensation would be a good place to start.

FURTHER READING

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BUEN VIVIR

The good life

In the Andean countries of Latin America, the principle of Buen Vivir or Sumak Kawsay (meaning roughly “living well” or “life in harmony”) developed as an alternative to western notions of development. It is based on the worldview of indigenous peoples and, simply put, aims to ensure material, social and spiritual satisfaction for all members of a community, but not at the expense of others or to the detriment of the natural environment. In 2008, the government of Rafael Correa, who then served as Ecuador’s left-wing president, enshrined Buen Vivir in the new constitution as a policy principle. In the meantime, however, the concept has lost significance.

By Philipp Altmann

In Ecuador’s national development plans (from 2009 to 2013 and from 2013 to 2017), indigenous peoples hardly figured. Mentioning them only served a symbolic purpose and legitimised government policy. Constant reference was made to Buen Vivir’s in-

digenous origins, but its specific indigenous content was never spelled out. Variations of Buen Vivir thinking, however, are found in the documents of indigenous movements beginning in the 1930s. Since the 1990s, indigenous activists have also connected Buen Vivir with calls for local self-administration within a plurinational state.

Partially as a result of the contradictions, the Buen Vivir ideology split into three main branches after the adoption of the 2008 constitution:

1. the indigenous branch is concerned with autonomy and self-determination,
2. the state branch is geared to inclusive development and human rights, and
3. a third branch views growth and development with scepticism and is centred around economist Alberto Acosta and others who oppose oil extraction.

The three branches have developed in different ways, but there was constant interaction between them.

The indigenous branch of Buen Vivir has the clearest definition and the longest



history. It has been described by the recently deceased activist Benjamín Inuqa. Since the 1930s, variations of the concept have been used to politicise indigenous identity. Since the 1980s, indigenous peoples in Ecuador have been demanding territorial autonomy, plurinationality and interculturality. In this sense, the indigenous version of Buen Vivir is about self-determination at the local level, with development respecting cultural differences and resulting from the action of civil society and local organisations rather than an overarching state. Accordingly, the indigenous branch of Buen Vivir generally opposes the exploitation of natural resources.

In the wake of the anti-government protests of October 2019, in which 20,000 members of indigenous peoples were involved, the term has fallen into disuse. Other terms are now preferred instead, like



Indigenous community in Ecuador sharing a meal.

plurinationality or Kawsay Sacha (meaning roughly living forest). The latter is also disseminated internationally by Patricia Gualinga, an activist from Sarayaku Kichwa.

A NEW DAWN

The state branch of Buen Vivir has a distinct origin. It arose with the sense of a new political dawn when the Correa government took office in 2007 and established the constituent assembly. The governing party, Alianza PAIS, saw itself as a collective left-wing movement. The new constitution and the initial government policies reflected a broad variety of positions, including the current that criticises conventional development and is associated with Acosta. He is the most prominent intellectual proponent of Buen Vivir worldwide.

At the core of this governmental vision is an inclusive development that:

- dismantles inequalities,
- relies on sustainable oil production and mining and
- is driven by state agencies.

This branch of Buen Vivir thinking considers the state to be unified and centralised. It does not offer scope for more local independence and self-administration. In 2009 and 2010, René Ramírez, then the head of the state planning authority, made an unsuccessful attempt to define a version of socialism based on Buen Vivir. Under his successors, the idea lost its centrality.

President Lenin Moreno, Correa's successor, took office in 2017. He has drastically reduced the Buen Vivir rhetoric. The current development plan (2017–2021) no longer includes the term in its title. The Secretariat of Buen Vivir, which was only ever symbolic, has been closed. "Living well" is no longer government policy.

Indeed, the state version of Buen Vivir had been in crisis since at least 2013. That was the year when Correa's third term began. It was characterised by economic difficulties and an increasingly authoritarian style of governance. In 2013, Correa officially ended the innovative initiative Yasuní-ITT due to a lack of international support. Yasuní-ITT was an attempt to prevent oil extraction in a large biosphere reserve in the Amazon region. The idea was that industrialised nations would compensate Ecuador for foregone export revenues. The initiative was designed with input from

Acosta. The plan was discussed in Germany's Bundestag, but Dirk Niebel, who was then the federal minister for economic cooperation and development, did not support it. The failure of this flagship project meant that, at the international level, an important pillar of Buen Vivir had collapsed.

