

# D+C

MONTHLY E-PAPER

DEVELOPMENT AND  
COOPERATION

ENTWICKLUNG UND  
ZUSAMMENARBEIT

D+C

E+Z

International  
Journal

ISSN  
2366-7257  
April 2018

## SUCCESS STORIES

German civil servant  
emphasises progress  
humanity has made

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

Former liberation  
movements need to  
reconnect with people

## INTERNET GIANTS

Why ADB economists  
call for cross-border  
competition policies



# Tough childhood

## Monitor

Club of Rome demands shift to sustainability | Germany lacks strategy for MENA region | Western money helps to fund Islamist ideology | Russia's destructive approach to information | Nowadays: Environmental activists in Libya | Imprint 4

## Debate

Taking note of developmental success | India's toxic air 11

## Tribune

### HANS DEMBOWSKI

Why Trump's tariff policy is dangerous 13

### HENNING MELBER

Changes of leadership in southern African countries 15

### YASUYUKI SAWADA AND CYN-YOUNG PARK

Why the internet needs something like a cross-border competition policy 18

## Focus: Tough childhood

### SUN NARIN

Cambodia's street children deserve support 21

### SALLY ATKINSON-SHEPPARD

What role Dhaka's street children play in organised crime 23

### MASUDA FAROUK RATNA

Inclusive school for rural children with disabilities in Bangladesh 25

### BELAY BEGASHAW

In Africa, lipservice to the education SDG is not enough 26

### MOSES NTENGA AND ANGELINA HENRICH

Campaign against corporal punishment in Ugandan schools 27

### DAMILOLA OYEDELE

Orphans who raise younger siblings deserve more attention in Nigeria 29

### PARACH MACH

In South Sudan, the growing number of underage household heads results from civil war 31

### VERENA STAMM

Poverty and political violence have undermined family traditions in Burundi 33

### RAYNA BREUER

Underage refugees struggle to find a foothold in Germany 35

### DRAKE JAMALI

UNICEF: Young generation can benefit from internet, but must be taught about its risks 38

## FOCUS

# Tough childhood

## Living in the streets

Cambodian street children face many risks, including drugs, crime and exploitation. Families and children at risk need more support, Sun Narin, a Phnom Penh based journalist reports. Researcher Sally Atkinson-Sheppard studied the role of minors in Bangladesh's criminal gangs and says they are "illicit child labourers". **PAGES 21, 23**

## Appropriate schools

Inclusion means that no child must be left behind, writes Masuda Farouk Ratna, whose NGO runs a school for children with disabilities in Bangladesh. Belay Begashaw of the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa insists that schooling at all levels must improve. Angelina Henrich and Moses Ntenga of the Ugandan civil-society organisation Joy for Children argue against corporal punishment. **PAGES 25, 26, 27**

## Child-headed households

In Nigeria, the authorities are hardly aware of a particularly vulnerable group: under-aged youngsters who head households and look after their younger siblings. They deserve attention, demands Abuja-based journalist Damilola Oyedele. Things are even worse where civil war compounds the problems. Parach Mach, a Juba-based journalist, reports from South Sudan. **PAGES 29,31**

## Stolen childhood

A carefree childhood is something many girls and boys in Burundi have never known. The long civil war, broken homes and poverty force innumerable children onto the streets. Many must do hard work or marry early instead of going to school. Verena Stamm, who has started a charitable foundation in Burundi, assesses the situation. **PAGE 33**

## Life on hold

Some refugees come to Germany as unaccompanied minors. Their situation is difficult, especially if they do not know whether they will be allowed to stay, writes journalist Rayna Breuer. **PAGE 35**

## Digital childhood

According to UNICEF, the internet offers educational opportunities, but also exposes kids to serious risks. D+C intern Drake Jamali reviews the UN agency's publication on the matter. **PAGE 38**

## Creating equal opportunities

Children are born with extremely unequal chances. This is the case within individual countries – rich and poor alike – and even more so between different parts of the world. The difference between an upbringing in an upper-middle-class family in Singapore and a peasant family in Chad is substantial.

The former child enjoys many luxuries, from a world-class education at prestigious universities that helps him obtain his career aspirations to the best health care in the world. The latter child is not so fortunate. He might not even finish primary school before he is needed to help support his family, either by working in the fields or by looking after his younger siblings. These children seldom experience childhood. Due to the lack of adequate health care, even diarrhoea can be fatal.

Children in war and crisis zones and those on the run or in camps are not even considered. Children who are forced to work, have a disability, live on the streets or are abused have a particularly hard time. For others, there is an inability to enjoy one's childhood because of an oversized responsibility or the constant pressures of their parents. A nurturing and safe childhood is by no means a certainty for every child in the world.

But it should be. Every child deserves equal opportunities in life, and the world community has a responsibility to create them. This goal is being presently worked on within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, for example. Whether it is a quality education (Sustainable Development Goal – SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5) or reduced inequalities (SDG 10) – children will benefit particularly from improvements.

Much has already been achieved. Between 1990 and 2015, the period of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the number of children of primary-school age who did not attend school fell by almost half globally. The mortality rate of children under the age of five was also halved. Yet, the target was higher for both MDGs.

Health, nutrition and education are key areas. Only a healthy child can develop and learn properly. That is why the strengthening of health systems in developing countries is so important, and so is universal health-insurance coverage. Only a child with a full stomach can concentrate on school work. School meal programmes are some of the most successful development measures as long as hunger is not eradicated.

Education is the basis for almost everything in life: family planning, gender justice, political participation, finding a fulfilling career. The foundations of which are laid at birth. Early support in families that do not make it on their own initiative is therefore straightforward. The vast majority of parents want the best for their children. However, not all of them can provide it; persistent socio-economic and political barriers create unfavourable conditions for many.

