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Education for all

Ensuring that every young person has a place in a classroom is not enough. The quality of teaching is crucial. People's ability to take their fate into their own hands depends on what they learn in schools. Without a good education, it is difficult to find a good job. The scope for getting involved in public affairs and influencing the future of one's nation also hinges on what one has learned. Ignorance, by contrast, exacerbates health problems and makes people vulnerable in many other ways too (page 18).

Title: Community-based school in a slum in Lagos, Nigeria.
Photo: picture-alliance/dpa/MAXPPP/Sadak Souici/Le Pictorium





Our focus section starts on page 18. It pertains to the UN's fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): quality education. It also has a bearing on the entire SDG agenda.

The lack of pertinent lessons compounds the structural disadvantages that this particularly vulnerable group suffers in education systems around the world. Stigma associated with menstruation and poor sanitary facilities, moreover, keep many girls from attending school in the first place. In many male dominated societies, boys' education is prioritised.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made matters worse in many countries. School closures were harsh, and not everyone had access to online classes. Moreover, there was an ill-considered tendency internationally to let students pass in spite of poor performance in the hope of avoiding hardship.

Education does not guarantee a person will always avoid unemployment and poverty. But it does increase opportunities. Educated people are more likely to escape vicious downward spirals. General knowledge helps people to take their fate into their own hands, and it gives them a voice in public affairs, enabling them to become involved in shaping their society's future.

Close the gaps in education

The results of inadequate schooling do not only affect those who did not learn to read or write because they were sent to work in the fields as children rather than to classrooms. Nor does it only concern those who do not understand the official language of the country they live in because, due to cultural traditions or religious conventions, they did not attend school. Society as a whole suffers negative impacts because those who lack knowledge tend to be less productive. Consequences include poverty and dependence on informal jobs.

Uneducated people are not in a good position to make decisions concerning their own lives, whether those decisions concern their finances or their physical health. Moreover, they are not empowered to participate in democracy, to understand decisions which are necessary for the common good or to identify anti-democratic propaganda.

Education is not only about making sure that every young person finds a place in the classroom. What they learn there and in what circumstances they do so, matters much more. For good reason, the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) of the UN is not simply education, but quality education.

Governments that shy away from education spending because they want to keep the state small act myopically. Too many school buildings are in a state of disrepair. In too many places, there are too few and underpaid teachers. These issues do not only haunt developing countries and emerging markets. They are common in Germany and other EU countries too.

Curricula need to be reconsidered, moreover. Financial literacy, regarding taxes, for example, typically does not feature. Nor does media literacy, which would allow people to tell trustworthy information from fake-news propaganda. In Germany, huge gaps in citizenship lessons result in citizens only having a vague understanding of EU institutions.

Young people, moreover, need to learn more about their own bodies than schools typically teach them. How vaccinations work and why preventive action helps to contain diseases, should be high on the agenda. All too often, reproductive and sexual health do not figure in school curricula at all. This gap means that girls and young women are denied vitally important information on which their right to self-determination depends.



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► All contributions to our focus section will also appear on our website www.dandc.eu, where you will find other related content as well.



OECD members have failed to reduce carbon emissions sufficiently: coal-fired power station near Cologne.

ODA

An outdated concept

The international community must cooperate to provide global public goods, but the most resourceful economies are contributing too little to this cause. The system of official development assistance (ODA) is outdated.

By André de Mello e Souza

Members of the professional community find the term “aid” condescending. For decades, they made efforts to rename it “development cooperation”, but that did not catch on in the wider public. The press still regularly uses “aid” when dealing with ODA.

The history of ODA is troubled in other ways too. In 1970, the nations with high incomes pledged to invest 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) in ODA every year. The group did not live up to the promise. In 2021, only Luxemburg, Norway, Sweden, Germany and Denmark were true to their word, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an umbrella organisation of high-income nations and some emerging markets. Global ODA only amounted to 0.33% of OECD members’ GNI.

Some argue that this failure does not matter much because other kinds of financial flows – including private foreign direct investments and migrants’ remittances

– exceed ODA. When a promise stays unfulfilled for half a century, however, that is a clear sign of dysfunctional politics.

For several reasons, the ODA system is indeed not up to task. They include:

- the tendency to redefine goals over time,
- the growing need to invest ODA money in global public goods and
- disagreements between established economic powers and emerging markets.

ODA was originally meant to support recipient countries’ national development. The idea was that infrastructure investments would drive growth and lead to broad-based prosperity. This approach had facilitated reconstruction in Western Europe after World War II, but it did not work as expected in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Therefore, other topics were prioritised. In the 1990s, the focus was on poverty reduction. Later the rule of law, gender justice and minority rights became prominent.

Not only goals were redefined. The OECD also modified what counts as ODA. Dissatisfaction with ODA, moreover, triggered interesting proposals for more convincing concepts (see box).

The greatest challenges the international community faces are things like climate change or the Covid-19 pandemic, which re-

quire the provision of global public goods. Economists call a good “public” when it benefits all stakeholders, regardless of whether they contributed to bringing it about.

Left to market forces alone, public goods remain underfunded. Private parties normally do not invest in them because they do not want others to benefit from their spending, but also hope to free ride themselves. Public infrastructure (including roads, water supply and electric power) therefore depends on public-sector spending and prudent legislation. Without government action, public goods remain neglected.

FUNDING FOR GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS

In this sense, the debate on how to deal with the climate crisis and other global challenges boils down to who will bear what costs for providing global public goods. This is an issue of global governance, and finding international consensus is always difficult. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has made it even more difficult.

In recent decades, OECD members’ ODA expenditure has increasingly served to bolster global public goods. An example is funding for clean-energy facilities, which serve the dual purpose of national development and global climate mitigation. Dual purpose ODA would be fine in principle, if OECD members contributed their fair share to global purposes in other ways too.

They are not doing so. The failure of the Kyoto Protocol was a striking example. The prosperous nations simply did not live

up to the emission-reduction commitments they made in 1997. By mitigating climate change at home, they could have strengthened a global public good.

In 2009, moreover, high-income nations promised to mobilise an annual \$100 billion for climate action in less advantaged countries from 2020 on. That money was supposed to come on top of ODA. So far, however, they are only affording about \$80 billion per year, and the terms are so loosely defined that it is impossible to tell climate finance apart from ODA. Last year's climate summit in Egypt decided to establish a new fund to cover the loss and damage of climate impacts. How such funding will be distinguished from previous pledges remains unclear.

When Covid-19 spread around the world in 2020, there was a general failure of cooperation and even coordination. Governments competed for diagnostic tests, personal protective equipment, ventilators and, from 2021 on, vaccines. Western countries developed the most effective vaccines, but provided them primarily – if not exclusively – to their own citizens. By contrast, China and Russia developed vaccines and shared them with other countries generously.

For many years, western governments have been calling for more private development financing, not least in view of the

ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It fits the pattern that they modified ODA rules to include some kinds of such funding. Public-private partnerships have indeed arisen and arguably operate quite efficiently, but there are obvious limits to how much private money can be mobilised for public goods. Profit-maximising companies have other priorities.

Emerging market economies grew fast in the past three decades, and from the turn of the millennium on, countries like Brazil, India and China extended their global reach. As their trade expanded, companies from these countries invested abroad, and their governments contributed more to ODA-related efforts. The OECD response was to try to create global rules for development cooperation, but the most important emerging markets did not accept common standards, insisting on their freedom to implement policies of their own. As a result, the aid system became even more fragmented and politicised.

It probably became less efficient too. Shying away from closer cooperation with the OECD meant that China, for example, did not learn from OECD experience. To some extent, the current debt crisis many countries are facing results from China having granted loans with too little concern for corruption or the quality of governance in

general. However, China did not cause the problems on its own. Others are culpable too. Private-sector lending to countries with low and middle incomes has increased considerably. Moreover, institutions that are owned or dominated by OECD countries, certainly must bear some responsibility too.

Solving the debt problems will require difficult negotiations involving all creditors. The G20 (group of 20 leading economies) has adopted a Common Framework for Debt Treatment (CF) which is a reasonable starting point, but not yet fully fit for purpose (see José Siaba Serrate on www.dandc.eu). It is a good example of the international community needing stronger global governance.

To bring it about, better cooperation is needed. If western governments want to make it happen, they must do more to promote global public goods. Criticising authoritarian regimes is simply not enough, even if it is justified.



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Beyond ODA

The distinctive feature of official development assistance (ODA) is that it is generous, given freely in support of a recipient. This is known as “concessionality”. In the case of loans, concessionality typically means reduced or even no interest rates.

What counts as ODA is defined by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), a club of prosperous nations and emerging markets (see main story). Over the decades, there have been statistical adjust-

ments. So called “grant equivalents” and “private-sector instruments” were accepted as ODA, leading to inconsistencies and confusion. Double-counting has become common, in particular in regard to debt relief, with the original loan counting as ODA and the costs of its restructuring counting as ODA again, though the recipient country actually does not get additional resources for its development.

In view of the obvious flaws of ODA, other metrics

have been proposed. The most prominent example is probably Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), which comprises various financial flows, including private ones, that are supported by a government. Proponents say TOSSD better reflects what actually delivers developmental impacts. However, it includes so many different flows that it does not really reveal to what a government is contributing.

A more radical proposal is to introduce something called Global Public Investment (GPI). It would be administered by a permanent fund under the

control of a multistakeholder body, which would be a new institution of global governance. ODA would then be obsolete. Countries would contribute to this fund according to their capacity and benefit from it according to their need. This fund would be democratic and all-inclusive. The main challenge, of course, is that powerful countries would have to surrender their national policymaking to a global institution. AMS

LINK

Global Public Investment:
<https://globalpublicinvestment.org/>

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Nonetheless, this invitation applies to everyone, regardless of gender or nationality. We need correspondents everywhere, and are keen on closing some evident gaps. We pay a modest financial compensation for articles. If you would like to contribute, please send an e-mail to: **euz.editor@dandc.eu**.

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South African churches in the Covid-19 pandemic



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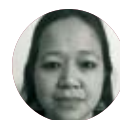
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When right-wing extremists invaded Brazil's capital



Bimbola Oyesola

In Nigeria, even poor people prefer private schools



Rukamanee Maharjan

Nepal's public schools must pay more attention to girls



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES GLOBAL AWARENESS AND LOCAL ACTION



Young people in Niger. The country has one of the youngest populations in the world.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

Benefiting from fewer children

Birth rates are declining in some of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Under certain conditions, this can help promote economic development. Good strategies are needed for development to be achieved in line with climate and environmental goals.