Acosta and his supporters had actually broken with the Correa government as early as 2008, so the group's influence on his government waned and the state version of Buen Vivir started to lose relevance.



Sarayaku Kichwa activist Patricia Gualinga.

However, Acosta continued to promote the concept independently and became very active at the international level. From 2009 on, he disseminated his version of Buen Vivir in English- and German-language publications. He attended many conferences and gave numerous speeches.

In his eyes, Buen Vivir is an open and ongoing project. It is inspired by indigenous cultures and fosters a harmonious relationship with nature. The term can be rather freely interpreted. However, Acosta rejects industrial development, oil extraction and mining. His version of Buen Vivir fits the Yasuní-ITT initiative well, as it is closely related to ideas of climate justice, post-growth and development criticism. Some of his demands resonate internationally. In 2015, for example, François Hollande, then the

French president, referred to Buen Vivir in a speech. Acosta's ideas have left marks on international debate – for example at climate summits and in other UN contexts. They have had an impact on various institutions, including the UNESCO-funded programme Global Citizenship Education.

The high point for the Acosta branch of Buen Vivir was the Degrowth Conference in 2014 in Leipzig, Germany. Buen Vivir was prominently discussed at that conference, which convened scientists as well as social activists. The focus was on criticism of both growth and development. Later attempts to spread Buen Vivir thinking were less effective. They included a 2015 tour of the USA by Franco Viteri, a member of the Sarayaku people, and lectures Acosta and Grupo Sal continue to hold in Germany.

NOT ENTIRELY DISTINCT NOTIONS

The three versions of Buen Vivir have distinct orientations and foundations, but they are not entirely separate. There are several synergies. Proponents of all three branches endorsed the Yasuní-ITT initiative. There is also an underlying sense of mutual acceptance, especially between the indigenous movement's version and the version that criticises development. Tensions primarily arose about what role the state should play. The indigenous movements reject European ideas of statehood, whereas development critics tend to pin their hopes on spontaneous local cooperation. The Correa administration considered Buen Vivir to be tangible policy.

For some time, Buen Vivir was an innovative concept that served to link different discourses to one another. During its peak from 2009 to 2013, it provided a platform for a variety of interesting initiatives. As a state policy, however, it ultimately gave way to more traditional approaches. Its appeal to scientists and social movements is in decline. Though Buen Vivir has lost much of its relevance, the disputes it facilitated were meaningful and would not have occurred without it.



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OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Why taxation matters

ODA programmes are supposed to facilitate sustainable development. Given that they sometimes prove dysfunctional, however, new approaches are being tested. Official development assistance must not undermine the quality of governance.

By Hildegard Lingnau and Julia Schnatz

Official development assistance (ODA) stands for the range of foreign-funded programmes aimed at helping developing countries to boost both living standards and productive capacity. The proclaimed goal is “sustainable development” which basically means that economies should expand steadily and ensure broad-based prosperity, without however depleting environmental resources. Unfortunately, ODA sometimes hinders sustainable development.

The reason is ODA has a paradox at its heart. It only works to a rather limited extent. From life-expectancy to literacy rates, progress has been quite spectacular internationally (see, for example, review of

Hans Rosling’s book “Factfulness” in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/09). Rich nations’ support for poorer ones may be bureaucratic, but it has certainly contributed to this trend. Nonetheless, it can – and often does – create dependency and perverse incentives that actually impede progress towards sustainable prosperity.

James Shikwati, a Kenyan economist, is a harsh critic of conventional ODA. He argues that it supports unstable regimes, “while corruption and misappropriation of funds flourish”. Anecdotal evidence from many countries supports his claims. Shikwati warns that ODA not only funds huge bureaucracies, but also teaches Africans “to be beggars and not to be independent”. Shikwati wants ODA programmes to simply be terminated.