At the core of the 2030 Agenda is the commitment to leave no one behind. It should apply to children in particular. They cannot control the circumstances into which they are born. That being said, there is too great of an inequality between children from different parts of the world. Consequently, there is a great need to balance these divergences.

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



**KATJA DOMBROWSKI**  
is member of the editorial team of **D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.**  
[euz.editor@fazit-communication.de](mailto:euz.editor@fazit-communication.de)

## Debate



### Ignored achievements

Humanity has made more progress in recent decades than is generally acknowledged. The mood tends to be worse than is warranted by statistically well documented trends. Smallpox has been eradicated, and Polio has almost been eradicated. Matthias Meis of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development warns that we will be unable to rise to challenges unless we understand what we have achieved. **PAGE 11**

## Tribune



### Political upheaval in southern Africa

Within three months, three presidents left office in southern Africa: Eduardo dos Santos in Angola, Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Jacob Zuma in South Africa. Their parties are still in power, however. Whether new brooms sweep clean, remains to be seen, writes Africa scholar Henning Melber. **PAGE 15**

### Call for international standards

A handful of multinational corporations like Facebook, Amazon and Google dominate the internet. According to Yasuyuki Sawada and Cyn-Young Park of the Asian Development Bank, the international community needs cross-border action to foster healthy competition. **PAGE 18**



LIMITS TO GROWTH

# Preventing systemic collapse

If human beings do not fundamentally alter their current lifestyles and economy, planetary boundaries will soon be transgressed. “Earth Overshoot Day”, the date on which the world’s population has consumed all of the resources that the earth is able to regenerate in a year, is moving further and further up. In 2017, it was 2 August, meaning that 1.7 earths would have been needed to meet the demand of that year. In a new publication, the Club of Rome reveals what in their eyes has to change if we as humans want to stay.

By Katja Dombrowski

The foundations for the world’s dominant economic systems were laid in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the world was still “empty”. When John Maynard Keynes developed his economic theory, for instance, there were fewer than 2.5 billion people on earth. They produced far less compared to today. Natural resources were abundant, and the earth could easily absorb the impact of the people’s lifestyles and economic habits.

Presently, the world is home to 7.6 billion people with a high level of industrialisation and destructive consumption habits. The old system is no longer working. This is the thesis of the report “Come on! Capitalism, short-termism, population and the destruction of the planet”, published to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club of Rome in 2018. Forty-five years after the international think-tank first drew global attention to the issue of unsustainable growth with its famous report “The limits to growth”, the Club of Rome has now published another comprehensive analysis. The work was done by the current co-presidents Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman, along with 33 other Club members.

Part 1 of the book offers an overview of current crises and threats to the planet. It touches on topics like climate change, population growth, urbanisation, the glut of plastic waste and nuclear weapons. In order to measure the status of the earth, the authors rely on the concept of planetary boundaries, which was developed by a group of international scientists led by Johan Rockström

and Will Steffen (2009). Back then, the scholars identified nine such boundaries, which are also called thresholds or tipping points:

- stratospheric ozone depletion,
- biodiversity loss and species extinction,
- chemical pollution and the emission of novel compounds,
- climate change,
- ocean acidification,
- land use,
- freshwater use and the global water cycle,
- the flow of nitrogen and phosphorus into the biosphere and the oceans and
- atmospheric aerosol loading.

Some limits, like biodiversity loss and interference with the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, have already been transgressed, others are classified as “growing risks”, including climate change and changes in land use. Yet others, like freshwater use and the depletion of the ozone layer, are still within a safe operating space. Scientists have not yet defined a boundary level for chemical pollution and aerosol loading.

Most of the insights collected in “Come on!” are not new, but they are alarming nevertheless. The focus is less on the causes of the acute threats to our planet than on options to respond. The third and last section is dedicated to solutions.



The ocean is being threatened not only by plastic waste, but also by the less visible nitrogen and phosphorus. Beach in Sri Lanka.

The middle section deals with the our civilisation's "philosophical crisis". Indeed, part 2 calls for a new enlightenment. The authors consider it the most revolutionary section. It addresses environmental ethics and world religions. Their underlying thesis is that current religions and ways of thinking arose in the era of the "empty world" and are thus poorly suited to the "full world". The starting point for this analysis is "Laudato Si", the 2015 encyclical by Pope Francis that calls on humanity to completely re-think our relationship with nature. Of course, texts concerning human responsibility towards nature are found in all world religions.

The authors offer an explanation for why some religions, including the Abrahamic faiths, contain statements about the dominion of people over nature: "Going back to the origins of the major religions of the world, it should be recognised that they all emerged at times when nature seemed robust and endless, and the relatively few humans were threatened by hunger, wild animals, unknown diseases and neighbouring tribes." After all, the world was still "empty". In our current "full world", however, the mandate to "be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" can no longer be applied.

Another basic evil, according to the authors, is the radical market-orthodoxy that became paradigmatic after 1989. It empha-

sises liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation – and the result is globalisation, which has led to cut-throat competition between states and has produced many losers. The Club of Rome does not fundamentally condemn the market economy, but it criticises phenomena like growing inequality, the "dictates of the financial system" and the "arrogance" of global capitalism.

Balance should be one of the main features of the new enlightenment, between for instance:

- people and nature,
- short- and long-term,
- speed and stability,
- public and private,
- men and women,
- social justice and incentives for excellence and
- faith and state.

Yet we cannot wait for these new guidelines to be implemented worldwide. As the authors point out, "total system collapse is a real possibility". Humanity must act now, as part 3 makes clear (see also box below). In that section, the authors share a variety of success stories, concerning, for instance, grasslands regeneration in Mexico and Zimbabwe through holistic management. Moreover, alternative development strategies are creating millions of jobs in rural India, and China is transitioning to a green economy. Part 3 is an explicit at-

tempt to spread optimism. The authors are convinced that it is still possible to facilitate a future of prosperity for all people – but only if economic growth is decoupled from the consumption of natural resources.

