

# D+C

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COOPERATION

**D+C**

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figure in economists'  
models

## HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

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aid and more attention from  
international community

## POVERTY REDUCTION

New initiative to set up  
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Seven different alphabets are used to write in an Indian Adivasi language – and that does not help the community concerned 32

## FOCUS

# Literacy matters

## The right to go to school

Refugee children have a right to go to school, and illiterate adults deserve literacy training. All too often, people in refugee camps are denied these opportunities. Qaabata Boru, a journalist, demands change. **PAGE 21**

## Indispensable knowledge

In everyday life, media literacy, scientific literacy and digital literacy are becoming increasingly more important. Our contributors – Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi from Uganda, Carmel McNaught from Australia and Sundus Saleemi from Pakistan – elaborate the reasons. **PAGES 23, 27, 28**

## Destructive violence

Teachers still beat schoolchildren to punish them in many parts of the world. The resulting traumas often harm victim's mental health and have detrimental long-term impacts on their achievements in school. The German psychologist Laura Hinze spells out why this practice must stop. **PAGE 24**

## WhatsApp for school purposes

A Zimbabwean high-school student has contributed to developing a WhatsApp chatbot that is proving useful for remote teaching during Covid-19 lockdown. Journalist Farai Shawn Matiashe tells the story. **PAGE 26**

## Split societies

In many countries, more men are literate than women. Gender injustice is perpetuated that way, writes Sundus Saleemi, a Pakistani scholar. In Nepal, government-run schools are not as good as private ones, and urban schools perform better than their rural counterparts. Accordingly, society is not marked by equal opportunities, warns Abishek Thapa of the Childaid Network Foundation, a civil-society organisation. **PAGES 28, 30**

## Too many options

Santali is one of many South Asian Adivasi languages. Seven different alphabets are used to write in it. This large number does not help the people concerned to develop a stronger sense of coherence and self-esteem. Boro Baski of the community-based organisation Ghosaldanga Adibasi Seva Sangha reports from the Indian state of West Bengal. **PAGE 32**

# Literacy empowers

In human history, writing was one of the most consequential innovations. It marks the difference between history and prehistory. About 5000 to 6000 years ago, ancient empires in Mesopotamia and Egypt started to rely on written information. Those documents typically served a religious or administrative purpose. Governments that keep accounts are more effective than those that do not.

For millennia, the vast majority of people stayed illiterate. Those who could read and write often assumed positions of influence. That was even true of some enslaved scribes, because their masters depended on their knowledge and knew they could not easily replace them.

The printing press was another important innovation. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, written documents could be multiplied fast. As a consequence, more people learned to read and write. Books became popular – and the Bible was translated. The impact was dramatic. Fanatics who insisted on their reading of the holy scriptures played leading roles in Europe’s religious wars in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Increasingly, people’s worldviews were shaped by what they read. As we know now, humanity was experiencing a minor ice age which reduced agricultural productivity.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century conflicts dragged on with God apparently not granting victory to either Protestants or Catholics. As military technology advanced fast, however, people were ever more interested in rational explanations. Such thinking led to the European Enlightenment, which ultimately resulted in demands for democracy and human rights. This trend, of course, gained additional momentum thanks to ever more people becoming literate.

Today, all those who cannot read and write are by definition marginalised persons. They are:

- excluded from doing many kinds of jobs,
- side lined in many ways in both business life and political affairs,
- unable to collect information on all manner of topics independently,
- prevented from understanding the wording of legal contracts, and
- incapable of making full use of the digital devices that increasingly permeate even remote villages in developing countries.

For good reason, the international community has been emphasising literacy as a development goal for a long time. Quality education is the UN’s fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). And it is true: the ability to read and write is the basis on which important competencies such as media literacy, scientific literacy or digital literacy are built. Social justice and gender justice depend on these things. Those who cannot escape ignorance, cannot take their fate into their own hands.

Even in prosperous nations, some people are functionally illiterate. They may be able to decipher a sentence word by word, but they struggle to make sense of that sentence as they fail to understand its context.

The scenario is worse in many developing countries. School-enrolment rates are still too low in many places, though they have generally improved considerably in the past two decades. School quality, however, is still inadequate. In particular, government-run schools must get their act together. Every child deserves a good education – and otherwise cannot become a fully empowered citizen.

► 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



### Studying in Germany

Foreign graduates of German universities help to build bridges between cultures. That is true whether they remain in Europe or return to their home country. Sudeh Dehnavi of the University of Applied Sciences Cologne (TH Köln) assesses the matter.

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## Tribune



### Safety nets for everyone

The debate on establishing of a global fund for social protection has been going up for years and is currently gaining momentum. Such a fund would help low-income countries to support their poor, write Markus Kaltenborn and Laura Kreft of Ruhr University Bochum.

PAGE 15

### Displaced by climate crisis

Entire communities are losing their homes because of floods, droughts and other climate impacts. The numbers of the displaced are set to increase. The injured national community should do more to coordinate the response, demand Michaela Schaller and Felix Ries of GIZ.

PAGE 17

Photos: Ricarda Bruder, Pedroso; Philippe Lissac/GODONG/Lineair



THE ECONOMICS OF BIODIVERSITY

# Completely rethinking economics

**The British Dasgupta Review makes the case that humanity and its economic systems should be considered part of nature. According to this view, biodiversity is a valuable asset, and its disappearance poses a threat to prosperity. Every interaction with nature should be guided by the idea of true sustainability.**

By Katja Dombrowski

The Dasgupta Review, which was published in February, views nature as an asset comparable to produced capital (like roads, buildings and factories) and human capital (health, knowledge and skills). At the same time, it recognises that nature is more than a commodity: it has an intrinsic value that rests in its very existence.

Biodiversity, or the variety of habitats and life forms as well as the genetic diversity within species, makes nature productive, resilient and adaptable. The authors of the review, which is named for its lead author, the British economist Partha Dasgupta, see in it another parallel to the financial world: diversity in an investment portfolio reduces risk in the same way that diversity in nature protects ecosystems from shocks. Less biodiversity is bad for both people and nature, the review concludes.

According to this economic perspective, humanity as a whole has thus far done a poor job managing the global portfolio of natural assets: Dasgupta et al. argue that demand has far outstripped supply. Whereas between 1992 and 2014, produced capital per capita doubled and human capital grew by 13%, natural capital shrunk by 40%. In other words: human prosperity has grown at the expense of nature. In order to maintain it, we would need an estimated 1.6 earths.

But since we only have one planet, economic growth and development must be carried out sustainably. According to Dasgupta, “truly sustainable economic growth and development means recognising that

our long-term prosperity relies on rebalancing our demand of nature’s goods and services with its capacity to supply them”. He made this statement at the publication of the review, which he and other experts have been working on since 2019 at the behest of the British government.

## POOR COUNTRIES ARE WORST AFFECTED

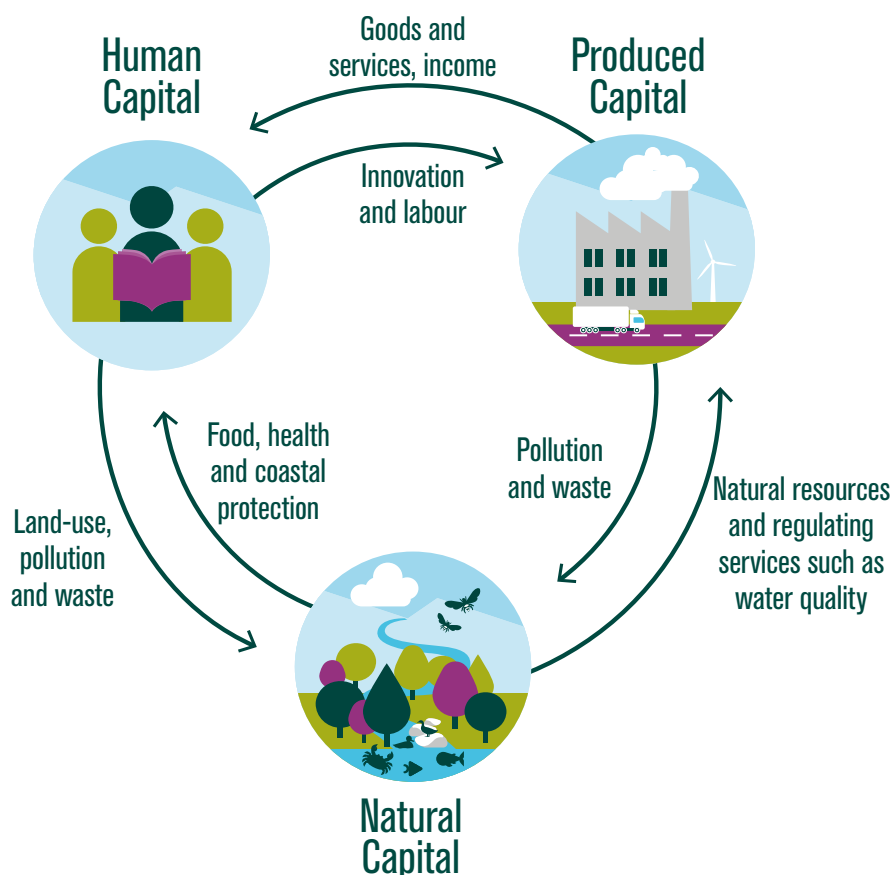
The loss of biodiversity is dramatic (see Theresa Krinninger in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/07, Monitor section). Many ecosystems, from tropical rainforests to coral reefs, have already been irrevocably destroyed; others

are about to reach a “tipping point”, which could have dramatic consequences for life on earth. Poor countries, whose economies rely more on domestic natural services and resources than those of industrialised nations, are worst affected, the review emphasises.

According to the authors, the desperate situation can primarily be attributed to a failure of markets and institutions. They criticise the fact that nature’s services and resources cost nothing in financial terms. As a result, there is no incentive to invest in them. They also see it as problematic that many of nature’s assets are mobile (animals), silent (trees) or invisible (like the life in the soil). Additionally, they stress that it is difficult to track what factors impact it and how, which leads to numerous external effects.

According to the review, a fundamental institutional failure is at the root of this market failure. The handling of externalities has been faulty, the authors believe, and almost everywhere in the world, states are

### Interaction between the capitals.



exacerbating the problem by spending more on exploiting nature than on preserving it, and by not prioritising sustainable economic activities. Conservative estimates put global subsidies that harm the natural world at \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion per year.

What's more, there are no international agreements to protect global public goods like oceans or rain forests. The authors believe that could be changed at the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in October in Kunming, China, and at the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in November in Glasgow, Scotland. The year 2021 is considered decisive for determining whether dramatic trends like the loss of biodiversity and the fuelling of the climate crisis can be stopped.

### VIEWING HUMANS AS PART OF NATURE

The authors believe that it is necessary to completely rethink the relationship between nature and economics. Most models of economic growth and development treat nature as the source of a limited number of

goods and services, and aim to show that technological advancements could, in principle, overcome these limitations. These theoretical models see humanity as existing "outside" of nature.

In contrast, Dasgupta et al. propose an "economics of biodiversity". They view humans and their economic systems as part of nature. According to this understanding, humanity must take full responsibility for the consequences of every interaction with nature, from the extraction of commodities to the disposal of waste, and arrive at truly sustainable economic growth and development. Specifically, the authors recognise that action is needed on three levels:

- Humanity must ensure that it does not consume more natural resources than can be provided over the long term. Additionally, the supply of natural assets must be increased, for instance by expanding protected areas, increasing investments in nature-based solutions and enacting policy measures to curb overconsumption and overproduction.
- We should measure economic success differently and arrive at an inclusive definition of prosperity that takes into account the

value of investments in nature. Including natural capital in national accounts would be an important step.

- In order to implement these changes, we have to reconfigure our institutions and systems, particularly in the areas of finance and education. For instance, public and private funds could be diverted to increase, rather than decrease, natural assets. Education should place a high value on nature, because, among other reasons, that would allow people to make conscious choices and call for change.