By Frank Swiaczny, Sonja Haug, Susanne Schmid and Sabrina Gabel

Reconciling global population growth with sustainable development is one of the most critical issues humanity is facing. However, we are running out of time to achieve this goal. The climate crisis, biodiversity and ecosystem loss are advancing. At the same time, global resource consumption takes place on a massive scale.

Due to high birth rates, the world's least developed countries have a very young age structure. Around 60 % of the popula-

tion are less than 25 years old. In many of those countries, the population continues to grow, but with a decreasing trend. This opens up economic opportunities: if there is a decline in the number of births per woman in the wake of strong population growth, the proportion of people of working age in the population as a whole generally rises.

The implication is that there are more people available to drive the economy. Society has to take care of fewer children and elderly. This potential economic benefit of a demographic shift is called "demographic dividend".

However, a favourable age structure alone does not necessarily produce a demographic dividend. A number of factors may be involved in generating the kind of demographic capital that yields dividends that can improve people's living conditions.

Identifying those factors has been a long-standing focus of discussion. What is clear is that a high proportion of people in employment can promote economic development, if at the same time:

- there is investment in human development – for example in health and education – and
- new, well-paid jobs are created.

That, at least, is what is promised by development concepts based on classical economic growth theory. In the past, demographic dividends were observed in a number of countries in Asia, including the "tiger economies" of South Korea and Taiwan.

Today, birth rates are falling in many countries across sub-Saharan Africa. In Ethiopia, fertility has fallen from more than seven children per woman in 1990 to just four children today. The average for the region is 4.5 children. Whether this will culminate in a medium-term demographic dividend depends, among other things, on how fertility will fall in the future and to what extent investment in human development will take place. Consequently, the African Union (AU) focuses on investing in youth, so that African countries will benefit from population growth.

This issue was stressed by experts during a virtual conference at the university of applied sciences in Regensburg (Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg) in late 2021. It was organised by the "Migration, Integration and World Population" working group of the German Society for Demography in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), development service provider GIZ, Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) and University of Koblenz-Landau (UKL).

RIISING EMISSIONS

The conference also discussed a dilemma presented by demographic-fuelled economic development – the fact that it often gives rise to higher resource consumption and more emissions. This was the case with conventional industrialisation. It brought prosperity to many in the past, but it also meant that responsibility for around half of global warming today lies at the door of just 10 % of the human race – namely the world's wealthiest. Resource consumption by to-

day's fastest-growing populations hardly contributes to the climate crisis at all.

It is hardly realistic for sub-Saharan Africa to achieve sustainable development through conventional industrialisation. On the one hand, the population continues to grow despite falling fertility rates; on the other, global sustainability limits have already been far exceeded as a result of the historical development of industrialised and emerging economies. Any such strategy for sub-Saharan Africa must therefore be viewed critically.



Schoolchildren in Senegal.

One way to realise economic development sustainably without following the same resource-intensive development path as industrialised countries is by "leapfrogging". This means skipping certain stages of development, as happened in Nigeria, for example, with telephone infrastructure. The country leapfrogged landline-network development. Instead, mobile-phone contracts proliferated, creating direct opportunities for mobile-bank accounts.

CLIMATE-FRIENDLY GROWTH

Lots of small steps in different areas of development could contribute to climate-friendly growth. But many African countries

are likely to find it difficult to replicate the surging development of economies in Asia. This is particularly true of countries still suffering from the consequences of civil wars and other conflicts. But whatever the environment, respect for sexual and reproductive rights should be guided by the principle of human rights.

In some African countries attitudes towards family planning are changing, as experts at the Regensburg conference pointed out. In Ethiopia, for instance, access to information on sexual and reproductive

health has improved school enrolment and completion rates, especially for girls.

The need for sex education is high among young Africans, and the desire for fewer children and later pregnancies is widespread. However, every second woman in sub-Saharan Africa who wishes to use contraception has no opportunity to do so. There is a lack of services for young people, for example at health stations. These problems should be addressed. It would contribute to a sustainable population development based on respect for human rights and gender equality.

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COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

The man behind the Auschwitz trials

Holding perpetrators of violence accountable is a typical challenge that nations face when they are dealing with collective trauma. Fritz Bauer, a German judge of Jewish origin, is remembered in Germany for helping the country learn about what happened in the Nazi era. His work had influence on how Germans perceived their past – and on the country's image abroad.

By Suparna Banerjee

Fritz Bauer initiated the Auschwitz Trials in Frankfurt am Main, where German Nazi war criminals were brought to court under West German law. He died in 1968 in Frankfurt, however his popularity reached new heights much later in the 1990s when his contribution began to be recognised as an important milestone. In 1995, the Fritz Bauer Institute was established in Frankfurt in his memory to carry on research on the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Born in 1903, Bauer completed his degree in law from the University of Heidelberg. He was a politically conscious person of Jewish origin. Bauer was a member of the Social Democrat Party (SPD) and a judge at the district court in Stuttgart when he was arrested by the Nazis in 1933. He was imprisoned at the concentration camps Heuberg and Oberer Kuhberg before he was released.

Bauer emigrated to Denmark to escape the Nazi atrocities. He returned to Germany after the end of Nazi rule and held high positions in the judicial system of the Federal Republic of Germany. "It was important to him to contribute to making Germany a democracy," says Katharina Rauschenberger, a senior researcher at Fritz Bauer Institute.

The main hearing in the first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial began on 20 December 1963. Fritz Bauer had campaigned for the investigations into Auschwitz to be brought together in Frankfurt. He initiated a large-scale trial that would allow the system of industrialised mass murder at Auschwitz

to be unravelled. The Nazis murdered more than a million people there, mostly Jews. Auschwitz is located in what is now Poland.

Immediately, Bauer was faced with scepticism. People questioned the need of the trial, since the Nuremberg Trials conducted by the allies after the war had already dealt with crimes of high-ranking Nazi officials. "For many years, however, German justice did not feel responsible for the crimes committed in Eastern Europe," says Katharina Rauschenberger. It was not until a trial in Ulm in 1958 ("Ulmer Einsatzgruppen-Prozess") that it became clear that many former Nazi perpetrators were still at large in the Federal Republic of Germany, about whose involvement in crimes not much was known.

Many ordinary citizens considered the Auschwitz Trials an unnecessary effort to malign the image of their country. In their opinion, Germany had to move forward rather than look back at its past. Life was gradually becoming normal, or at least that

was what people claimed. Some suspected that Fritz Bauer – a Jew – wanted to take revenge on the people of Germany. He began receiving hate mail and death threats.

INVESTIGATING THE NAZI SYSTEM

Bauer began to explain publicly the significance of the trials and to inform people about historical facts on Auschwitz. To him, the objective was to highlight the system of industrialised killings that the Nazis had established: How had it been able to function so efficiently? To what extent did ordinary people know about systematic mass killings being committed, and what could have been done to prevent them?

During the Nuremberg Trials, the allies – invoking international law – had classified Nazi atrocities as crimes against humanity. The chief perpetrators were found guilty because they were the ones who gave the commands. The rest were simply following orders.

The Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, however, applied West German criminal law to the Nazi war criminals. In the first trial, more than 200 people were investigated. At the beginning of the trial, 22 men were charged. In 1965, 17 of them were convicted. They received varied sentences. Television was not allowed to broadcast the trial, unlike in the Adolf Eichmann trial conducted by Israel.

The Auschwitz trials, mainly the first Auschwitz trial from 1963 to 1965, had politi-



Fritz Bauer, around 1947.

cal influence in West Germany and abroad. East Germany (GDR – German Democratic Republic), for example, propagated that the trials in the west were simply for show and had no substantial objective. One argument was that the sentences handed down to the accused were quite lenient in comparison to the atrocities that they had committed. Another argument was the fact that known Nazi functionaries continued to hold high offices in the Federal Republic.

In East Germany, harsh sentences were handed down to Nazi criminals that

often included death penalty. One of the largest GDR trials with regard to Auschwitz was that against SS doctor Horst Fischer, who was executed by guillotine in 1966. As a doctor in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, he had participated in the murder of more than 70,000 prisoners.

As Katharina Rauschenberger of the Fritz Bauer Institute points out, Nazi trials were welcomed on neither side of post-war Germany, because they exposed the overall complicity of the German society in allow-

ing Nazis to function. It was only decades later that Germans began to fully appreciate the significance of these trials in dealing with the country's past – and of people like Fritz Bauer.



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Bauer Institute for her comments on the text.
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The legacy of the Auschwitz trials

The first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial initiated by Fritz Bauer started in 1963. One of Bauer's objectives was to understand how the Holocaust had been organised and what role even lower ranks of the SS played in it (see main text). The 1960s were the decade of the students' uprising across the globe, and Germany was no exception. Students were inspired by left-leaning ideologies which tend to look at history from the perspective of the collective rather than from the individual.

Fritz Bauer, on the other hand, through the Auschwitz trials, emphasised individual responsibility: Everyone should self-critically examine their own attitude towards National Socialism. This made the younger generation aware of what had happened during the Nazi era. Many started questioning their parents about their role during the Holocaust, and what they had done to prevent it. This happened at a time when large parts of society were concerned with "looking forward" and not dig dirt from the past.

To some extent, the Auschwitz trials also helped in

building Germany's image abroad. They showed that the West German government seriously wanted to deal with its past. This was necessary because there were still many high-ranking Nazis serving in post-war Germany's government, who had never been prosecuted for their crimes. Western Germany refused to remove them from their posts. The Frankfurt Auschwitz trials thus reassured foreign governments of Germany's will to face its Nazi past.

Even though the trials had important impacts, Fritz

Bauer himself was not very happy with their outcomes, as Katharina Rauschenberger of Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt explains. He would have preferred the perpetrators to show human emotion during the trial and acknowledge the injustice done to the victims. Instead the trial helped them to narrate their side of the story, which conveniently blamed those in the upper ranks of the system of being guilty, while the rest had to follow orders in order to survive.

Moreover the crimes were treated as "normal" crimes with provisions of murder being used to try the accused. The systematic killing machinery of a legitimatised regime that

murdered more than one million people in Auschwitz was reduced to charges of murder and accessory to murder – as if everyday crimes had been committed there.

Nonetheless, the Auschwitz trials are still relevant. They helped to create awareness of the Holocaust and National Socialism. Nevertheless, it still took about twenty years for historical scholarship to deal with the murder of European Jews and to include the perspective of the victims, as Katharina Rauschenberger points out. This is also the research approach of the Fritz Bauer Institute, founded in Frankfurt am Main in 1995.

Fritz Bauer was concerned with contributing to the democratisation of post-war Germany, says Katharina Rauschenberger. When referring to German society, he always spoke about "we" – indicating that the responsibility of the Nazi past had to be borne collectively. Although he was Jewish, he did not exclude himself.