Some of their claims are radical. This one is an example: Full national sovereignty over actions that affect the entire globe is no longer legitimate. It seems unlikely that the UN will determine in the near future whether a country may build coal-fired power plants or allow more vehicles that burn fossil fuels on its streets. However, the call to take integrated approaches in economic, social and environmental affairs reflects the idea of sustainability that the global community adopted with the 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals are designed to solve as many of humanity's problems as possible. But the Club of Rome warns that achieving the 11 socio-economic SDGs may imply trampling the environmental ones by bringing about the swifter ruin of the climate, ocean and biodiversity.

**SOURCES**

Von Weizsäcker, E. U., Wijkman, A., et al., 2017: *Come on! Capitalism, short-termism, population and the destruction of the planet.* New York, Springer.

Rockström, J., Steffen, W., et al., 2009: *Planetary boundaries. Exploring the safe operating space for humanity.* *Nature* 461: 472-475.

## Nature as a model

In its third part, the new book published by the Club of Rome invites readers to "Join us on an exciting journey to a sustainable world!". The authors present ideas for a sustainable economy.

One example is the so-called blue economy, a concept that was first spelled out by the Belgian entrepreneur Gunter Pauli in a report to the Club in 2010. It is based on the idea that nature offers solutions to almost every challenge, and people can uncover them by studying ecosystems.

The goal is to meet all of humanity's basic needs, especially food. In doing so, the blue economy must respect the planetary boundaries. The principles emphasise, for instance, that systems should be optimised, not maximised. Greater diversity, moreover, means greater resilience. Everything has value, including waste and weeds.

The book presents three examples for blue-economy approaches:

1. Coffee chemistry. The idea is to make use of coffee-production left-overs, which amount to 99.8 % of the biomass of the coffee cherries. This "waste" can be used to fertilise mushrooms, and when the substrate has been consumed, it can be further used for various purposes, including animal feed, odour absorption, UV protection and hydrogen storage. Chemical waste is thus avoided, and income and jobs are generated. This approach works for coffee, but also for tea and many other crops.

2. Energy from thistles. Thistles grow as weeds in places like abandoned fields.

On the Italian island of Sardinia, thistles are harvested, processed into oil or sugar and then transformed into biochemicals. Useful thistle products include polymers for plastic bags, elastomers for rubber gloves, herbicides and lubricants. They can also be made into animal feed.

3. 3D sea farming. This kind of aquaculture uses an artificial eco-system of algae, mussels, oysters, scallops, fish, crabs and lobsters. Waste is transformed into fertiliser and the technique – a "marine permaculture" – de-acidifies the ocean and restores biodiversity. (kd)

## MENA REGION

# Incoherent German approach

**Germany's aid to Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries has increased in the past seven years, but it lacks strategy and coherence, according to an assessment published by the German Development Institute (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik – DIE). The author argues that bureaucratic inertia and a focus on security interests have hindered aid effectiveness. He suggests that an SDG-based MENA strategy would be better.**

By Monika Hellstern

Since 2011, German official development assistance (ODA) to the MENA region has more than doubled – from around € 750 million annually to around € 1.8 billion in 2015. However, this increase was not supported by a comprehensive regional strategy, argues DIE scholar Mark Furness. He suggests that the main factor driving aid increases has been the German public's reaction to the arrival of refugees from the region.

In previous decades, Germany's approach to the region was largely pragmatic and risk-averse. Germany was a "payer" rather than a "player" while other donor countries meddled in the regions' geopolitically relevant affairs, according to Furness. He appreciates that Germany maintained a diplomatic, economic and development presence for several decades, but cannot identify a whole-of-government strategy that would define goals. Accordingly, ODA and other policy instruments are not used systematically.

Furness finds it surprising that the 2011 uprisings of the Arab spring did not make Germany draft a coherent strategy. Relevant issues have been pondered at different levels of the German foreign policy-making system, but Germany still lacks a coherent approach to MENA affairs. This incoherence, Furness warns, is reflected in action. Most of the ODA increase was spent on measures in just two areas: humanitarian aid in response to Syria's crisis and soft loans for promoting renewable electricity generation in Morocco. The strategic reasoning

behind such prioritisation is unclear, the scholar writes, but it seems to correspond to German and European security interests.

Furness explains the lack of strategy as a result of the complexity and fragmentation of the German system for making foreign policy. Several ministries and the chancellor's office are involved, and the ODA sector alone consists of several governmental and non-governmental agencies. The pattern of aid spending in the MENA region looks random to Furness. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the agencies for financial cooperation (KfW) and technical cooperation (GIZ) are working on closer alignment, he writes, but Furness argues that the involvement of other ministries makes matters difficult.

The way the Arab spring uprisings are understood is relevant too. Furness detects a tendency to "securitise" narratives. In this sense, the term stands for adding a security dimension to policy areas unrelated to security. For example, migration is increasingly being discussed in terms of threats and necessary protection. Accordingly, measures for supporting migrants who have returned to their countries of origin is now high on

the agenda, and so is ODA for North African countries that absorb migrants, Furness argues. EU-level "migration management" indicates that even more securitisation is likely, which Furness does not consider to be a healthy trend. In his view, however, Germany has not focused narrowly on advancing its own interests, and its humanitarian aid was also driven by the duty to assist communities in need.