#### LINK

Dasgupta, P. et al., 2021: The economics of biodiversity – the Dasgupta review.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>



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





Wind farm in northwest China.

## CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS

# Make Xi keep climate promises

**As China emits more greenhouse gases than any other nation, whether it achieves the Paris goals is of global relevance. A recent study expresses hope that the People's Republic will live up to its pledges. It was published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which is close to Germany's Green party.**

**By Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi**

China even seems to be on track to exceed its Paris promises, according to the study. It was written by Lauri Myllyvirta, Huwei Zhang, Xinyi Shen and Yunqing Bi on behalf of CREA, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a new think tank, which lead author Myllyvirta co-founded.

The UN climate summit in Paris in 2015 marked a paradigm shift. Rather than opting for global emissions targets, every nation is since expected to pledge what nationally determined contributions (NDCs) it would make to climate protection. China's initial promise was to make its emissions peak in the year 2030, but in September last year, China's President Xi Jinping announced: "We aim to have CO<sub>2</sub> emissions peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060."

To meet Xi's new long-term vision, China will have to take short-term action,

the authors state. They point out that China's share of global emissions increased rapidly – from less than 10% in 1990 to more than a quarter in 2019.

The Böll Foundation report assesses how decision-making should proceed on the practical level. The authors consider the 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan particularly important. It was released in March 2021 and, according to environment experts, does not indicate significant change. Late last year, Myllyvirta and her co-authors had written in their Böll report that the plan would have to include decisive new measures for lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of GDP. Instead, the new five-year plan largely re-affirms the targets spelled out in the previous one.

The Böll document warns that those targets are insufficient. On the other hand, it points out, that China has, for some time, been preparing to scale up its NDCs to reach the CO<sub>2</sub> peaking target by 2025, but the government has not done so yet in order to keep some diplomatic negotiating chips.

Policymakers, moreover, are facing unexpected challenges. As elsewhere, Covid-19 has disrupted economic development in China. So far, the policy response to the pandemic has increased the role of govern-

ment in the economy, the report argues. State investments in infrastructure, construction and industrial projects have been driving GDP growth recently, with construction and heavy industries being said to have rebounded much faster than household consumption and service sectors. In other words, energy-intensive industries have been particularly important, increasing the climate-neutrality challenge.

The report insists international partners such as the European Union (EU) should take Xi by his word, advising them to apply both "hard" and "soft" power to nudge China in the right direction. China is a decentralised dictatorship, the authors argue. Policies are drafted at local and subnational levels, but then need approval from the top layers. Accordingly, international partners can engage Chinese policymakers at different levels, but need to find the appropriate approach for doing so, the policy paper suggests.

Myllyvirta et al. see the EU in a role of leadership in talks with China. The advice is to share best practices on energy and environment governance with Chinese partners. As an important trading partner, the experts argue, the EU could also press China to adhere to sustainability principles in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its major funding programme in support of international infrastructure construction. Environmentalists accuse the BRI of often neglecting climate issues.

The report was published in December 2020, before Joe Biden became US President. It does not discuss the Biden administration's strong interest in climate matters.

## LINK

**Lauri Myllyvirta et al., 2020: Political Economy of Climate and Clean Energy in China.**  
[https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2021-01/Clean\\_Energy\\_in\\_China\\_endf.pdf?dimension1=division\\_ip](https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2021-01/Clean_Energy_in_China_endf.pdf?dimension1=division_ip)



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GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

# Stem the tide of dirty money

Illicit financial flows are a big obstacle to attaining sustainable development. A report that was recently published by a high-level panel makes proposals on how to improve matters.

By Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi

Governments should do more to base the global financial system on accountability, legitimacy, transparency and fairness. These are the core components of financial integrity, according to FACTI, the High-Level Panel on International Financial Ac-

countability, Transparency and Integrity. It was established in 2020 in support of the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Financial integrity, FACTI states, is indispensable. The panelists call for greater transparency in regard to:

- company ownership,
- public spending,
- prosecution of bribery,
- taxing the digital giants that dominate the internet,
- fighting money laundering and
- stemming tax evasion and abuse.

Too much money is currently syphoned off illicitly, FACTI states. According to its data, as much as 2.7% of global GDP is money-laundered annually, while corporations' use of tax havens cost governments up to \$600 billion a year. Germany is said to lose the equivalent of \$35 billion a year to tax avoidance. That money would suffice to install an additional 19 gigawatts of new onshore wind power per year. Recovering the annual loss to tax avoidance and evasion in Bangladesh would allow the country to expand pensions to 9 million additional

elderly people. In the case of Chad, 38,000 classrooms could be built. The report also points out that Transparency International, the international non-governmental organisation, has documented cases of corruption and malfeasance in 17 countries, affecting public funds amounting to \$1.1 billion.

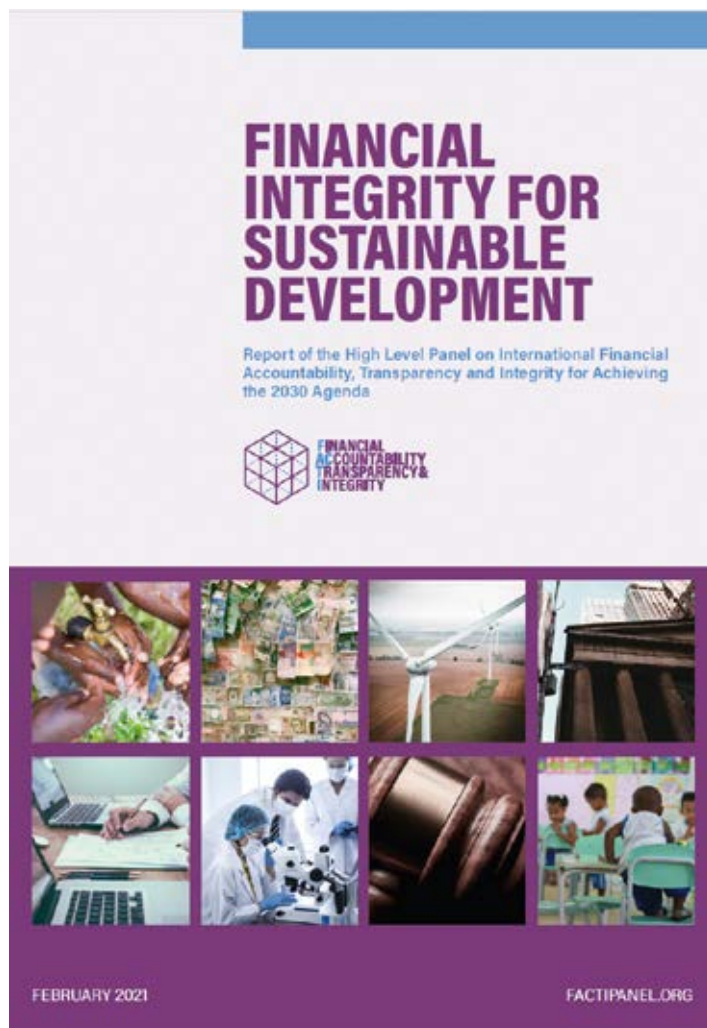
In 2015, the global summit on financing for development in Addis Ababa discussed issues of this kind. It adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Participants committed to redouble efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030. To this end, countries agreed to combat tax evasion and corruption, both through strengthened national regulation and increased international cooperation. These measures were considered essential for achieving the SDGs, which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in the same year.

## PANDEMIC IMPACTS

The FACTI report sees the existing international and national frameworks as insufficient to tackle illicit financial flows. Even before the ravages of Covid-19 eviscerated public finances and confidence, there were fragilities in the international and national systems, it points out. The pandemic has made inequality worse moreover. FACTI reckons that 176 million people were plunged into extreme poverty, with extreme poverty increasing by seven percent in the months April to July 2020. On the other hand, billionaires' wealth is said to have grown by 27.5%.

FACTI is co-chaired by Ibrahim As-sane Mayaki, former prime minister of Niger, and Dalia Grybauskaitė, former president of Lithuania. It builds on work by UN agencies like UNODC, UNCTAD, UNDP and the UN regional commissions. While the panel members do not agree on every detail of the final report, they reached consensus on most recommendations. The most urgent steps, according to them, are:

- establishing a legitimate global ecosystem of laws, norms, standards and institutions that conforms to UN principles and standards,
- transforming the financial system in ways to address climate change and ensure sustainable investment.
- turning FACTI's proposed values into guiding principles for national and international financial systems.



The report can be downloaded from <https://www.factipanel.org/reports>.

GIZ

## Learning from experience

The bilateral German development agency GIZ is a “learning” organisation, says its board member Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven. Guiding questions, according to her, are: “What is effective? And why is it effective?” Accordingly, the headline of the GIZ’s recently published evaluation report 2020 is “using knowledge”.

By Hans Dembowski

The report is based on the evaluation of 215 projects. It offers interesting insights into both the successes and the limits of GIZ efforts. The topic of the focus section is governance. In GIZ jargon, this term covers the performance of institutions as well as the promotion of peace and the prevention of disasters. Governance related activities are considered on average to have been “successful overall”. Advice on technical and organisational issues as well as capacity development are said to have proven particularly effective. On the other hand, the report points out that the GIZ cannot influence a country’s macro politics much and only has very little bearing on issues such as democracy, the rule of law or the transparency of state agencies.

For example, in GIZ supported reform efforts made by Zambia’s government regarding public finance, the evaluators found that, as a consequence, the national revenue service is now performing better and tax audits have improved. However, stabilising public debt proved impossible in view of the deteriorating world-market price of copper, Zambia’s main export commodity. Moreover, public-finance management still is not transparent. The report recommends stronger involvement of both civil society and the national auditors anticorruption office in the future.

On behalf of Germany’s Federal Government, the GIZ is taking part in the rule-of-law dialogue with China. In the years 2015 to 2018, it provided advice to Chinese legislators and ran capacity-building measures in the courts of law. The evaluators note that the quality of legislation has improved, for

instance in regard to labour relations and competitive markets, but that a positive impact on court judgments is not discernible. Shortcomings, they argue, reflect the political context.

Experiences of this kind reinforce the old insight that national ownership is needed for lasting change. Bilateral agencies like GIZ can help to lay foundations and support positive trends, but they obviously do not control a partner country’s development. To improve impact, the evaluation report proposes taking multi-level approaches, paying attention to potential synergies and designing projects in ways that facilitate upscaling.

Such ambitions make sense, but they are not easy to live up to – and especially not when an agency has to respond flexibly to erupting crises. According to the evaluation report, that is increasingly the case. Fragile statehood is considered a huge challenge, and the refugee crises put the GIZ under particular stress. The evaluators praise GIZ staff for responding to complex challenges with flexibility in restrictive circumstances.

The GIZ is continuously updating its evaluation system. According to Hoven, the board member, attention is now paid to whether – and to what extent – a project serves the achievement of the sustainable development goals. “Coherence” has thus become the sixth overarching evaluation criterion. The other five are “relevance”, “effectiveness”, “efficiency”, “policy goals” and “sustainability”. Hoven adds that the GIZ head office is increasingly in charge of evaluation, whereas programme managers tended to assign studies in the past. As Hoven emphasises, any expert who was involved in planning or implementing a project does not get a role in evaluating that project.

Martin Jäger, the state secretary at Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) says he is not aware of any other government department evaluating its impacts as diligently as development agencies do. From 2015 to 2020, the BMZ budget doubled to about €12 billion.

### LINK

GIZ, 2021: Evaluation report 2020: Using knowledge. (9 MB)

[https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/giz2021\\_en\\_GIZ-Evaluation-report-2020\\_USING-KNOWLEDGE\\_.pdf](https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/giz2021_en_GIZ-Evaluation-report-2020_USING-KNOWLEDGE_.pdf)



This GIZ office building in Bonn was inaugurated in 2019.