Bauer is more accepted now than ever before. His work has been recognised recently, when he received the Wilhelm-Leuschner-Medaille, the highest honour presented by the state of Hesse, of 2022. SB



The first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, 1963.

Churches lose worshippers after pandemic

The Covid-19 lockdowns changed behaviour patterns as health experts discouraged physical meetings. In South Africa, going to church is one of the most popular traditions for Christians. Technology allowed online church attendance through platforms such as Zoom and Whatsapp. Now, as the world reintroduces physical meetings, church administrators are decrying low numbers of worshippers.

Church and faith establishments are not only a faith issue, but also an economic enterprise. The country has a very high unemployment rate, which has led to the emergence of “faith entrepreneurs” who use religion to collect money from church attenders. Attracting a large followership means that “pastors” or evangelists of these churches can collect large sums of money from their followers.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, church business became digitised. Faith entrepreneurs were able to open “Zoom churches”. The venture was very lucrative because the church could hold multiple sessions, have attendees from all over the world and collect money (tithe, offerings) using digital payment platforms.

As the pandemic subsides, South Africa’s churches are suffering from

a ‘great quitting’, with congregants vanishing from Sunday “Zoom church” services and quitting their old churches as they get poached by rival congregations.

“I’m a pastor – thanks to the vanishing pandemic, the migration from online to offline has led to a ‘great quitting’ of my worshippers,” says Leonard Cele, of the Greater African Boksburg Church in Johannesburg.

“The wave of ‘Zoom churches’ we held in 2020 meant that at the click of a button, my flock could attend five different services from five different churches in a day from their Wi-Fi enabled laptop at home. Now Zoom churches have declined, and 30 % of my flock can’t show up in person back at church. I’m not sure if I have lost them to rival churches or if they have abandoned faith briefly or completely,” Cele says.

The return to normal after the pandemic has not been an easy transition for people and institutions around the world. New realities created during the pandemic have become a norm that is hard to shake off. For pastors like Cele, the return to normal has brought new challenges. While worshippers could attend multiple events online, this is not possible with physical churches. People now must choose which church to attend.

“It’s a crisis for pastors. There is less money and earnings in tithe if worshippers quit their established churches,” says Kudakwashe Magezi, a poet in Johannesburg.

The harsh Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa saw church services banned alongside other mass gatherings like beerhalls, sports events and weddings. Churches are a major part of South Africa’s economy as they must pay a tax to the South African Revenue Service (SARS) to operate. Pastors too pay an income tax and make contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

In 2022, SARS made over 740 million Rand (€40.1 million) from non-compliant churches after an audit of 33 churches.



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Sustainable development requires global awareness and local action.

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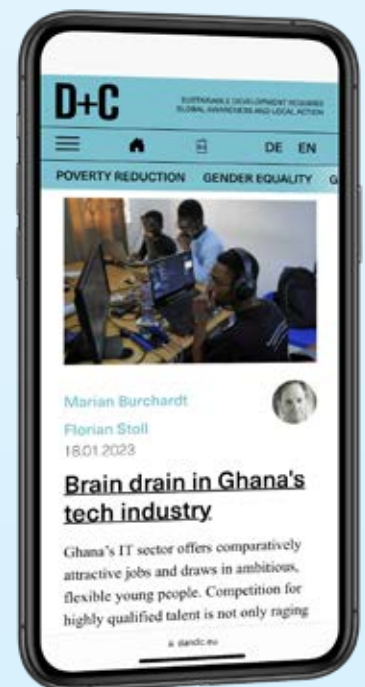
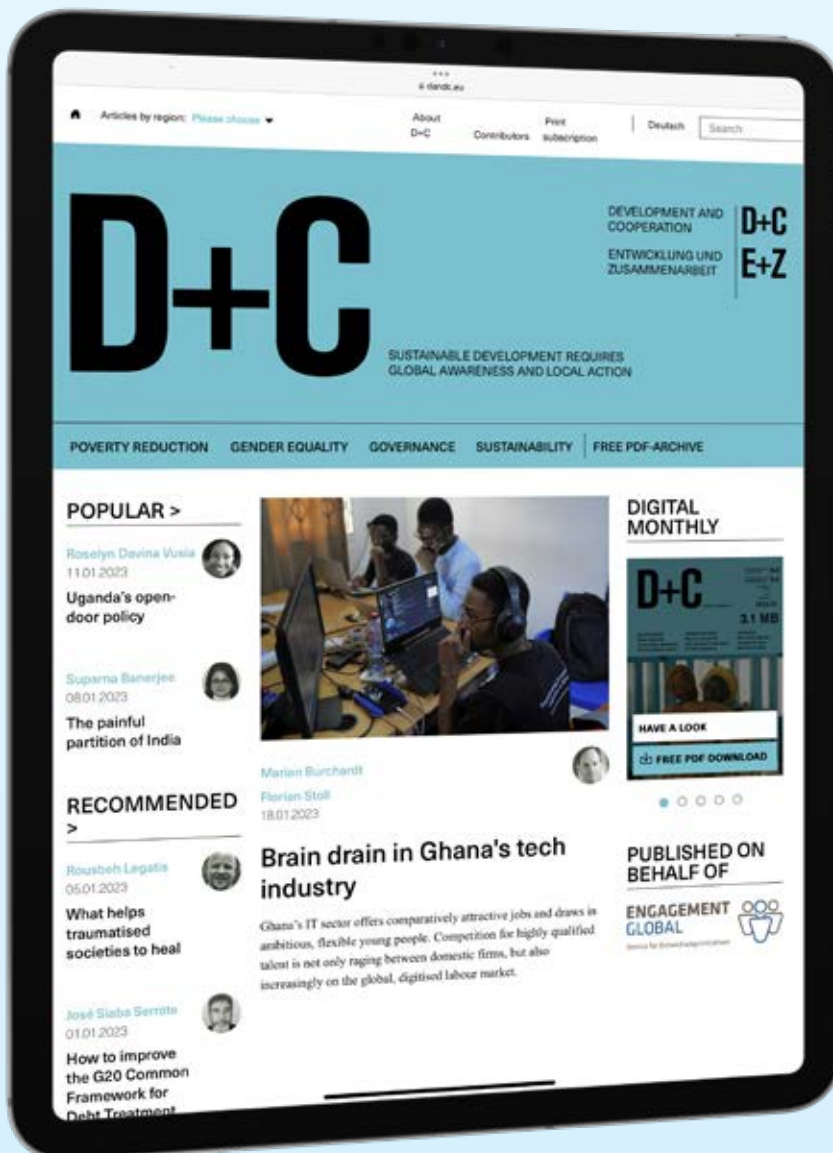
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To honour Gaddafi victims, this square in central Tripoli is called “Martyrs’ Square”.

LIBYA

Gaddafi nostalgia

When crowds flooded the streets and squares in various Libyan cities on 17 February 2011, they were demanding a better future with freedom and prosperity. Now, more than ten years after the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, it is obvious that their dreams have been turned to ashes.

By Moutaz Ali

In the last decade, Libyans have suffered instability, civil war, uncontrolled armed militias and corrupt elite politicians failing to conduct any elections since 2014. Moreover, terror militia ISIS made the country one of their main operating centres. As if that were not enough, Libya became a main gate for smuggling hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants to Europe, where governments reacted with corresponding irritation.

Regional and international conflicts over resources in Libya also keep the country unstable. Turkey has a declared military presence in the west of Libya while Russia did the same in the east. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar have funded and established different Libyan-operated media outlets which mainly fuel violence and conflict by using hate speech and promoting bloodshed through their content. Egypt and

Algeria have never been particularly helpful in stabilising their neighbour, and Tunisia has itself been hit hard economically by the conflict in Libya.

In the wake of this devastating situation, many Libyans who were dreaming of a better future are now dreaming of the past again and, despite all its hardships, are beginning to recall the Gaddafi era with nostalgia.

This nostalgia has its roots in the consecutive setbacks of the past ten years, but also in the erosion of the quality of life in all aspects such as the country’s infrastructure. “You see, we had a big airport with daily flights to dozens of destinations, including Europe. Now we have only a very small and modest one with flights to just four or five destinations,” says Libyan tour operator Fouad Fazzani.

VAST AND LASTING ECONOMIC DAMAGE

Tripoli’s international airport was torched in 2014 in one of the heaviest battles between the military and civilians the country has ever seen. Since then, former domestic airport Mitiga is in use. The travel industry is just one of the sectors severely affected by the situation in Libya. It has lost billions of dollars, while thousands of people have

lost their jobs. Fazzani adds: “A few years before the revolution, we started hosting thousands of tourists and organising trips for them all over Libya. Now, this promising industry has been destroyed due to the devastating situation the country has been facing since 2011.”

Also, most investments in real estate projects have been frozen, and already established construction sites are now abandoned. One example is the “Great Man-Made River” project, once the world’s largest drinking water pipeline project to improve water supply for the population and agriculture. The expansion of one of the last phases of the project, which was to supply the Jabal Nafusa, an arid mountainous area in the northwest of the country, was stopped after the revolution.

Libya’s financial resources are largely in the hands of corrupt politicians allied with armed militia leaders and backed by various foreign players such as Russia, Turkey, Qatar and the UAE. Many Libyans see the situation this way: They all serve their own interest, while the people struggle to feed their children.

“Other countries want to keep the situation in Libya unstable by scaring people with the militias they have established and using corrupt politicians as instruments to steal our resources on their behalf,” says Doukali Meghri, a Libyan political analyst. He adds: “That’s why those countries continue to support different conflicted local parties. They want them to continue fighting each other. Elections would not serve their interests, because everyone wants to keep their corrupt congressmen and political allies.”

Even the despair of the current situation, however, cannot disguise how much Gaddafi harmed his country and people for the 42 years of his rule. Not only has he made many enemies in the world, violated human rights and massively suppressed freedom of speech, but he has also failed to develop important sectors, such as education and health, despite the country’s enormous resources. Up to today, Libyans are suffering the consequences of this neglect.



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TIGRAY CONFLICT

Ethiopia's fragile peace

The Tigray conflict in the north of the country is estimated to have claimed a million lives. Now a peace agreement gives reason for hope. However, those implementing it need to take account of underlying problems.

By Markus Rudolf

The conflict that erupted in 2020 between Ethiopia's central government and the Tigray regional government was extremely brutal. In the end, it came down to which side was willing and able to pay the higher blood toll. Soldiers became cannon fodder, starving civilians became pawns of military strategy, infrastructure became a target for destruction.

As a result, there are currently millions of internally displaced people in northern Ethiopia. The country's economy has been set back years and the population is increasingly disillusioned with politics. Rifts between ethnic groups have deepened.

