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Political movements

FOCUS

Political movements

Longing for democracy

Algeria's government hoped to stop pro-democracy protests with a recent constitutional referendum. Sophian Philip Naceur, a Tunis-based journalist, explains why that did not work out. In Lebanon, many people feel disappointed because the change they hoped for has stalled. Instead, corruption is rampant, propelled by Covid-19 and a deep economic crisis, as Beirut-based journalist Mona Naggar reports.

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Fighting oppression

Homophobia is common in Uganda, including among government agencies and legislators. Queer Youth is an independent organisation that supports young gay and lesbian people, as Sam Opio, the founder, elaborates in an interview. In Nigeria, the government recently had to dissolve a controversial police unit in view of broad-based protests. Ben Ezeamalu, a Lagos-based journalist, assesses the situation.

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Engaging OPAs

The world population is growing, but senior citizens are largely ignored in many countries. Older people's associations – OPAs for short – can make a difference. Important issues include social protection, financial support and public appreciation, writes Jürgen Focke of the international non-governmental organisation HelpAge.

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Mixing fact and fiction

Right-wing populists want to mobilise masses of people. In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte and his supporters rely on strategic online disinformation. Alan C. Robles, a contributor from Manila, claims that such propaganda helps to keep the opposition in check.

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Andean activism

After months of protests, voters in Chile have opted for electing a new constitutional assembly. The old constitution was crafted under military dictatorship and served to entrench social injustice, as Javier A. Cisterna Figueroa, a journalist, argues. In neighbouring Bolivia, social movements and civil-society organisations reflect complex class, ethnic and regional identities. Their influence is strong, and they have impacts on politics, as sociologist Ulrich Goedecking elaborates.

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Leaderless, but powerful

Political movements ebb and flow. They typically arise suddenly, and some change society forever, while others fade without much impact. Some transcend borders, but then play out quite differently in different places.

Our era is restless, marked by many political movements. This year, the Black Lives Matter movement spread from Minneapolis around the world. In 2018/2019, “Fridays for future” became the slogan of climate-aware teenagers on all continents. In 2011, the Arab Spring rocked much of North Africa and the Middle East. Recent pro-democracy protests look like an Arab Spring 2.0 in some countries, but similar movements are evident in faraway places too – including, Chile, Belarus and Thailand, for example.

Some basics deserve attention. Unlike formal organisations, political movements typically do not have a legally defined leadership. They arise from loose networks of like-minded people who share a common cause and, for one reason or another, decide that a grievance has become intolerable. Leaderlessness has several implications. The two most important are that:

- movements are hard to repress because the authorities cannot simply silence the top level, and
- movements are prone to utopian demands as no one is in charge of making dreams come true.

To achieve goals, more is needed. Accordingly, political movements tend to have close relationships with formal organisations (associations, co-operatives, parties et cetera), which they either found anew or discover to be supportive of their cause. In a democracy with secure civil rights, new movements fast become yet another facet of a highly diverse civil society. Typically they demand more inclusion, environmental protection or social justice, so they find allies accordingly. Where, however, civil-society space is restricted, political movements challenge the political order itself, so demands for democracy take centre stage. Democratic systems are actually stronger than autocratic ones because they can respond to new demands without seeing their very existence under threat.

Angry people – especially if they are young – endorse radicalism. Some, though not all, equate radicalism with violent action. They are misguided. Ample historical evidence shows that non-violent civil disobedience often achieves a lot, whereas militia-style operations regularly lead to new authoritarianism. Repressive governments, on the other hand, are quite keen on provoking violent clashes. They know that their security forces, well-trained and well-equipped, are more likely to prevail in combat-like scenarios than they themselves are to prevail in reasoned public discourse.

Not all political movements are progressive. Right-wing populism too needs to network, leveraging widespread frustration. However, this kind of nationalism tends to be more top-down, more prone to science denial and more dependent on charismatic personal leadership. If right-wing populists feel support within the security forces – as they often do – they will be more prepared to risk the escalation of violence. If they have strong financial support from special interests, they can rely on intricate media operations to spread propaganda. Small grassroots initiatives of marginalised people do not have that opportunity. Nonetheless, the discontent they express may resonate with masses of people and trigger huge popular movements.

► 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



Nice try

A seemingly trail-blazing Bangladeshi judgment made international headlines in early 2019, but it did not set a precedent guiding courts in other countries. The High Court had ruled that rivers are legal entities with the right to be protected. Law professor Ridwanul Hoque explains what would have made the judgment more forceful. **PAGE 8**

Tribune



Another Bretton Woods moment

To fight Covid-19 and get a grip on the climate crisis, the IMF wants governments to take decisive action and recommends deficit spending. It emphasises international coordination, moreover. José Siaba Serrate, an economist based in Buenos Aires, explains the background and points out that other important players take a similar stance. **PAGE 9**

No healing, no peace

In Africa's Great Lakes region, recurring violent strife and fight have traumatised many people. Their psychological suffering needs attention and healing. Otherwise, it will only exacerbate the potential for violent conflict. Gesine Ames and Luca Bootsmann of Ökumenisches Netz Zentralafrika (Ecumenical Network for Central Africa), a faith-based organisation, provide an overview. **PAGE 12**



They have good intentions, but are privileged nonetheless: humanitarian workers in Sudan's Darfur region.

HUMANITARIAN AID

A time of reckoning

Humanitarian organisations are concerned about racism, inequality and abuse of power structures. They must face persistent post-colonial structures not only in the regions where they work as relevant problems arise within the agencies themselves. Humanitarian workers are reassessing their practices and demanding systemic change.

By Sabine Balk

Lina Srivastava used to be an international development worker and now advises agencies on how to use narratives for bringing about social change. One of her favourite topics is how privilege and abuse of positions of power mark non-government organisations (NGOs) and their surrounding networks. She says of herself: "I am privileged because I was born in the USA and grew up there, but at the same time, I am disadvantaged as a woman of colour." In her eyes, systemic racism, sexism and self-righteousness permeate the humanitarian sector, with humanitarian workers typically

enjoying privileges. She says these things were ignored for a long time.

Lauren Reese of the DAI Center for Secure and Stable States agrees. She offers this explanation: "We all believe that our work does good, and that has blinded us to blatant and racist inequalities within our own sector." A brief consideration of history, she adds, suffices to show that many things related to aid are deeply rooted in colonial times.

According to Reese, a long-standing pattern was to think that developing countries were unable to take care of themselves and thus needed technical and financial assistance to industrialise. At the same time, aid allowed countries in the global north to stay in control and to further exploit the markets of developing countries. Reese says that colonial power structures are still evident in the aid business, with leaders being predominantly white and white people deciding matters of funding and control.

Angela Bruce-Raeburn works for Global Health Advocacy Incubator, a con-

sultancy. As a black woman, she is used to experiencing racial discrimination the USA – and that includes humanitarian agencies. That is what she told her audience during the Humanitarian Congress 2020. This is a conference series and it was held digitally in October for the first time, hosted by agencies like Doctors without Borders and the German Red Cross. The intention was not only to discuss issues of privilege, inequality and racism, but also to come up with tangible solutions.

Bruce-Raeburn has observed that aid agencies, when hiring staff, often give preference to white men over black women. All too often, the man is considered to be better qualified. Bruce-Raeburn wishes women would stop accepting such practices and oppose them more assertively.

Inequalities that are prevalent in society are typically prevalent in humanitarian agencies as well, says Rahima Begum, a human-rights activists from Bangladesh and cofounder of the NGO Restless Beings. She has been working with women and children from the Rohingya community in refugee camps, for example. She reports that communities that are particularly marginalised – including refugees or Dalits, for example – are often cut off from aid. In her eyes, humanitarian aid should first and foremost serve the needs of the affected communities

and be handled by local workers. She hopes that the sector will develop in a way that will make local ownership in this sense more common.

This year, Covid-19 has made inequalities worse, says Sandra Dworack, who works for Oxfam and specialises in education. The pandemic, according to her, has triggered a massive education crisis, further marginalising children from poor families. Dworack points out that about one third of the world's children cannot take part and are excluded from remote schooling as they lack access to radio, TV and internet (also see Claudia Isabel Rittel in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/10, Covid-19 diary).

Deepak Xavier also works for Oxfam and warns that, most likely, not all people will benefit from a future Covid-19 vaccine (also see Jörg Schaaber in Tribune section

of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/11). Given that vaccine research is mostly funded with tax money, he finds that unacceptable. People, he insists, make vaccines for people rather than for corporate profits.

Xavier is adamant: "People do not need aid, they need rights." In his view, the humanitarian system is not inherently bad, but it is designed in a way that only benefits few people, including international NGOs as well as grassroots organisations. "We must build a world," he demands, "in which all people get equal treatment and enjoy equal opportunities." He wants structures that only serve the few to be dismantled.

Lina Srivastava's proposal for bringing about change is "to really listen". In particular, aid agencies should pay more attention to those who suffer and the local people.

Unless the social and political context is understood, she warns, it will be impossible to find solutions and devise better strategies. She recalls how she once asked members of a community-based organisation in Arusha, Tanzania, what conditions they were facing, and being told with great surprise that no western expert had ever raised that question.

Srivastava insists that the humanitarian sector must tackle the impacts of racism, colonialism, inequality, gender prejudice and patriarchy, all of which are deeply entrenched in agencies' power structures. She considers it a good start that these things are now being debated. More black and indigenous people are needed in positions of leadership, she adds. Systemic change is inevitable, according to her, but it will take time.

Tackling disinformation

Fake news is being spread in regard to both the novel coronavirus and vaccinations. Humanitarian workers must confront such disinformation, which is spread online. Agencies are shoring up their response.

Fact checking is crucial (see Mona Naggar in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/11, Covid-19 diary). Kate Wilkinson, the deputy chief editor of Africa Check, is committed to the cause. Africa Check is an agency that applies various methods to find out whether statements made in public are accurate and fact-based. It publishes its findings. Wilkinson wants her work to help aid workers argue the pro-vaccination case convincingly. However, Wilkinson says that it is impossible to reach every single person who was exposed to a falsehood.

Fact checking should be proactive, Wilkinson says. Accordingly, Africa Check published an extensive fact sheet

based on all available information on vaccinations as well as approval-procedures for pharmaceuticals in South Africa. The idea is to give people guidance concerning the questions they should ask about vaccinations and the sources they can depend on to find out whether information is true or not.

Fact checkers are not averse to humour, Wilkinson told this year's digital Humanitarian Congress. She has launched a podcast called "What's crap on WhatsApp" and sends it out to 6,000 people twice every month. The mission is to point out fake news on WhatsApp by making fun of it. The responses have been enthusiastic, she says, so she feels encouraged to keep testing new and entertaining approaches to spreading information.

According to her, it is essential to disrupt the flow of fake news. When people are shocked, frightened or angry,

their capacity to critically assess a message is reduced dramatically, Wilkinson warns. It is therefore important to make the audience pause and think before they share information.

D+C/E+Z contributor Urvashi Aneja of the Indian think tank Tandem Research agrees, not least because some people share disinformation they know is false simply because they are bored. Cultural dimensions matter too. For example, she says, there is an

Indian habit of sharing news in the morning without considering it important or serious. Aneja says it is necessary to assess more diligently why people are hanging around without anything better to do than "sharing random trivia by smartphone". sb

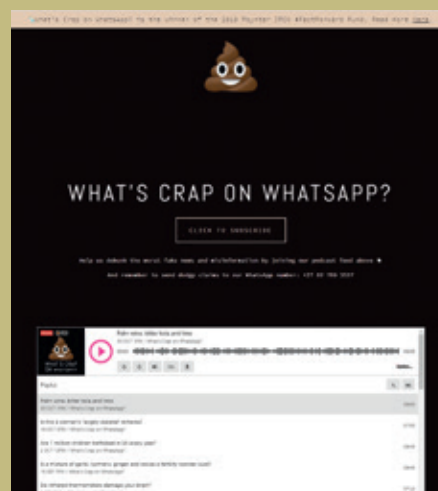
LINKS

Africa Check:

<https://africacheck.org/>

What's crap on WhatsApp:

<https://www.whatscrap.africa/>



The podcast "What's crap on WhatsApp" points out – and makes fun of – fake news on WhatsApp.