## Taking it to the bank

Financial products such as bank accounts and bank loans help people to manage their money and invest in assets such as houses and education. When households have secure bank accounts and reliable channels for making payments, they are better able to make large purchases and to save money for the future. As a result, when most people in a community use financial products, businesses are more likely to invest in those communities.

That is why many developing countries, including Zambia, aim for universal access to basic financial products. But they have a long way to go to get there. More than 40% of Zambian adults have no access to quality financial products, and about 60% of adults who have such access do not use it, according to Zambia's National Financial Inclusion Strategy paper for 2017-2022. In vast areas of Zambia, especially remote rural regions, people still rely on cash or barter, or use unregulated and unsecured channels, to make payments and store savings.

The main reasons for this poor showing are lack of funds, high bank fees, time-consuming travel to a bank branch and lack of trust in the financial sector, according to a 2017 World Bank study titled "Enhancing Financial Capability and Inclusion in Zambia".

Slowly, however, this is beginning to change. Atlas Mara Bank Zambia, a large retail bank with headquarters in the capital Lusaka, recently opened two branches in the remote North-Western Province, one in Mwinilunga and the other in Zam-

bezi. "We are bringing financial services to the Zambezi District after an absence of over 30 years," says James Koni, the bank's managing director.

Customers responded enthusiastically. "Having a bank here will enable me to save and be more financially secure," says Clement Mufwaya, a pineapple farmer from Mwinilunga District. "Also, by opening a bank account, I can get a loan and expand my business."

The government is asking other banks to take similar steps. It is also asking banks to provide electronic access to customers in remote locations.

"Digitalisation is already the future of financial services," says Mukuli Chikuba, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Finance. "Adopting advanced information technology and online business models will help financial service companies operate on a bigger scale, cut operating costs and better understand the needs of customers."

Expanding to rural areas and offering online services is costly, however. Most likely, banks will need to merge with or acquire other banks to become big enough to invest in information technology and to reach out to unbanked populations.

Some merger activity is already in evidence. For example, Atlas Mara acquired Finance Bank Zambia in 2016 and subsequently merged the acquired bank with an existing subsidiary. The combined institution has a network of 65 branches, a roster of 23 external agencies and a collection of 176 automated teller machines in ten Zambian provinces.

The bank's strategy is to offer a secure digital network that protects customer data from hackers and ensures that online financial transactions are safe from fraud and theft. "At the centre of our offer is our first-class digital platform," says Koni. "This shows our commitment to support the government's vision for financial inclusion for all Zambians."



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HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE IN YEMEN

# Stave off the worst

**A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Yemen. More than ever, support from the international community is required today. On 1 March, however, a UN donor conference only pledged a little more than half of the money that humanitarian agencies consider necessary.**

By Tamuna Sabadze

War broke out in Yemen in March 2015. On one side is the Yemeni government's military alliance, which is led by Saudi Arabia and supported by the USA and various European powers. On the other side is Shia Houthi rebels who are supported by Iran (see Maysam Behravesh in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/01). Despite UN peace efforts, no end is in sight.

The situation is disastrous for the population of Yemen. Two thirds of almost 30 million people now depend on humanitarian aid. More than half are threatened by starvation. The majority of Yemeni children are underdeveloped due to malnutrition.

The tragic humanitarian situation is made worse by a collapsing economy and an unstable financial system. The Yemeni currency, the Rial, lost over 25% of its forex value in 2020 alone, and food prices have soared. Even state institutions have stopped paying salaries. Food is still available, but most people cannot afford it.

## MORE DONOR FUNDING NEEDED

Dependence on aid agencies has become greater than ever. More than 208 humanitarian organisations currently support an average of 13 million people across Yemen every month, relying to a large extent on funding from public donors such as Germany's Foreign Office or ECHO, the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. However, the UN pledging conference on 1 March resulted only in pledges worth €1.7 billion, a little more than half of what is needed. Ahead of the event, demands had been raised for €3.3 billion.

The €1.6 billion shortfall shows how the most prosperous nations are currently shying away from addressing critical global problems. While money is not all that is needed, funding is indispensable for saving lives. Without money, aid agencies like the International Rescue Committee (IRC) cannot deliver the support needed. As a result, people will die.

## POLICY CHANGE FOR ACHIEVING PEACE

Unless the international community exerts more pressure on the parties involved in Yemen's war, war crimes and impunity will continue and no peace process will be restarted. The change of course announced by the new US administration inspires hope. Under President Joe Biden, the US intends:

- to reverse the previous administration's suspension of aid to Yemen's Houthi-controlled North,
- to interrupt arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and
- to end support for the offensive operations of the Saudi-led military coalition.

It also matters that Germany's Federal Government has extended its ban on arms exports to Saudi Arabia until the end of 2021. At the same time, it must be ensured

that German weapons do not reach Yemen via Egypt, the United Arab Emirates or other routes, and that they are not used in the context of other EU projects in Yemen.

The US administration's decision not to classify the Houthi movement as a terrorist organisation has brought about real change on the ground. Declaring them terrorists, would have made imports of commercial and humanitarian goods impossible, with civilians suffering most.

All these steps only amount to the beginning of the international community's urgently needed commitment to resolving the conflict. In March, the US will take over the presidency of the UN Security Council. Washington should use this opportunity to strengthen international law as the foundation of international relations and to hold those who violate it accountable. It is a good sign that Saudi Arabia, under pressure from the Biden administration, has now showing interest in a cease fire in Yemen

The international community must prevent further escalation of Yemen's crises. Accordingly, it must

- fulfil financial pledges fast,
- ensure access to humanitarian aid,
- provide the needed goods (including Covid-19 vaccines) to the country and
- negotiate a lasting cease-fire.



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Mobile health staff caring for a malnourished infant in Yemen.

## PANDEMIC RESPONSE

# Re-imagining public finance in Africa

**Coronavirus does not distinguish developed from developing countries. However, advanced nations are better placed to respond. Sub-Saharan governments must act as well.**

By Chimezie Anajama

Prosperous nations are setting the tone by providing support to households as well as businesses. Many African countries have been taking a similar approach. Governments know that both the vulnerable informal sector and small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) are struggling because of the pandemic. Even Togo, a small West African country, has stepped up its cash-transfer programme for workers in the informal sector. Several countries have reduced taxes and/or provided low-interest loans to companies.

African governments deserve praise for supporting their citizens and SMEs in this time of crisis. Doing so reinforces the social contract. Increased spending, however, leads to an urgent question: where is

the money coming from? Some sub-Saharan countries are heavily indebted, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reckons that the region's development financing gap will widen to \$ 345 billion by 2023.

Indeed, African governments have been on a borrowing spree, and not only since the advent of Covid-19. Even before the pandemic, the IMF had been warning of some countries' debt-to-GDP ratios rising above 60%. Now many African countries' recovery packages depend on loans from international financial institutions (IFIs) as well as donor governments' bilateral agencies. New debt, of course, adds to the existing burden.

Some warn that debt restructuring will be needed, rather sooner than later, and that agreeing on it will prove far more difficult than in the past. One reason is that private-sector institutions and emerging markets, especially China, are now among the lenders too. They are not expected to readily forgive outstanding loans. On the other hand, some observers argue against debt relief, saying it would encourage corruption (see Leny van

Oijen and Christian Penda Ekoka in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/10).

The truth is that Covid-19 has deepened corruption in many places. In South Africa, the auditor general has reported foul play regarding Covid-19 relief. In Nigeria, civil-society organisations are sounding the alarm, claiming that government offices have been diverting funds. No doubt, other countries are affected as well – not only in Africa, but in prosperous world regions as well.

## NO MORE AUSTERITY

On the upside, top IFI leaders like Kristalina Georgieva of the IMF have been encouraging governments to borrow money in the current crisis (see José Siaba Serrate in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/11). After all, the double need to protect people at risk and to stimulate stalling economies is obvious. Moreover, long-term economic health urgently requires investments in climate action. For these reasons, the IFI leaders are no longer preaching austerity.

An excellent way to support developing countries now would be to issue new special drawing rights (SDRs). SDRs are an equivalent of money that the IMF uses for internal purposes. The G7 have endorsed this approach in principle. If the rich nations, which dominate the IMF, renounced their share of new SDRs and passed them on to poorer ones, the impact would be particularly strong.

African governments have homework to do too, of course. To widen their fiscal space, they must fight corruption and reduce illicit financial flows. Moreover, they must ensure their tax systems are progressive, charging more from those who can afford to pay more.

All summed up, the pandemic offers us an opportunity to re-imagine public finance in Africa (see Dereje Alemayehu in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/11). Let's grasp it.



**Not calling for austerity: Kristalina Georgieva of the IMF addressing a digitised press conference last year.**



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Students from around the world study in Cologne.

## UNIVERSITIES

# The merits of studying abroad

**Foreign graduates of German universities help to build bridges between cultures. That is true whether they remain in Europe or return to their home country.**

By Sudeh Dehnavi

The experience of studying abroad is not just about academic achievements. Going to a foreign university offers considerable opportunities

- to better understand one's way of being,
- question one's own solid beliefs,
- discover so far unknown social realities,
- explore new perspectives, and
- make new choices.

Students from Asia and Africa find Germany quite exciting. On the one hand, they benefit from new technologies, better laboratory equipment, up-to-date curricula and broad professional networks. On the other hand, they experience an open-minded culture that typically not only appreciates independent, critical thinking, but permits people to question whatever may seem an immutable reality. Pluralism, religious tolerance and individual liberty are taken for granted. New options arise for

personal choices, including the career path. Of course, that applies to every student leaving the hometown to study elsewhere, but the impact is stronger when someone from Africa or Asia goes to Europe.

Moreover, Germany serves as a hub interlinking international students from different regions. To a large extent, these multicultural networks remain active after graduation, when many alumni return home, others stay in Germany and yet others move on to other places.

Either way, the persons concerned will have a developmental impact on their nations. Obviously, the home countries need human resources, leaders and agents of change. Those who have foreign experience and foreign training are well-placed to assume such roles. What they have learned in pursuit of their degree is useful, but so is their understanding of German cultural attitudes. But even if they stay in Germany, they will stay in touch with families and friends at home. They share insights; they inspire others. That is equally true of those who use a German university as a steppingstone to get to another, often Anglophone country.

I work at the University of Applied Sciences in Cologne (TH Köln) as the coordinator of the international master programme

“Integrated Water Resources Management”. It has a specific focus on the Middle East and North Africa, where water supply is always been a huge challenge, with things getting ever more difficult because of the climate crisis. Our students have prior degrees in various subjects, and our approach emphasises interdisciplinarity and multiculturality. The participants develop their professional skills further and deepen their understanding of the issues in interaction with classmates, and it is fascinating to observe how they increasingly open up to different perspectives. After graduation, they typically assume roles of responsibility. Most do so in their home country, sometimes on behalf of a German development agency, and some stay here, perhaps in pursuit of a PhD or employed by a German company.

In any case, Germany benefits too. The foreign students inspire their German counterparts. They contribute to multiculturalism and can promote the integration of immigrant communities. Teaching and hosting students from developing countries is a long-term investment which is especially important in an era when ever more issues require international and indeed global cooperation. Germany needs people in foreign countries who understand Germany, and it needs people in Germany who understand foreign countries. People who graduate from a foreign university are well-placed to build bridges between the two countries they are intimately familiar with.

Germany is grasping those opportunities to a large extent, but there is still some room for improvement. If the country was more generous granting work permits and residence permits, including for family members, life would become easier for members of the diaspora. Moreover, the working environment sometimes proves difficult for immigrants. The more open the host country is, the more effective migrants can serve as ambassadors between two different cultures.



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## HUMAN RIGHTS

## Left to themselves

**Bangladesh has set up an offshore camp for Rohingya refugees, isolating some 10,000 persons on a remote island. To a large extent, this harsh policy follows an example set by the EU.**

**By Ridwanul Hoque and Hans Dembowski**

Today, one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar live in Bangladesh. In August 2017, masses fled across the border to escape army brutalities and genocidal actions. However, Bangladesh's government does not formally recognise the Rohingya as refugees. It has stated it is sheltering them on humanitarian grounds.