The peace agreement negotiated in November in South Africa's capital Pretoria came about partly because the Ethiopian

central state was on the verge of economic collapse. Donor countries were applying increasing pressure. The federal government's opponent, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), was also fighting for its military and political survival. Should peace fail, both warring parties have more to lose than before the treaty was signed: opposition forces and diaspora groups are harshly critical and poised ready to take over.

After previous agreements had repeatedly been broken, many doubted that the parties to the conflict were seriously interested in peace. The peace agreement was panned for being too sketchy and non-binding. Critics claimed it would be difficult to implement – or could even trigger further conflict.

In the meantime, however, the positive signs are increasing. The parties met first in Kenya's capital Nairobi and later in Tigray to discuss the implementation of the treaty. More than 65% of the fighters fielded by the rebel Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) were swiftly demobilised. Major centres in Tigray have been reconnected to the

national electricity grid and humanitarian organisations have regained access to those in need.

In certain areas, however, human rights continue to be violated, and delivering humanitarian aid remains difficult. This shows where the fault lines of the peace agreement run. The Ethiopian army was supported by the Amhara Fano militia and the Eritrean military. Neither of them was officially party to the negotiations, nor to the agreement. How this might impact on the peace remains to be seen. As of January 2023, the Eritreans stationed in the north are retreating in a looting frenzy. But they are unlikely to turn their backs on the territories they have claimed since the Eritrean-Ethiopian war at the turn of the millennium. Like the allied Amhara, they will expect compensation for sacrifices they made during the conflict.

While implementing the peace agreement, the deep-seated problems underlying the conflict must not be forgotten: unscrupulous elites strategically fuelling ethnic conflict; a spiral of violence, trauma and revenge; the exclusion of large parts of the population from development gains – all of these have set Ethiopia back, leaving it socially disrupted and economically poorer.

A national dialogue is needed to address these challenges. Initially, however, the focus is likely to be on economic development, which did not do much to promote social integration even before the conflict. What is more, the Ethiopian central government has emerged weakened from the Tigray conflict. It is more isolated internationally and more dependent on debtors and partners than before the conflict. Its armed forces are exhausted and riven by internal divisions.

Ethiopia must now be rebuilt in such a way that, firstly, the problems mentioned are not exacerbated. Secondly, it must be carried out simultaneously at all political and military levels – regional, national and international – in order to prevent the conflict from flaring up again and to lay the foundations for genuine peace.



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Now it is time to go home – a fighter in the Afar region in early 2022.

DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK

Another January insurgency

In protest against legitimate election results, right-wing extremists vandalised government buildings. Brazil's institutions responded fast, but key questions remain unanswered.

By André de Mello e Souza

Collective violence from extreme right-wing supporters of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro was feared and even expected after the October 30th 2022 runoff of Presidential elections. While there were indeed many demonstrations, road blocks and protest camps across the country, the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva took place without disturbance on 1 January. The expectation was that the new government would thus no longer face anti-democratic activities.

It was wrong. On Sunday 8 January, an angry crowd of Bolsonaro supporters invaded the Presidential Palace, the Congress and the Supreme Court. Some 10,000 extremists, dressed in the colours of Brazil's flag, vandalised the buildings of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Glass windows and doors were broken. Furniture and art works – many of high historical, cultural and financial value – were destroyed.

After hours of rioting, reinforced security forces managed to control the vandals. By Monday evening, 1500 persons had been arrested. Some were caught in the act, but the investigative police also used photos and video to identify perpetrators of what was widely called acts of terrorism. Some culprits had posted incriminating images online.

Nonetheless, authorities' failure to prevent the attack is deeply worrisome. The intelligence agency had issued several warnings about the risk of radical action. Nonetheless, the military police of the Federal District of Brasília escorted the mob through the capital. Some pictures show them appreciating the extremists. Bolsonaro always did his best to woo the security forces. Ibaneis Rocha, the governor of Federal District of

Brasília, is a Bolsonaro ally and now considered an accomplice of the attacks.

The invasion of Brasília was orchestrated. Radicals were brought in by bus from all over Brazil. Transportation and food were paid for by businesses, mostly from the agricultural sector, where some big investors benefited from Bolsonaro's disregard for the environment. Coordination was done on social networks, especially Twitter and Telegram.

The incidents in Brasília obviously resembled the riot in the US Capitol on 6 January 2021. There is evidence of the extreme right's transnational networking. Supporters of former US President Donald Trump strategised with people who belong to Bolsonaro's inner circle. Bolsonaro himself took refuge in Florida in late December, where he was hospitalised at the time of the invasion. That looked like a carefully planned alibi.

Brazil's institutions did react forcefully. Lula announced a federal intervention in Brasília's security forces, and Congress approved it fast. He also dismissed dozens of military leaders. A Supreme Court justice suspended Rocha from the regional government for 90 days. He also blocked Telegram and ordered that the content of messages from before 8 January must be sent to the federal police. Anderson Torres, who was in

charge of public safety in the Federal District and is Bolsonaro's former attorney general, was arrested – and so was the chief of Brasília's military police.

Many analysts now see Brazil's institutions, democracy and current government strengthened. The extremists who wanted to trigger a military coup failed. In mid-January, key questions were still unanswered:

- Why was the military not called in? Some argue that, had the new government done so, it would have risked facing the refusal of several generals to intervene against the mob. Brasília's military police chief claims the army had not let him remove a protest camp near the barracks. Lula says he did not want to let the military decide over a power grab.
- What went wrong in the regional government? Perhaps Rocha knew what was going on, but he may have been misled by underlings.
- What businesses were involved in funding the protests?
- What role did foreign individuals and organisations play? Particularly interesting is how social media were used and manipulated internationally.

In this context, it is encouraging that many foreign leaders expressed solidarity with Lula fast.



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On 8 January 2023, vandals in Brazil's Presidential Palace seemed to follow the example set by insurgents in the US Congress on 6 January 2021.

CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY

Mutually interdependent

The future of humankind depends on how we treat our natural environment. The climate crisis and the erosion of ecosystems are increasingly shaping the relations between richer and poorer world regions. The issues are crucially important since our health, our food and our economies depend on them. People's standard of life is at stake.

By Jörg Döbereiner

In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro adopted UN conventions to tackle the most important ecological problems. Progress has been slow, however. Late last year, there was a global climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh and a global biodiversity summit in Montréal. Both came close to failure.

In Egypt, delegates ultimately decided to establish a fund to cover loss and damages in poor countries. Unfortunately, not much happened to limit global heating. The conference in Canada made history in terms of adopting the ambitious goal of declaring 30% of land surface and 30% of seas protected areas by 2030. So far, only 16% of land and 8% of the seas are conservation areas. The need for action remains great, and the stage is set for serious disputes.

Indigenous peoples and deep-rooted local communities live in many areas where nature should be protected. Their interests must not be sacrificed. In Uganda, for example, the Batwa were displaced from their rainforest habitat when the government decided to protect mountain gorillas.

It is therefore good news that the final declaration of the Montréal summit spells out repeatedly that the rights of indigenous peoples must be protected and local communities should be involved in nature protection. Where local people are acknowledged as guardians of nature and supported in that role, both humans beings and nature can thrive. This is the win-win approach.

Global success hinges on developing countries and emerging markets contributing to nature protection. After all, many important ecosystems are on their territory – just consider the rainforests of the Ama-

zon region, the Congo basin or Indonesian islands. Humankind's future will suffer if the countries concerned, in the pursuit of development and prosperity, destroy nature the way that high-income countries did. The implication is that it serves the latter's self-interest to do their best in support of sustainable development in less prosperous places.

At the same time, high-income countries must achieve net-zero emissions fast.

Global crises require multilateral solutions. Reckless national egotism, as became evident in Russia's attack on Ukraine, is unacceptable. Irresponsible action at the domestic level, however, can cause global harm too. Under President Jair Bolsonaro, who lost his re-election bid in Brazil last year, deforestation of the Amazon accelerated to the point that the jungle began releasing more carbon than it is absorbing. In this sense, the Bolsonaro supporters who rioted in Brasília on 8 January were attacking the global common good.

The declarations of Montréal and Sharm el-Sheikh present an opportunity to improve matters internationally. First of all, rich nations must fulfil all promises. The annual \$20 billion they pledged to less prosperous countries for nature protection must



In the end, COP15 did adopt the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Global heating must be slowed down. Not only is the climate crisis causing serious suffering in countries that have hardly emitted greenhouse gases. It is also an important driver of the erosion of species and ecosystems.

The double crisis of climate and biodiversity shows that our fates are mutually interdependent. To protect life on earth, we must cooperate. Unfortunately, there is a lack of global solidarity. High-income countries' lifestyles are unsustainable and cannot serve as the global model. Nonetheless, these countries are not living up to their climate-finance commitments.

flow reliably and transparently – and on top of previous spending commitments for climate and development purposes.

The nature protection goals for 2030 must be achieved. The natural resources our existence depends on are dwindling. We must protect them as best we can.



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FOCUS

Education for all

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“Anybody who wants to work with people from disadvantaged social classes must speak their language.”
MARTIN KÄMPCHEN, P. 32



„Motherhood is not a kids game“ – Mexican campaign poster in 2014.

TEENAGERS

Too young to become mothers

Many low-income countries struggle with the problem of teenage pregnancies. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 18% of all women giving birth are younger than 19. That is the second worst ratio behind only sub-Saharan Africa. The Mexican experience shows that education – and in particular sex education – makes a difference.

By Pamela Cruz

When teenagers become mothers, the risk is high that they will stay poor or become poor. Typically, they drop out of school, so their job opportunities are diminished. At the same time, early pregnancies have negative impacts on the girls' health and personal development.

Research shows that expecting mothers who are younger than 15 are four times more affected by maternal mortality. They

are at greater risk of complications such as anaemia, hypertension and premature birth.

Among the member countries of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), an umbrella organisation of 38 mostly prosperous countries, Mexico has the highest share of teenagers who give birth. The absolute number has been declining since 2007, but women below the age of 20 still account for 15.1% of births in Mexico. Things have been deteriorating again in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the National Population Council estimating that the number of unwanted teenage pregnancies increased by 30%.

Teenage pregnancies occur for various reasons. Child marriage matters. Many girls marry early because of poverty, gender-specific inequality and harmful traditions.

Violence and sexual abuse leads to pregnancies too. It also matters that there is only limited access to comprehensive sex education, full reproductive health services and information on contraceptives (including how to use them).

How common teenage pregnancy is in Mexico, varies from region to region. The rate is particularly high in the comparatively poor states like Guerrero and Chiapas. Chiapas, for example, has generations-old cultural traditions that are obstacles to family planning. The religious faith opposes contraceptives, and traditional gender norms give men the power to decide whether to use them or not.