Other economists say the good news about poverty reduction is vastly exaggerated. Andy Sumner of Kings College in London says that most pockets of extreme poverty today are in developing countries and emerging markets where average incomes are rising fast. The problem is that many

people are left behind, and averages largely reflect gains of top-income groups. Sumner claims that at least half of the world’s poor live in countries where national governments are in a position to lift their people out of extreme poverty.

In 2019, a record number of 109 countries were classified to belong in the middle-income bracket. Poverty was still widespread in many of them, and inequality tended to be growing. This is not sustainable development.

While some countries have made progress – including China, Rwanda and Vietnam, for example – many others have not been successful, often in spite of strong economic growth.

Kenya is a case in point. In the years 2010 to 2017, its economy grew at a robust annual average rate of 5.9%. It achieved middle-income country status in 2014. However, income inequality has persisted since Kenya became independent in 1963. The country is not governed well, and more than a third of its people still live in extreme poverty (see box next page). Too few government officials take interest in providing for basic needs. They often prefer to let foreign ODA agencies take care of the matter.

ODA, however, cannot substitute for government action, and the long-term goal must be to make ODA superfluous. Domes-

GiveDirectly About COVID-19 Programs Recipients Evidence Blog Give Now

Did you know about the ongoing refugee crisis in Uganda? Give Now

In 2016, Uganda took in more people than any other country in the world — and that includes all of Europe at the height of the refugee crisis. Unfortunately, it's not making headlines.

UGANDA

GiveDirectly is cost-efficient, bypasses bureaucracies and helps poor people take their fate into their own hands.

tic resources should replace external funding in the not too distant future. That is why international agreements on development finance emphasise that all countries must generate tax revenues (see interview with Stefanie Rauscher in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/01). That agenda has actually been gaining momentum in recent years, but more can and should be done (see essay by Dereje Alemayehu in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/01).

National agencies matter very much. Research done by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), a think-and-do-tank of prosperous nations, confirms that insight. ODA is most successful when funders stick to the criteria that were spelled out in a series of high-level summits on aid effectiveness that started in Rome in 2003 and culmi-

nated in Busan in 2011 (also see essay by Peter Lanzet in Tribune section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/02). The most important principles are:

- policy ownership of developing countries,
- transparency and mutual accountability,
- focus on results and
- inclusive partnerships.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

These principles serve the purpose of building domestic capacities in developing countries, but ODA agencies unfortunately sideline them all too often. One consequence is that governments of developing countries have no incentive to increase their tax revenues. As there is no political will to solve

domestic problems with domestic resources, however, progress must remain illusive.

Angus Deaton, an economist and Nobel laureate, has explained why: “Economic development cannot take place without some sort of contract between those who govern and those who are governed.” Taxes contribute to reinforcing that bond, as other economists, including Mick Moore of the University of Sussex and Odd-Ørjan Helge Fjeldstad of the University of Bergen, have been arguing for over a decade (see Fjeldstad in D+C/E+Z print issue 2007/05, p. 202).

The underlying reason is that citizens who are taxed will want to know what the government will do with their money. They will demand accountability, and the political system gains legitimacy to the extent that governments prove that they are making good use of the revenues, for example in

Under-performing ODA darling

Despite its recently acquired status as a middle-income country, Kenya still has a high absolute poverty rate. A 2018 World Bank report puts it at 36.1%. According to the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, a group of researchers, policy makers and practitioners and development professionals, 55% of the Kenyan households that escape poverty do so only temporarily.

Other indicators show that Kenya’s economic growth has not translated into generally better living conditions. Kenya ranks 146th of 188 countries in the UNDP’s Human Development Index. Its Gini coefficient – the most commonly used measure of wealth inequality – is 0.552, reflecting very high levels of inequality. The nation did not reach the Millennium Development Goals and is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Kenya under-performs on governance compared both to

the average for Sub-Sahara Africa and to the average for other middle-income countries. It scores poorly on World Bank Good Governance indicators for things such as rule of law or control of corruption. It ranks at the lowest third of countries on these measures and shows signs of things getting worse. Corruption is eroding the national budget by an estimated 30% to 50%. In July 2019, Kenya’s minister of finance and 14 other officials were charged with financial crimes. The government is not taking effective measures to counteract rising social and economic exclusion.