An early end to childhood

In 2017 the Malawi Parliament banned marriages among children under 18, hoping to stem a tide of child marriages. The legislation was passed as an amendment to the Constitution, in an effort to strengthen an existing law setting the minimum marriage age at 18.

Three years later, nothing much has changed. Indeed, the incidence of child marriage is on the rise.

According to the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), 46 % of Malawian girls are married before age 18, compared to 42 % in 2017; 9 % of girls are married before age 15. Malawi has the 12th highest rate of child marriage in the world, Unicef says.

Not surprisingly, the data on early marriages are correlated with data on teen pregnancy. Malawi's National Statistics Office says that between 2010 and 2016, the rate of pregnancy among teenage girls increased from 25 % to 29 %.

Also not surprisingly, early marriage and pregnancy are also correlated with girls dropping out of school. More than 50 % of Malawian women who have never been to school became pregnant in their teens, compared to 32 % of those

with primary education and 19 % of those with secondary education. Early marriages and pregnancies stunt girls' educational and social development and limit their future opportunities.

Limbani Nsapato, an educator, says that laws alone will not reverse these trends. Broader social factors that contribute to early marriage and teen pregnancy must be addressed. The main cause of early marriages is poverty. "Many families are too poor to pay for their daughters' school fees and other needs; they opt for early marriage thinking that the husbands will support them," he says.

Another factor is cultural practices such as initiation ceremonies encouraging teenage boys to be sexually active. In addition, "parents lack knowledge about how to advise their daughters on sexuality and contraception and how to emphasise the importance of education," he says.

The closure of schools in response to the Coronavirus pandemic made matters worse, by interrupting teens' education. "Due to the closures of schools we saw more early pregnancies and early marriages," Nsapato says, reporting of thousands of girls who have been forced into early marriages or become pregnant. "Some are marrying as young as age 14," he says.

Theresa Kachindamoto, paramount chief in Dedza District agrees that teen pregnancies spiked in the wake of school closures. Kachindamoto, who has informal authority over more than 900,000 people, has taken action to dissolve 2,000 child marriages, earning for herself the nickname "the marriage terminator".

She highlights the importance of education for both girls and boys, and calls on education authorities to keep schools open. "Continued closure of schools is encouraging young girls and boys to engage in sexual relationships that end up in pregnancies and marriages," she says. "This is compromising their education."



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WORLD POLITICS

Brief sigh of relief

The votes are counted, and Joe Biden obviously won the presidential elections in the USA. This is good news for international cooperation, but it is a matter of concern that Republican leaders let Donald Trump block the transition far too long.

By Hans Dembowski

Biden will repair some of the damage done by his predecessor. The USA is set to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, for example. Moreover, it will hardly keep making the World Trade Organization ever more dysfunctional. In many other multilateral settings too, a more constructive US policy will make a difference. The promotion of democracy and the fight against corruption will get a boost in global debate. In office, Trump resembled an authoritarian strongman who took good care of his cronies and family, with neither interest in the public good nor respect for the rule of law.

Unfortunately, the voters did not fully reject Trump. Some 47% wanted him to

stay president – in spite of the mismanaged pandemic, the blatant cronyism and constant lying. They also re-elected or newly elected Republican politicians who enabled Trump's norm-breaking authoritarianism for four years. It is especially worrisome that a large number of Republican officeholders chose to pretend that the election results were somehow unclear. As the editorial board of the Washington Post put it on 19 November, Trump attempted a coup. It was likely to fail in view of Biden's strong performance, but Trump did deny the validity of the result, put pressure on state officers in charge of vote counting, made a trusted loyalist his secretary of defence, filed frivolous court cases and blocked the transition by any means available. If that happened in Nigeria or Pakistan, everyone would consider it a coup attempt. It is alarming that far too many Republican leaders failed to stand up to it. Their democratic duty was to support a peaceful transition to the Biden presidency.

Most likely, the Senate will stay in their control, though Republican senators

still represent far fewer citizens than senators of the Democratic party. If Democrats win two run-off Senate elections in Georgia in January, they would also win the Senate, but that is not the most likely scenario.

Republican senators may thus stop Biden from implementing a comprehensive reform agenda and deny him the funding he needs for decisive health care or climate action. He will also probably stay unable to implement reforms to entrench democracy more deeply, such as granting statehood to Puerto Rico and Washington DC. The people of both jurisdictions are tax-paying US citizens, but they are not represented in Congress by legislators with voting rights. Puerto Rico does not even vote in presidential elections. Statehood would change that, but an obstructionist Senate is unlikely to make it happen.

Biden's domestic success, however, will have an impact on his highly relevant international influence. We live in an era in which international cooperation is indispensable. No nation can successfully tackle the most important challenges – the climate crisis, world peace, public health et cetera – on its own. Our future depends on governments responsibly coordinating their action. Trump easily managed to disrupt global institutions, but he was unable to replace them with anything better.

The governments of democratically run countries are certainly entitled to a sigh of relief. They should not take a break however. We have seen just how fragile US democracy has become. Diplomats from around the world should not only cooperate with the future Biden administration in pursuit of their narrowly understood national interests. They should do their best to bolster him in the USA, by cooperating sensibly with him on the global stage and by engaging legislators and sub-national leaders in the USA.

They should also make it very clear to Republican politicians that the world expects the USA to live up to the principles of democracy and human rights that US presidents – with one exception – have been preaching for decades. Chancellor Angela Merkel, alluding to Trump in 2017, said that the years in which “we could entirely depend on others” were over. That remains accurate. Though Biden should be a reliable partner, things may again look different after the next election.



The next president of the USA is very different from the current one.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Nice try

A seemingly trail-blazing Bangladeshi judgment made international headlines in early 2019, but it did not set a precedent guiding courts in other countries. The High Court had ruled that rivers are legal entities with the right to be protected. This judgment was well intended, but ultimately people and agencies have to be empowered to take action, which a river plainly cannot do.

By Ridwanul Hoque

It all began in 2016 with a newspaper article about the sad state of the river Turag on the outskirts of the Dhaka agglomeration. The reasons were pollution, land grabbing and sand extraction. Next, a non-governmental organisation lodged a lawsuit as often happens in South Asia (see my contribution co-authored with Arpeeta S. Mizan in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/11).

Bangladesh is located in the Delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. It is marked by water bodies and wetlands. The country is densely populated, and the global climate crisis is compounding problems of water scarcity, but also flooding.

The activists told the Supreme Court of Bangladesh that the river degradation was putting people's lives at risk.

Legal cases do not move fast. In 2016, the judges ordered that illegal establishments on the riverbanks had to be evicted. In 2017, a court-appointed officer reported that there were at least 30 such establishments. In previous cases, judges had ruled that rivers are of vital environmental relevance. Accordingly, they had declared it illegal to cause damage to them. However, some businesses responded by arguing that their operations were underpinned by their fundamental rights and thus legal.

In response to such claims, the High Court Division decided to endow rivers with legal personhood in regard to environmental affairs in early 2019. The judges stated they had to do so to save the Turag. They thus made Bangladesh the first country to give legal rights to all its rivers. This is an interesting and innovative approach.

The idea to award legal rights to forests, oceans and other natural objects was first spelled out in the 1970s. For three decades, it remained pure theory. In the new millennium, however, related laws were passed by Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand and some states in the USA.



The river Turag in March 2020.

In India in 2017, a High Court accorded two rivers, the Ganges and the Yamuna, the status of legal persons. That ruling, however, did not take force. The reason was that a state government asked what would happen if someone sued a river for compensation after flooding. Quite obviously, a river cannot pay.

In theory, the same question could arise in Bangladesh too. Other issues remain unresolved as well. A river may be given rights, but it cannot go to court after suffering harm. Yes, rivers must have the right to exist, flow and not be polluted – but human beings must do the work.

The judgment is 283 pages long. Many consider it historic, and an appeal against the decision has failed. The main problem is that the judgment does not answer many practical questions. Bangladeshis may feel good about the judges having quoted the popular proverb of water being “the other

name of life” or praising rivers’ “contribution” in the liberation war of 1971. Such phrases help to raise valuable public awareness, but they have no immediate consequences in daily life.

For good reason, the court ruling ordered the government to turn the existing river-protection agency into an independent and efficient body. That step makes sense. It is equally important to ensure that government agencies act in accountable ways. Allowing non-governmental organisations to sue officeholders who fall short of their duties is useful in that context. None

of this, however, requires rivers to be considered persons.

The ruling won praise from many commentators, but it did not set an international precedent. Indeed, the effective approach to nature protection is to expand the scope of the state's respective statutory and constitutional duties. The Supreme Court took steps in that direction but could have done more. Considering rivers as persons is beautiful, but ultimately just symbolism. The sad truth is that many water bodies in Bangladesh, including the Turag, are still in a rather depressing state.



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MACROECONOMIC POLICY

Another Bretton Woods moment

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is in favour of aggressive state action in response to Covid-19 and global warming. Its top leader insists on global cooperation more-over. In the international arena, other voices are supporting those views.

By José Siaba Serrate

The pandemic is proving to be a turning point for global economic policy. “We face a Bretton Woods moment,” says Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the IMF.

Bretton Woods is a small town in the USA where, before the end of World War II, an international conference set up a new international economic order as well as the IMF and the World Bank (the “Bretton Woods institutions”).

In many ways, the international community faces similar challenges today. It must fight the war on the virus, ease the economic pain and rebuild better for an unsettling future. Top priorities now, according to Georgieva, are to spend more, and not to cut expenditure, invest in people and protect

the vulnerable. She wants governments to assume responsibility by expanding spending on health care, for example, and by providing support to businesses as well as needy people.

Very importantly, she considers action on climate change to be indispensable too. Its impacts are “macro-critical”, threatening growth and prosperity.

Like in Bretton Woods in 1944, moreover, she calls for international cooperation. “A sisterhood and brotherhood of humanity” was the title she gave her address to the annual meetings the IMF and World Bank held in digital format in October. She alluded to a famous statement the British economist John Maynard Keynes made at the conference, where he was the leading intellectual though, at the end, not the most influential. The final, less functional, architecture was dictated by his US counterpart, Harry Dexter White, a self-made technocrat who imposed Washington’s unrivalled post-war muscle.

Notice that this time David Malpass, a US citizen and president of the World Bank, does not dissent to Georgieva. He

emphasises the urgency of “addressing poverty, inequality, human capital, debt reduction, climate change and economic adaptability as elements in ensuring a resilient recovery”. He was nominated for the job by US President Donald Trump, but Malpass’ statements show that global cooperation is in better shape than the rhetoric of populists would suggest (and maybe even than in 1944). The Covid-19 pandemic pushed the world to the brink. Governments around the world have responded with massive spending on health care, social support and economic stimulus. Policies were so similar that they were de facto coordinated.

Fiscal packages around the world now total \$ 12 trillion. The EU has backed even off from previous practice, moreover, and decided to do joint lending. The idea is to facilitate strong government action in economically weaker member countries.

CENTRAL BANK THINKING

Central banks are helping governments to borrow money with very low-interest rates (nil and even negative) and massive bond-buying. Because of the pandemic, both the US Federal Reserve (Fed) and the European Central Bank have further loosened their monetary policy. Jerome Powell, the Fed chairman, has indicated that maximum employment is the top priority, and that, under a new policy approach, his institution would allow inflation to temporarily overshoot its two percent annual goal if necessary.

Moreover, central bankers’ worries about climate change have been growing. The Central Bank and Supervisors Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) has pointed out that its impacts might increasingly undermine macroeconomic stability. The NGFS was launched in 2017 and now has 72 member institutions. The Bank for International Settlements has expressed similar views – in technocratic detail rather than as a policy statement (see Hans Dembowski in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/03, Monitor section). In a similar vein, ECB President Christine Lagarde says: “Everybody must step up to address what is the main risk of the 21st century.” If action is not taken fast, she warns, it will be too late.