It is the job of governments to identify and understand conventions of this kind in order to take countermeasures. In 2018, Mexico's Federal Government ran a national survey concerning health and nutrition issues. The data not only showed that 23% of the youth become sexually active between the ages of 12 and 19, but also that 15% of the men and 33% of the women did not use contraceptives when they first had intercourse. While a large share of the Mexican population is informed about contraceptives, the

knowledge about how to use them varies between different population groups.

The survey also showed that 75% of sexually active women in the age group 15 to 49 use contraceptives, but that the share drops to 64% for those who speak an indigenous language. Moreover, only 60% of youths in the age group 15 to 19 used contraceptives.

Governmental protection of sexual and reproductive rights is not fully developed in Mexico. Disadvantaged population groups are discriminated against. Access to contraceptives and sex education depends on various issues, including age, place of residence and socio-economic status. Things are especially difficult in poor, isolated and remote municipalities in the rural areas of Chiapas, Puebla, Tabasco or Michoacán. Making matters worse, access to any kind of health service is limited in those places.

NATIONAL STRATEGY

The Federal Government is aware of the problems. In 2015, it launched a national strategy to prevent teenage pregnancies. The idea was – and is – to change people's attitudes by promoting the sexual and reproductive rights of girls, boys and youth in general. The focus is on girls' rights to self-determination. Girls are told that they have a right to say no and that violence is inappropriate within a relationship. The campaign addresses boys too. The goal is to promote a healthy idea of manliness with an eye to reducing violence in relationships as well as brutal sexual practices.

CONEVAL, the National Council for Evaluating Social Development Policy, conducted research during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to assess young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services. The council belongs to the federal administration, but is a decentralised entity. The study revealed serious regional discrepancies regarding health facilities, everything from buildings to staffing and medical supplies.

On the upside, 80% of the youth stated that their schools provide information on sexual and reproductive health. They also said that schools are best placed to spread such information. The data showed that 60% indicated they had access to materials that allow them to understand sexual and

reproductive health. Some 85% stated that their textbooks included information on the subject.

Sex education is essential, not only for preventing unintended pregnancies among young people. It also contributes to fighting violence and sexual abuse. Without relevant knowledge, girls are not empowered to self-determination and self-care. It is vitally important to inform them about reproductive health, the menstruation cycle and the use of contraceptives. The better children and teenagers are informed, the more they are empowered to reject sexual abuse and/or report cases of such abuse. Moreover, information puts them in a better position to postpone sexual contact until they feel ready for it.

Improving sex education is a global issue. Countries around the world must rise to the challenge.

Latin America – and Mexico in particular – have made undeniable progress regarding the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and, in more general terms, gender equality.

According to Article 3 of Mexico's Constitution, schools and curricula must be gender-sensitive and engage in education regarding sexuality and reproductive health. In 2021, the Supreme Court decriminalised abortion, declaring that the constitution forbids the outlawing of abortion. Nine states have since legalised abortion, and four (Mexico City, Oaxaca, Hidalgo and Veracruz) now permit voluntary abortion for any reason in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. It has thus become even more relevant than before to include information about abortion rights in sex education. Young people deserve to know that, in some

states, the law grants them full control over their own bodies.

The road to sexual and reproductive rights being universally guaranteed in Mexico nonetheless remains long. Cultural obstacles persist. Some ideological forces want to restrict such rights. For example, a parents initiative was launched in 2020, demanding that schools must not teach students lessons that do not conform with the ethical, religious or moral convictions of their parents or guardians without their prior consent and approval. Controversial topics include diversity, inclusion, gender perspectives as well as sex and reproductive education. Should this approach become official policy, it would restrict the rights of children and youth to a non-violent life and healthy sexuality.

The campaign was proposed in five states and initially approved in the education law of the State of Aguascalientes. A group of civil-society actors, as well as the National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, however, had demanded that the regulation must be withdrawn there and must not be approved by other states. So far, the Supreme Court has not accepted the parents' initiative to restrict education, and a federal judge has even ordered its suspension.



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Four states have fully legalized abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Menstruation justice in Mexico

For a very long time, menstruation was a taboo in Mexico. It was not mentioned in society, and government agencies shied away from it. More recently, however, the government's approach has changed, and it is now promoting menstruation justice. There has been a remarkable progress, though some people remain un- or under-informed.

To some extent, taboo and stigmatisation persist. The results include inadequate health infrastructure and limited access to menstrual hygiene materials.

Up to January 2022, menstruation-related consumer goods were actually considered to be luxury items in Mexico. They were heavier taxed than

essential consumer goods. Even though pads, tampons and menstruation cups are now tax-free, some women still do not have access to those items. Mexican society is marked by strong inequality.

More than half of the population live on below-poverty-line incomes, and 17% do not have the purchasing power to buy everything they need to fulfil day-to-day needs. Sufficient food and menstrual-management materials often remain out of reach.

Moreover, many women do not have access to clean and safe toilets, and hygiene problems are compounded during menstruation. It is the government's duty to bring about change.

Things have been improving in Mexico since 2021. To some extent, menstrual hygiene materials have become available free of charge at least in the public school system. Nine of 32 Mexican states have granted free access, especially to members of disadvantaged rural and indigenous communities. Michoacán was the first state to insist that schools must make these goods available free of charge. This state has also included menstrual education in mandatory comprehensive sex education. This is very important since too many young girls do not have sufficient information about their bodies when they first experience menstruation, are unsure about what their menstrual cycle is, about their fertility window and premenstrual disorders.

Free distribution of menstrual hygiene materials must

go along with other measures, including menstrual education and data collection. The reason is that evidence-based policies and programmes require reliable statistics.

In October 2022, the publication of the first national survey of menstruation management in Mexico was a milestone. The research was done by the civil-society organisation *Menstruación Digna México* ("dignified menstruation Mexico"), the private sector company *Essity*, which focuses on hygiene and health, and UNICEF. It revealed how girls and women handle menstruation, what the gaps in health infrastructure are, what is missing in legislation and what sociocultural obstacles remain. The survey covered 3000 persons who menstruate or used to menstruate earlier in their lives in the age group 12 to 70. PC



Dignity in menstruation is demanded throughout Latin America, as it is here in Colombia.



Kids on the playground of a public grammar school in Kwara state.

PRIVATE EDUCATION

Little faith in public schools

Disappointed in government-funded education, Nigerians increasingly turn to private schools. But not everything on offer is up to standard.

By Bimbola Oyesola

Olufemi Olajide is used to spending almost 80 % of his salary on tuition fees for his three children. He does not want to send his kids to a public school “where 100 or more students fill up a class and only one teacher is allocated to them”. After losing his job in the current economic crisis, his big worry is how to keep paying for his children’s education.

Olajide belongs to a upper middle-class family and says that he went to public schools himself. Back then, however, private schools had not taken off, and public schools were in better shape than today.

His loss of faith in Nigeria’s public school system is neither unique nor new. People largely agree that it is underfunded and mismanaged. Buildings tend to show a great need for investment.

Most Nigerians now see spending on private education as an investment in their children’s future. Many are prepared to invest a large share of their income. For religious reasons, some parents prefer faith-based schools.

The law states that primary education is compulsory and free in Nigeria. Nonetheless, experts reckon that only about 60 % of children aged six to 11 regularly attend primary schools.

According to Statista, the country had about 117,000 elementary schools in the school year 2018/2019, of which 62,000 were state-owned and 55,000 were private. Before the pandemic, private schools seemed to be mushrooming everywhere in Nigeria. Many of them, however, shut down again permanently during Covid-19 lockdowns. In the lack of resources, others are still struggling to bounce back. However, business activity has begun to expand again, and private education is picking up too.

There are many different schools of different affordability, catering to different groups of people. The private schools that poor families can afford obviously are far below the standards of the expensive facilities that rich people rely on.

The best ones are well-equipped and properly staffed. They have state-of-the-art science labs, libraries, sports facilities, swimming pools et cetera. They offer courses in many different subjects, including information technology, music and art. The teacher-student ration is good.

Adunola Adebote is an educator who has worked as a teacher, counsellor and director for both public and private schools. She says that high academic performance is typical of good private schools, for example, because students are encouraged to take part in competitions. Scholarship opportunities open up for brilliant students. Moreover, various kinds of skill training promote children’s development. During the pandemic, they ran online classes, with prosperous students having the needed IT devices.

In Adebote’s experience, it also matters that parents get a say in what their kids do at school. “Sending your child to a private school makes you a partner in progress,” she says. Safety measures, such as security officers at the school gates, are appreciated too.

Such schools, however, charge high fees. Otherwise, they could not accomplish their goals. Not only public schools typically lack that financial capacity. Many private schools do so too.

Indeed, some enterprising people have turned dilapidated or uncomplete buildings into low-cost private schools. Teachers there are typically not trained professionals. The quality of education can be so low that some state governments have been threatening to shut down schools that are not registered, do not follow official curricula, disregard safety standards or neglect other public norms.

Parents nonetheless tend to consider these schools to be superior to public ones. To some extent, deprived communities have started self-help schools, which do not exploit parents’ anxiety. However, they obviously cannot compete with expensive private schools.

Adebote considers the proliferation of sub-standard public schools a serious problem. In her eyes, it is a government duty to regulate schools and improve education. Some policymakers share her view. The legislative assembly of Lagos State recently insisted that Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu must ensure that private schools meet minimum requirements before getting approval.



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LABOUR MARKET

Brain drain in Ghana's tech industry

Ghana's IT sector offers comparatively attractive jobs and draws in ambitious, flexible young people. Competition for highly qualified talent is not only raging between domestic firms, but also increasingly on the global, digitised labour market.

By Marian Burchardt and Florian Stoll

The situation on the Ghanaian labour market is difficult for young people. The global economic crisis did not spare Ghana: the country's rate of inflation over the summer was over 30%. Unemployment is high among young people and university graduates (see box).

Within the relatively small group of formally employed young people, many begin to look for new jobs immediately after being hired. Because of the large number of applicants for individual jobs, many people also accept positions with less-than-ideal pay, duties and working conditions. The position that is ultimately obtained is therefore by no means perceived as a guarantee for a fulfilling life and stable employment. Why is that? This question is being addressed by a research project situated since May 2020 at the Institute for Sociology at Leipzig University, Germany. The project is receiving funding from Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The digital technologies sector presents a particularly good opportunity to study the dynamics of job switching. For several years, Ghanaian firms have been trying to copy India's formula for successfully establishing a digital service industry. One such company, which we will call "Tiger Comp" to preserve its anonymity, was founded in 2019 and as of 2022 had created 200 jobs in Ghana and another African country. Tiger Comp offers young university graduates a six-month training programme in fields like software development, software testing and data analysis. After finish-

ing the programme, trainees should receive a position and complete assignments for clients around the world.