Nonetheless, Kenya remains a darling of governments that invest in official development assistance (ODA). According to OECD data, it has consistently stayed among the top 12 ODA recipients.

ODA flows mean that Kenya’s government hardly has any incentive to generate taxes



Informal businesses are common in Kenya: knife sharpening service in Nairobi.

in order to fund development. Indeed, Kenya’s tax revenues have consistently fallen as a share of GDP in recent years.

According to a World Bank report of 2018, they dropped to 17.2% in the 2016/2017 fiscal year.

terms of building infrastructure or providing essential services.

Many economists such as MIT's Daron Acemoglu and Harvard's James Robinson argue that development has more to do with the strength of a country's political institutions and its social systems than with ODA (see book review by Rebecca Renz in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/08). To reduce poverty, they need good governance more than they need money. If ODA is not managed well, it can actually undermine governance.

There are several innovative approaches to ODA that are designed to deliver better results. Examples include:

- The World Bank's "Programmes for Results" (P4R) link ODA disbursement to achievement of results.
- Multilateral organisations are considering direct funding in support of global public goods. So far, money for these purposes has been channelled through national governments. However, academic studies suggest that multilateral initiatives are less politicised, more demand-driven and more

likely to achieve the intended results. An example of this approach is for multilateral organisations to support research and development aimed at eradicating specific diseases affecting developing countries, such as malaria.

- Economists Armando Barrientos and David Hulmes have suggested a simple yet powerful solution to ending poverty: give money directly to the poor instead of relying on an expensive and complex "aid industry". The idea is to let them decide for themselves what helps the most. This idea led to the creation of a non-profit organisation named GiveDirectly, which passes money on to the world's poorest by use of readily available digital technology.

- GiveDirectly began operations in 2011 and is now active in several East African countries. Cash transfers are done by mobile phone and directly boost the purchasing power of poor families (also see report on PEGNet conference in Monitor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/12). The operations of GiveDirectly cost less than five cents per dollar raised. That is a tiny fraction of the share

spent by ODA agencies. By bypassing both governments and non-government organisations, however, GiveDirectly is certainly not feeding corrupt bureaucracies.

The critics of conventional ODA certainly have a point or two. The challenge now is to improve ODA rather than to simply discontinue it.



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PARTICIPATION

Valuable resource

A new book presents participatory methods in development research and projects. It has the makings of a standard.

By Frank Bliss

Participation is a concept that is used especially frequently in development cooperation, but also leads especially frequently to misunderstandings. That is because the use of participatory methods in gathering planning data for a development project is often confused with the actual participation of the affected people themselves. The first is common, the latter much less so. The reason is that, for the vast majority of all development projects, the goals and allocation of resources have already been decided before participatory data collection takes place on site.

Nevertheless, more and more participatory planning is occurring, and participatory methods are being used, regardless of how or whether the projects are ultimately carried out. These participatory methods are the subject of the book "Partizipation und nachhaltige Entwicklung" ("Participation and sustainable development") by Michael Schönhuth and Maja Tabea Jerrentrup. It addresses their derivation, development and in particular their application.

In the first of ten chapters, the authors discuss the concept of participation, and how it has become a cross-cutting issue in development assistance in recent decades. This discussion is followed by an overview of ever more fine-grained participatory survey and planning approaches, from rapid and rural to the general participatory appraisal. Whereas experts' initial goal was to gather information about, for instance, the socio-economic conditions of a rural region as quickly as possible and with the involvement of all important actors, nowadays participatory methods are used in almost all development areas and situations.

The book also illustrates the use of participatory methods during the implementation of measures and during the subsequent evaluation. The reader must keep in mind, however, that participation almost

always relates exclusively to the small details of a project whose execution has been determined in advance by someone else. Similarly, evaluators almost always make their ultimate assessments alone.