According to the IMF, government deficits will have to grow for yet some time. Hasty attempts to restart economies and balance budgets will only deepen the crisis,



Temporary Covid-19 hospital in an exposition centre in Mexico City: around the world, health care needs additional resources.

with both health and economic problems becoming worse. World Bank economist Carmen Reinhart says the governments of advanced economies should not worry about repaying debts now, given that interest rates are very low.

For the governments of developing countries and emerging markets, things are more difficult than those of advanced nations. Their fiscal space is more restricted, and they need foreign loans. The good news

is that Covid-19 has not triggered a credit crunch. Capital markets have kept functioning smoothly. It certainly helped that economic policies from around the world were responding in the same expansive way.

LOOMING SOLVENCY PROBLEMS

So far, there has been no liquidity crisis. However, solvency problems are looming. A growing number of developing countries

and emerging markets look increasingly over-indebted. The risk of sovereign debt stress within two years has more than doubled – from an average probability of 11% to 24% – according to IMF forecasting models. Emerging markets are particularly exposed.

The scenario is complex and not fully transparent. Nobody has a clear understanding of every existing liability. Relevant lenders include multilateral institutions, bilateral agencies of established as well as

Keynesianism – then and now

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) was probably the most important economist of the 20th century. Analysing the Great Depression, which started in 1929, he introduced a new paradigm: governments must borrow money and increase their spending in economic downturns in order to prevent a recession from becoming a self-enforcing depression. Put very simply, the dynamic is otherwise that the recession forces private-sector companies and households to cut spending since their own revenues and incomes keep dwindling. If everyone reduces spending at the same time, however, incomes keep falling. The lack of demand for goods and services stalls economic activity.

Governments can stop the downward spiral with deficit spending, as Keynes pointed out. If they use this opportunity to build necessary infrastructure and expand public services, moreover, they will improve their nation's long-term outlook.

Today, free-market radicals consider Keynes a leftist, because he insisted that governments have an important role to play in economic life. The truth, however, is that he did not want to overcome

capitalism. His theory actually helped to rescue it.

Keynes proved to be very influential. For decades, western governments assumed a strong role in economic life, and that helped them prevail in the competition with the Soviet bloc. Keynes emphasised international cooperation. One reason was that exports can compensate demand shortfalls in one country if other countries buy its goods. It thus made sense for national governments to coordinate their economic policies with one another. Multilateral institutions – in particular the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which were established in 1944 (see main story) – were supposed to serve that purpose.

For several reasons, however, market orthodoxy was gaining strength again by the mid-1970s.

One was that it proved much more difficult to bring about development in former colonies with Keynesian concept than to facilitate fast reconstruction in post-war Europe. Many developing countries became over-indebted. Another reason was that conservative economists began to blame inflation and unemployment on excessive government action. Leaders like Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA promised they would liberate market forces and reduce the role of the state. Multilateral institutions followed suit.

However, Keynesianism never died completely. Starting with Reagan, even conservative US leaders have had a pattern of relying on deficit spending

to stimulate the economy when they needed to. They did, however, resent the kind of public services Keynes recommended.

Nonetheless, the World Bank and the IMF have been gradually returning to Keynesian ideas and backing off from market orthodoxy. One relevant step was multilateral debt relief around the turn of the millennium, when it became obvious that many least-developed countries were plainly overburdened with debt (see Jürgen Zattler in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/08, Focus section). To boost development, domestic spending on poverty alleviation was considered more important than repaying excessive debts owed to bilateral and multilateral agencies.

After the Great Recession that started in 2008 with the collapse of the investment bank Lehman Brothers, the IMF accelerated its paradigm shift. Keynesian ideas indeed fit the needs of our time. In a sluggish economy with far too little investment, it certainly makes sense for governments to take indispensable climate action or tackle worsening global poverty (see review of World Bank report in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/10) – even if that means increasing their debt. According to the IMF, there actually is no alternative in the current global setting. dem



John Maynard
Keynes in 1944.

rising economic powers as well as private-sector entities. China, of course, has become very important. It is now the leading official bilateral creditor.

Governments' need for funding is growing, but financiers are likely to become more cautious. World Bank President Malpass has therefore expressed frustration about private lenders so far hardly joining the initiative to suspend debt servicing to low-income countries. He insists they must enable cash-stripped governments to respond to the Covid-19 crisis.

It adds to the worries that the international community does not have a standard procedure for resolving government defaults. In cases of crisis, effective and fair restructuring of debt requires the participation of all parties involved – including private companies or the Chinese government.

Georgieva, the top IMF leader, has pointed out that cooperative debt restructuring may be needed. To some extent, how-

ever, things are better today than in the past. The reason is that the IMF began to promote collective action clauses (CACs) in the context of bond-denominated debt two decades ago. Such clauses spell out that bond buyers agree to restructure debt contractual conditions in the case of sovereign default. This means that, if certain majorities are met, individual bondholders can neither block procedures, nor stay aloof and then insist that the money owed to them be repaid in full. CACs have reduced financing costs for governments of many countries. Recent restructuring efforts concerning Ecuador and Argentina, moreover, have shown that they are effective.

Nostalgia for Bretton Woods is nothing new, by the way. In 2008, after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, it led to the G20 raised to the presidential level to become the top global economic forum. Their coordinated action then ensured that the Great Recession did not escalate into a second Great Depression.

We live in an uncertain world. While the IMF and the World Bank point in a sensible direction, many details must yet be resolved and much may yet go wrong. World political leaders have a role to play too.

At the Bretton Woods final plenary, Keynes famously said: "We have had to perform at the same time the tasks appropriate to the economist, to the financier, to the politician, to the journalist, to the propagandist, to the lawyer, to the statesman – even, I think, to the prophet and to the soothsayer". This time, one should add the medical doctor.



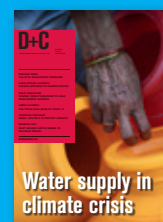
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TRAUMA

Confront the past or lose the future

Africa's Great Lakes region is marked by violent conflict, migration and constantly recurring dynamics of violence. The experience has traumatised the people, and the failure to properly address their suffering has exacerbated the propensity for violence – and the potential for further conflict.

By Gesine Ames and Luca Bootsmann

The Rwandan genocide of 1994, which left more than 800,000 people dead, was an incisive event. It destabilised the entire

region. Many Rwandan refugees gathered across the border in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). New armed groups formed in the confusing scenario. In 1996, the First Congo War erupted, marking the start of an enormous military confrontation, and conflicts over land, natural resources and power continue to this day.

In the eastern DRC, the state performs few of its basic duties. Indeed, government agencies at times perpetrate violence themselves. Rwanda has developed into an auto-

cratic state that exerts strong control over its territory and people. Burundi, which borders both countries, has repeatedly recorded cycles of violence since becoming independent in 1962, with massacres of both the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. After 12 years of civil war, an increasingly autocratic regime has taken hold. The contentious re-election of former President Pierre Nkurunziza plunged Burundi into a new political and humanitarian crisis in 2015.

Experiences of violence have triggered major traumas in the people of the countries. Failure to address these issues causes them to reproduce and be passed on – potentially for generations. Currently, the three countries are addressing their violent pasts in different ways.

DR CONGO

In 2018 alone, violent conflicts displaced 1.8 million people in the DR Congo. Around



Soldiers in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa in 2006.

12.8 million people in the country depend on humanitarian aid. The east in particular has suffered from violence for over 20 years. In 2019, over 130 armed groups were counted in the provinces of North and South Kivu (see interview with Christoph Vogel in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/02, Focus section).

Sexualised violence is a widespread phenomenon. In South Kivu, in the years 2005 to 2007, over 20,000 rape victims were registered, a third of whom were minors. The number of unreported cases is certainly considerably higher. Other traumatic experiences, like kidnappings, are also very common. A 2008 survey of the north-eastern province of Ituri, revealed that 95% of 13- to 21-year-olds had at least one traumatic experience, and 52.2% of respondents exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The perpetrators frequently were from the ranks of the army and police. They are rarely taken to court. Widespread impunity reinforces people's lack of trust in the justice system, so victims all too often do not report crimes.

The public health-care system is dilapidated and cannot provide the necessary psychiatric treatment. State programmes to address the past are practically non-existent. "The responsibility for caring for traumatised people is passed off to national and international NGOs and faith-based organisations," says Kavira Nganza, one of the few trauma therapists in the eastern part of the country.

There are just two hospitals that treat trauma patients, and both are church-financed. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Denis Mukwege (see Mahwish Gul in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/11, Debate section) works in one of them: Panzi Hospital in Bukavu. He has treated many rape victims and has repeatedly called for an end to the violence and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Yet the current government is doing nothing to either confront the past or address rampant impunity.

Most violence occurred during the 18-year term of former President Joseph Kabila, whose security forces actively contributed to the problem, most recently during the brutal suppression of the protests against the postponement of the presidential elections between 2015 and 2018 (see my article in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/05, Debate section). Kabila has nothing to fear from his successor, Felix Tshisekedi, however. Short-

ly after taking office in 2019, Tshisekedi announced that he would let the past be past and that he saw Kabila as his ally.

RWANDA

Rwanda is often considered to provide a model of how to confront the past. The state authorities have gone a completely different way than the DR Congo. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 was among the 20th century's most atrocious crimes. Twenty-six

traumatised during the genocide and their mental health is affected accordingly today.

At the end of 1994, the UN established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which reviewed complaints against the parties primarily responsible for the genocide. The majority of the proceedings were transferred to Rwanda's own national jurisdiction, however. Because Rwanda's justice system lacked the necessary capacity, pre-colonial Gacaca courts were reintroduced in 2002. These are lay-



An event in Rwanda's capital Kigali, to commemorate the genocide of 1994.

years later, the legal proceedings have been concluded, but social reconciliation still has a long way to go.

During the genocide, around half a million women and girls were raped. Many people witnessed friends and family members become victims of violence. Studies have shown that between 25 and 29% of people in Rwanda exhibit symptoms of PTSD. A 2018 study demonstrated, moreover, that the prevalence rate of depressive disorders is as high as 53.9% among the survivors of the genocide. Generally speaking, it is assumed that at least a quarter of the country's 12 million residents were severely

person's courts that were traditionally only responsible for minor crimes such as theft. Their application to violent crimes in Rwanda's post-genocide state created many challenges, and their effectiveness is disputed.

Rwanda's policies of remembrance are subordinated to an official state doctrine in many areas. Thus the state has developed clear mechanisms regarding how the past is to be dealt with and how it should be discussed. The state speaks exclusively of "the genocide against the Tutsi". Hutu who opposed the murders and were therefore killed, and the Twa, an ethnic minority of whom an estimated one third were mur-

dered, are rarely mentioned in official state discourse. Furthermore, the government under President Paul Kagame to this day refuses to take part in addressing the human-rights violations that it itself has committed since the end of the genocide.

Kagame's government has strictly defined how the genocide is commemorated. Every year, a week-long commemoration takes place "in order to show solidarity with the murdered Tutsi", as the official phrase states. The other ethnic groups are denied an opportunity to memorialise their dead. The extremely offensive commemoration, during which, for example, survivors report on their experiences and the remains of the victims are laid out, triggers another retraumatising crisis every year. Participation in the events is mandatory and misconduct can be punished.

Whereas the government has made great efforts to tackle the genocide from a political (and educational) standpoint, the psychological/medical side has received far too little attention so far. Despite some development success, Rwanda remains a low-income country with limited resources.

This is evident in the health sector, particularly when it comes to the treatment of mental disorders. In the entire country, only one clinic specialised in mental health in 2016. In this area, Rwanda depends entirely on local and international NGOs as well as on faith-based institutions. According to the Ministry of Health, however, mental health has now been declared a top priority. Correspondingly, the number of medical personnel specialising in this field has dramatically increased in recent years.