Germany's Federal Government should develop a MENA strategy based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Furness suggests. He says this UN agenda offers sensible guidelines for development cooperation. Since they require donor countries to evaluate what impact all of its policies have on developing countries, Germany should reconsider arms sales to countries in the MENA region, for example. Moreover, reforms of current EU trade and migration policies would make sense. Furness argues that a German whole-of-government strategy may not automatically modify EU policies, but it would send a clear signal. Coordinated by the Chancellor's office, this top-down approach may also reduce bureaucratic inertia.

## LINK

**Furness, M., 2018: Strategic policymaking and the German aid programme in the MENA region since the Arab uprisings.**

[https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP\\_5.2018.pdf](https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP_5.2018.pdf)



German ODA supported the solar power plant Noor 3 in Ouarzazate, Morocco.



## FINANCING OF TERRORISM

## Dangerous cash flow

**Radical Islamists see themselves as mortal enemies of the west and its way of life. However, this does not prevent them from doing business with the west in order to finance the spread of their radical ideology.**

By Dagmar Wolf

Whether in preparation for the Football World Cup in Qatar in 2022, in the arms trade with warring states or in financing questionable Islamic associations and charities – money is flowing from east to west and vice versa. The book “Sharia capitalism” (in German: “Scharia-Kapitalismus”) by journalist and filmmaker Sascha Adamek is dedicated to these financial flows.

Countries that have declared radical Islam the state religion, the author calls “Sharia states”. According to his analysis, neither actors from Sharia states nor their business partners acted out of religious conviction. Rather, the author writes, it is about ventilating and increasing money. Adamek warns against a dangerous ping-pong game:

financial flows from the west refinanced individuals in many parts of the Middle East, but also state organisations, which in turn acted as patrons and sponsors of fundamentalist associations.

As an example, the author cites Qatar, which often serves as a hub for terrorist financing. The country is considered one of the richest countries in the world, but this wealth does not benefit the 2.3 million foreign workers from India, Nepal, Bangladesh or African countries. On the contrary, they work under precarious and inhuman conditions on the construction sites of the emirate, which is preparing itself with huge infrastructure projects for the organisation of the 2022 World Cup. Instead, the wealth would accumulate in the accounts of Qatari companies and individuals, who in turn would emerge as financiers of terrorist groups.

Adamek admits that not all business partners from the Arab Emirates have terrorism in mind. For the Gulf States, it is part of their religious and political self-image to finance mosque associations and Koran

schools. Many mosque associations in Germany, for example, are by no means on the ground of the German Constitution. The author warns that many rather resemble non-transparent black boxes in which children and young people are gradually being radicalised.

Donations to supposedly humanitarian organisations are also not unproblematic. As an example he cites Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW). Although IRW supports people in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe with its humanitarian aid and development projects, it is also suspected of being part of the financial system of the Palestinian terrorist organisation Hamas.

In the area of the economy and finances, a largely unnoticed Islamisation has long been underway, warns Adamek. Large corporations such as Alitalia, Air Berlin, Daimler, Volkswagen or Mövenpick, but also banks such as Credit Suisse or Deutsche Bank, have fallen into difficulties – among other things due to the financial market crisis in 2008. Islamic investors with fresh money often appeared to them as saviours in distress. But this leads to questionable dependencies. Saudi Arabia, for example, threatened to sell all US bonds when the US Senate decided in 2016 to publish closed pages from the investigation report on the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001.

According to Adamek, economic dependencies dominate not only industry and commerce, but also the leisure industry. Tourism is tragically linked to terrorism. Especially in holiday paradises like the Maldives or Bali, a lot of money has been generated from tourism and funnelled into the financing streams of international terrorism.

The author explains that the so-called Sharia states are just as economically dependent on the west as the west is on them. This would enable the west to dissuade these states from exporting their extremist religious beliefs. They should do everything to drain the channels of extremists, terrorists and their backers – regardless of their own business, Adamek demands.

### BOOK

Adamek, S., 2017: *Scharia-Kapitalismus. Den Kampf gegen unsere Freiheit finanzieren wir selbst. (Sharia capitalism. We finance the fight against our freedom ourselves – available in German only)*. Munich: Econ, 2017.



The holiday paradise of the Maldives is also a source of finance for international terrorism.



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## SOCIAL MEDIA

# When the government spreads fake news

**Russia's secret service is manipulating information on the internet – with international impacts. In the Russian Federation itself, the freedom of expression is restricted ever more tightly.**

By Drake Jamali

Spanning almost two decades the Russian Federation has seen the gradual deterioration of civil freedoms. The biggest decline occurred after protests in the years 2011 to 2013, says Artem Koslyuk, the chairman of Roskomsvoboda, a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The Russian Duma, the national parliament, passed dozens of restrictive laws limiting the freedoms of speech, assembly and the press.

The FSB (the successor for the KGB as Russia's federal security service) increased monitoring of internet usage, observing bloggers, journalists and citizens in general. But even today, arrests and police harassment of bloggers and social-media personalities is increasing throughout the country, says Koslyuk. It seems this authoritarian behaviour will not be abated soon.

At a panel discussion hosted by the international NGO Reporters without Borders in Berlin, Koslyuk said: "People are still motivated to protest against negative things the government does – social media plays a large role in connecting these people." He does not want his country to become like China or North Korea where public dissent is extinct or endangered. However, he argues that Russia is too diverse and connected to the world for there to be complete government censorship.

In Koslyuk's eyes, social-media platforms need to be made more accountable for the content that they allow, mainly because the daily user is bombarded with constant government propaganda. According to Irina Borogan, an investigative journalist, the FANGS (Facebook, Apple, Netflix,

and Google) need to shore up their act: "It is increasingly difficult to receive reliable information from these organisations because the FSB controls the majority of the internet servers."

In Russia, it has become risky to report stories that the government considers sensitive. Relevant topics include corruption, human rights and Russian foreign policy – in particular the wars in Syria and Ukraine.