The main portion of the book consists in a methodology of participatory appraisals in the broadest sense. It is strongly shaped by personal experiences and is therefore particularly vivid. The team of authors presents, among other things, participatory research and consulting tools and discusses fields where they might be applied, such as work with the poor, children and young people or indigenous people. Thematic examples include land rights or the path from taking a participatory survey in a village to processing the results electronically.

Two short chapters on the question of participation and representation and participation and ethics address important issues such as the protection of especially vulnerable people during participatory processes – particularly questions of anonymisation – and data protection.

Twenty practical tips summarise important technical advice and ethical requirements for applying participatory

methods, whereas in the chapter called "Instead of a conclusion", the authors call for more civil-society involvement in general, highlight the limits of participation in a representative democracy and, with regard to participation in the digital age, make a deliberately provocative gesture towards the idea of awarding political offices through selection by lot.

A 43-page bibliography supplements the most important sources, which were cited and commented on in the individual chapters. Thanks to its breadth and relevance, it represents a valuable resource for further work in this area. With their book, Schönhuth and Jerrentrup have made the best contribution so far, at least in the German language, to the question of the use of participatory methods and the role of participation in development practice. It will surely remain relevant for years to come.

BOOK

Schönhuth, M., Jerrentrup, M. J., 2019: Partizipation und nachhaltige Entwicklung. Ein Überblick. Wiesbaden, Springer VS. (Only in German.)



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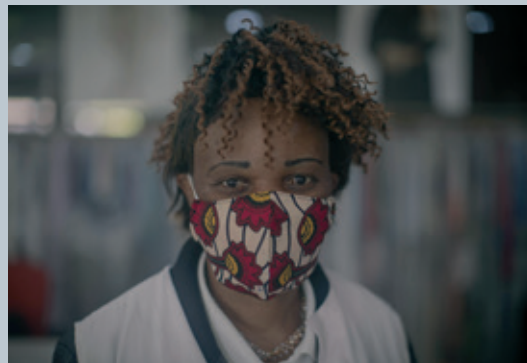


A woman reports from a village planning group in Chad.

Novel coronavirus

As D+C/E+Z is supposed to tackle issues of long-term relevance without responding much to breaking news, Covid-19 took us by surprise. To deal with this crisis, we started a Covid-19 diary on our website and are including some of the most recent entries here. The authors are from four different continents. Their articles do not necessarily reflect the fast changing state of affairs. The relevant date is the indicated day of publication on our website.

Our web diary: <https://www.dandc.eu/node/4306>



30 AUGUST 2020

Covid-19 and the climate crisis are linked

Media has been calling the Covid-19 pandemic “the worst crisis in 100 years”. The same can be said about the global climate crisis. Indeed, the two crises have similarities. Handled in a good way, both can help to improve humankind’s resilience.

By Waldo Soto, Luís Cisternas and Katie Cashman

The global crisis around the Covid-19 pandemic accentuates the fragility of governing systems and the lack of a coordinated crisis response. Safeguarding the economy versus protecting people’s lives have been internationally established as the poles determining the range of governmental actions.

This is similar to the orientation of responses to global warming. Many consider climate action to be in contrast to a growing economy. The similarity between the crises is unquestionable, although the Covid-19 crisis might end soon – which is definitely not the case for the climate crisis.

In both crises, those who suffer the most are those who were already vulner-

able, either because of their age, illness, or because of a state that fails to protect them. This is particularly the case in countries with high inequality, poverty, poor health systems, corruption and government mistrust. Loretta Hieber, the UN delegate for disaster risk reduction for the Asia-Pacific region, said on 22 April: “The most marginalised are the most severely impacted by both crises.” The crises affect all individuals, but at the same time exacerbate the vulnerability of those with less resources.

According to early scientific definitions, a crisis is characterised by a disruptive stimulus – surprise, a shock – which causes individuals to readapt their behaviour. Such “shocks” could have permanent consequences, such as chronic stress or malnutrition. Under a crisis stimulus, people develop a problem-solving attitude. However, if they are not successful in solving the problem, they may permanently lose their confidence for solving future challenges. In this way, a crisis can be seen as a turning point in life, in which a person

either expands their repertoire of tools to solve problems or ends up with techniques that are not adapted or applicable to reality. The same applies to communities and organisations.