BURUNDI

Burundi's recent history has been shaped by various cycles of violence beginning in 1962 and a twelve-year civil war that cost around 300,000 lives. The tensions persisted following the Arusha Peace Accords of 2000 and the end of the civil war in 2005. The most recent cycles of violence occurred both before and during the presidential elections in 2010 and, even worse, in 2015 (see my comment in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2016/02, Debate section). Political power struggles have hampered attempts to confront the country's violent past in the context of various peace and reconciliation efforts. Many perpetrators of human-rights violations

and war crimes still hold political positions, which makes coming to terms with the past significantly more difficult.

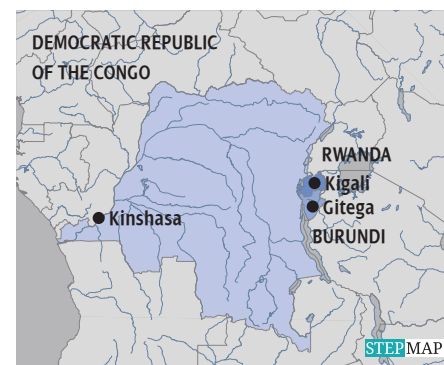
Since 2000, multiple state and civil-society initiatives have aimed to tackle this history. The most important document is probably the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of 2000. This agreement laid the foundation for a comprehensive division of power between the Hutu and Tutsi – in the government, legislature, administration, police and army. Transitional-justice mechanisms were established, including an independent national human-rights commission and a truth and reconciliation commission (CVR).

However, the CVR only began its work in 2014 and has been harshly criticised. One reason is that it has shied away from addressing the current political conflict, which began in 2015. Instead, it has attracted media attention with the exhumation of mass graves, which, according to its director, contain only the victims of massacres perpetrated against the Hutu in 1972. These finds, their documentation and above all the lack of psychological processing potentially retraumatise people and, in the worst-case scenario, revive ethnic resentments. The staffing of the CVR is determined entirely by the government, which thus ensures that responsible parties within its own ranks are not brought to justice. The human-rights commission is also more or less under government control, so its contribution to an open and honest confrontation with the past is likely to remain minimal.

The regular justice system is not doing its part to handle the numerous attacks on members of the opposition, human-rights activists as well as civil society actors. Impunity is common. Moreover, in 2017, Burundi became the first member country to quit the International Criminal Court, following the Court's announcement of a thorough investigation of the events since 2015. In 2018, a controversial constitutional amendment largely repealed the division of power between Hutu and Tutsi that was agreed in the Arusha Agreements. A new government took office this year, and it does not conform with the agreement. The country's fragile peace and reconciliation process is at risk.

The many acts of violence in the distant and more recent past have deeply traumatised Burundi's people. According to a recent study, 63 % of people know at least

one person personally who was murdered. A 2012 study discovered that about a fourth of all Burundians are so severely traumatised that they exhibit clinical symptoms of a trauma-related disorder such as PTSD. Another investigation even determined that just under 40 % of people experience symptoms of PTSD. In a study from 2010, 91.7 % of the surveyed Burundian refugees reported having closely escaped death, while 96.7 % had lost a family member to a violent death. Like in Rwanda, however, the state-regulat-



ed examination of such violence tends to focus primarily on the political dimensions.

On the whole, the conflicts and associated traumas of the people in the African Great Lakes region are very complex. Their triggers include the genocide in Rwanda and years-long cycles of violence and civil wars, as well as ongoing internal displacement and flight. The conflicts continue to smoulder and are being exacerbated by various political, military and economic factors. Without a comprehensive confrontation with the past, it will remain difficult to carve a path to long-lasting stability, security and peace for people in the region.



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Many Nigerians are tired of police brutality – protest rally in October 2020.



Political movements

Public demands for change often arise suddenly and can have lasting impacts. Political movements typically call for social justice, inclusion and environmental protection. Sustainable development is implicitly, if not explicitly, endorsed by such movements. Where the authorities respect civil liberties, a new movement fast becomes yet another facet of highly diversified civil-society activism.

Where civil-society space is severely restricted, by contrast, demands for democracy and human rights take centre stage.



This focus section directly relates to the UN's 16th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. It also has a bearing on the other SDGs.

ALGERIA

Call for genuine democracy

Algeria has not found peace since Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was president for 20 years, resigned under massive public pressure in April 2019. On 1 November 2020, the government held a constitutional referendum to end the political crisis. Things did not work out that way. On the contrary, the rifts between the regime and the pro-democracy movement have deepened further. The opposition now wants to use the momentum from the latest wave of protests to better organise itself.

By Sofian Philip Naceur

In seeking to amend the constitution, the Algerian government was trying to take the steam out of the protest movement, which is generally referred to in Algeria as the “Hirak” (Arabic for “movement”), fobbing it off with cosmetic reforms. The increasingly authoritarian regime hoped to acquire legitimacy and put the Hirak on the defensive. That attempt has failed.

Though the constitutional changes were approved by 66.8% of those who took part in the referendum, turnout was at an all-time low of just 23.7%. And even that figure may have been embellished. It is well understood that elections have been systematically manipulated for decades in Algeria, but government failed to take steps to reform electoral law that would have ensured a transparent vote in the run-up to the 1 November referendum.

On polling day, the majority of Algerians thus simply ignored the ballot. Instead of queues outside polling stations, there were protests, biting satire and even assaults on polling stations. Demonstrators set up trash cans with slits for voting papers and symbolically tossed handmade ballot cards into them as garbage in eastern Algerian towns and the traditionally rebellious Kabylia region – a Berber-dominated opposition stronghold east of Algiers. Peaceful protests took place in numerous towns and villages. In some places, however, demonstrators stormed polling stations and dumped or set fire to ballot papers on the street. In the face

of the protests, authorities actually aborted the electoral process in uncounted municipalities in eastern Algeria.

The electoral disruptions came as no surprise. Many close to the Hirak had called for a boycott of the referendum. Indeed, the successful boycott campaign is a ray of hope for the activists. For the first time since March, when the Covid-19 pandemic set in, the movement started once more to attract significant support.

THE PROTEST MOVEMENT'S SUCCESSES

The Hirak's glory days were in early 2019, when hundreds of thousands of demonstrators marched almost daily through Algeria's cities, demanding Bouteflika's resignation. He had been in office since 1999. When he did step down in April 2019, the regime remained in place however. The army took de facto control, though, under pressure from the streets, it did arrest and put on trial dozens of people who had belonged to Bouteflika's inner circle.

It fast became clear nonetheless that the army was not going to fulfil Hirak demands for genuine political openness. Instead, it used the crisis to clean up its own ranks and purge the Bouteflika faction from the corridors of power.

Since then, the regime has been trying to appease the protesters without responding to calls for real democracy. And yet, the Hirak has proved extremely tenacious, having learned lessons from Algeria's past as well as from failed uprisings during the Arab Spring of 2011. For example, the Hirak consistently disowns violence. Facing peaceful protests, the regime could neither use brute force nor discredit the movement. Nonetheless, the authoritarian officeholders stubbornly clung to power. In early 2020, the country was heading for deadlock.

A new president, Abdelmajid Tebboune, was “elected” in December in a ballot clouded by charges of manipulation. It is an open secret, moreover, that Saïd Chengriha, the powerful army chief of staff, is pulling the strings. Both were soon reiterating mantra-like demands for a constitutional referendum, suggesting it would lead out of the impasse. Chengriha declared over and over again that it would be a crucial step towards building a “new Algeria”. The government tried to sell the proposed constitutional



Mass anti-government protests in Algiers in March 2020.



amendments as a concession to the Hirak and the opposition in general. The truth, however, is that those changes do not mean serious reform.

Yes, the new constitution only permits the head of state to stay in office for two terms. It also strengthens the role of legislators. However, the president still has the power to choose and appoint senior judges and thus retains considerable influence over the judiciary. While civil liberties and a ban on censorship are now enshrined in

the new constitution, moreover, the government showed in the run-up to the referendum that the “guarantees” are not worth the paper they are written on. Activists, members of the opposition and journalists continued to be systematically detained. Many were dragged before the courts on bogus charges.

The Pact of the Democratic Alternative, a centre-left opposition alliance, stated that this latest wave of repression against members of the opposition amounted to a “crusade by the regime against freedom”. Accordingly, the government’s assurances of human rights and civil liberties being respected in the future are unconvincing.

In view of the coronavirus crisis, the Hirak had dwindled, and, ahead of the referendum, it was no longer the impressively powerful force it had been in the first months of 2020. Now, the tide has turned. The regime used the pandemic as an excuse to take increasingly repressive action against the Hirak. That has now backfired,

with opposition to the referendum swelling the ranks of Hirak supporters again.

The Hirak intends to strengthen its arm even more in the coming weeks. It has launched a new initiative, “Nida22”, aimed at finally convening the diverse ideological and political groups within the movement around one table. The goal is to forge a broad alliance that is capable of putting the regime under pressure more effectively than at present.

If the government wants to end the political crisis, it needs to offer the protesters more than merely cosmetic reform. But without a new mass mobilisation of the Hirak on Algeria’s streets, it is unlikely the regime will make concessions.



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An event marking the one-month anniversary of the explosion in Beirut's port, as a result of which the government was forced to step down.

MENA

Quick reforms are not in sight in Beirut

Approximately one year after stepping down, Saad Al Hariri will once again head Lebanon's government. Many of the demonstrators who took to the streets to call for reforms in October 2019 consider this a serious setback. Others are clinging to old patterns – and leaders – in response to the country's grave crisis.

By Mona Naggar

There was an enormous feeling of joy when former Prime Minister Saad Al Hariri stepped down at the end of October 2019. He was responding to the reform demands raised by thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets in a number of Lebanese cities. The resignation of the government and the formation of a transitional govern-

ment made up of technocrats was supposed to usher in the reform at process. It seemed for a moment as if civil society was strong enough to exert pressure on Lebanon's political class.

The new government, which formed under the leadership of Hassan Diab, a university professor, did indeed merit the label "technocratic" – its members did not belong to any party. Yet they were clearly loyal to the established political forces and personalities in the country.

The Diab government resigned a few days after the catastrophic explosion at Beirut port on 4 August 2020. In view of 200 dead, thousands of injuries and 300,000 people left homeless (see my commentary in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/09, Debate section) it could not stay in office. Now the former

prime minister is back: Hariri will once again take over the task of forming a government.

Reactions to Hariri's return have been mixed. Some people are deeply frustrated at the prospect of a reprise of all-too-familiar agreements among the corrupt forces in the country. It feels like déjà-vu: politics according to the old model. For others, Hariri's political experience, good relationships with the west and the fact that he enjoys the trust of the banks make him the right candidate to enact concrete measures in these turbulent times.

Lebanon's situation could hardly be more difficult. The state is bankrupt. The banking crisis has robbed the citizens of their savings. Every day people, queue up in front of the banks in the hope of being able to withdraw small amounts. Poverty is rising rapidly. According to data from the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), over 55% of Lebanese now live in poverty, almost twice as many as last year.

The state is being overwhelmed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Anyone who can is leaving the country. Nasser Yassin, a political scientist at the American University of Beirut (AUB), is speaking of the third wave of emigration in Lebanon's history. The first

occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when a civil war and the collapse of silk manufacturing drove people abroad. The second wave occurred before and during the civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990.

Today, the country is experiencing the most difficult political and economic crisis in three decades, which is being exacerbated by the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Well-educated Lebanese are moving to Australia, Canada or the USA. Illegal paths are being used as well: boats regularly leave the Lebanese coast bound for Cyprus.

SHATTERED HOPES

Only one year ago, many Lebanese looked full of hope into the future. In October 2019, enthusiasm and optimism had gripped people all over the country. Lebanese migrants even came back from abroad to take part in the “October protests”. They wanted to witness the political system, which was in need of reform, bowing to the pressure of the street. One year later, this mood has dissipated. The demonstrators’ demands can still be seen written on the walls of downtown Beirut. But protests happen only spor-

adically. The activists have become largely invisible.

It was not possible to maintain a high degree of mobilisation for months, writes Lina Gomaty for the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS). Gomaty played an active role in the demonstrations. She acknowledges that activists failed to bring forth other forms of mobilisation or create a sustainable infrastructure. According to her, the majority of them did not organise themselves into groups or parties.