In August 2022 we interviewed around 20 employees of this company, which is located in a medium-sized Ghanaian city. We asked them about their family backgrounds, their experiences during their training and job search and about their wishes and goals. Almost all of the respondents were unmar-

a prolonged search for better jobs with quicker paths to promotion, higher base salaries and more lavish perks than those offered by Tiger Comp. This attitude also increased interviewees' willingness to move to the next city for the next job, for instance to Accra and Kumasi, the largest centres, or even abroad.

Demand for well-educated specialists is strong in Ghana's IT sector. In fact, training companies like Tiger Comp are to some extent victims of their own success. Occasionally, trainees fast receive offers that pay two to three times their salary. The leadership of Tiger Comp therefore considers the poaching of the smartest minds a serious problem, and the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this trend. Our research revealed that European and American firms are also increasingly awarding contracts directly to IT specialists in low-income countries – not



Coders at an office of a Ghanaian logistics start-up in Accra, the country's capital.

ried, single and had a great deal of autonomy with regard to how they led their lives. They were free from local family ties, which allowed them to easily move to the medium-sized city from various regions. This independence persisted during their time at the company as well. Because their self-image was rooted in autonomy and personal success, they had a positive attitude towards

just to companies like Tiger Comp, but also to independent contractors who work in a Ghanaian home office.

COMPETITION ON TWO LABOUR MARKETS

Firms like Tiger Comp are therefore competing for the best minds on two labour markets at once: the Ghanaian market on

the one hand, and the global, borderless, digitised market on the other. The low cost of labour of Ghanaian companies – which is actually one of their advantages – also has a dark side: the firms simply cannot pay the wages offered by their western competitors. On the other hand, Ghanaian IT specialists who are employed abroad gain access to sources of income that can help thrive the domestic economy.

Although the employees of Tiger Comp repeatedly cited better earning opportunities as their central motivation to switch jobs, other factors also played a role. The working environment, for example, was occasionally seen as negative. On the other hand, the opportunity to have further training financed is a reason to stay put.

IT specialists in no way value risk-taking and professional flexibility for their own

sakes. They are striving for a certain permanence in their professional lives, as long as it does not interfere with other goals, like financial stability. That also includes supporting relatives, who may have financed the education of the interviewees in the past.

In principle, IT specialists are privileged with regard to employment and advancement opportunities among working people in Ghana, for example when compared to the textile industry. In a textile factory we studied, employees earn only a fraction of the IT specialists' wages. Their incomes are aligned with Ghana's minimum wage, and they can hardly cover the costs of rent, transportation and food. Nevertheless, in 2022, none of the approximately 90 employees left the company of their own accord. Many told us that they wanted

better-paying work, but had been unable to find it.



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Promoting employment

The high rate of unemployment among young people and university graduates is one of Ghana's most urgent social and political problems. The lack of opportunities for young people leads to a high degree of dissatisfaction. It tends to destabilise democracy and increases the willingness to emigrate, thereby causing a possible brain drain.

Official data is only gathered at irregular intervals, however, and it only captures people who have officially registered as unemployed. It leaves out, for example, the underemployed, informally employed and people working in jobs not suited to their qualifications. The methodology, which comes from Europe and North America, is of questionable use, particularly considering the large informal sector. This problem affects Ghana as well as other African countries, as the Ghanaian economist Wil-

liam Baah-Boateng (2016) has pointed out. According to a report by the World Bank (Dadzie et al. 2020), over half of those who are not officially considered unemployed are underemployed.

Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is tackling this problem. Since 2019, it has been supporting

measures to promote employment in a total of seven African countries as part of the Special Initiative on Training and Job Creation (Sonderinitiative Ausbildung und Beschäftigung). In Ghana, the project has a total budget of €38.3 million for the period from 2019 to 2025.

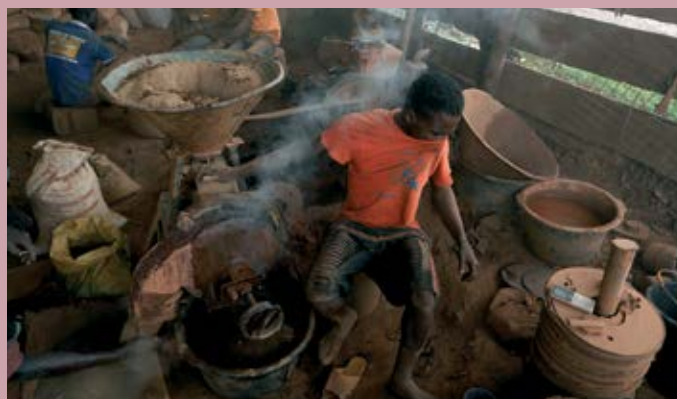
The initiative also operates under the name "Invest for Jobs". It is integrated into a more comprehensive project by the G20 states entitled "Compact with Africa". In Ghana, GIZ is coordinating projects

that cut across all sectors of the economy – from training bus drivers to supporting small farmers to telecommunications and IT.

The initiative is pursuing a variety of goals. On the one hand, the African countries that are receiving support are those that have made particularly good progress in the effort to achieve good governance. On the other hand, quick successes in employment promotion also have top priority. By supporting development on a local level, the initiative also aims at reducing the pressure of migration to Europe. MB, FS

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Informal labourers like these gold prospectors do not appear in Ghana's unemployment statistics.



Postgraduates from SLE and from Cameroon and Chad doing project work together.

YOUNG GENERATION

Students' changing expectations

Less time abroad, more work-life balance and a keen interest in gender justice – with Generation Z, the occupational landscape of international development cooperation is changing. For example, students increasingly consider poverty in terms of inequality, and climate change has become an overarching concern.

By Susanne Neubert and Miriam Holländer

The Centre for Rural Development (SLE) at Berlin's Humboldt University (HU) is the only university institute in Germany to offer a programme preparing postgraduate students for a professional career in development and international cooperation (DC/IC). Most of the students who graduate from it join DC/IC organisations soon after completing the one-year course.

Since its foundation 60 years ago, the SLE has systematically adapted to changes in the vocational landscape. In the past, the updating tended to be gradual, but in the last three years some major adjustments have been required. The SLE has responded not just by reviewing topics but by develop-

ing a comprehensive agenda, under which each individual topic has now been revised, restructured and regearred for a solution-oriented approach to transition.

At the same time, the SLE's focus, which used to be exclusively on the Global South, has been broadened to include studying the interrelationships between richer and poorer parts of the world.

These changes at the SLE also reflect a shift in the attitudes of today's postgraduates, the majority of whom belong to the so-called Generation Z. People born between 1997 and 2012 will shape the vocational landscape in the future (see box).

Two developments at the SLE so far have been particularly influenced by Generation Z's views. Firstly, poverty reduction as an overarching goal of development policy is increasingly seen as a fight against the inequality that exists between economically strong and weak countries. This also raises the question of how actions on one side affect the other. What impacts does resource consumption in industrialised countries have on remote ecosystems in the South, for instance? Answers have been yielded in

recent years by tele-coupling, a new field of research at the HU that analyses socio-economic and environmental impacts over long distances.

Secondly, extensive foreign travel no longer figures in many job applicants' portfolio; nor is it, in many cases, on their wish list. This development is primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as to growing security issues in many countries that were once popular destinations for work stints abroad. They are also more aware of the greenhouse-gas emissions caused by international air travel. Moreover, digital communication makes it possible to work on an equal footing with partners in other countries without being present in person. As a result, organisations in western countries are increasingly attracting young professionals, for example in the fields of environmental and climate protection or education and training.

At the same time, the decline in willingness to spend time overseas has potential drawbacks. For instance, lack of personal contact can make it harder to build relationships with people on the ground.

Some recent operational changes at the SLE relate to the composition of participants. In its first 25 years, the SLE was male-dominated. Then came a period of 25 years when the dominant gender tended to be female. Today, both participants and selection committee are less concerned about which

genders dominate. In line with the feminist orientation of German development policy, gender is increasingly relevant at the SLE as an intersectional factor, but no real importance is attached anymore to monitoring gender ratios within teams. Working teams at the SLE may be all-male, all-female or diverse in their composition.

Major changes are also seen in cooperation during periods spent abroad (Joint International Research Projects, JIRP). Key topics encouraged within teams and by team leaders include consideration of personal needs and setting limits, for example to achieve a reasonable work-life balance. Working through the night is deprecated and no longer considered a positive team experience. Workday structures such as scheduled breaks are strictly adhered to in all teams.

Another change relates to the internationalisation of the degree programme: the SLE operates in a university environment in which master's programmes are increasingly offered exclusively in English.

At the same time, very good German language skills continue to be important in development institutions within Germany to permit communication between institutions and with the German public. In the future, the SLE aims to use applicants' qualifications as the sole criterion for admission and employ English as the main teaching language. However, additional German language courses and courses to improve UN language skills will continue to be offered.

This will ensure a high level of proficiency in German among international participants wishing to join German DC/IC organisations. What those organisations

can now also usefully do is review their recruitment policies so that graduates are offered equal opportunities regardless of their country of origin.



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What Gen Z wants from work

Generation Z – the demographic cohort born between 1997 and 2012 – takes a different view of the world of work than the generations that preceded it. This is transforming the occupational landscape of the development sector.

Many members of Generation Z no longer view their working life as a career path that they will one day be able to look back on with pride. On the contrary: careerism and high salaries are out. The opportunity to strive for career success or financial reward is seen as a privilege for which there is no valid justification in the world of development work.

Employment – of any kind – is defined by Generation Z as “wage labour”, which can only be considered valuable as part of a meaningful work-life balance. Personal overloading is not priced in. The pride in a 60- or 70-hour week sometimes felt by members of the

previous generation meets with incomprehension and rejection from Gen Z representatives.

Consequently, young people today prefer to opt from the outset for part-time work, for example within the framework of a four-day week. The present shortage of skilled

workers plays into their hands here, frequently enabling them to push through such demands.

For Gen Z, the single breadwinner supporting a nuclear family is a long-obsolete model. Family structures today are highly diverse; it is taken for granted in this generation that singles are financially responsible only for themselves or that at least two adults, regardless of

gender, contribute to a family's income.

Generation Z is relaxed about the prospect of sacrificing prosperity as a result of these attitudes. Indeed, young people see that sacrifice as a necessity, because they anticipate an inevitable loss of prosperity in the longer term. But that is not to say they see a bleak future. They subscribe to the growing conviction that less prosperity will have positive impacts on the planet and humanity.