Therefore, both the Covid-19 crisis and the climate crisis can serve as opportunities to adopt new behaviours, expand the set of available tools and improve problem-solving abilities. A crisis is temporary, but what remains of it depends on the response to it. The fundamental question is how to cope with and overcome the crisis in a way that leads to improved resilience. Lessening inequalities in our societies seems to be the fundamental answer to ensuring the protection of all in the face of crisis.



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23 AUGUST 2020

Temples over hospitals

The tally of people infected with Covid-19 in India zoomed past the 2 million mark in the first days of August. The numbers are raising fast to take it to 3 million soon. It took India only 20 days to progress from 1 million to 2 million cases. This was faster than the USA (43 days) and Brazil (27 days).

By Arfa Khanum Sherwani

Two million infections was not merely a psychological mark. It showed that India's Covid-19 policy has been a disaster. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrongly praises his government for managing Covid-19 better than the "developed" world. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare argues that it is a great achievement to have kept the recovery rate among patients above and the fatality rate below the global average, but epidemiologists do not agree. They attribute the lower fatality rate to India's comparatively young demography.

Of course, one does not have to be a public health expert to conclude that more than 50,000 deaths in just over four months is a terrible record, especially after the imposition of a harsh, but improvised lockdown. On 24 March, the prime minister announced a total national lockdown on a notice of just



four hours. This resulted in millions of migrant workers getting stranded in big cities without jobs, food or shelter. All public transportation was discontinued, so neither trains nor buses were available. Masses of people started walking home to their villages. The trip took many of them several days – and all too many died on the way.

A rough estimate is that India has about 120 million internal migrants who come from a village but work in one of the major cities. The depressing truth is that the lockdown was not used to ramp up medical services, including testing. The government has centralised decision making, but has not risen to pandemic challenges. The suffering the lockdown caused was therefore

mostly in vain. Once the restrictions were lifted, the disease began to spread fast.

In August, Amit Shah, the home minister of the central government, was tested positive for Covid-19. He was immediately admitted to a private hospital. Several other policymakers were infected too, and so is Amitabh Bachchan, the Bollywood superstar. Most of the prominent patients get good medical treatment. Nonetheless, two state ministers in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, did not survive the virus.

It is telling that Home Minister Shah opted for a private hospital. The public health-care system is in a very poor shape. It has long been neglected. The vast majority of Indians, however, cannot afford private health care. About 90% of the labour force works for informal businesses or smallholder farms.

Modi's Hindu-supremacist government is more interested in identity politics than in social services. As the country crossed the 2 million patients threshold, Modi found the time to lay the foundation stone for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya on the location where a Mughal Mosque was torn down in 1992 (for background information, see my contribution in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-paper 2020/08).



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9 AUGUST 2020

Unwanted pregnancies

Zimbabwe's anti-coronavirus lockdown has had an unintended consequence: a spike in unwanted pregnancies as contraceptives became unavailable. The spread of HIV is looming too.

By Jeffrey Moyo

"Even condoms that used to be free of charge are difficult to find in the villages,"

says 46-year old Jabulani Zhou of Mberengwa in south-central Zimbabwe. He already has eight children and now has four more on the way, as his three wives and a girlfriend are pregnant. Zhou is not sure how he will support 12 children, especially now that Zimbabwe's economy has slowed.

His is not an isolated case. "Fighting unwanted pregnancies has become difficult for many people here as prices of birth

control pills go beyond reach," says Mucha Shumba, an official of the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council in Mberengwa.

Contraception in Zimbabwe has become a story of haves and have-nots. Birth-control pills can be found in private pharmacies at a price of \$1 per packet – too high for many Zimbabweans at a time of high unemployment. Condoms are difficult to find at almost any price.