Therefore, the demonstrations posed no lasting threat to those in power. Moreover, the economic crisis forced people to focus on their very survival. Given the lack of public social services, many Lebanese see clientelism as their saviour – particularly now. They turn to political and religious leaders for help even though they know that these very leaders are the foundation of the corrupt system. Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that public protests have flagged. The increasingly brutal attitude of the security forces is also making many people shy away from protesting in the streets.

At first glance, the situation appears hopeless – as if there was no possibility for

change in Lebanon. If, however, one regards the “October revolution” in the larger context of protests since the end of the civil war in 1990, the verdict is not so grim. Opposition to social injustice, mismanagement and corruption has never stopped in recent years. On the contrary, it has gradually become more intense, and that presents a very promising outlook for the future. And one achievement of the “October protests” is already clear: the politicisation of the younger generation.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

“LGBT people still tend to hide”

Homophobia haunts many African countries, including Uganda. The civil-society organisations Queer Youth Uganda is making efforts to improve things for LGBT people. The four letters stand for “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual”. Queer-Youth leader Sam Opio told D+C/E+Z about both the progress made in recent years and lasting problems.

Sam Opio interviewed by Isabella Bauer

How has the situation of LGBT people changed in Uganda in past decades?

When I grew up, we had no information at all. Every once in a while, there would be a story about a man being arrested for “sodomis-

ing” another man. There was no distinction between gay, lesbian or trans people. People said that homosexuality was not part of the African tradition or culture and that “perversions” were being imported from the west. Things were very confusing and frightening for young gay people like me. There has been some progress, however, and the year 2014 was an important turning point in the history of the LGBT movement in Uganda.

What happened?

In 2014, legislators passed a bill that would have introduced the death penalty for homosexuals. That was supposed to become the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014. The gov-

ernment supported that initiative, and so did some fundamentalist Christian faith leaders. They did not succeed however because a network of civil-society organisations resisted them. It included women’s organisations, HIV/AIDS organisations, human-rights activists and others. Scholars supported us too. We became a coalition that had a lot of influence on public opinion. Many people came to understand that our community is being demonised. The truth is that we are not a danger to anyone and that we have a right to live our lives. What we do with consenting adults in privacy is nobody else’s business.

Did international networking help?

Yes, it was very important in several ways. In 2011, the murder of David Kato, who was Uganda’s first prominent LGBT activist, had made international headlines. We got support from international civil-society organisations, including, though not only, LGBT



The website of Queer Youth Uganda.

organisations. The information they provided concerning research insights into health and sexuality was very useful, and it helped to push back against homophobic propaganda. They also provided funding, legal advice and sometimes personal support. Donor governments became aware of how bad homophobia is in Uganda and other African countries. They started to cut official development assistance to Uganda, insisting that our country must follow international human-rights standards. The government felt that pressure and ultimately the “kill-the-gays bill” was nullified by the constitutional court in 2014. The homophobic preachers actually got some support from Evangelical leaders in the USA, for example, but people in Uganda began to understand that they were peddling unscientific lies.

So has homophobia calmed down?

Only to some extent. We still face a lot of harassment and must cope with occasional abuse. Sometimes, people beat us in the streets. I have personally been attacked several times. That can be very frightening, because it makes you feel that you have no safe future. But things have improved nonetheless. When I was attacked in 2019, I went to the police to report the case, though the police didn’t do much investigating. They claim that they have a special LGBT unit but nothing is done in favour of LGBT persons. They continue to blackmail, distort and

embarrass the LGBT persons at the police stations. The Ugandan parliament has continued to pass laws that negatively affect the LGBT community. The Computer Misuse Act, for example, makes it illegal to share information about LGBT advocacy online. The punishment can be up to five years in prison. If we want to host a workshop with more than 15 persons, moreover, we have to request a police permission according to the Public Order Management Act. We have to say that the topic is human rights or HIV/AIDS. If we say we want to discuss LGBT rights, we will not get the permission.

Why does Queer Youth Uganda mostly work in your country's remote and rural areas?

We focus on the rural setting because there are already many organisations for LGBT people in Kampala, the capital. It used to be very difficult for us to reach out to our community in rural areas, but that has changed thanks to social media. There still is a lot of prejudice however, and LGBT people tend to hide.

You grew up in a village yourself. How did you come to understand your own identity?

No one had an idea of who I was. We could not talk about it. I always felt different from the rest, because I was so attracted to the same sex. But I had no idea how I could define this. When it became clear that I feel for people of my same sex, I was rejected by my extended family.

How did your life change when you moved to Kampala?

Well, it is ironic that the anti-gay campaigns of some Ugandan newspapers actually helped me. They mentioned a meeting place, the bar Mama Mia in Speke Hotel. So I went there and immediately felt I had come to the right place since this was the meeting point for other same sex persons in the capital city.

How did you become a fulltime activist?

I finished university and got a job with Bata shoe company. But I was fired after some time, because I was gay. Newspapers had published pictures of me. Thanks to donors from the Netherlands, however, there was an opportunity to become a fulltime activist, and I was able to start Queer Youth Uganda. It was the first time that I was not constantly asked whether I was married or had children. It felt liberating. And it feels good to provide young LGTB people in the countryside with this kind of information and support that would have helped me when I was a young gay village boy.



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Participant in protest rally in Lagos State on 16 October.

POLICE MISCONDUCT

Sudden eruption of anger

In October, Nigeria's government found itself forced to disband a notorious police unit after officers' excessive violence had triggered protests. Unfortunately, there is reason to doubt that lasting change has been achieved.

By Ben Ezeamalu

In early October, a video went viral. It allegedly showed men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a Nigerian police unit, killing a young man. Protests erupted fast – first in the major cities of Lagos and Abuja, and then spreading across the country.

SARS has a bad reputation and discontent has been expressed for years. In the years 2016 to 2020, the government announced – four times – that it had disbanded, reformed or scrapped this police unit. This time, it formally replaced SARS with a new unit: the Special Weapons and Tactical unit (SWAT).

SARS was established in 1992. It was meant to fight armed robbery and other serious crimes. Over the years, however, it became known for harassing people and extortion. It was even widely accused of torture and extrajudicial killings.

In 2016, the hashtag #EndSARS began to trend on social media. In the same year,

Amnesty International published a report highlighting how SARS officers routinely demanded huge sums of money before releasing persons from custody. In June 2020, the international non-governmental organisation issued another report, documenting human-rights abuses. In one case, SARS officers tortured a 23-year old man they suspected of having stolen a laptop in 2017. In another, they kept a 24-year old man detained for five weeks without allowing him to contact his family or a lawyer or giving him access to medical care in 2018.

In October 2020, after the video incident, protests moved offline. Angry young people rallied on the streets. They used social media to coordinate points of convergence, and soon road blocks made economic activities grind to a halt.

As the protests gathered momentum across the country, a five-point list of demands became popular. It included:

- the release of all arrested protesters,
- justice for victims and compensation for their families,
- the establishment of an independent body to put a check on police misconduct,
- psychological evaluation and retraining of officers and
- better pay for the police so they might finally be adequately compensated.

On the one hand, the government began to discuss the demands seriously, but on the other hand, it once more opted for repression. In the night from 20 to 21 October, armed soldiers were told to disperse protestors who were blocking a toll plaza on a highway in a prosperous part of the Lagos agglomeration. The troops shot and killed several people, triggering violent riots that included looting and even arson.

The anti-SARS protests had erupted spontaneously, based on loose networks of frustrated people. There was no formal leadership. The government thus did not have clearly identifiable people it could negotiate with – and potentially co-opt. On the other hand, no movement leader could assume responsibility in terms of preventing the protests spiralling out of control and turning violent.

In the eyes of the activists, the absence of a recognised leader is a strength. In the past, protest leaders all too often used their position for self-enrichment – or they were silenced by the authorities who arrested them or used even more brutal means.

In the wake of the protests, the government is now cracking down on perceived masterminds. Bank accounts have been frozen and some persons face allegations of financing terrorism. At least one person had her passport seized so she can no longer travel abroad. Dismayed by the audacity and effectiveness of the protesters, the authorities appear determined to mete out punishments.

To what extent the new SWAT will be different from SARS remains to be seen. If it turns out to be no better, youth frustration will keep growing and the government's legitimacy will further be eroded. Some political leaders seem to believe that aggressive police repression is a sign of strength, but in reality, excessive police brutality indicates inadequate governance – and undermines the credibility of the political leaders.

LINK

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One of the priorities for Older People's Associations is women's participation, as here in Cambodia.

SENIOR CITIZENS

A mobilising force

The world population is ageing, but in many countries, senior citizens have almost no lobby. They lack political influence, financial support and social security. The international network organisation HelpAge seeks to change that.

By Jürgen Focke

HelpAge Germany was established in 2005 in Osnabrück and is currently active in 89 countries. Working with around 160 partner organisations, it supports and promotes self-governing associations of the elderly

in Asia, Africa and South America. Most of those organisations are called Older People's Associations (OPAs) – for example in Cambodia, China, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka. Some go by different names, such as the International Self-Help Club Vietnam (ISHC), Kwa Wazee (For All Older People) Tanzania, or Waman Wasi (The Old Wise Men) Peru.

In line with their founding principle, OPAs define themselves as groups of older people working to help their members by organising social activities, providing microfinance or engaging in other charitable activities. They also promote information-sharing

and peer support. Each of these groups consists of 30 to 50 members. The first OPA was founded by HelpAge in Cambodia in 1998 with a specific mission to help older people in the aftermath of the civil war.

The idea is to strengthen civil society from within, without imposing a framework for action from outside. OPAs are particularly active in the following areas, with the first two bullets indicating the primary focus:

- health care,
- care and social security,
- income security,
- women's empowerment,
- broader political participation and
- social and cultural activities.

The OPA model spread rapidly in South East Asia. Its underlying design is flexible, not rigid. Organisational structures and working methods differ from country to country and can be tailored to local requirements.

When developing a new OPA, HelpAge draws on experiences made in Vietnam. It generally takes two years before an OPA is fully operational and financially independent. An average of around \$10,000 start-up funding is required to enable it to refinance itself from members' contributions. Money that is not urgently needed for ongoing activities is invested in savings associations. Those savings prove valuable at a later time – for example, if a member needs an expensive operation, but cannot meet the costs. Well-funded self-help groups have proven effective in complementing overburdened medical care provided by government agencies in countries with underdeveloped health-care systems. However, OPAs must not develop into “substitute health authorities” in countries of the Global South.

OPAs' success depends essentially on four key interlocking factors:

- standardisation of operation,
- political support from the state,
- replicability of processes and
- further development/strengthening of processes.

Older People's Associations were very quickly recognised to be a mechanism for social protection in Asia and they were promoted accordingly. Since 2011, for example, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has included OPAs as a meaningful instrument in its Strategic Framework for Social Welfare and Development.

China included OPAs in its 12th Five-Year Plan. Cambodia has approved National Guidelines for the Establishment of Older

Persons' Associations and adopted a guideline for establishing one OPA in every municipality.

In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development has facilitated the formation of Older People's Associations in all cities and municipalities. In Vietnam, OPAs are included in the National Action Programme on Ageing that targets creating 5,000 clubs by the end of 2020. It is anticipated that this target will be reached.

The World Health Organization (WHO) hails OPAs as an “innovative approach” to “actively promote general well-being and ensure the participation of the socially weak and disabled in society”. They are thus considered to be a major asset for the WHO's Decade of Healthy Ageing (WHO, 2015).

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) recommends Older People's Associations as an important tool for meeting the challenges of demographic change and advancing the intergenerational approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): “Governments must ensure that people of all ages can lead a healthy, active and fulfilling life. It is therefore no longer enough just to meet the expectations and needs of the older population; a more comprehensive life-cycle approach is needed to address their impact on all population groups.”

OPAs are a recognised partner in development cooperation. In Zanzibar, for instance, an OPA successfully launched a social pension for all its members. What started out in a mere two villages is now to be spread out to cover the entire nation

of Tanzania. Neighbouring countries such as Uganda, Malawi, Zambia and Kenya are also interested in this form of pension payment and plan to incorporate it into their own national law.