Frugality, sensitivity and self-discovery – Gen Z sees these as vital elements of a successful working life. Paralleling that belief is the generation's different understanding of poverty and how to fight it: industrial economies' prosperity is no longer regarded as a model for the rest of the world (see main article). On the contrary, the perception is that for the Global South to stand a chance of lifting itself out of poverty, the industrialised world needs to reduce its resource usage. SN, MH



For many young people in Gen-Z, studying is not primarily about better career opportunities.

REFUGEE CHILDREN

Disastrous results

Syrian refugee children and young people have been effectively cut off from Lebanon's education system for over a decade now. State-run schools have nowhere near enough capacity, and the offerings of civil-society organisations cannot fully meet the demand.

By Mona Naggar

Omar Khodr fled from Syria to Lebanon with his family ten years ago. He lives in Bar Elias, a small town in the Bekaa Valley, in the country's east. Over 300,000 Syrians have found refuge in this region. Khodr's children are an illustration of the disastrous educational situation of Syrian children and youth in Lebanon. None of his six children, who range in age from seven to 20 years old, has ever attended a regular school.

Instead, they took advantage of a few informal educational opportunities that were provided by civil-society organisations, typically in tent schools for various age groups. Most of these offerings are not recognised by Lebanon's Ministry of Educa-

tion. As a result, pupils do not receive valid school certificates or credentials that would allow them to take secondary school examinations. They also cannot qualify for secondary schools.

Khodr, whose name has been changed to protect his anonymity, cannot afford private schools. The father of six has repeatedly attempted to enrol his children in Lebanese state-run schools that offer evening classes for young Syrian refugees. He has always been turned away with the justification that there are no free spots. Khodr doesn't doubt this explanation, since the schools in the small town of Bar Elias are not equipped to deal with thousands of new arrivals. What's more, Lebanon's state-run schools require documents that he, as a refugee, cannot procure outside Syria.

According to Khodr, during the pandemic-induced lockdown, the teachers of the informal schools tried to conduct classes via the messaging service Whatsapp. It was not effective, he says. Many Syrian refugees cannot afford laptops and powerful internet.

Education for Syrian children and youth is one of the largest challenges that is confronting the Lebanese government and the international community. Over ten years after the start of Syria's civil war and the flight of hundreds of thousands of Syrians into neighbouring Lebanon, the education level of the young generation is disastrously low and their future prospects are correspondingly dim.

PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOLING

During the first few years after the outbreak of the civil war, civil-society organisations paid admission fees for Syrian pupils to state-run Lebanese schools. However, the number of Syrian children quickly exceeded their capacity. In response, the programme R.A.C.E. (Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon) was launched in 2014. Its goal was to secure schooling for 500,000 Syrian children in Lebanon. The programme, which was financed by the international community, envisaged evening classes for Syrian children and youth at state-run schools according to Lebanese curriculum. Donors paid admission fees to the Lebanese Ministry of Education via the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Financing was also provided for maintenance costs and teachers' wages.

By now the R.A.C.E. programme, which ended in 2021, has been heavily criticised. The Lebanese NGO Legal Agenda, for example, has declared it a failure. Legal Agenda bases its assertion on numerous sources, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which claims that in 2021, a third of Syrian children between the ages of six and 17 did not attend school. Only 11% of 15 to 24-year-olds have begun vocational training. According to the Center for Lebanese Studies (CLS), just one percent of pupils completed secondary school in 2019. All of these numbers are likely even lower now given the pandemic and the ongoing global economic crisis.

Khodr knows most of the many reasons for these low rates. He says that many Syrians do not have enough information about the learning programme that has been established for them at Lebanese state-run schools. Another obstacle, he believes, are evening classes: parents are reluctant to send their children to school in the after-



A makeshift school for Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley, eastern Lebanon.

noon because they worry about their safety on the way home after dark. According to Khodr, families also lack the money for transportation. Finally, he points out that children are sent to work in the fields in order to support their families.

A survey conducted by the CLS with Syrian pupils in Lebanese schools also revealed that the vast majority of respondents has difficulties with English and French, the languages in which science classes are taught. The survey also discovered that refugees' living conditions played a role: overcrowded dwellings and financial distress are clear impediments to learning.

Maha Shuayb from the CLS is calling for a long-term, comprehensive and integrative programme that would not force Syrians to the margins of society, but rather respect their rights. After all, the researcher claims, learning is not just about combating illiteracy, but also facilitating participation in the labour market over the longer term. Fighting poverty is just as important as expanding the capacity of state-run schools,

Shuayb says. In order to implement this approach, given the crisis in Lebanon, she believes that an alliance is needed between the public and private education sector on the one hand and civil society on the other.

In the summer of 2022, Lebanon's Ministry of Education introduced the successor programme to R.A.C.E., the Transition Resilience Education Fund (TREF). To what extent this is a first step in the direction Shuayb sketched out remains to be seen. The TREF is directed equally at Lebanese and non-Lebanese children and youth. The programme is being implemented in cooperation with UNICEF; the EU and KfW Development Bank are also involved. It ought to pay greater attention to the quality of instruction and respond more flexibly to the needs of Syrian pupils.

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EDUCATION IN INDIA

Learning Loss

During the Covid-19 pandemic, India became the country with the second longest school closures in the world, topped only by Uganda. 82 weeks of closed schools with only occasional classes in between hampered the education of some 360 million students and kept them in their homes, mostly without any possibility for e-learning.

By Roli Mahajan

According to the Ministry of Education, more than 20,000 schools were closed across the country between 2020 and 2021. The dropout rate of young children at the upper primary level doubled. The government links this to postponed admissions due to Covid-19, but also talks of high enrolment rates for the same school year. The number of teachers declined by almost two percent

in comparison to the previous school year, mostly because private schools fired teachers during lockdown.

For some, the educational situation in India was grim even before the pandemic. A UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) survey shows that, in normal times, one third of girls drop out of school due to domestic work and one quarter due to marriage.

The 2022 National Achievement Survey report reveals that matters got worse during the pandemic. At the same time, it emphasises the poor quality of school education in general. The document highlights that education does not reduce the inherited disadvantages in Indian society. Instead, it reinforces privileges.

In lower grades, for example, there is hardly any difference between the perfor-

mance of students in state schools and those in private schools. However, private schools show better performance in the higher grades. This lead increases significantly when students reach high school. Caste also has an impact on the educational achievement. While students from lower castes do move up the educational ladder, they still fall behind students from other castes – and the gaps increase in higher education.

The national newspaper “The Hindu” analysed pre- and post-pandemic education data. It confirmed a massive drop in overall learning levels during the lockdown period. It also noted a much higher decline among students from lower castes and rural areas.

The reasons are quite obvious. According to one study, at least 43% of students did not have access to online classes for up to 19 months after schools closed. This was not surprising, given that only 24% of Indian families have a smartphones and less than 12% of government schools are connected to the internet. With the severe economic impact of the pandemic on household incomes, most families with low incomes could not afford to buy digital devices.



Lane in a Mumbai slum: poor children were largely abandoned during the pandemic.

A teacher from a remote school in West Bengal says that only five of 50 students attended her online classes.

The Federal Government proposed to increase educational television from 12 to 200 channels to reduce the learning gap. Since most poor households do not own a TV set, it is little astonishing that another report, the School Children's Online and Offline Learning (SCHOOL) survey, underlined the complete ineffectiveness of TV-based education programmes.

E-content alone could not replace the need for schools and teachers. This became ever more clear as different surveys conducted in different states reported that many grade 3 to 5 students had almost forgotten how to read and write by the time they were back in their classrooms in 2022.

And even those with sufficient technical equipment faced challenges, as all responsibility for the children's education shifted to the family: "My child would switch off the camera during class and play games. He didn't take notes and mostly, I had to teach him again every day after his online classes," shares Aparna Singh, a working mother whose six-year-old child studies in a day school in Lucknow, the capi-

tal of the most populous Indian state Uttar Pradesh. "Teachers only wanted to finish the syllabus; and I have no idea how much my son actually learned! He was promoted anyway."

The 50 students of the West Bengali teacher also all passed the semester, even if only five were able to attend online classes. The government mandating promotions or lenient marking to make sure students would pass was common in all states. This hints at a bigger problem of the Indian education system: equating learning with completing the syllabus. But since policymakers explicitly mandated promotion during the pandemic, the number of students moving from secondary to upper secondary school and from high school to college was even higher than in previous years. In accordance with this, repetition rates nosedived from 2020 to 2022. The effects of such a lenient approach are likely to be felt by school leavers later on in the job market – and also by society in general, where discussions about less capable engineers and other specialists were already ongoing before the pandemic.

For most Indians, quality education is the only hope of breaking the cycle of poverty in which they are trapped. Covid-19

revealed many weaknesses of India's education system, and it has widened the existing educational inequities. The country must therefore address the shortfalls caused by the pandemic as quickly as possible and generally work on improving its dysfunctional educational system.

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GIRLS' EDUCATION

Equality only on paper

The Nepalese constitution guarantees free basic education for all and explicitly anchors the rights of women. However, the reality in Nepal is different: girls' lives are still determined by traditions such as menstruation taboos. Boys are clearly favoured when it comes to education.

By Rukamanee Maharjan

UNESCO estimates that 129 million girls are out of school worldwide – 32 million of primary school age and 97 million who would actually go to secondary school. Conflict,

Nepalese society is dominated by men. Families prefer sons over daughters. This preference is deeply rooted in traditional gender roles, customs and expectations. Many Nepalese believe that only boys can carry on their father's name and continue the family lineage.

Daughters, conversely, are considered to be a burden. They are not even taken for a real part of their family of origin because they are going to be sent off to live with their groom's family anyway – and parents will need to pay dowry for them and bring gifts for their in-laws. Therefore, families are less

tees every citizen the right to free education up to the secondary level. This means that parents do not have to pay school fees if they send their children to state-run public schools.

For children with disabilities and children from economically indigent families, the state also provides free higher education. Visually impaired children and those with a hearing or speaking impairment receive free lessons using braille script or sign language. The constitution also guarantees lessons in the respective local language.

Women's rights are also anchored in the constitution: it states that they have the right to seize special opportunities in health, employment, social security – and education. Until now, this has usually meant having a certain quota. For example, 33% of the members of parliament must be female, and in higher education 33% of university places are allocated to women.

A MATTER OF CLASS

There are two types of schools in Nepal: public schools, which are funded by the government and therefore free of charge; and private schools, which are non-governmental and for-profit. In general, only people from the upper middle or higher classes can afford to send their children to well-equipped private schools.

Therefore, public schools became synonymous with schools for the lower class and poor people. The quality of public schools is seriously affected by the lack of resources such as reading materials. They are located across the country, while private schools are largely centered in cities. Lower middle class or middle class families tend to send their daughters to public schools, while sons visit private schools.