The Rohingya depend on humanitarian aid. The camps near the Myanmar border are shabby and dismal. Bangladesh is shouldering most of the burden, though there is considerable international support. Negotiations on repatriation with Myanmar have not led anywhere. Due to Myanmar's military coup, the outlook has become even darker. There is reason to fear that the camps will become permanent settlements.

The government of Bangladesh does not want that to happen and is implementing an unwelcoming plan. It intends to move about 100,000 refugees to Bhashan Char,

a recently emerged island some 37 miles off the coast. Permanent buildings have been set up on the silt island, and about 10,000 people have been sent there against their will. Experts say that the island is vulnerable to flooding, cyclones and even submersion into the sea.

The government claims that the new homes for the Rohingya are special, not least because facilities include mosques, schools and open fields. The full truth, however, is that the authorities want to keep the refugees away from the border and in a controlled zone.

International human rights groups oppose the Bhashan Char scheme. One reason is the island's exposure to environmental risks. It is equally important, however, that the refugees lack opportunities there. They are cut off from society. To the community concerned, Bhashan Char looks like a detention camp.

One can easily find fault with this policy. Critics abroad, however, should bear in mind that Bangladesh is a very densely-populated, lower middle-income country. To a considerable extent, moreover, it is following a destructive example set by the EU, which has a depressing track record of banning refugees to remote Greek islands, though in provisional facilities. Australia

**Devastating fires destroyed shelters and property in Rohingya refugee camps near the Myanmar border after this comment was finalised. Investigations were still ongoing when work on this e-Paper was concluded.**

too is systematically keeping refugees offshore, away from mainstream society.

### GREEK TRAGEDY

Last year, the infamous camp of Moria on Lesbos went up in flames. It had been built for not even 3,000 inhabitants, but was populated by up to 20,000. The fire that devoured it deprived more than 12,000 people of their shelters and destroyed most of their belongings. European authorities promised to improve matters, but more than half of the refugees soon found themselves in another, provisional camp on the same island.

Not only non-governmental agencies express outrage. In December, Gerd Müller, Germany's federal minister for economic cooperation and development, told the newspaper *Passauer Neue Presse* that the new camp was not better, but indeed worse than the previous one. He added that he had visited the old facilities in 2018, finding them to be worse than the refugee camps he had been to in South Sudan and North Iraq.

Unlike Bangladesh, the EU is a powerful global player. Member countries' infrastructure is much better, and their standards of living much higher. Moreover, they have signed up to the Refugee Convention. Not having done so, Bangladesh is not bound by it.

European leaders like to emphasise human rights. Their credibility would benefit from living up to those principles when it comes to refugees. Yes, Germany has taken in about 1,500 refugees from Lesbos to alleviate the suffering. But that is not enough. Some 7,000 refugees are still stuck in the new camp on Lesbos. During the recent cold spell, humanitarian agencies once again reported unacceptable hardships. Many other refugees suffer on other Greek islands. To set the right example, the EU must ensure all refugees get the aid and the opportunities they deserve.



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# Letters to the editor



## SLUM LIFE IN INDIA

Rahman Abbas: “City of migrants” in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2021/01, Focus section, and Hans Dembowski: “Sensible utopian visions” in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2021/03, Opinion section

The article by Rahman Abbas made me proud as an In-

dian. This writer hailing from a semi-literate Muslim family started his life in a slum in Mumbai. The name of the slum Dharavi has become synonym with informal urban settlements in India. It is heart-warming that this man became an author of note. I am a Hindu living in the South Indian city of Chennai (formerly Madras) with my wife and my daughter and her family. Even in our city, the centre of India’s fourth ranking metropolitan area with more than 13 million people, there are indescribable slums. I have to look at them very often and it depresses me. By contrast, the article by Rahman Abbas gave me joy.

Let me add that I agree with your editorial comment.

Environmental protection, public health and digital communication are indeed of global relevance and require global regulations.

**Devendra K. Oza, Chennai**



## SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS, BUT NO SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Gerd Müller: “A world without hunger is possible” in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2021/02, Opinion section

Gerd Müller, Germany’s Federal Minister for economic

cooperation and development, once more reiterates his permanent mantra: “We have the knowledge and technology to fight world hunger, but I simply lack the needed billions.” Why did this not happen even to a minimal extent in the past 60 years, even though billions of marks, dollars and euros were spent on development, especially in Africa. In eight years, Müller has not answered the simple question even though it is obvious that something must be wrong with our strategy. Individual projects are declared successes, but there is no systemic change. Micro-level action does not deliver macro-level results. And does Müller really believe that recklessly self-enriching African leaders are interested in the human and sustainable development of their nations?

**Prof. Dr. Hans Ferdinand Illy, Merzhausen im Breisgau**



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GLOBAL FUND FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION

# Social security for all

**For years, social experts have proposed the establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection – an international institution to help low-income countries develop the capacity to finance a minimum level of social protection for their population. The debate is now gaining momentum.**

**By Markus Kaltenborn and Laura Kreft**

Amid the Covid-19 crisis, the proposal for a Global Fund for Social Protection has recently been taken up by a major international actor for the first time: in September 2020, the French government teamed up with the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights to stage a High-Level Expert Meeting on the “Establishment of a Global Fund – Social Protection for All”.

It is highly likely that creating such an institution will also be among the topics discussed by the G20 – the group of leading industrialised and emerging economies – and the UN Human Rights Council this year. The aim is to overcome financing problems that a number of low-income countries face in trying to provide a minimum level of social security for their population. That includes achieving basic income security and access to essential health care.

Each country ultimately needs to provide social protection from its own resources, of course – for example through fiscal budgets or social insurance systems. Due to economic difficulties, however, some countries are simply not in a position to do so – at least not in the short or medium term.

## PRESENT SUPPORT

The international community already provides the governments of those countries with technical support for creating the administrative structures required for social protection systems. What is often lacking, however, are the means to ensure stable funding for programmes. People living in the poorest countries of the world cannot wait for sufficient domestic resources to be mobilised. They need protection now.

Even before the Covid-19 crisis, the International Labour Organization (ILO) flagged up the size of the gaps that still exist in social protection worldwide (ILO, 2017). More than two thirds of the world population (about 5.2 billion people) have limited or no access to basic social protection. The pandemic has now made it abundantly clear how important it is for countries to have functioning and solidly financed social protection systems. Lockdown measures, for example, have deprived many people

and thus prevent the further spread of extreme poverty.

## MANDATE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

It is still unclear how likely it is that such a fund actually will be established in the foreseeable future – and if it is established, what its specific assignments will be. A number of suggestions are contained in a recent call for the establishment of such a fund by the international civil society alliance Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF). Its core task, according to the GCSPF, should be to co-finance basic social protection systems – on a transitional basis – for low-income countries that lack sufficient tax revenue and for countries in



**Basic social security includes general preventive health care: a health centre for children in Senegal.**

of their livelihood. Even though social protection has been strengthened in many countries over the past year and a number of new protection mechanisms have been developed, the measures taken are mostly temporary.

A Global Fund for Social Protection could help low-income countries develop a long-term capacity to finance social protection programmes for their populations

crisis (e.g. due to natural disasters or economic crises) that temporarily lack the capacity to fund such systems.

The GCSPF proposal envisages a mandate for the fund that would also include action to improve domestic resource mobilisation. The organisations that have signed the call believe it is important that the fund’s activities should be in line with the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation,

which makes clear that social protection needs to be financed as a matter of principle from national resources. International aid can therefore only ever be an interim solution. The ILO recommendation also sets out a number of additional and equally important principles, including universality of protection and a rights-based approach.

Organisational aspects also need to be clarified. Among other things, for example, the question of where the new fund could be positioned in the institutional architecture of global social policy needs to be answered. One conceivable option would be a financing mechanism closely linked to the ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO), which are responsible for social protection and health-care issues within the UN. Another variant could be a fund established alongside the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or under the umbrella of the Universal Social Protection 2030 Partnership (USP 2030), a global alliance of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The composition and operation of the fund's decision-making bodies would need to be in line with the human rights-based approach and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) guidelines. The GPEDC calls for principles such as country ownership, inclusive part-

nerships, transparency and accountability as well as adequate participation of civil society.

### NEW GLOBAL INITIATIVES NEEDED

Many details of a new global fund are thus still under discussion. But there is no doubt about the urgent need for action. The global community still has a long way to go to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable).

A financing and coordination mechanism at the global level could be an option to bundle international donors' present efforts to help low-income countries develop stable social protection systems and thus make those efforts significantly much more effective. At the same time, a new institution of this kind would motivate donors to increase their financial support in this area. And this is indeed urgently needed.

### LINKS

**Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, 2020: Civil Society Call for a Global Fund for Social Protection to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and to build a better future.**

<http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/civil-society-call/>

**De Schutter, O., and Sepúlveda, M., 2012: Underwriting the poor. A Global Fund for Social Protection.**

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20121009\\_GFSP\\_en.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20121009_GFSP_en.pdf)

**Oxfam International, 2020: Shelter from the storm. The global need for universal social protection in times of COVID-19.**

[https://www.oxfam.de/system/files/documents/bp-social-protection-covid-19-151220-en\\_embargoed.pdf](https://www.oxfam.de/system/files/documents/bp-social-protection-covid-19-151220-en_embargoed.pdf)



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A man visiting Vunidogoloa, the Fiji village where he used to live. Because of climate risks, the entire community was relocated to a place farther away from the shore in 2014.

CLIMATE CRISIS

# When homes become uninhabitable

**Entire communities have been displaced by floods, droughts and other impacts of climate change, and more displacements are expected in future. The international community should better coordinate its efforts to meet the needs of climate migrants.**

By Michaela Schaller and Felix Ries

People leave their homes for a wide range of reasons. A major one is searching for work – and it will likely increase in importance as employment opportunities remain sparse in many countries. In many places, Covid-19 has compounded problems.

Another, and often related, reason is climate change and its impacts – such as droughts, floods and extreme weather events. They all affect livelihoods and endanger lives. As climate conditions worsen, migration is very likely to increase.

For now, it is difficult to determine the exact number of migrants who are driven

away by climate change rather than other causes. Moreover, causes are hard to tell apart given that the climate crisis is exacerbating challenges of poverty, demographic developments, governance, conflict and environmental degradation and therefore projecting climate migration.

We know, however, that weather-related disasters displaced close to 24 million people within their countries in 2019, while violent conflict displaced another 8.5 million people. That is what the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported.

## MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION

A recent World Bank study (2018) projects that, by 2050, impacts of slow-onset climate change – such as gradually rising sea levels or slowly diminishing water availability – could cause up to 143 million people to

become internal migrants in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America. The biggest of those movements are expected in sub-Saharan Africa, with up to 90 million people leaving their homes. The World Bank argues that the number of people driven to climate-change induced migration can be reduced by 80% if bold action is taken for mitigating climate change and adapting to the phenomenon. Otherwise, however, global warming will make human mobility ever more common.

Human mobility due to climate impacts takes several forms:

- One variant is voluntary migration by people who have the resources to move, either temporarily or permanently. Voluntary climate migration may be a response to extreme weather events or to gradual deterioration in environmental conditions.
- Another variant is involuntary displacement – usually of entire communities – in response to extreme weather events such as cyclones. It, too, can be either temporary or permanent.
- A third variant is planned relocation of entire communities to new permanent locations. Such moves are usually organised by governments with strong involvement of both the communities under relocation and the new host communities' decision-making. Planned relocations are especially relevant for small islands at low elevations



and low-lying coastal areas. Fiji, for example, has started to relocate communities.

A separate phenomenon is linked to people who are trapped by adverse climate conditions and would like to move but are not able to do so. Often, they simply cannot afford to move.