In Peru, indigenous OPAs are working at local level handing down traditional knowledge in school classrooms. That knowledge is considered to be culturally and historically important. It figures in the national school curriculum and is now taught by trained OPA members.

OPAs have been particularly successful in Thailand. Starting out as grassroots organisations, they now have national influence. Thanks to intensive lobbying, all draft legislation must be reviewed prior to parliamentary approval to ensure that, in line with the “leave no one behind” slogan, neither older people nor people with disabilities are disadvantaged by new laws.

What starts “small” at the local level can eventually have a “big” impact at the national level. Older People's Associations play an important role in helping to create locally anchored self-help groups and strong self-government.

LINK

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Older people need more protection

Covid-19 is like a magnifying glass. Demographic change and discrimination against older people worldwide have rarely been more obvious than in the present pandemic. In a strategy paper published in May (UN, 2020), Antonio Guterres,

the UN Secretary General, announced a new guideline to strengthen the rights of older people from the end of this year.

The coronavirus pandemic so far has been less severe in Africa and Asia – with the exception of India – than

feared earlier this year. Nevertheless, the need for appropriate protective measures is rising everywhere, including in East Africa. Government agencies are often unable to take the required action, however. As a result, HelpAge partners and regional offices report that older people increasingly ask how they can organise and protect themselves against Covid-19. The establishment of Older People's Associations

(see main article, p. 22) makes sense in the context. In view of demographic change, moreover, such organisations will continue to play a significant role in the future. jf

LINK

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AUTHORITARIAN RULE

Fact and fiction

Like social movements, right-wing populists need to mobilise supporters. In the Philippines, however, the Duterte administration is spreading strategic disinformation on social media.

By Alan C. Robles

Rodrigo Duterte, the president of the Philippines, straddles two centuries. On the one hand, he is a classic “Third World Dictator” of the 20th century. On the other, he owes his rise to Facebook, the multinational internet corporation of the 21st century.

Duterte is probably the first president ever to be elected thanks to social media (Donald Trump may have been the second). Facebook played a decisive role in shaping the Philippine leader’s image, attacking his opponents and deluding a large number of people (see box next page).

If one accepts Duterte propaganda, factual truth and fantasy become impossible to tell apart. Duterte’s image makers claim that “the people” love him and he is uniting the nation. The electoral records show that he won the presidency with a mere 39% of

the vote in 2016, and his aggressive rhetoric has stayed deeply divisive. The president wants everyone to believe that he is fighting corruption, but he filled his government with incompetent favourites.

According to Duterte, the Philippines is drowning in an illegal drugs crisis. According to human-rights groups, however, his supposed “war on drugs” has led to about 20,000 extrajudicial killings by the security forces and informal militias, with many victims being children, teenagers or elderly, but most likely not being linked to drugs in any way. The murders typically affect poor neighbourhoods, but Duterte critics also have reason to fear being shot.

Duterte has a long history of extrajudicial killings. In the 1990s, he was the mayor of Davao, a city then haunted by organised crime and illegal drugs trafficking. He relied on what was called the DDS – the Davao Death Squad. His followers have appropriated that acronym, only now they say it means “Duterte Diehard Supporters”.

The violence of Davao’s Duterte era has never been fully investigated. Impunity

persists. His followers, however, see him as a determined maverick who can bring about change. By contrast, they dismiss his political opponents as ineffectual “trapos”. That is the slang word for traditional politicians, who belong to the classic, dynasty-building elite. Trapos use public office to promote their families’ interests, network among other privileged clans and look after their cronies.

A VERY TRADITIONAL TRAPO

In office, Duterte turned out to be a very traditional trapo. He has even cosied up to the clan of the late Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the country as military dictator from 1972 to 1986. Duterte’s son and daughter hold elective offices. His administration is full of his friends, including retired military and police officials from Davao. The government keeps handing out lucrative contracts to business allies.

None of Duterte’s bombastic vows has come true. In the election campaign, he promised to solve crime in three months, get rid of illegal drugs in six, eliminate graft in a short time and obliterate rice-supply cartels in a couple of weeks.

Policy failure, however, does not hurt the head of state. He keeps his supporters agitated by railing against adversaries, and his vulgarity is hard to overstate. He has ordered soldiers to shoot women rebels in their genitals, using an explicit anatomical word in public. He graphically described how, as a young man, he molested the family house help. He threatened to behead Benigno Aquino, the former president.

He has even repeatedly insulted the public, calling them dupes for believing his promises and admitting he was lying. “You believed THAT?” he has scoffed.

The president’s only unalloyed success is to have severely damaged Philippine democracy, which was never in good shape to begin with. Like that of the USA, after which it was patterned, the political system consists of a strong executive led by the president. Two independent branches of government, the judiciary and the legislative, are supposed to provide checks and balances.

UNRESTRAINED PRESIDENT

Duterte, however, has packed the courts with his appointees, while the legislative



Upset about extrajudicial executions: protester at an anti-Duterte rally in Manila in September 2020.

consists of compliant allies and supporters. The two independent branches no longer constrain the commander in chief in any meaningful way. Indeed, legislators have granted Duterte limited emergency powers, sent one of his political foes to jail on trumped up charges, ejected a supreme court justice on an invented laughable norm violation, and shut down a TV network that Duterte loathed. The mainstream media have largely caved in to him.

Nonetheless, Duterte cannot feel safe. The reason is that public outrage has twice ousted presidents when masses spontaneously took to the streets – Ferdinand Marcos was toppled in 1986 and Joseph Estrada in 2001. “People power” could well arise once more. While there are recurring protests

against Duterte, they have not coalesced to a forceful movement so far.

Internet trolling serves to maintain this state of affairs. The social-media activism of hundreds of thousands of trolls keeps the public confused and divided. They praise Duterte as “the father” or “the saviour” of the country, and attack anyone who dares to oppose him as “subversive” or a “drug addict”. This kind of online activism does not engage in serious debate. It only keeps on stoking anger and entrenching authoritarian rule.

While Duterte’s online support is strong, his ground game is not. At least twice since 2016, supporters have tried to mobilise mass rallies in Manila’s streets. They suggested 10 million would show up and call

for a Duterte-led revolution, but only a few thousand did.

For democracy the stakes are high: social media can manipulate public perception of reality, leading users to question facts and erode their trust in science and rationality. It is creating the impression of mass mobilisation while crowding out interactions concerning real grievances. Other democracies should pay attention – right-wing populists around the world use the internet pretty much the way Duterte and his supporters do.



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Increasingly manipulated forum

Manipulative messaging on social media is hierarchical and not geared to discussing real grievances among peers. Authoritarian populists use it systematically.

Not even a decade ago, observers spoke of “Facebook revolutions” – for example, in regard to the uprisings of the Arab Spring. Back then, in 2011, social media were new and facilitated communication among equal peers. Governments were not paying much attention, and discontent articulated on Facebook fuelled mass protests in many places.

That was then. In the meantime, Facebook has become one of the most powerful and cheapest propaganda instruments ever to fall in the hands of authoritarian operators. The platform’s infamous algorithms note what kind of content a user likes and serves up more of it, gradually offering ever more radical content. Facebook reinforces conspira-

cy theories and disinformation. This destructive potential is being exploited by the Duterte administration in the Philippines (also see my essay in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/05).

Trolling is very easy and only takes pressing a few buttons. A troll can invent stories, lie and attack at will. There are almost no consequences, impunity is near total. Using a fake account adds a layer of protection. A troll network typically involves tens of thousands of accounts, many of them fake. Some are probably true believers, but many others are paid to follow instructions.

The country is addicted to smartphones. People gaze at their screens the whole day, and Facebook is extremely popular. During the 2016 election campaign, the corporation offered to teach politicians how to use the platform.

In a clever move, Duterte propagandists mobilised mil-

lions of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), whom politicians previously mostly ignored. OFWs turned out to be perfect as amplifiers of disinformation. The expatriates’ being geographically scattered turned out to be a strength because somebody is awake somewhere at any time, ready to engage on Facebook.

The OFWs, however, are not doing all of the propaganda work. Observers who study online disinformation say that many troll networks are run by PR and advertising firms, call centres and even government agencies. Facebook itself has moved at least twice to take down various pro-Duterte Facebook pages – some of them with hundreds of thousands of followers. It accused those pages of “inauthentic behaviour”. In Facebook’s corporate jargon, this does not mean lying. It means that a page is guided by an undisclosed entity, though it looks as though it represents an individual person. So far, occasional purges have hardly hurt the troll networks. More generally speaking, Facebook’s efforts to stop

the spread of fake news have mostly proven to be toothless.

Studies (Bradshaw and Howard, 2017, Ong and Cabanes, 2018) suggest that the troll networks are deliberately organised and paid for. They show that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google and even Wikipedia can be gamed. The companies have shown they are either unable or unwilling to stem such organised, manipulative behaviour that is sponsored by powerful special interests, but not geared to egalitarian peer-to-peer interaction. ac

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CHILE'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

Revolt of the masses

Chileans voted overwhelmingly to rewrite their Pinochet-era constitution by means of a drafting assembly elected directly by the people. Now the hard work begins.

By Javier A. Cisterna Figueroa

As the world watched in fascination, many thousands of jubilant Chileans poured into the streets on the night of 25 October to celebrate a landslide vote to rewrite their country's constitution.

Not only did Chileans vote overwhelmingly to revise the constitution drafted during the era of dictator Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990), who built market-competitive principles into the document; they also voted to do so via a drafting group elected directly by the people, without the participation of established politicians.

The landslide vote for reform aims to produce a constitution with greater emphasis on principles of social equality and perhaps less emphasis on principles of free-market competition. The reformers' victory was all the more impressive as it took place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 health

crisis, which has caused substantial damage to Chileans' health, finances and general well-being.

To understand how and why Chile, one of the region's most stable countries, reached this point, one must go back a year in time – in particular to 18 October 2019.

That day, after several days of protests by high school students against a fare increase on the Santiago Metro system, thousands of people took to the streets to protest more generally against constant increases in living costs and a lack of protection for the vulnerable. The uprising was spontaneous and sometimes turned violent.

It involved clashes with police, looting, and burning of 20 Metro stations in Santiago. The protests were fuelled by a generalised rage that took many by surprise. Yet signs of rising discontent had been visible for decades.

Since 2006, Chile had seen several uprisings. Separate demonstrations by students, retirees, women and environmentalists objected to deep inequality. Cases of illegal financing of political campaigns sparked further protests, as did corporate plots to



manipulate the prices of medicines, food and even paper.

At the same time, the Chilean police came under fire for using excessive force, particularly against the Mapuche indigenous group. For example, in November 2018 police fatally shot a young Mapuche farmer named Camilo Catrillanca, sparking demonstrations.

Against this backdrop, the fare hike in Santiago was for many Chileans one insult too many. The price hike itself was only 30 Chilean pesos, equivalent to about €0.03 per ticket. But those three cents – imposed by a political class perceived to be indifferent to the poor – were enough to produce an explosion of rage.

UNITED BUT DIVERSE

Interestingly, the general uprising of October 2019 did not issue specific demands, nor did it designate a single spokesperson. The uprising was largely unorganised, drawing its power directly from the people rather than from any political party.

Emmanuelle Barozet, a sociologist at the University of Chile's Center for Conflict and Social Cohesion, says the revolt is "a diverse movement, like others in the world. If you talk to the demonstrators, it is easier to know who they are against than what they really want".

Nonetheless, the reform movement spread throughout Chile, sparking simultaneous protests in 15 cities within a few months. Protesters in different cities voiced similar concerns, using slogans such as "Chile has awakened", "the people demand dignity", and "it's not about 30 pesos, it's about 30 years" (putting the mass-transit fare hike into the context of 30 years of austerity).



People voted in spite of the pandemic.



Two young women protesting against police brutality in Santiago in November 2019.

Protesters also shared unease about human-rights violations. During a year of unrest, more than 30 people lost their lives according to numbers from the National Prosecutor's Office. Chile's National Institute of Human Rights has recorded more than 3,000 human-rights violations since 18 October 2019. Some 163 people suffered eye trauma, of whom 32 have lost sight, as a result of the police shooting pellets into people's faces.