Watching a live broadcast.

In her view, the problem is that there is so much fake news regarding the wars that regular citizens are unaware of what is happening. Borogan argues that information is available on what the troops are doing in both countries "if you go looking". Reporters who dare to do so, however, may end up in jail. "It is worth the risk; we are journalist, and it is our job to report in such issues that affect our nation whether it be positive or negative," says Borogan.

According to Roman Sakharov of the Glasnost Defense Foundation, covering corruption is more dangerous, "especially regarding Russia's natural resources". These resources tend to be owned by just a few oligarchs. Seekers of the truth struggle to decipher pro-government propaganda and to challenge it where necessary. Speaking in February, he rightly predicted President Vladimir Putin would be re-elected on 18 March. In his eyes, the majority of Russians are easily susceptible to state-run propaganda and fake news. Many do not read any other language than Russian and thus are cut off from foreign news sources.

Sakharov warns that FSB manipulations are of international relevance. It operates an army of social media bots that can make any story seem relevant or irrelevant, whether it is true or not. Even Britain and

the USA were influenced by Russian fake news, Sakharov says. Moreover, the Brexit vote and the 2016 US presidential election were affected by misleading reports on Russia Today – an English language media organisation which is funded by the Kremlin.

#### LINK

**Reporters without Borders (Reporters sans Frontiers):**

<https://rsf.org/en>

## The Turtles of Tripoli

In Libya, an environmental civil-society organisation has recently published an encyclopaedia and wants all households to pay attention to it. The book contains information on ways to protect the environment – including waste-sorting for example. In Libya, this is an innovative concept.

“The book is part of a project,” says Najwa Wheba. Her group also runs workshops with teachers, encouraging them to spread the information in schools. She is a co-founder of the civil-society organisation Oxygen Association for Environment Protection.

“The book consists of three chapters. The first focuses on a number of animals and plants and their relevance in the ecological balance,” Wheba explains. “The second chapter discusses urban garbage problems and explains why waste sorting must start at the household level. The third one offers handicraft ideas inspired by nature.”

“Turtles of Tripoli” is the title of efforts that focus on the damage that plastic causes. “Sea turtles die because of plastic bags which look like jellyfish, so they feed on them,” says Thurya Al-Sedig, the chairwoman of Oxygen.

Hanan Banooga belongs to the teachers’ group. They now want to teach

students how to handle garbage at home. “We have formed a team of students from different classes that we call ‘police of environment’.” The team is taught to use three large bags to sort waste in schools and on the school grounds. One is for plastic, one for paper and one for biodegradable waste.

Maher Alshahry, a local environmentalist, says the project is very important even though it has little resources and, so far, does not have much support. “It is a promising start,” he maintains, “and it inspires hope.” He points out that government authorities tend to stay silent on environmental issues, and many are probably unaware of what needs to be done. A clean environment thus depends on civil-society action. Oxygen is implementing its project in coordination with the Tripoli Municipal Council, sponsored by VNG International, a Dutch association which is working on behalf of the EU.

### LINK

Oxygen Association for Environment Protection:  
<https://www.facebook.com/GroupO2/>



**MOUTAZ ALI**  
is a journalist and lives in Tripoli, Libya.

[ali.moutaz77@gmail.com](mailto:ali.moutaz77@gmail.com)

## IMPRINT

D+C DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION  
Vol. 45, 2018  
D+C is the identical twin of the German edition E+Z  
Internet: [www.DandC.eu](http://www.DandC.eu)  
D 12 107 ISSN 0721-2178

D+C Development and Cooperation is funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and commissioned by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL. D+C does not serve as a governmental mouthpiece. Our mission is to provide a credible forum of debate, involving governments, civil society, the private sector and academia at an international level. D+C is the identical twin of E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit, the German edition.

ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL gGmbH  
Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen  
Tulpenfeld 7  
D-53113 Bonn  
Phone: +49 (0) 2 28 2 07 17-0  
Fax: +49 (0) 2 28 2 07 17-150  
[www.engagement-global.de](http://www.engagement-global.de)

ADVISORY BOARD:  
Thomas Loster, Prof. Dr. Katharina Michaelowa,  
Prof. Dr. Dirk Messner, Petra Pinzler, Hugh Williamson

PUBLISHER:  
FAZIT Communication GmbH  
Executive directors: Peter Hintereder and Hannes Ludwig

ADDRESS OF THE PUBLISHER AND EDITORIAL OFFICE:  
Frankenallee 71–81, D-60327 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

This is also the legally relevant address of all indicated as responsible or entitled to represent them in this imprint.

EDITORIAL TEAM:  
Dr. Hans Dembowski (chief), Sabine Balk, Katja Dombrowski, Sheila Mysorekar, Eva-Maria Verfürth, Dagmar Wolf (assistant)  
Phone: +49 (0) 69 75 01-43 66  
Fax: +49 (0) 69 75 01-48 55  
[euz.editor@fazit-communication.de](mailto:euz.editor@fazit-communication.de)  
Art direction: Sebastian Schöpsdau  
Layout: Jan Walter Hofmann  
Translators: Malcom Bell, Claire Davis

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ADVERTISING AND SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:  
FAZIT Communication GmbH  
c/o InTime Media Services GmbH  
PO Box 1363  
D-82034 Deisenhofen, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-8 32  
Fax: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-6 28 32  
[fazit-com@intime-media-services.de](mailto:fazit-com@intime-media-services.de)

PRINTING:  
Westdeutsche Verlags- und Druckerei GmbH  
Kurahessenstraße 46  
D-64546 Mörfelden-Walldorf, Germany

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PRICES (INCL. MAILING CHARGES):  
single issue: € 2.20  
annual subscription, Germany: € 14.00  
annual subscription, world: € 18.00



## GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

# Ignored achievements

**Humanity has made more progress in recent decades than is generally acknowledged. The mood tends to be worse than is warranted by statistically well documented trends.**

By Matthias Meis

One example is public health. International data show that it has improved dramatically. Smallpox has been eradicated, and Polio has almost been eradicated. In 1988, 350,000 new infections were reported around the world. Now we are down to two-digit figures. In 2013, there were 45 % fewer Tuberculosis (TB) patients than in 1990, and the mortality rate had declined by 41 % in that time span. From 1995 to 2014, some 7.6 million deaths of HIV/AIDS were prevented with free supplies of anti-retroviral medication.