Many public schools lack proper toilets and sanitation. This severely affects girls who are menstruating. In rural Nepal, sanitation facilities are often insufficient, so girls generally miss at least four days of school every month. In addition, particularly in the western parts of the country, women are treated as impure and untouchable while they are menstruating. Here, the Chhaupadi tradition is practiced, which prohibits Hindu women from participating in family activities during their menstruation. They are not allowed to stay in the family house while on their period and are



Educating girls is also about empowering them.

poverty, child labour, child marriage, gender-based violence and the multiple consequences of Covid-19 are some of the barriers that keep girls out of school.

Nepal is one of the countries that pushes these numbers up. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, several socio-cultural factors stop Nepali girls from going to school.

interested in investing in their daughters' education. The situation is likely to be worse if a girl's family is economically poor, marginalized or from a rural community.

Nepalese law contrasts with these realities. It actually obliges parents to send their children to school – education is compulsory for every child between four and thirteen years. In fact, the 2015 constitution guaran-

instead required to live in a Chhau Goth, a cattle shed or menstruation hut.

The Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic situation worsened the circumstances for girls. As the financial situation of many families became ever more dire, parents prioritised the boys again and discontinued only their daughters' education. As more girls are now out of school, they are more likely to become victims of child marriage, trafficking or child labour.

The Nepalese government has launched some initiatives and campaigns to improve girls' education. For instance, in the Madhesh province, the chief minister's office started a campaign called "Beti Bachau – Beti Padhau" ("Save Daughters, Educate Daughters") in 2019, inspired by similar campaigns in India. Through this campaign, every newborn girl is supposed to be insured and to receive approximately \$950 for her education after she gets her citizenship certificates. Moreover, bicycles have been distributed to young girls.

CORRUPTED INITIATIVES

What's more, the aim of this campaign was to discourage sex selective abortion and curb child marriage as well as the existing dowry system in Madhesh. It was well received by the general public. However, in August 2022, an anti-graft body – the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority – filed a corruption case against six people including the then Secretary of Madhesh Province at the Special Court in Kathmandu. They are accused of carrying out financially illegal activities amounting to approximately \$780,000 in the name of the campaign: they allegedly bought low-quality bicycles, which they then distributed and charged for as high-value bikes. The case is still pending before the court. It shows that rampant corruption also affects initiatives taken for the improvement of girls' education in Nepal.

The serious distortion in the Nepalese education system is obvious. Despite the

legally guaranteed free basic education, by far not all children go to school. And despite all legal guarantees for equality and non-discrimination, girls and women definitely do not have the same educational opportunities compared to boys and men. Gender differences and inequalities in Nepal indisputably persist.

Lastly it is important to note that educating girls is not only about sending them to school. It is about giving them skills, capacities and the confidence to be independent so that they have the power to make decisions about their lives and change society. It is all about empowerment, but that empowerment starts with sending them to school and allowing them to stay there.



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Education in numbers

70 years ago, formal education in schools and universities became available to the general Nepali public. Until 1951, education was limited to the ruling class and higher castes such as Brahmins or Chhetri. Initially, the education system gave preference to boys over girls due to traditional gender roles. There were also separate schools for boys and girls. After 1990, society opened up to co-education and girls' education also became a priority from an international development perspective.

UNESCO's statistics show that over the last three decades, Nepal has made a significant improvement in its literacy rate. In 2018, 79% of the male and 60% of the female population was literate with an overall literacy rate of 68%.

As shown by the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey 2019, conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) together with UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), there is also a gender discrepancy in school attendance. It starts from a young age: the average net attendance rate for early childhood education for children from 36 to 59 months is 62%. The report recorded clear disparities in this figure between 64% attending boys and 60% attending girls, 55% attending out of the rural and 66% out of the urban population, as well as between 52% attendees out of the poorest and 87% attendees out of the richest wealth quintiles.

The report also shows that as education levels climb, girls' enrolment in school

declines. In the school year 2018/2019, the net attendance rate for girls in lower basic education was 76%, compared to 55% in upper basic and 49% in secondary education. In rural areas and in the poorest communities, children in general and girls in particular are less likely to attend upper basic or secondary school.

A positive change can be seen in school completion rates: girls are more likely than boys to finish school at all educational levels; for example 43% of boys are at risk of dropping out of lower basic school and 47% might drop out of upper basic school, while the rate for girls for both educational levels is at 39%. RM



A woman in a female literacy class in Dhankuta, Nepal.



Santali-speaking children being educated in their native language with Bengali script.

LANGUAGES

Understanding what common people are saying

The author Martin Kämpchen lives in Shantiniketan, a small university town in the state of West Bengal. Ever since he learned Bengali, the local language, in the 1980s, he has seen India with new eyes.

By Martin Kämpchen

It took a long time, too long, for me to decide to learn Bengali. After graduating from university, I came to Calcutta as a German teacher and thought that I would stay for one or two years before returning to Europe. Things turned out differently. I taught for three years and then decided to begin a new course of study in Chennai (South India). Another three years! Afterwards, when I wanted to extend my studies again and conclude my research by earning a doctorate, it became clear to me that now I had to learn an Indian language.

I was living in West Bengal again, though not in Calcutta, but in the small university town of Shantiniketan, which was once home to India's national poet, Rabindranath Tagore. At that time there was no "Bengali for Non-Bengalis" class. So, I hired a private tutor.

A PARTICULAR CHALLENGE

I had learned English and French and was quite proficient in both languages after having spent a year each in Wisconsin and Paris. But I was aware that learning an Oriental language, even within the region where it was spoken, was a particular challenge.

Bengali has its own script, which is related to Devanagari (the script in which Sanskrit and Hindi are written). This script represents some vowels where they are spoken in the word. However, others are placed

in front of the consonants after which they are pronounced, and one other vowel is represented only at the beginning of the word and nowhere else.

The syntax is different from that of European languages. Verbs appear at the end of sentences, and instead of prepositions, postpositions are attached to nouns. The language does not assign nouns' gender, but does use polite forms that correspond to the German "Sie", even when referring to people in the third person singular or plural. Often, the meaning of a word only becomes clear based on its position in the sentence. Therefore, I had to learn to understand the world using hitherto unknown linguistic differentiations, while at the same time dispensing with familiar categories.

My Bengali instructor was a young man with a master's degree in philosophy, but no training as a language teacher. He probably thought: I'm Bengali, so I can teach Bengali. He had an intuitive command of grammar and syntax, like most native speakers, but couldn't explain the rules.

My instructor tried to teach me like I was a six-year-old learning how to write in school. His pedagogical cluelessness combined with his pride in his native tongue made learning difficult for me. On top of everything else, I was already over 30 and therefore no longer at an age when acquiring a language comes easily. If only I had started ten years earlier! I was often discouraged.

At the time there were no textbooks for people like me. Now there are a few, of which William Radice's "Complete Bengali", with its accompanying audio component, is the best. Radice taught Bengali at the London School of Oriental and Asian Studies and has made a name for himself as a translator.

I learned to speak more quickly than I learned to read and write. After a few months, I noticed that I could conduct preliminary, basic conversations with ordinary people. An incredible new world opened up! It became clear to me how important one's native language can be to people – especially if they don't speak any other languages and perhaps also can't read or write.

Conversely, I realised that our knowledge of those with whom we cannot communicate in their language will remain very paltry. A native language is like a second skin, or a person's aura. Their personality is only revealed when we speak, listen and respond.

I discovered West Bengal anew when I began to understand the conversations happening around me. My sympathy for poor, simple, unlettered and subordinate people as well as for manual labourers took on a new dimension. These people are in continuous communication with one another. Their need to communicate is great. Once I understood enough Bengali, this anonymous humanity became individuals with characters. After six years of waiting, I was getting to know India.

Mahatma Gandhi said that India lives in its villages, or in other words in ordinary people. Now I felt the truth of this statement.

Anybody who wants to work consistently with people from disadvantaged social classes has to learn their language. It creates trust, deepens communication and facilitates mutual understanding. Whoever is dependent on translations, however, cannot perceive his/her counterpart as a “whole person”, because nuanced expressions of joy, grief, hope and disappointment are easily lost. We only know how close we can come to people when we speak their native language, once we have actually experienced it.

Whoever carries out development cooperation without this knowledge cannot

reach the target group directly and will also never truly understand the socio-economic power relations. As a result, they are unlikely to achieve lasting success.

India has 22 official languages. They are promoted by the state, taught in schools and their literature is supported by the state literature academy (Sahitya Akademi). Native languages reign in the family, in neighbourhoods, in villages. Since I have lived in India, there have been discussions back and forth about what value native languages should have in the education system. The insight that children should first be taught in their native language was slow to gain acceptance.

I provide mentorship and mobilise donations from Germany to support the development efforts of a community project conducted by two Adivasi organisations. The primary school they operate offers instruction in Santali, the native language of this marginalised ethnic group. Different scripts are used in India for texts in Santali. Our village school uses the Bengali alphabet because the children will have to learn that language and its associated script anyway.

The fact that Adivasi children are being taught in their own language remains an exception, unfortunately. Conversely, in the

cities there is a strong trend towards English-language private schools, meaning that there, too, many children are being taught in a language that is not their native tongue (see box).

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Language politics in India

The Indian states are largely divided along language borders, which reveals how important language is to political identity.

Correspondingly, Bengali is the language of the state of West Bengal and of the neighbouring country of Bangladesh. Rabindranath Tagore, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, wrote in this language. With the founding of his university, Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, over 100 years ago, he very consciously maintained the region's cultural heritage under British colonial rule. He also expanded it

with songs that are still popular today.

Nowadays, however, there is an ongoing political battle in India about in which school year and in which order children should learn Hindi and English after their regional language. The central government has been trying for decades to make Hindi the national language, an effort that has intensified since Prime Minister Narendra Modi, of the Hindu-chauvinist BJP party, took office.

In large cities there is nevertheless a strong trend to-

wards private English-medium schools. The urban middle class is success-oriented from an economic standpoint. These parents want their children to learn English. If they do not have a good command of spoken and written English, they will not attain leadership posi-

tions in business, government or law. The great importance of the language of the former colonial power leads to a certain alienation (see main text).

For many, however, Hindi is not an attractive alternative, because it is only spoken natively in North India. Since English is equally foreign to everyone, people from other regions appreciate it as comparatively neutral territory. In principle, it would not be harder for them to learn than it would be for their compatriots from the North. This is especially true in South India, where Dravidian languages prevail, which are not at all related to Indo-European languages like Hindi, Bengali or Gujarati. MK



Martyrs' Square in Tripoli: In light of the devastating situation in their country, many Libyans now remember the Gaddafi era with nostalgia.

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Photo: picture-alliance/AA/Hazem Turkia