Repressive police tactics did not dampen the protests. On the contrary, they galvanised opposition to President Sebastián Piñera, a conservative businessman, and to the entire political class. As the protests continued, the street cry of "resignation", directed at the president, became a threat to the executive branch. The president's position was further weakened when military leaders started resisting sending troops to quell demonstrations.

As the clashes continued, in the early hours of 15 November 2019 representatives of the various factions proposed a way forward: the creation of a new constitution. That process would be kick-started by a referendum on whether Chileans want a new constitution and, if so, who would draft it.

This proposal was a bold gamble for both sides. It won the president a respite from demands for his resignation. But it also required him to put the constitution – the Pinochet regime's most important legacy – in play. In 1980, it was approved by a government notorious for human-rights violations. It has a clear bias towards market competition. So, for example, in areas such as health care and education the constitution guarantees the right to choose among competing providers but does not guarantee access to these services. The water sector too is

marked by excessive reliance on market dynamics (see Katie Cashman in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/06). The current constitution generally makes the state the aid-provider of last resort.

Moreover, the current constitution requires a special, qualified quorum to approve amendments. In practice, this provision makes it impossible to amend the constitution through legislation. As a result the document has remained unchanged over the years, through successive Social Christian, Socialist and Conservative governments. Thus, although democratic Chile said goodbye to Pinochet in 1990, it kept his institutional design and model of society.

The collective memory of Chileans initially caused some protestors to mistrust the constitutional-reform proposal. But in the end a sense of opportunity prevailed and most members of the diverse coalition of protestors approved this approach. As the 25 October 2020 referendum approached, nearly everyone agreed on putting this issue to a public vote.

DEMOCRACY AMIDST A PANDEMIC

But nearly everyone also failed to foresee the devastation that Covid-19 would cause in Chile. Quarantines, contagion and a crisis of unemployment forced the postponement of the referendum from April 2020 to October. Thousands of deaths threatened to slow the momentum and undermine the progress made.

In this environment, proceeding with the referendum became a test of determination: Were Chileans still committed to meeting the challenge of social reform, or would they be more focused on surviving the Covid-19 emergency?

They were indeed committed. Over 7.5 million Chileans – half the eligible electorate – turned out to vote on 25th October. That was almost a million more than in the last presidential election. Chileans voted with a 78% majority to rewrite the constitution, and with a 79% majority to have the drafting done by directly-elected citizens, without members of parliament involved.

After the vote, there was little time to celebrate. Discussions began almost immediately on the composition of the drafting assembly. Some commentators worried that the assembly would become a power centre that challenges the authority of the national Congress.

Others, such as Teachers' Union President Mario Aguilar Arévalo, worried that the drafting group might come under the influence of political parties, thereby undercutting its own legitimacy. "It is important to keep up the pressure" for reform, he says.

One landmark agreement already reached is to elect a gender-balanced assembly, with 50% women. That would make this the first gender-balanced constitutional drafting group in history. Discussions are also under way about setting minimum quotas for native peoples in the group, and about ensuring representation of independents unaffiliated with political parties.

Paulina Astroza, a lawyer and member of a network of independent voters, says that participation of non-partisan drafters will help to ensure a focus on the voters' wishes. "If we want a constitution that reflects the demands of society, the independents must be involved," she says.

In short, despite their massive victory, the reformers have a lot of work ahead. The next step is a referendum, set for April 2021, to elect drafting-group members. The elected drafters will then have a year to do their work. In August 2022 Chileans will vote in another referendum on whether they agree with the text created.

Meanwhile, as the violent protests of the past year die down, the streets are filled with citizens wearing masks and carrying hand sanitisers instead of placards. Due to Coronavirus, the immediate challenge has shifted. But the determination is the same.



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Indigenous organisations can mobilise masses in Bolivia: people in La Paz protested against the construction of a road through an Amazonian nature reserve in 2011.

IDENTITIES

Pulling the levers of power in Bolivia

Trade unions, ethnic affiliations and regional identities have shaped Bolivian society for decades. The influence of formal organisations and informal movements is strong, and their relationship to political power is ambivalent.

By Ulrich Goedecking

“Our task will be to support him, working together with the social movements,” Evo Morales, Bolivia’s former president, tweeted on 2 November from his exile in Argentina. He was referring to his party colleague Luis Arce Catacora, a former minister of economic affairs, whom a clear majority of voters had just elected president of Bolivia.

The message seemed supportive, but the new president may actually read his pre-

decessor’s words as a threat. By mentioning “social movements”, Morales undoubtedly referred to groups that are loyal to himself as the historical leader of the “Movement for Socialism” (MAS). Luis Arce has since taken office, and Morales has returned to Bolivia.

Political movements and civil-society organisations have had a complex relationship with political power ever since Morales first rose to office. He became president in 2006, but was forced to resign and leave the country in October 2019, following massive irregularities in the election to decide his bid for a fourth term.

Under Morales, political legitimacy was not only based on legislators’ support but also on his ties to movements and organisations, which his government actively engaged in negotiations. Various actors in civil

society felt they were changing Bolivian society from the bottom up. For example, they were involved in the Constituent Assembly in 2007. However, such networking was marked by a clear hierarchy. The authority and leadership role of Evo Morales could not be questioned.

Social movements and organisations in Bolivia tend to be based on one of three types of identity: class-based trade-union identity, ethnic-cultural indigenous identity and/or regional identity. Bolivia’s identity-based movements and their formal organisations have evolved over decades. Often, they are just as difficult to categorise neatly as individuals are.

CLASS STRUGGLE AND COCA

For a long time, organised miners spearheaded protests against those in power. In the large mines that were nationalised after the revolution of 1952, the “mineros” and their wives developed a strong working-class identity. Readiness to fight, including with weapons, was not a mere slogan. It was the historical experience. Miners were often in the front lines of resistance to the dictatorships of the 1970s and early 1980s.

From 1985 on, the mines, which had become unprofitable, were closed or privatised. Many newly unemployed people from mining towns migrated to the lowland province of Chapare north of the city of Cochabamba, where they made a living growing coca. The leader of the organised coca farmers was Evo Morales.

Combat-readiness was also called for in Chapare. The governments of the 1990s worked closely with the USA, supporting Washington's anti-drugs policy, and Chapare was repeatedly the scene of armed conflict. This permanent state of strife reinforced authoritarian and hierarchical patterns. Identity tended to be based on union membership. The portrayal of Evo Morales as an "indigenous man" came much later, when he was on his way to La Paz to become president. Coca growers remain an important part of MAS-affiliated social groups. A potential future leader of the MAS, 32-year-old Andónico Rodríguez, comes from their ranks.

INDIGENOUS PRIDE

Since the 1990s, cultural-ethnic identity has become more important in Bolivia. The farmers' union CSUTCB, founded in 1979, serves as a significant forum for dialogue. Its name "trade union confederation of peasant workers" refers to a class orientation, but the union at the same time sees itself explicitly as representing indigenous peoples.

In 1989, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention 169 on the rights and welfare of indigenous peoples. It remains the central political frame of reference to this day and provided international support to social groups that focus on indigenous identity, including financial support in the form of many projects and programmes.

In 1993, the intellectual Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, who belongs to the indigenous Aymara community, was elected vice-president. Radio star Remedios Loza, another Aymara, became a member of parliament. She embodied a new social reality, both as an indígena and as a politically influential woman. The political emancipation of non-white Bolivia took shape. The election of Evo Morales as president in 2005 was another major step in the same direction, but not the starting point.

Some of the newly emerging organisations invoked a pre-colonial past which is sometimes idealised. One example is CONAMAQ, an association of village communities in western Bolivia's mountains. Founded in 1997, it refers to both the colonial regime and the republic after independence as "invaders". It demands self-determination for indigenous communities and wants the land to be returned to them.

Meanwhile in eastern Bolivia's lowlands, the umbrella organisation CIDOB has championed the interests of the more than 30 indigenous peoples since 1982. Their situation and demands differ from those of indigenous groups in the highlands. In the lowlands, the indigenous peoples are small in number. They particularly depend on land that is specifically protected. Tensions grew as ever more migrants from the highlands moved in to such areas. The relationship between the highlands' Aymaras and Quechuas, quite populous ethnic groups, and much smaller indigenous peoples in the lowlands is fraught with conflict.

Nonetheless, both CONAMAQ and CIDOB long belonged to an alliance of indigenous organisations supporting Evo Morales. In 2011, however, there was a rupture between the government and both of indigenous organisations. The government wanted to build a road through an indigenous area. Both the lowlands-based CIDOB and the highlands-based CONAMAQ opposed the project. Subsequently, the government sought to weaken and even internally split CONAMAQ and CIDOB. The MAS would not tolerate any departures from its coalition.

REGIONAL IDENTITY

Regional identity plays a role mainly in the eastern lowlands. Santa Cruz de la Sierra is the largest city and commercial hub. The "Comité pro Santa Cruz" is a civic organisation and a platform for local elites to negotiate economic and political issues and would not normally be considered a social movement. However, political careers begin here, including that of Luis Fernando Camacho, who was the right-wing outsider among the strong candidates in the election on 18 October 2020. His share of the vote was 45% in Santa Cruz, but a mere 0.72% in La Paz.

Groups such as the "Comité" are by no means just a mutual-support platform for upper classes. They can potentially mobilise

masses of citizens. Many residents of Santa Cruz feel they are poorly represented in national politics and have little bearing on Bolivia's international reputation. This sentiment provides an impetus for mobilising voters across social and economic classes. In view of this mobilisation potential, Evo Morales and his vice president García Linera made a deal with the Santa Cruz entrepreneurs. These would refrain from mobilising people to block the government. In return, the authorities in La Paz provide stabil-



ity and let the entrepreneurs continue their business in peace. The result: neither expropriations nor class struggle in Santa Cruz.

After one year's break, the MAS was returned to power in October. It had held government for 14 years previously, tightly embracing civil-society organisations and movements. It strengthened them in many areas, but it also dominated them. It is unlikely that this attitude can persist under President Arce. He lacks the charisma and authority of Evo Morales, whose future role is still unclear.

It is good news that Bolivia's society does not permit a regime to establish decades-long hegemony by co-opting all relevant civil-society groups. By the way, that is what the MNR, the Party of the Revolution of 1952, had tried to do as well. It failed. Bolivian society is extremely diverse, with many faultlines between identities. Moreover, political dynamics differ from place to place very much. This country will certainly never stand still – its society keeps moving.



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State repression can backfire: Belarussian people gather on 20 November in Minsk at the funeral of a person who allegedly died after being beaten by the police.

RELEVANT READING

More forceful than guns

It makes sense for the Belarussian opposition to adopt nonviolent protest strategies. Two political scientists argue that civil disobedience is the most promising way to oppose an authoritarian regime.

By Hans Dembowski

Alexander Lukashenko has ruled Belarus in an increasingly authoritarian manner since 1994. In August, he claimed to have won presidential elections with 80% of the vote. Opposition leaders spoke of fraud. Since then, huge rallies have supported their stance Sunday after Sunday. The demonstrations' sheer size shows that Lukashenko's support cannot be as strong as he claims. His security forces have repeatedly cracked down, but they neither intimidated most activists nor triggered a large-scale violent response.

Success is not guaranteed, and it may take a long time, but the nonviolent attitude nonetheless makes strategic sense, according to two scholars. Erica Chenoweth and Mary J. Stephan published "Why civil resistance works" in 2011. The book is based on data covering about 250 political uprisings in many different countries. It concludes

that nonviolent resistance is twice as likely to succeed as the violent alternative. The main reason is that it attracts more diverse and broader based support.

As the scholars point out, it takes courage to oppose an oppressive regime by peaceful means, but most people find violent action far more terrifying. The demands of a nonviolent movement, moreover, can resonate with masses of people without requiring a rigid organisation or a strict ideology. At the same time, the movement is likely to stay focused on its demands, and its legitimacy is not dented in ethics debates. Accusations of "terrorism" are likely to stay unconvincing.