Indeed, any decision to leave one's home permanently to escape an intolerable physical environment is a choice born of desperation. For those concerned, it is typically a last resort. Accordingly, policy-

makers should take a comprehensive approach:

- Investing in climate mitigation to prevent the deterioration of livelihoods and ecosystems,
- promoting adaptation to climate change and boosting resilience and
- supporting those who are migrating nonetheless.

That said, climate-induced migration is itself a way of adapting to climate change. Climate migrants thus require support simi-

lar to that offered to other migrants. Industrialised countries should offer such support – on top of increasing funding for climate action.

In particular, the communities that people leave need support. They are under climate stress and likely to be weakened by the departure of leaders and wealthier inhabitants. The receiving communities also require support, as they may be vulnerable to climate change themselves, while facing socio-economic stresses due to the arrival

## Promising starting points

While the international community lacks a coherent policy framework for dealing with climate migration, a broad range of relevant international agreements is in place. They offer models for strengthening global cooperation.

One such agreement is the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, known as the Kampala Convention. It recognises natural disasters and the impacts of climate change as causes of cross-border migration. Free-movement agreements reached by regional economic communities, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), can help to promote orderly migration and perhaps to mitigate the causes of the migration itself.

Another example is the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, which was adopted by 10 Latin American nations in 1984. It too recognises natural disasters as a cause of refugee movements, but stops short of granting climate migrants the status of refugees. This shortfall could be remedied by establishing an international

mechanism to issue “climate passports” to this category of refugees.

At the global level, the basic foundations are in place as well. The 2015 Paris Agreement reached under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) sets a goal of limiting global warming to 2°C at most and preferably only 1.5° above pre-industrial levels. It also defined a pathway for achieving this goal.

In 2013 the UNFCCC's governing body approved the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts, known as the Loss and Damage Mechanism. It establishes a task force to recommend an integrated approach to climate migration.

Further, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 is a highly relevant global framework for dealing with climate induced migration. The SDG slogan “Leave no one behind” is significant in this context.

Another important document is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in March 2015. It is the product of consultations under the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), and emphasises the primary responsibility of each state to prevent and reduce disaster risks.

The Platform on Disaster Displacement (see interview with Walter Kälin in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/04, focus section) is a follow-up of the Nansen Initiative, a state-led programme to protect people who move across borders due to disasters and climate change. The Platform's aim is to integrate its people-protection agenda in international processes.

The UN International Organization on Migration (IOM), a member of the Task Force on Displacement under the Loss and Damage Mechanism, is another central player. IOM established an Environmental Migration Portal to facilitate information exchange.

The 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees both address demographic and climate trends. The GCM was the first intergovernmental pact to cover migration in a holistic and comprehensive way.



**Flooding in northern Uganda in December 2019: the AU's Kampala Declaration has recognised that environmental disasters may cause cross-border migration.**

of newcomers. Above all, the migrants need help in becoming settled in their new environments.

In offering support, authorities must safeguard migrants' human rights and physical security. This applies especially to women, the young, the elderly and ethnic minorities.

## PROMISING EXAMPLES

There are some encouraging examples of rising to the challenges. Through its programme "Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change", Germany's bilateral development agency GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) is working with partners in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean to manage climate migration better. The programme supports partner countries' policy-making at the level of world regions, nation states and local administrations.

For example, GIZ supported the government of Fiji in developing guidelines for relocating communities at risk of increasing flooding and other climate impacts. Moreover, the Fijian government set up a trust fund to finance the measures.

Managing climate-induced migration requires experts from a variety of disciplines, including humanitarian aid specialists, community leaders with experience in adapting to climate change and specialists in reducing disaster risks. Tapping into expertise is crucial, but it is equally important to set up networks enabling the experts to coordinate their work well. It is necessary to clarify the roles of different actors within an overall governance structure. A good example is provided by the interdisciplinary working groups established in the Pacific Islands region.

Such cooperation among experts from different disciplines is necessary to develop appropriate standard procedures. The perspectives of all stakeholders concerned must be taken into account. Disaster management, for example, all too often is only about reacting to ongoing disasters. By contrast, pro-active measures are needed to handle climate-change induced migration issues adequately. That is true at household, community and government levels.

So far, there are only a few international agreements that serve as legal foundations for coordinated intergovernmental

and interdisciplinary responses to climate migration. A proper policy framework should be developed. However, good starting points are in place. A range of existing international agreements is in place and can be further adapted for the purpose of managing climate-induced migration (see box previous page).

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE

Officials must ensure that human rights and gender justice are fully respected by the policy response. The need is obvious. Case studies from the Pacific and elsewhere show that climate change makes women and other vulnerable groups suffer disproportionately.

Policy makers should also focus on helping climate migrants who move from rural areas to urban agglomerations. Bangladesh, a densely populated country severely impacted by climate change, is a case in point. With BMZ and EU funding, GIZ is advising stakeholders in Bangladesh on improving social services, upgrading infrastructure and expanding work opportunities for migrants. Experience shows that skills training is particularly useful in helping them to adapt to their new urban environments.

This kind of insight must be shared widely among all parties concerned. That is, of course, generally true of all knowledge generated in development projects. Collecting information and sharing experience are essential for the necessary scaling up of useful initiatives and approaches.

Expertise is currently shared through central platforms. An example is the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) platform, which is hosted by the World Bank. Another useful hub is the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) platform on Environmental Migration as well as the topic on climate change and migration on adaptationcommunity.net.

## RELEVANT PARTNERS

Collaboration among various agencies concerned with aspects of climate migration should be strengthened further. These agencies include UN bodies such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Refugee Agency

(UNHCR), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the IOM and others. Collaboration should also include donor institutions, researchers, civil-society activists and private-sector companies. Initiatives like the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) play an important role in facilitating dialogue and developing solutions for better protection of people displaced by disasters across borders.

More must happen. There is a need for more research, especially at the regional level. Early warning systems matter, and climate-risk analyses must improve. In order to facilitate climate risk assessments, GIZ in cooperation with others, has published a Climate Risk Source Book. Moreover, human mobility must figure in national climate-adaptation plans and other policies. It is promising that the global community has begun to address climate migration in contexts such as the Global Compact on Migration, the PDD and especially the UNFCCC. But a lot still has to be done. A warming world, after all, will see more climate-induced human mobility.

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Nepali boy attending rural primary school.

## Literacy matters

Written communication is becoming ever more important. Anyone who is excluded cannot make full use of common digital devices, is unable to access vital information and deprived of options for making their views resonate. Every child must learn to read and write. That is not enough, however. Most writing is not self-explaining. To understand messages, people need a basic understanding of the contexts in which writing is used. Without it, gender justice or social justice cannot even be imagined.



This focus section pertains directly to the UN's fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Quality Education. It also has a bearing on other SDGs, including SDG 5 (Gender Justice), SDG 8 (Decent Work) or SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).



## REFUGEE EDUCATION

# A right to go to school

**Basic childhood education and adult literacy training are fundamental rights of refugees, but those rights are often violated. Administrators of refugee settlements and international donors should allocate more funds to make the promise of refugee education a reality.**

By Qaabata Boru

Education is a basic human right, according to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Further, the UN's 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants identifies education as a key part of aiding refugees. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for inclusive and quality education for all as well as promoting lifelong learning.

Beyond the legal instruments, policy makers agree unanimously that refugee education at all levels – primary, secondary, tertiary and continuing adult education – benefits both individuals and society. It enables displaced people to regain some sense of normalcy, develop citizenship skills, resist radicalisation and acquire the means of eventually integrating into society and earning a living.

Considering all this support for the idea of educating refugees, it seems somewhat surprising that refugee education is severely lacking at all age levels. Often even basic instruction is not offered to refugees – or it is offered only under such dire circumstances that learning is nearly impossible. In almost all instances, education of refugees is under-funded. As a result, a generation of children is being left behind, and millions of adults are denied an essential means of improving their lives.

Data collected by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) tell the story. In a 2020 report titled “Coming together for refugee education”, UNHCR says that of the 19.9 million refugees under its care, 7.4 million are of school age. Of these, 4 million – more than half – are unable to attend school.

When the figures for non-access to schools are broken down by age group, the data show that the older the child or adolescent, the less likely he or she is to be enrolled in any kind of educational programme. Tertiary (university) education and adult literacy programmes show the lowest percentages of refugee participation. The reduced participation of adolescents and adults is largely due to a lack of funding.

All of this represents an enormous missed opportunity. “School is where refugees are given a second chance,” says Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. “We are failing refugees by not giving them the opportunity to build the skills and knowledge they need to invest in their futures.”

The neglect of refugee education is already having negative effects. Refugee children are falling years behind the literacy levels appropriate for their ages. Adolescents, already frustrated by prolonged stays in camps, are losing hope about their prospects. In some cases the frustration leads to drug abuse, crime, and participation in armed militias. In Kenya, for example, some young refugees based in the Kakuma and Dadaab camps have joined militias to fight in Somalia and South Sudan.

## QUALITY CONCERNS

Primary and secondary schools in refugee camps generally are staffed with teachers who are poorly trained, badly paid and ill-equipped. A lack of discipline typically marks camp schools, resulting in part from teachers' lack of professional skills and in part from students' frustration with low-quality instruction. Students come and go at will, even in voluntary adult literacy programmes.

“Adult students turn up for class whenever they have time, and attendance is very inconsistent, making cumulative learning in a group setting very difficult,” says Yasin Mohamed, an adult education tutor who has worked at the Kakuma camp.

Classes for children take place under difficult circumstances. In Uganda, which hosts about 1.4 million refugees in 11 settlements across the country, classes usually involve a teacher standing in front of a group and using a chalkboard to show, for example, how to write. In theory pupils should copy down the information, but most do not have pencils or notebooks. Books are in short supply as well.

Similar challenges arise in the sprawling Bidi Bidi camp in north Uganda. More than 285,000 refugees live there – mostly women and children who fled the civil war in neighbouring South Sudan. Schools are overcrowded and under-resourced. Most pupils have to walk a long distance to get to school.



Elementary school children at Jusoor learning center in Lebanon.



**Adult education workshop in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.**

Konga Mouch, a teacher in one of Uganda's refugee camps, says school conditions are among the worst he has seen anywhere. "Children sit on the floor under a makeshift covering and that is our classroom," he says. "There is also a shortage of toilets." The lack of toilets causes many girls to drop out as soon as they start to get their periods.

Overcrowding is a particular problem in schools in Lebanon's refugee camps. Lebanon hosts an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees, almost half of them children. Most of those children have never been to school or have been out of school for years. The settlements simply do not have enough schools.

The few Lebanese camps that have schools lack adequate books and other teaching materials. "We try to teach students and tell them about Lebanon without using the usual school materials," says Suha Tutunji, director of refugee education at Lebanon's Jusoor camp. "We had to find other methods." To its credit, the Jusoor

camp aims to prepare refugee students to transition into Lebanese schools, but its funding limitations make that goal difficult to achieve.

For camp administrators, the risk is that spending more of the funds they have on education will come at the expense of spending on food, medicine and other necessities. Some camps, however, benefit from innovations in delivering education and training despite their severe funding shortages (see box below).

### SELF-HELP

Encouragingly, in some settlements, refugees are stepping up to close educational gaps. In Bangladesh's sprawling encampments in Cox's Bazar, for example, some Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have started their own adult literacy programme, using refugee teachers. The programme relies partly on volunteer work and partly on small donations. A separate, more comprehen-

sive schooling programme – involving 400 learning centres to serve the approximately 400,000 school-age children in Cox's Bazar – is run with contributions from UNICEF and international donors.

Another self-help operation began in Kenya's Kakuma camp, where refugees, using charitable donations, started adult education centres that have internet-connected computer facilities. Last year UNHCR, which runs the camp, stepped up its support for the project and opened additional cyber cafés. This has helped refugees to gain valuable information-technology skills.

Such initiatives point to a promising development: a focus on supporting skills training and psycho-social development of refugees, rather than trying primarily to meet day-to-day physical needs. Innovations and self-help initiatives are not a substitute for adequate funding for systematic education programmes, of course, but they show a path to a better educational result for millions of refugees.