Statistics for other sectors are good as well. In India, only 70 % of the people had access to safe drinking water in 1990, but the share rose to 94 % by 2015. In China, the respective figure even went up from 66 % to 95 % – and in Ghana from 55 % to 89 %.

The share of the world population's extremely poor people has decreased dramati-

cally too. About 90 % of the 1.1 billion people who lived in 1820 were struggling at the subsistence level. In 1970, that was true of 60 % of 3.6 billion people. In 2011, only 14 % of 7 billion people were extremely poor.

Population growth, some might now say, is a challenge in itself – and that is true. However, the speed has been reduced remarkably, and the peak is in sight. The world population may yet grow to 11 billion people at most, but from that point on it will decrease according to current trends.

In spite of such data, many people believe that things just keep getting worse. In rich countries, many citizens doubt that global development efforts make sense at all. Three issues are driving this misperception:

- The media find it much easier to sell bad news, and that results in the impression that things used to be much better than they are today.
- Donor government's aid efforts are measured by the input. A successful minister for international development manages to mobilise more money, for example, by making his government fulfil the decades-old pledge of spending 0.7% of gross do-

mestic income on official development assistance (ODA). Taxpayers, however, want to know what is done with those financial resources, and they are not satisfied with mere disbursement figures. It is impossible to indicate the results precisely in euros and cents, and this is directly linked to the third issue.

- Humanity is facing several huge challenges that can only be mastered by taking many small and separate steps. To fight poverty, we must act at local, national and global levels and deal with many different issues – from food supply to employment, from education and health to elderly care. To protect the climate, we must improve energy efficiency and switch to renewables in all sectors – including manufacturing, agriculture, transport and private households. The options are multidimensional, and all action is piecemeal. Causal attribution of results to individual players is next to impossible because of the multitude of partners who must assume responsibility.

The truth is that the share of the world's extremely poor people has been declining for decades, but many people nonetheless believe that the poor are only getting poorer. And no, the global financial crisis of 2008 did not reverse the long-term trend.

Governmental and non-governmental development agencies alike must do more to make the public aware of developmental success. The point is not to claim that ODA is at the root of all progress. As argued above, linear causality is hard to establish in highly complex context. It would, however, be absurd to argue that ODA is completely useless when some developmental goals have indeed been achieved and others look increasingly within reach.

We must fight hopelessness and resignation. Humankind is indeed facing daunting challenges, and rising to them will require huge collective efforts. In order to tackle this enormous task we need to better understand how much we have already achieved – and how much more we can achieve.



**MATTHIAS MEIS**  
heads the strategy unit at  
Germany's Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development (BMZ).

[matthias.meis@bmz.bund.de](mailto:matthias.meis@bmz.bund.de)



**Polio has almost been eradicated: vaccination of a Liberian child.**



## RESPIRATORY HEALTH

# 10 % of the disease burden

**Delhi has a reputation for dismal air pollution – but the issue does not only affect the national capital region. Indoor air pollution is a huge challenge too.**

By Roli Mahajan

Ashwini's four year old daughter has had a persistent cough since November. Her throat is itching. The doctor says her lungs are inflamed because of Delhi's air pollution. Ashwini has been told steaming is a must, and it would be good to use air purifiers and keep her child indoors. The girl missed more than 20 days of school this winter.

Vikas, a 30 year old cancer survivor, complains about a tough winter. Wheezing bothers him, and he has even been to the emergency ward. He too has been told to use air purifiers.

The poor are disproportionately affected by air pollution, of course. They cannot afford air purifiers or good quality pollution masks. Moreover, they do not benefit from the protected environments of sealed spaces such as cars, offices or well-built apartment houses.

Air pollution has caused concern in the expatriate community as well. For example, Mariela Cruz Alvarez, Costa Rica's ambassador to India, described in a viral blog post how India has become a threat to her health. At the onset of every winter, Delhi finds itself in international spotlight for poor air quality. This year was no different. At the end of October 2017, some monitoring stations reported an AQI (air quality index) of 999. According to experts, this is equivalent to smoking 45 to 50 cigarettes daily. The Indian National Medical association declared a "public-health emergency", and Arvind Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, likened the national capital to a "gas chamber" in a tweet.

AQI is based on measurements of PM2.5, the tiny particulate matter emitted by combustion engines. It can slip into the lungs and enter the blood stream, adversely affecting human health. Impacts include cardio and respiratory problems. Accord-

ing to a study published by the science journal *The Lancet*, various kinds of pollution resulted in 2.5 million deaths in India in 2015 — the highest number anywhere in the world. The World Health Organization has stated that half of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in India. Indeed, the air quality of places like Gwalior, Allahabad or Patna is worse than Delhi's.

Yet the Indian government seems to be in denial. The central government has told the parliament that there was no conclusive data to establish a direct correlation

accounts for about 90 % of industrial emissions. On the upside, the National Green Tribunal has decided that no new thermal power plant will get an environment clearance unless it complies with the new norms.