Chenoweth and Stephan argue that, while violent government repression can crush an armed uprising, it is likely to backfire in the case of civil disobedience as an increasing number of people will perceive the brutality to be excessive and unjust. Indeed, doubt is likely to spread even within the police and military. By contrast, violent resistance is prone to reinforcing cohesion within the security forces and state agencies in general. To win, however, a movement must separate the government from the pillars it relies on, the scholars write.

They insist that nonviolent movements only arise when local people articulate popular frustrations. Foreign forces are unable to do that – though they can lend support in terms of spreading information, calling for human rights and discrediting abusive regimes. Once again, the comparison with violent rebellions is telling. In the authors' view, guerrilleros rarely succeed without foreign support, and the support they require is much more expensive, both in terms of funding and public legitimacy, than what nonviolent movements may get.

Chenoweth and Stefan admit that many movements fail, but their point is that this is even more likely in the case of armed rebellion. They also argue that success is likely to be more sustainable, with the country concerned being more likely to live under democratic rule 10 years later. Where there was no civil war, moreover, there is no risk of relapsing into it.

The Arab Spring set in before the book went to press. The authors discussed it in a brief epilogue. They estimated that Egypt would have a 30% chance of becoming a democracy if the country followed "the pattern of other successful nonviolent campaigns", as was evident in the Philippines in 1986, for example, or East Germany in 1989. A probability of 30%, they added, might seem uninspiring, but they argued it would have been "much closer to zero" had protesters opted for violence – or not taken to the streets at all.

Chenoweth is now a professor of international affairs at Harvard University in Massachusetts and Stephan a programme director at the US Institute of Peace in Washington. Both authors are public intellectuals with a strong interest in their own nation's fate. US President Donald Trump has been working hard to delegitimise elections for years. The two scholars' twitter feeds (@EricaChenoweth and @MariaJStephan) are a good place to go for anyone who wants to know how grassroots movements have been responding to that threat – and how they are now contributing to ensuring that Joe Biden, the winner, does become president.

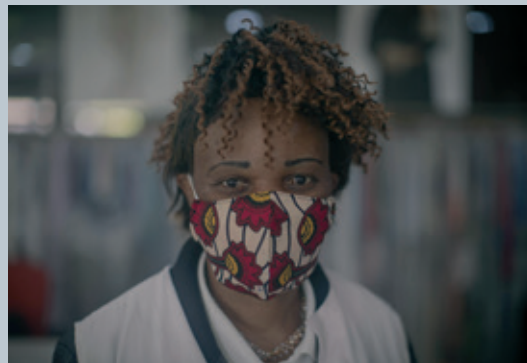
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Chenoweth, E., and Stephan, M.J., 2011: Why civil resistance works – The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict. New York, Columbia University Press.

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 NOVEMBER 2020

Some cannot afford health worries

India's poor find some relief in being allowed to make money again after their countries five-month lockdown. The threat of the deadly disease remains scary, but falling even deeper into the clutches of poverty is more frightening. The truth is that penniless people cannot let worries about Covid-19 slow down their efforts to make money.

By Roli Mahajan

Radha is a young girl of 12 years. She helps her father who runs a small, informal tea stall in a Kolkata suburb. It is really only a small cooking space plus two stools underneath a black-coloured tarpaulin, which is spread between a stick on one side and the fence of an office complex on the other. Vishvajeet, Radha's father reopened it after five months of lockdown, only to realise that the regular customers – young professionals from corporate offices nearby – are still working from home.

Vishvajeet says he earns less than 2000 rupees per month – less than a third of his pre-Covid-19 income. Nonetheless, he is grateful the lockdown has ended. Only few restrictions – mandatory masks, for example – are still in place. When the entire economy was shut down, Vishvajeet had to

rely on savings, but they were basically gone after two months.

Sudha, Radha's mother, could not make much money either. She normally works as a maid in wealthy households in Kolkata. However, the employers did not want her to come anymore, afraid she might spread the virus. Some people kept paying her, but many did not. On the upside, some families have begun to give Sudha assignments again since the lockdown has ended.

On the other hand, some of the apartments where Sudha used to work are now empty and permanently locked. The tenants were students or young professionals, who returned home and may not return until colleges and offices begin to function again like they used to.

That may take a while, not least because colleges and schools have gone online. For Radha's family, the increased relevance of remote schooling means exclusion. Poor people are less well equipped and connected digitally than the middle classes. Sudha and Vishvajeet couldn't keep paying tuition for the small private school their daughter used to go to. Indeed, many disadvantaged parents no longer trust government schools to teach their children well (see my essay in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/05, Focus section). It is not clear when Radha will return to lessons again.



People are afraid of Covid-19, but it is even more frightening not to be earning money. "How long can we afford to be scared?", asks Sudha. "Lots of people in our locality get fever, but we need money to cope with whatever happens." In her eyes, "Covid-19 only happens to those who can afford it." The depressing truth is that poor people's illnesses are typically never diagnosed, so they die of "fever". Only prosperous people know whether their relative succumbed to malaria, Covid-19 or another disease.

India's economy is in deep crisis. This year, GDP is set to contract by 10.3%. The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), a think tank, reckons that 6.6 million white-collar jobs were lost between May and August alone. India's informal workers have been hit particularly hard.



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School girl in Cotonou in May 2020.

24 NOVEMBER 2020

Overburdened even in good times

In early October, Benjamin Hounkpatin, Benin's minister of health, went on national television to warn citizens against relaxing anti-Covid-19 prevention. He had reason to be concerned. People are becoming tired of acting cautiously.

By Karim Okanla

"Some people believe that the virus has already disappeared because the number of fatalities is low", Hounkpatin said. "That's a terrible mistake."

Some people endorse the minister's view. Jean-Benoît Akpovi, a teacher of philosophy, thinks that too many people are no longer taking the infection risks seriously. "I note a blatant disregard for preventive measures. Most people are no longer wearing their face masks; some don't even bother washing their hands before eating anything," he says, and then points out: "I mean people in the civil service."

Hubert Gnonlonfoun, a law student at the University of Abomey-Calavi, laments widespread indiscipline too. "Old habits die

hard," he says. "I see people shaking hands as if the virus were defeated." It worries him that infection numbers are indeed rising.

The student has a point: in bars, pubs and eateries, where beer flows abundantly and huge loudspeakers blare deafening Afro-pop music, customers sit close to one another. They crack jokes, laugh with their mouths wide open and pat each other on the back. Where people go to have fun in their free time, they apparently do not want to consider health risks.

At work and in schools, by contrast, preventive measures are generally being enforced. Social distancing is practiced and face masks are worn, though there are some lapses. It certainly helps that the ORTB, Benin's public service radio, broadcasts regular ads to warn citizens against carelessness and irresponsible behaviour.

Benin officially recorded its first Covid-19 case in March. The health authorities responded fast. A first partial lockdown of the urban agglomerations was enforced for a few days. Road traffic was restricted in some areas, and land borders were tem-

porarily closed. So was the international airport in Cotonou. Schools and university campuses shut down too, but later reopened again with new Covid-19 rules in place.

As of 17 November, Benin had recorded more than 2,900 Covid-19 cases and 41 related deaths. In a country of 12 million people, some feel that these numbers do not warrant serious restrictions. "Why panic?", a young man asked me. "We must move on with our lives, we cannot allow this invisible virus to hold us down."

The truth is that preventive measures simply do not fit Benin's culture. People are used to holding each other's hands when they meet. It is also true, however, that Benin's health-care system is weak and chronically over-burdened even in good times. The country is lucky to not have been hit harder by the corona virus so far, and it probably helps that people are quite young on average. Half of the population is not yet 19 years old. But where professional care is hard to come by, cure will often prove illusive, so prevention certainly makes sense. The health minister's warning is of lasting relevance.



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22 NOVEMBER 2020

Holistic approach

Covid-19 is a zoonotic disease, which means it can be transferred from animals to humans and vice versa. Even before the pandemic started, specialists from the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) adopted a holistic approach to fighting zoonotic diseases. It is called "One Health", and the KfW development bank supports it. A recently published KfW policy paper spells out how.

By Sabine Balk

Two thirds of human diseases are zoonotic. Apart from Covid-19, examples include Ebola, SARS or MERS. Evidently, human, animal and environmental health are closely interlinked. Experts warn that zoonotic diseases are likely to increase and may cause more pandemics.

The One Health strategy is their response to this danger. It does not merely focus on the prevention of infective diseases. The idea is to tackle the root causes and improve health comprehensively at a global level with an eye to humans, fauna and flora. Relevant measures are designed to cut across sectors, prevent crises and boost resilience. One Health is thus geared to sustainable development.

The KfW promises to support the approach by ensuring that operations serve the following purposes:

- sustainable improvement of global health, including the reduction of social disparities in regard to access to medical treatment,
- limiting the health impacts of the climate crisis,
- protection of biodiversity including the conservation of soils, water and forests,
- healthy nutrition,
- promotion of safe drinking water and sanitation, and
- promotion of global partnerships, including One Health networks.

The KfW is running a relevant project in Vietnam in cooperation with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the inter-

national non-governmental organisation. It is designed to protect the ecosystem in highlands along the border to Laos, where poaching is a serious problem. Wildlife is hunted to produce food, medicines and souvenirs, all of which are popular among

are needed. With various financing instruments, the development bank is supporting research as well as marketing. It is involved in the health funds GHIF and Adjuvant GHTF, for example, but also concludes partnerships for research and development purposes.

Sanitation and safe drinking water matter very much, moreover. In the DR Congo, the KfW is supporting efforts to beef up respective infrastructure in the public buildings of small towns. Such action also supports the One Health strategy



Wildlife may be infectious – a man wants to sell a poached civet cat.

urban people. These products are thus sold in shops, markets and restaurants. There is a serious risk of infections. The project the KfW supports serves to employ additional rangers so protected wilderness areas will be better monitored and poaching becomes more difficult. Increased patrols already have an impact, according to the KfW.

Pharma research is another important field of KfW activity. Vaccines, diagnostics and medications for new zoonotic diseases

LINK

KfW, 2020: One Health (only in German).

https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Download-Center/Materialien/2020_Nr.11_One-Health_DE.pdf

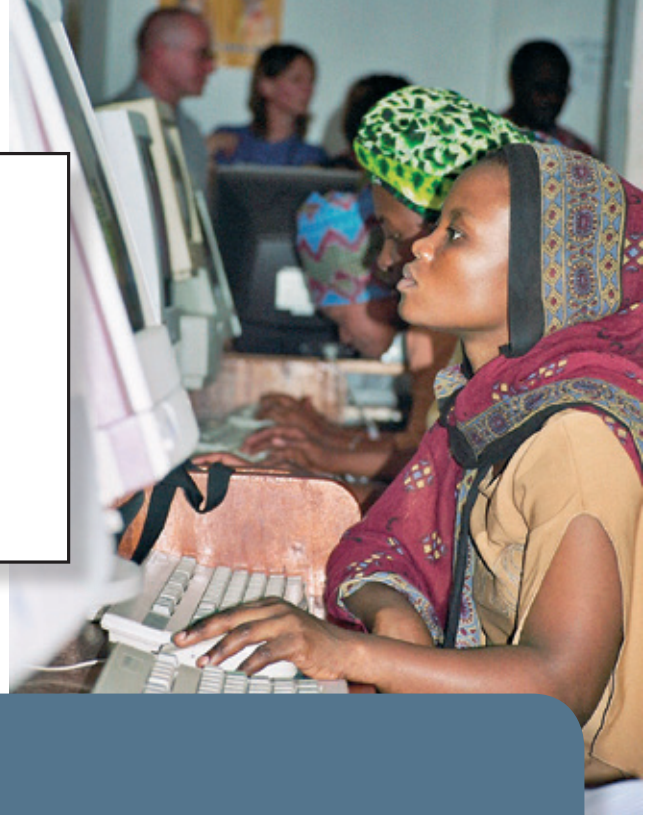


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STRUGGLING FAMILY

Some cannot afford health worries



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