### LINK

**UNHCR, 2020: Coming together for refugee education.**

<https://www.unhcr.org/education.html>



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## Filling funding gaps

Despite funding shortages that keep refugee settlements from offering quality primary and secondary schooling and adult literacy training, some camps manage to provide educational opportunities. Several innovations aim to close some gaps in funding refugee education. One of them is the "School-in-a-box" initiative of UNICEF, the UN

children's agency. It operates centres in Dubai, Panama and China from which it can send supplies to schools worldwide within 48 hours. According to Unite for Sight, a global charity, "the School-in-a-Box kit has educated millions of children and refugees worldwide".

Another innovation is Zambia's "Book Bus", which is

operated by a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The Book Bus provides books, storytelling materials and libraries for children and teachers in Zambia, Malawi and Ecuador. This is not a refugee initiative as such, but it helps underserved children and adults in refugee camps.

For example, the Book Bus has worked in Zambia's Meheba Refugee Settlement, visiting each school in the camp. Stories were read aloud and support given for planning lessons.

A third initiative has arisen in Uganda, where the Finnish Refugee Council (FRC), an NGO, has supported adult literacy training and English language learning groups in refugee camps. The FRC's Massimo Lanciotti noted in 2019 that the FRC was the only NGO providing that kind of aid. He appreciated, however, that UN Women had started a literacy programme for South Sudanese women in four districts in northern Uganda. QB

## MEDIA LITERACY

# Limit spread of fake news

**A democratic culture depends not only on citizens having access to reliable information. They must also be able to tell what kind of information is trustworthy. This is a key component of media literacy and should be taught in schools.**

By Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi

Free media are indispensable in a democracy. They hold state institutions accountable. Law courts also do so, but by different means and with different impacts. Good governance depends on both the media and the courts operating well. It also depends on citizens being able to tell whether they are doing so.

Media and information literacy (MIL) is the ability to understand how the media work and can be used to participate in public debate. It also includes competencies in producing media items oneself.

Many media use advertising to fund their operations, and media literate people know how to tell adverts from editorial content. Moreover, they also need to be able to judge the quality of reporting. Relevant criteria include whether journalists indicate the sources they quote, rely on more than one source and report facts without bias. News items and opinion pieces should be in separate sections, moreover, and any story must be logically coherent. It makes sense for readers, moreover, to check who owns a media outlet and who is responsible for the editorial content. In democratic nations, laws or conventions force newspapers to disclose such information in their masthead or imprint (see p. 9 of this e-Paper).

The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), which is close to Germany's Christian Democrats, published a report on the impact of fake-news propaganda on Arab youth last year. It recognised media literacy as important tools for strengthening young people's understanding of the news journalism – and, accordingly, civic participation.

The authors found that young people in the United Arab Emirates get information from multiple platforms. However, many

were found to be hardly media-literate, lacking the competences needed to question, analyse and authenticate information found online, in print, or any media format. Things are similar in many places, including western nations. The KAS authors recommend teaching media literacy in schools.

## THE UGANDAN PERSPECTIVE

Prossy Kawala agrees that the threat of “fake news” is making media literacy increasingly more relevant – and that digital competencies are an important dimension of media literacy. She is the co-founder of the Kampala-based Centre for Media Literacy and Community Development (CEMCOD). In her eyes, Ugandan education institutions so far do not embrace the topic – with the exception of a few private schools. CEMCOD is a non-governmental organisation.

Adding media literacy to school curricula would be an important step. Kawala believes that making teenagers media literate in schools would have impacts on their families and communities, thus promoting a media literate citizenry. She proposes forming a consortium of media-literacy organisations to promote the matter. More-

over, CEMCOD is cooperating with six local radio stations to teach people about media literacy. As Kawala points out, the media in general could – and should – do more to make sure media literacy figures in school curricula.

In other contexts, various civil-society groups are showing interest in media literacy. Kawala mentions the African Centre for Media Excellence, Reality Check Uganda, the Media Challenge Initiative and the Uganda Media Women's Association.

Related initiatives exist in many countries, and various international development agencies promote the cause. Deutsche Welle Akademie has even published a short booklet, providing useful material to anyone who teaches media literacy.

## LINKS

**Centre for Media Literacy and Community Development (CEMCOD):**

<https://www.cemcod.org/>

**Deutsche Welle Akademie, 2019: Media and information literacy – A practical guidebook for trainers (third edition).**

<https://www.dw.com/en/media-and-information-literacy-a-practical-guidebook-for-trainers-third-edition/a-42423367>

**Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020: Media and information literacy among millennials and generation Z in the Arab world.**

<https://www.kas.de/en/web/rpg/single-title/-/content/media-and-information-literacy-among-millennials-and-generation-z-in-the-arab-world-2>



News stand in Kampala in 2016.



## EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

# The dire consequences of school violence

Corporal punishment is still widely used in schools in many parts of the world – with devastating consequences. Children who experience violence at the hands of teachers (or parents) often develop emotional and behavioural problems. The psychological stress also impacts negatively on their cognitive skills and academic performance. Ending this archaic educational practice needs to be viewed as a matter of national interest.

By Laura Hinze

Despite internationally established goals to combat violence against children, the global initiative End All Corporal Punishment reports that corporal punishment in the home is currently legal in 139 countries and in schools in 67 countries. The figures are

highest in Southeast Asia and Africa, where physical punishment in schools is both legal and socially accepted in many countries.

For eight years, a team led by psychologist Tobias Hecker at Bielefeld University has dedicated themselves to researching and preventing violence in child education in eastern Africa, including Tanzania. In one study, the researchers interviewed pupils, parents and teachers at Tanzanian primary schools. 96% of the teachers reported having used at least one form of physical or emotional violence against pupils in the month prior to the survey.

Threatening students with violence was the most widespread admission. One in five teachers did so more than 20 times a month. They also admitted frequently shouting at students and hitting them on

buttocks, arms, legs or hands with a ruler, cane or similar instrument. The teachers' statements were corroborated by the fact that 95% of students reported experiencing at least one form of violence at the hands of teachers once a month.

## DECLINE IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Studies in recent years have shown a direct link between violence experienced by children and psychological problems. The more violence children experience at the hands of teachers and parents, the more likely they are to display emotional problems such as depression or social withdrawal and behavioural problems such as aggression or hyperactivity. The psychological stress makes it harder for students to concentrate and learn.

Children who experience violence are usually cognitively less able. This is evidenced, for example, by lower grades. While the impact on a child's mental health receives little social attention, research showing the effects on academic performance generates great interest among teachers and parents alike. There is an urgent need to protect children from violence – not only for the sake of their own health and development but also to avoid adding to the economic problems faced by low-income countries like Tanzania. Plan International, a non-governmental organisation for children's rights, for instance, conducted a study on the economic consequences of violence against children, taking India as an example: the cost to society of children dropping out of education due to school violence was estimated to be between \$1.5 and 7.5 billion per year.

In view of the devastating consequences – emotional, cognitive, economic and social – it is important to question why teachers use physical and mental punishment to discipline students. Hecker's research project also addresses this question and has found that an important role is played by teachers' attitudes to violence in education.

Approval and acceptance of violence can be explained, amongst other things, by what teachers themselves experienced during childhood. Many were exposed to the same violent practices and grew up in a social environment where corporal punishment was considered normal. One participant in the study reports: "Thinking



Corporal punishment and humiliation are still part and parcel of schooling in many countries – as here in Benin.

about the beatings I received from my teachers, and what I felt and thought about them, triggered a change. The very thought of beating a student now immediately brings to the surface the anger, despair and hatred I felt when I was beaten by my own teacher.”

However, concrete beliefs and myths about physical punishment also play an important role. Many teachers consider other educational strategies less effective. They believe corporal punishment teaches respect and builds character. There is also a perception that some children cannot be controlled by other methods. Furthermore, with classes ranging up to 200 students, teaching materials in short supply and household incomes generally below \$220 a month (with an average of five persons per household), teachers work under intense stress. Various studies have shown that stress leads to more aggression and teachers under greater stress use more violence against students.

### TEACHING NON-VIOLENT EDUCATION

Together with African academics, Hecker’s team has developed a training programme

for teachers that addresses the root causes of the use of violent punishment. Interaction Competencies for Children for Teachers (ICC-T) is a one-week interactive workshop for 20 to 30 participants. It conveys information about child development, consequences of violence and alternative educational practices (such as reinforcement systems, logical consequences and participation). In one part of the programme, participants are also encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of violence in childhood – as well as their current role as perpetrators of violence.

What is special about ICC-T is that it is specifically designed for low-resource contexts. Participants are motivated to participate actively in shaping the workshop and to engage in an extensive exchange with others. After the workshop, teachers are also encouraged to build a network for exchanging information on social media. In the long term, that will reduce the likelihood of participants reverting to old habits in the classroom. It will also strengthen collegial bonds and communication between teachers and thus improve the workplace atmosphere.

So far, ICC-T has been implemented at 17 schools for three studies. The par-

ticipating schools were primary and secondary schools in urban and rural areas of Tanzania and Uganda. Teachers showed keen interest in the workshop, and the vast majority of participants were highly motivated. The first two studies for which the programme was implemented and evaluated at secondary schools in Tanzania and Uganda yielded promising results.

Participating teachers reported that their attitude to violence changed and they subsequently used less physical and emotional violence against students. One participant reported: “I never thought about the feelings it engendered in my students. But it does not make me feel good to know that they hate me, that they want revenge, that they fear me and no longer respect me. It’s a horrible thought and it is never, ever what I wanted.”



#### LAURA HINZE

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## Preventing teacher violence

Together with academics in Tanzania, a team of researchers at Bielefeld University has developed a teacher training programme to prevent violence in schools in low-income countries. It goes by the name of Interaction Competencies for Children for Teachers (ICC-T) and is an interactive workshop employing the following methods:

- Knowledge transfer: In many countries, child psychological development is not covered in sufficient depth in teacher training. There is a lack of awareness that violence can harm children. Many teachers want only the best for their

students but fail to realise that they often achieve the opposite by resorting to physical and humiliating punishments. What is more, many teachers are unaware that there are alternatives. New knowledge gives them access to methods other than the cane.

- Practical exercises: Before participating in the workshop, teachers were familiar with a number of non-violent methods but had never used them. Practical exercises helped the teachers develop the courage and confidence to apply those methods later in the classroom.
- Reflection on personal experiences of violence: Many

teachers give no thought to how it feels or what it means for a student to experience violence. Self-reflection helps

them appreciate the impact of violence and prompts them to change their ways.

LH



Violence in the classroom is too common: a school in Uganda.

## REMOTE SCHOOLING

# Practical solution

**Trueman Hama, an advanced level student at one of Harare's top high schools, has co-developed a WhatsApp chatbot to assist other students and teachers with learning materials. This helps mitigate the impacts of school closures due to the Coronavirus pandemic in Zimbabwe.**

By Farai Shawn Matiashe

Zimbabwe's schools were shut down in March 2020, when the country recorded its first death. At the time, the government imposed a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. With Coronavirus cases being contained in October, the government gradually opened schools again. It reversed this policy in January, however, in view of surging case numbers.

Some schools have since introduced online learning as an alternative. However, not every student is equipped to attend lessons on digital platforms. It matters that Zimbabwe is experiencing its worst economic crisis in decades. Hyperinflation is compounding poverty. Most parents cannot afford to buy internet data, and many students do not have laptops.

In this setting, Hama came up with the idea of a WhatsApp bot providing educational materials to both students and teachers. A bot is a computer programme that performs repetitive tasks largely automatically. Examples of bots include web crawlers of internet search engines. They automatically visit websites, following the available links and evaluating the content of the pages.

Hama took part in a competition after the Topflights Arts and Science Conference had invited pitches. The student won \$ 1000 in funding, and next approached the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for support. UNESCO hired a professional developer to help him to realise his dream. The bot is called "Dzidzo Paden|Imfundwe'ndlini". This name means: "Learn in the comfort of your home."