Rural areas are affected by air pollution too. Indeed, research done by the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and the Health Effects Institute shows that 75% of air pollution-related deaths occurred there. Indoor air pollution – which mostly results from cooking on coal, wood or cow dung fires – matters in this context. As the central government's recent Health of the Nation's States report showed, indoor air pollution has been coming down significantly since 1990, while outdoor air pollution is getting worse. Together, they accounted for 10% of the total disease burden in 2016, second only to child and maternal malnutrition.



Smog in Delhi.

between air pollution and death or disease in February 2018.

However, not all state institutions are negligent. The Supreme Court of India has been nudging the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to take nationwide action. Its judges have stressed that the problem does not only concern the national capital region.

Nonetheless, the Central Pollution Control Board, which is subordinate to the MoE was recently reported to have permitted 400 thermal power stations to continue to emit pollutants above the official limit, for up to five more years. Things are thus hardly set to get better. Thermal power generation

The nation's battle against pollution needs much more than ad-hoc, knee-jerk reactions which concentrate on the national capital region only. India must make valiant and persistent efforts to improve the air quality because a healthy workforce and conducive natural environment is essential for the country to enjoy the full benefits of its slowing but still rapid economic growth.



**ROLI MAHAJAN**

is a freelance journalist based in Delhi.

[roli.mahajan@gmail.com](mailto:roli.mahajan@gmail.com)

WORLD TRADE

# Trump bullies and blackmails

**US President Donald Trump has imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports. The USA's trading partners must not cave in to his threats. Ongoing trade disputes with China, moreover, should be resolved in the multilateral WTO context.**

By Hans Dembowski

The rates are 25 % for steel and 10 % for aluminium. When this comment was finalised before the Easter break, Canada, Mexico, the EU and other close allies of the USA were exempt for one month. Others – prominently including Japan – could apply for exemptions too. Whether those exemptions would become permanent depended on further negotiations.

The White House also announced plans for another series of tariffs. They would affect high-tech imports from China and could amount to \$ 60 billion. Trump ar-

gues that China's trade practices, regarding intellectual property, for example, are unfair. The US will also restrict Chinese investments in the USA and appeal to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The last point is in line with EU demands. Indeed, other WTO members share grievances concerning China, and the right way to proceed is to rely on the WTO mechanisms, especially its dispute-settlement system. To what extent the White House is serious about going to the WTO remains to be seen. Trump's rhetoric clearly suggests he prefers unilateral action.

His tariffs can result in a destructive trade war to the detriment of all nations. If affected countries do not respond decisively, Trump will feel encouraged to further bullying and blackmailing. Retaliation, however, may tempt Trump to impose yet more tariffs. China has announced counter-measures to the metal tariffs and indicates it will respond to further tariffs in kind.

Such tit-for-tat action can escalate into full-blown protectionism everywhere. That would disrupt the cross-border supply chains that companies and global markets depend on.

## FLIMSY PRETEXT

Trump claims that his steel and aluminium tariffs serve national security. The reason is that the WTO rules give member countries scope for protective action if national security is at stake. However, Trump's stance is hardly credible. After all, he wants to use the tariffs as bargaining chips in trade negotiations. There is no sign of defence industries in the USA currently lacking metal.

If the USA needs its own steel and aluminium industry, it does not make sense to exempt allies even temporarily. If, however, US-based arms manufacturers can rely on supplies from close allies, they should be exempt permanently. If they serve to put pressure on partners in trade talks, they are unacceptable. Most likely, Trump wants to please his base and detract from his scandals (Russia, porn-star, self-enrichment et cetera).

No one should accept the flimsy pretext of "national security". Other WTO members must insist on rules applying to every member. As this is quite evidently a trade issue, the WTO should deal with it accordingly. US allies would not be wise to strike separate bargains with the White House to get permanent exemptions. This is a matter of principle. If they cave in now, more intimidation and extortion will follow. It is telling that Japan did not get temporary relief from the tariffs. Ever since Trump won the election, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has done his best to flatter him. The US president surely considers him to be weak.

Adding to the problems, the White House has been blocking the appointment of new arbitrators who would replace those who retire. Without a sufficient number of arbitrators, decisions will become impossible in a few months (see D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/03, p. 4). The implication is that retaliatory action would no longer be legitimised by the WTO's decisions, and trade disputes would become even more difficult to resolve. Global trade would be heading for a chaotic free-for-all.

A new conflict may arise if the US administration considers the three-percent



Trump invited steel workers to watch him sign his proclamation on tariffs.

sales tax that the EU plans to raise from online businesses as a trade issue. It is true that they would hurt the so called FAANGs (the likes of Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google), which are based in the USA (see interview on p. 18 of this e-Paper). However, such tariffs would not distort trade since they would apply to all internet businesses of a certain size.

The international community must not let this kind of dispute spin out of control. EU leaders have done well to declare that they will not make special concessions to keep the temporary relief from the steel and aluminium tariffs and to insist that all parties must use WTO mechanisms to resolve the tensions. That, however, will only be possible if the dispute settlement panels are staffed properly. This is a topic the EU will have to raise in talks with Washington.

**REGIONAL AGREEMENTS**

To some extent, regional trade agreements and meta-agreements between them may

contribute to limiting the damage. It is promising that the Trans-Pacific Partnership has now been concluded even though Trump withdrew last year. The TPP partners want a rules-based system. Apparently they want others to join the TPP. That is easier said than done, however, because trade agreements are very hard to negotiate. They affect many interests in many sectors and very many places. That said, it is good that AU plans for a continental free trade area are making progress too.

Trump is not known for responsible diplomacy. He excels in bragging, bullying, lying – and frequently changing his stance. His recent appointment of John Bolton as national security adviser fits the pattern. Bolton is a hawkish right-winger and, serving as UN ambassador, was one of the hard-line supporters of George W. Bush’s Iraq war.