Responsibility for providing contraceptives and family-planning advice ultimately falls to the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC), an independent agency under the Ministry of Health and Child Care. However, the agency

is strapped for funds and has been unable to carry out its mandate.

Women bear the brunt of that failure, say women's-rights activists. "Shortages of contraceptives help to undermine women's reproductive health rights," says Celestine Sithole of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), a human-rights NGO based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city.

Public health is also at risk. "With condoms in short supply, it may mean that after Covid-19 we will wake up to an upsurge of HIV cases," warns Milenia Musingwa of the Zimbabwe National Network of People Liv-

ing with HIV. About 1.3 million Zimbabweans live with HIV, according to UNAIDS.

Moreover, "there are concerns that women will be forced into unsafe abortions" to terminate unwanted pregnancies, says Fungisai Dube, executive director of Citizens Health Watch, a public health watchdog group. And Ruth Labode, chairwoman of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Health, says: "Anecdotal evidence points to an increase in unintended teenage pregnancies due to lack of access to contraceptives."

Sexually active young women and girls have a high risk of unwanted pregnan-

cies because more than 70% of them rely on oral contraceptives and condoms, as opposed to longer-term measures such as intrauterine devices, according to an April 2020 report in HealthTimes, a Zimbabwean web portal. The statistic comes from the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey of 2015.



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2 AUGUST 2020

Multiple adversities

Pakistan's mango growers are struggling with several problems: climate change slows production while the Coronavirus pandemic slows exports. Additionally, locusts are damaging the trees – which could severely affect next year's harvest.

By Syed Muhammad Abubakar

Mahmood Nawaz Shah is a mango grower and exporter from Tando Allah Yar district in Sindh province of Pakistan. Over the past few years, he has been seeing delayed ripening of mangoes due to changes in weather patterns. "The Sindhri mango, a popular variety, used to ripen by the end of May, but this year it was ready for harvest by the end of the first week of June in lower Sindh," Shah says.

According to the global climate risk index 2020, which is published annually by the German non-governmental organisation Germanwatch, Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change. Impacts of climate change strongly affect the agrarian economy.

Shah says: "Temperatures exceed 50 degrees Celsius. Coupled with unusual wind patterns, this affects the size and sweetness of mangoes." Certain districts of Punjab province that used to produce bumper crops of mangoes were impacted by rains and storms, Shah adds. Therefore, this year's mango production in these areas will be

considerably lower than usual. Changing seasons and unusual rain patterns affect mango production too.

However, climate change is not the only problem mango growers face. Exports have severely declined due to the Coronavirus pandemic. "Covid-19 has resulted in demand contraction and disruptions in flights. Air freight on the few available flights costs two to three times more than previously. Supermarkets in the UK have delisted Pakistani mangoes due to very high prices," says Shah.



Selling mangoes at a roadside in Karachi.

According to the All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA), a trade association, Pakistan exported 130,000 tons of mangoes last year, which earned \$90 million in foreign exchange. For this year, the target has been reduced to 80,000 tons. PFVA patron-in-chief Waheed Ahmed says: "COVID-19 had a two-pronged effect on mangoes. Peoples' buying power has been affected, and air freight costs have skyrocketed thus limiting exports."

Worsening the situation, the European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA) has suspended the authorisation for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to operate in the bloc for six months, starting in July. The decision followed a statement by Pakistan's aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan that 30% of Pakistani pilots have fake licenses.

Even if these problems are solved, next year the situation could be even worse: Pakistan is witnessing dreadful attacks of locusts on mangoes. They do not eat the fruits but the leaves, thus harming the trees and possibly affecting future mango production. Ahmed points out that the arrival of locusts and their regeneration is an environmental phenomenon: "Without a favourable environment, locusts wouldn't have been able to flourish the way they have."



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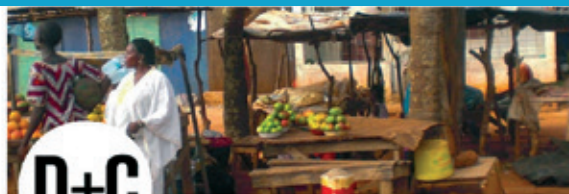
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