The chatbot distributes academic materials such as past exam papers and marking schemes. They help students to prepare for primary and secondary examination classes in Zimbabwe. The service is easy to use and can potentially reach 5.2 million WhatsApp users in Zimbabwe, according to UNESCO estimates. WhatsApp is the most

common smartphone messaging platform in the country. One of its advantages is that it does not require an internet connection all the time. As Hama points out, it is thus much more accessible than normal online classes.

## POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

Hama says the chatbot is currently being accessed by over 25,000 people in Zimbabwe. He hopes the number will rise to at least 100,000 by the end of this year.

Hubert Gijzen, UNESCO's regional director for Southern Africa says, digital technology presents a unique opportunity to serve as a medium for the transmission of educational and academic information. "This way, information and knowledge can go viral and spread faster, particularly as learners are preparing for their final examinations," he says.

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), hundreds of millions of children and teenagers in low- and middle-income countries have lost access to formal education since the start of the pandemic (see Claudia Isabel Rittel in our Covid-19 dairy in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/10).



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**Zimbabwe's schools have reopened in phases, but with smaller number of pupils, so many of them have to learn from home.**



## SCIENTIFIC LITERACY

# Everyone should understand climate change

**Denial of global warming is common. If people do not understand the science, they are more likely to accept fake-news propaganda.**

By Carmel McNaught

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), scientific literacy is “the ability to engage with science-related issues, and with the ideas of science, as a reflective citizen”. It implies that people will only accept as valid knowledge insights that are based on empirical evidence. It is not enough to have some kind of theory of a phenomenon, that theory must stand up to facts and critical reasoning.

Science is a very powerful tool for understanding the world we live in. Its findings are often counter-intuitive. An individual person would not notice global warming. The phenomenon is too complex. Nonetheless, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated clearly: “Scientific evidence for warming of the climate system is unequivocal.” The IPCC’s job is to monitor research results globally, and its members are leading scholars.

Indeed, there is compelling factual evidence of rapid climate change: global temperatures are rising, polar ice sheets are shrinking, glaciers are melting et cetera. As climate scientists have been predicting for decades, moreover, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent – and causing evermore damage. The data confirm scientific theories.

## WAYS OUT OF THE CRISIS

On the upside, science offers us ways out of the crisis. Sustainable and scalable solutions exist. On a global scale, we can replace fossil fuels with renewable energies. The transition to climate-friendly lifestyles is feasible, but it requires determined action.

So, why hasn’t every person on earth bought into the urgency of climate change and embraced the solutions? I think there are two interrelated barriers to action. The powerful fossil-fuels industry opposes reforms and has a history of promoting denialism. On the other hand, fearful people take comfort in disinformation that tells them everything is alright – or at least, that they are not to blame.

## MISCONCEPTIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND GERMANY

I live in Australia, after spending much of my life in science-education and development projects in Asia and Africa. People in my home country often claim that Australia’s contribution to climate change is small. They are wrong. In 2019, a report published by Climate Analytics, an international think tank, had this damning summary: “On a per capita basis, Australia’s carbon footprint, including exports, surpasses China by a factor of 9, the US by a factor of 4 and India by a factor of 37.” This report was widely circulated but only had minimal impact on public opinion and government policy.

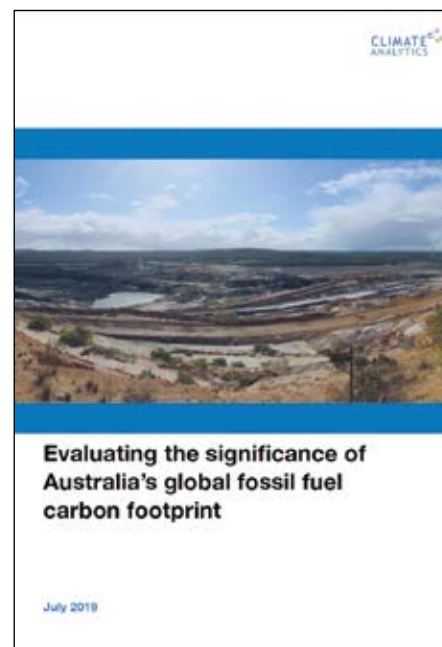
In a similar sense, Germans tend to believe they are “climate world champions”. In truth, all but four other EU countries had lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita in 2016 according to World Bank data.

What can be done? Sounding the alarm in a “doom and gloom” fashion does not work. However, understanding the science behind climate change could not only reduce denialism, but also inspire faith in available solutions. Fake-news lies are more readily accepted when the basic science is not understood.

School curricula are relevant for promoting scientific literacy, but they evidently do not suffice. Funding is often woefully inadequate – not only, but especially in developing nations. I know of wonderful sci-

ence teaching in many places. To get a grip on climate change, however, we don’t need isolated beacons of light. We need a floodlit plain.

Change needs to be a multi-level process: at personal, local, national and global levels. Each person in each community should understand the scientific basics of climate change. We must insist on evidence-based reasoning, assess information critically and reject conspiracy theories. One does not need a university degree to attain



**Relevant science-based information is freely available on the internet: front page of Climate Analytics’ Australia report.**

basic scientific literacy. Good science journalism is helpful, and many scholars make efforts to help people understand their research. TED Talks ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)) are videos from expert speakers with subtitles in many languages. On the internet, they are freely accessible.



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Primary school girls in Punjab province, where the enrolment rate is comparatively good.

#### WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## Illiteracy perpetuates oppression

**In many countries, more women than men cannot read or write. As a result, women lack opportunities and ignore their rights. The lack of education results from gender discrimination – and results in further gender discrimination. In Pakistan, this destructive vicious cycle is evident, for example.**

By Sundus Saleemi

Pakistan has a population of 220 million people, of whom 49% are female. The share is so low because of gender bias. The mortality of female infants is higher because many of them are neglected, moreover, there are reports of selective abortion. Many families prefer sons, not least because they will eventually take care of their aged parents, whereas daughters will require a dowry when join-

ing another family. Girls, therefore, are an economic burden.

Things are similar all over South Asia, but especially tough in Pakistan, which is the world's third most gender unequal country, according to the World Economic Forum. In 2018, its Gender Gap Index (GGI) ranked Pakistan 151 out of 153 countries, so only two countries fared worse. The GGI ranking is based on the magnitude of the gaps between men and women regarding participation in the economy, educational attainment, health status and political activity.

Lack of women's education is a consequence of women's inferior status and an obstacle to making progress. According to the government's Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM)

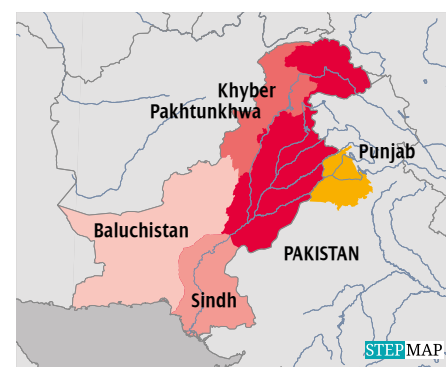
2018 to 2019, only half of women and girls aged 10 or older in Pakistan have ever attended school. It is thus no surprise that women's basic literacy remains abysmally low. That has detrimental impacts –including on their ability to grasp many of the opportunities that digital technology offers (see box next page).

Only half of the female persons aged 10 and above can read and write in any language in Pakistan. The pattern is not much better for the young generation. According to the PSLM, 64% of women aged 15 to 24 can read and write. This higher rate reflects progress made in urban areas as well as in the province of Punjab. In Baluchistan, by contrast, women's "Youth Literacy Rate" is a mere 32%. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, it stands at 50% and 55% respectively.

Low levels of education are a key barrier to women's participation in the formal labour force, which has been stagnating for a long time. Due to their lack of schooling and skills, most women cannot find lucrative jobs. Accordingly, the vast majority of women who do paid work, remain confined to mostly informal activities with poor remuneration. In rural areas, they typically work as daily labourers on farms, and in urban areas, they are mostly household helpers.

The money they make this way is not enough for their own sustenance, and they certainly cannot fend for their families by themselves. Low incomes, moreover, mean they cannot save money or accumulate any assets. They thus remain dependent on male family members who typically earn more, not least due to better educational achievements and more skills training.

Women's dependence on men makes them vulnerable to abuse and violence. Vio-



lence against women pervades public as well as private spaces. According to the official Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2017 – 2018, 28% percent of women aged 15 to 49 experienced physical violence at home. The prevalence of domestic violence was higher in rural areas. Not by coincidence, it was highest where women's literacy rates were lowest. In Baluchistan, for example, 48% of respondents were affected, while the rate was 43% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The background is that uneducated women are too dependent on their families to walk away from abusive men. Moreover, they often only have a traditional understanding of gender roles. Illiterate women typically do not understand the rights they are legally entitled to – and even if they do, they lack the means to go to court.

Many Pakistani laws put women at disadvantage, but they do not leave women

entirely without rights. For example, a Muslim marriage contract (Nikah Nama) must be signed by both the bride and the groom. It establishes the rights of the husband and wife. A standard clause gives a woman the right to divorce unilaterally. According to Muslim tradition, the husband generally has that right. However, the wife only has it if it is explicitly included in the signed Nikah Nama.

Most Pakistani women do not know this. Erica Field and Kate Vyborny are two scholars who have done research concerning wedding contracts. In a yet unpublished paper they wrote that 75% of women in Peshawar, the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, had not even read their Nikah Nama at the time of marriage. In Punjab, they found that the wife's divorce right had been deleted from 35% of Nikah Namas. Illiteracy and legal ignorance quite

obviously constitute a self-perpetuating cycle.

To judge by girls' enrolment rates in schools, women's literacy is unlikely to improve fast in the near future. Around 30% of children in Pakistan do not attend school. Girls are more likely than boys to either not go to school at all or to drop out early. Indeed, only 51% of the girls in the age group five to nine attend primary school. The data for secondary and tertiary education are worse. Any effort to bring about meaningful change in the lives of Pakistan's women must prioritise women's literacy.



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## Digital literacy would help

Digital literacy means that someone can make full use of digital devices such as smartphones, computers and the internet. Basic literacy is a precondition – and it is also required for using standard computer programmes that are common in business life, including Word or Excel, for instance. That is even true in some informal businesses as digital devices are becoming ever more common. Moreover, digital literacy often includes a basic grasp of English.

In Pakistan, half of the women are illiterate (see main story). Accordingly, it is no surprise that women's use of digital devices is very limited. To make a phone call, one does not have to be able to read or write, of course. Text messaging and many other, rather basic smartphone applications, however, require an ability to read and write. According to

the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2018–2019, only 26% of Pakistan's female population aged 10 and older own a mobile phone, and only 13% reported having accessed the internet in a three month period. A mere six percent had used a computer, a laptop or a tablet in that time span.

The plain truth is that most women in Pakistan are denied the vast opportunities that digital technology offers. For most practical purposes, they are digitally illiterate and unequipped. The impacts cannot be overstated.

Governments around the world rely on digital technologies to improve service delivery to people and to give citizens more access to state institutions. In Pakistan, such initiatives largely bypass women. The basic citizenship document in the country is the Com-

puterized National Identity Card (CNICs). According to official data, almost 24% of adult women do not possess it. Traditional norms restrict many women's mobility, so they cannot go to government offices that issue the document.

The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) is in charge of these



**Only one quarter of Pakistan's women has a mobile phone of their own.**

matters. It offers an online application process for the issuance and renewal of CNICs. To use it, however, a woman must not only have access to the internet and be able to read and write. She must also know how to fill out online forms and upload her picture. Further complicating matters, the NADRA website is in English, without offering links to Pakistan's regional languages or Urdu, the national one.

Government programmes that are supposed to empower women run into the same problems. Pakistan's flagship social-protection program is the "Ehsaas" programme. It offers the women of the poorest households small loans as well as both unconditional and conditional cash grants. Efforts to improve outreach and efficiency include the Ehsaas website. It includes information concerning the programme structure, application procedures, eligibility criteria, et cetera. Everything is spelled out in English. SAL





**Always too hot or too cold: provisional post-earthquake classroom.**

moreover, do little testing and offer no help to students who are struggling.

The disparity between urban and rural schools was laid bare in the aftermath of Nepal's 2015 earthquakes, which killed nearly 9,000 people and injured more than 22,000. The earthquakes destroyed over 35,000 classrooms, leaving 1 million children without schools.

In response, the government built temporary learning centres – provisional classrooms made of corrugated metal with some wooden supports – for use while school buildings were repaired or rebuilt. The temporary quarters were dark, susceptible to leaks during rainstorms, and either too hot or too cold. Learning in them was nearly impossible.

Most urban schools have since been rebuilt. But many rural schools are still waiting for support and continue to use the temporary structures. In addition, rural schools suffer from poor equipment, low teacher-student ratios, insufficient awareness among parents and community leaders about conditions in the schools, lack of expertise on the part of publicly appointed school overseers and poor general accountability and monitoring.

### **PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

A similar chasm exists in the quality of education at public versus private schools. Public schools have poor facilities compared to their private counterparts. The number of fully qualified teachers at state-run schools remains too low. The difference in educational quality between public and private schools is clear in the vastly different performance of their students on national School Leaving Certificate examinations.

Dropout rates are also higher at state-run schools. Although these schools receive state funding, they often rely on families for additional support. Parents are typically required to pay for books and study materials, school uniforms and admission and examination fees. This causes many impoverished rural parents to take their children out of school – or to encourage them to drop out voluntarily and find jobs instead.

Nepal's ethnic divisions are also reflected in its schools, with disadvantaged groups receiving only poor services. The country is splintered into a large number of

### SCHOOL QUALITY

## Deep educational divides

**Nepal's social divisions are reflected in its schools. The education of rural and lower-caste children is not as good as the education of urban and higher-caste ones. Teacher quality and resources at state-run schools are poor compared with private schools. The vast educational inequalities bode ill for Nepal's future.**

**By Abishek Thapa**

It is six o'clock in the morning in Daduwa, a remote village in Ramechhap district, and ten-year-old Laxman is hard at work. Every morning before leaving for school, which is an hour's walk from his home, Laxman milks the cows, collects feed for the animals and gathers firewood for his family.

Laxman is a member of the poor and marginalised Thami community. Thami men usually work in stone quarries and brick kilns, while women tend to the farms and households. Children routinely share the work. This is true in most of rural Nepal, where children as young as five do household chores, look after younger siblings and cook – all before starting their journey to school.

These conditions affect school attendance and educational attainment. About

one third of Nepal's overall population is illiterate, but the rates are higher in rural areas and among older residents. The 2019 UN Human Development Index ranked Nepal 142<sup>nd</sup> out of 189 countries in health, education and standard of living.

On the upside, Nepal's total school attendance and literacy have improved considerably in recent decades. According to a 2014 report published by the Borgen Project, a non-profit organisation addressing poverty, primary school attendance grew from 400,000 to 3.9 million in the years 1971 to 2001, and secondary school attendance grew from 120,000 to 1.5 million. The literacy rate improved from 23% in 1981 to 54% in 2001.

The positive overall trends hide large educational divides within the population. The chasms are found between children from rural versus urban areas, those attending state-run versus private schools, and those from lower versus higher castes.

### **COUNTRYSIDE VERSUS CITY**

Conditions in Nepal's rural schools are dire. According to the Borgen Project, studies show that hardly any learning occurs in state-run schools in those areas. Schools,

ethnic groups, each with its own culture and language. It is also stratified by class and caste.

Nepal has a high degree of political instability and fragmentation, according to a 2018 report published by World Education Services (WES), a non-profit group providing credentials evaluation for international students. “Nepali society is still largely agricultural and highly stratified, with upper-caste Hindu elites dominating a multicultural society that includes 125 ethnic groups/castes speaking 123 languages,” the report stated. “Only 45% of the population speaks Nepali, the national language of Nepal, as their first language.”

Anyone who wants to solve Nepal’s educational problems, must take this broader sociological picture into account. Inferior schooling for rural and lower-caste pupils and those attending public schools is likely to deepen inequalities and perpetuate them.

A further challenge is the gender gap. In Nepal’s education system, girls are less likely to go to schools than boys, and young women have less access to professional training and higher learning than young men do. This, too, is likely to have long-term impacts on the economy and society.

The Covid-19 pandemic is making the challenges ever more daunting. Economic pressures are making ever more children drop out of school. The poorer parents are, after all, the stronger the need will be to make even young kids contribute to the family livelihood (see box below).

### WHAT CHILDAID IS DOING

Non-governmental organisations such as the Germany-based Childaid Network Foundation are trying to close Nepal’s educational gaps. Childaid has been active in Ramechhap district in east-central Nepal since 2012. After the 2015 earthquakes, the agency supported the reconstruction of schools in the affected areas.

Childaid’s current focus is on training teachers and administrators. Moreover, we are building capacities among members of school-oversight bodies. We also provide study materials to students. In Childaid-sponsored programmes, teachers of very young children are taught how playful learning approaches work. Moreover, they are informed about using locally available materials as learning aids. Primary-school teachers are trained in managing classrooms and in child-friendly teaching methods.

At the same time, teachers are made aware of gaps in the education system – and what they should do to bridge them. Teachers can, for example, boost awareness among parents and community leaders of how important education is. They can also help to motivate parents to be more involved in their children’s lives at school. The idea is to offer every child a good education – regardless of ethnicity, caste, gender and geographic location.

### LINKS

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## Coronavirus impacts

Plummeting national income as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic is further weakening Nepal’s struggling public education system.

The Coronavirus pandemic presents a major challenge to Nepal’s already struggling education sector. Schools have been closed since soon after the pandemic began. Private and urban schools have largely substituted in-class instruction with online learning. Most rural and state-run schools, facing a shortage of equipment and expertise, cannot do so.

This disparity is likely to increase the dropout rate in ru-

ral and state-run schools. That, in turn, is likely to worsen social

disparities long-term. Moreover, it will have a detrimental psychological impact on those forced to leave school at an early age.

Making matters worse, the pandemic has dried up two

of the country’s major sources of income. The first is tourism: in March 2020 the government cancelled the “Visit Nepal 2020” tourism campaign, which aimed to draw 2 million tourists to the country. Tourism income in 2020 plummeted.

The second income source is remittances from Nepali migrant workers abroad, which represent more than a quarter of Nepal’s GDP. These payments are expected to decline by 14% in 2021 compared to pre-Covid-19 levels in 2019, according to the World Bank. The twin reductions in tourism and remittance revenues will further weaken an already struggling education system. AT



A child helping out on a rice field.

## MINORITIES

## Divided by scripts

**Santali is one of India's many Adivasi languages. Today, seven different alphabets are used to write in it. Some argue that this great variety does not help the community's development.**

By Boro Baski

Script is important for the sustainability and development of a language. In the long-term, writing requires a codified grammar, precise definitions of what words mean and standardised spelling. Without those rules, texts are hard to read. They become established as a literary tradition evolves. At the same time, that literacy tradition helps to define the values and norms of the people whose mother tongue this language is. Writing thus shapes the identity of the community concerned. All of these trends are reinforced if and when a formal education system uses a written language.

For us Santals, however, the debate on what alphabet to use has become divisive. We have too many options for writing in our language.

Among South Asian Adivasis, we are the largest homogenous group. More than 10 million people belong to Santal tribes in India's eastern states as well as in Bangladesh and Nepal. Our tribes are outside the Hindu caste system and have been marginalised historically.

Santali, for example, has survived and evolved over the millennia in oral tradition. It is an Austro-Asiatic language that is related to Vietnamese and Khmer, but not to the Indo-European languages prevalent in our part of South Asia.

In the 1890s, Christian missionaries found it helpful to write in Santali. They used Roman (Latin) letters. This alphabet, of course, has been used in many parts of Europe since the days of the Roman Empire. The missionaries wrote down folktales in Santali and documented traditional medicine as practiced by our community. They codified the grammar of the language and compiled dictionaries. Moreover, they de-

signed reading primers, especially in order to teach Santal children.

### THE SEVENTH ALPHABET

Education began to spread among Santals, and was not only driven by Christian mis-



**Bengali letters used in non-formal Adivasi school.**

sionaries. Typically, people opted for the scripts that were predominant in the region. Where most people speak Bengali, Santals

used the Bengali alphabet. Where Hindi or Nepali are more common, they opted for Devanagari, which is related to, but differs from the Bengali alphabet. Where Oriya is the lingua franca, however, that language's script was chosen, which is entirely different.

The sad truth is that Santali language and literature started to develop in six different scripts. To some extent, those alphabets were modified to better suit our language, but none of them accurately reflects Santali phonemes. The more depressing problem, however, is that Santal writing in different alphabets does very little to unite our community across the regions. It neither helps us communicate among one another nor does it foster a stronger sense of self-confidence.

This pattern persists however. The main reason is that it makes sense for a minority community to use the regionally prevalent script. In West Bengal, most Santal children attend state schools where Bengali is the language of instruction. In the neighbouring states, other languages are prevalent. At the same time, Latin letters are still in use as well, not least because some of the books prepared early on by the missionaries are still in print. They are indeed very useful.

Things have become even more complicated in the past two decades because government agencies started to approve a seventh script. It is called Ol-chiki and was designed to more accurately represent Santali phonemes. Since the turn of the millennium, state institutions have been promoting this innovative alphabet consistently, and they now consider it the only legitimate way to write in Santali (see box below).

While many Santals wanted that to happen, the results are unconvincing. It is ironic, to put it mildly, that many well educated Santals who assertively endorse Ol-chiki as a token of Santal pride prefer to send their own children to schools that teach in Bengali or English. They know that their kids will have more opportunities in life if they are taught in Bengali, Hindi or English.

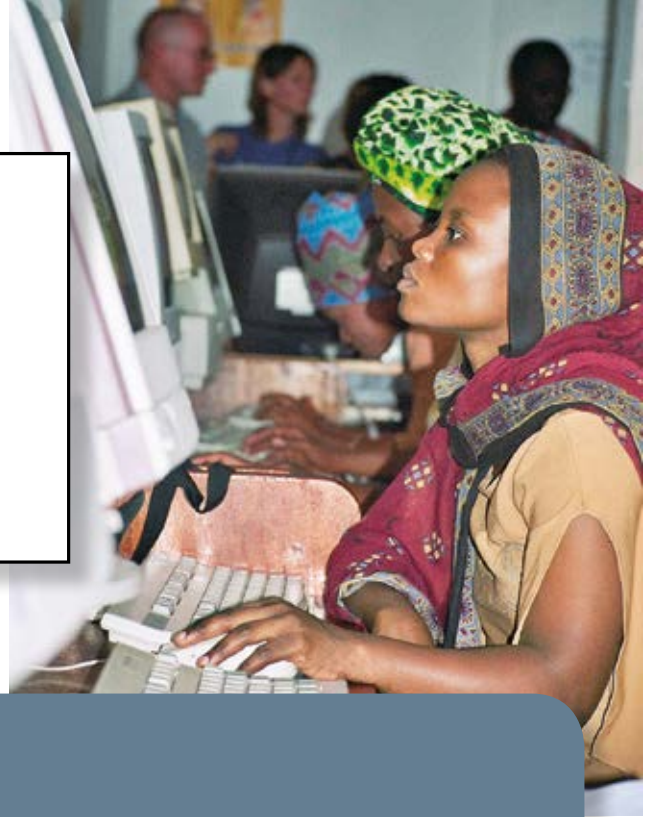
### OUR CHOICE

The community-based organisation I work for runs a non-formal school for Santal children. We have chosen to use the Bengali al-





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