Bolton has spoken out in favour of military US action against both North Korea and Iran, which may please Trump. On the other hand, he is a super-hawk in regard to Russia too – unlike the president. To some

extent, Bolton’s appointment may be sabre-rattling. Since Russia and Iran are close allies, it hardly makes sense to keep appeasing the former while preparing to go to war with the other. So far, there is no indication at all that Trump has managed to divide Russia from Iran. On the contrary, US-Russian relations have not been as hostile as they are now for a long time. A coherent strategy is not discernible.

The international community needs a reliable world order defined by rules. It must not surrender to an erratic US president. WTO members should unite in a co-ordinated effort to protect the WTO and its mechanisms. More generally speaking, all multilateral institutions deserve to be defended against disruptive White House action.



**HANS DEMBOWSKI**  
is the editor-in-chief of  
**D+C/E+Z.**  
euz.editor@fazit-  
communication.de



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SOUTHERN AFRICA

# New brooms sweeping clean?

**In 2017, two of southern Africa's longest-serving presidents announced their retirement within three months of each other: Eduardo dos Santos, who had ruled Angola since 1979, and Robert Mugabe, who had been in power in Zimbabwe since 1980. In February, Jacob Zuma of South Africa was finally forced to step down too. He had not been in office for quite as long, but had adeptly abused it. He had become head of state in 2009 after the removal of President Thabo Mbeki. What renewal the successors will bring, remains to be seen.**

By Henning Melber

After 38 years in power, Angola's president, Eduardo dos Santos, stepped aside for health reasons to make room for a younger man. João Lourenço, who was born in 1954, has served as president since September. He is considered a person of integrity, which is rare among politicians. He does not indulge in the obscene luxury of the "oilgarchy" and will hopefully build new trust in the MPLA government. The latter has long had little credibility among the people, who never saw any returns from the oil boom except for a higher cost of living.

Under dos Santos, massive repression could no longer stop a rising tide of popular protest. It became increasingly clear that change was urgently needed. The economy, which had been battered by a drop in oil prices, needed a stabilising shot in the arm as well.

Lourenço surprised the country by mounting an unexpectedly ruthless attack on corruption at the highest levels of government. Even dos Santos' four children, who, thanks to their father's protection, had manoeuvred their way to the control levers of important state-owned companies, were not spared. Isabel dos Santos, who is believed to be the richest African woman, was removed as the head of Sonangol, the state oil group. Numerous ministers and other senior officials did not escape unscathed either.

What's more, Lourenço announced a grace period for transferring funds back

home from tax havens. The total amount is estimated to add up to \$ 30 billion. After the grace period, all cases of embezzlement and tax evasion will be dealt with by the judiciary. Lourenço's actions send a clear signal, at least symbolically. However, it remains to be seen how serious this new broom is about sweeping clean the institutions of government – and what scope of action the established elite will allow him.

## DOWNFALL OF A DESPOT

The peaceful transfer of power in Angola was followed in mid-November 2017, surprisingly, by a gentle military coup in Zimbabwe (see my article in E+Z/D+C e-Paper 2018/1, p. 13). Since gaining independence in 1980, the former jewel of Africa had been held under the thumb of Robert Mugabe, who at 93 had no thoughts of retirement. Shortly before the coup, the ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front) nominated him as a candidate for the upcoming presidential election. But he was pushing his luck when he tried to install his wife Grace as his successor and began forcing her competitors out of the way.

His dismissal of Emmerson Mnangagwa, who had been his loyal deputy for decades, was the mistake that cost him the presidency. The military intervened, the despot was forced to step down and now Mnangagwa is in the driver's seat. Some people celebrated him as a saviour in the first moments of euphoria following the long-awaited resignation of Mugabe. But from the very beginning, there was a fear that the country had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.

Indeed, the evidence is growing that Mnangagwa does not offer an alternative to the authoritative and repressive character of Zimbabwe's political system. He appointed high-level military officers who had initiated the coup to government positions. These decisions can hardly be read as trust building. Nevertheless, some hope that he will be able to somewhat sort out the mess the economy has been in for decades. In or-

der to restore the trust of foreign investors, the new president even announced that he plans to compensate the farmers whose property was seized as part of the land reforms that caused serious turmoil since the turn of the millennium. But the same motto can be applied to Zimbabwe and the hoped-for reforms in Angola: the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

## PALACE REVOLUTION

The situation was rough in South Africa. Two representatives of different factions were fighting to succeed the embattled President Jacob Zuma as the head of the African National Congress (ANC): his deputy, Cyril Ramaphosa, and his ex-wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. The latter was widely considered Zuma's insurance policy to avoid prosecution for abuses of office. Ramaphosa, on the other hand, was seen by many, particularly outside the ANC, as the person who could put an end to Zuma's manipulations and mismanagement.

Ramaphosa is not untainted, however. He was at least indirectly involved in the 2012 Marikana massacre, in which police killed dozens of striking miners. But compared with someone from Zuma's inner circle, including his former wife, Ramaphosa seems the better choice. He is a former union leader and a successful businessman. Nelson Mandela had actually wanted him to be his successor.

However, Ramaphosa won the inner-party election only by a narrow margin, which shows that Zuma and his cronies still wield influence. Indeed, half of the six top ANC leadership positions fell into the hands of Zuma loyalists, and that has probably cautioned Ramaphosa.

It quickly became clear, however, that they want to save their own skins. Their opportunism tempted them to undermine the former party president. As more and more information came to light about the extent of the abuses of power that were committed under Zuma, the majority of the party's executive-committee members lost their patience. The leadership crisis culminated in early February. After Ramaphosa had replaced Zuma as ANC leader, the party demanded with growing force that Zuma had to make way for his successor as South African president as well. Following a tug-of-war that resembled the one in Zimbabwe



Supporters of Cyril Ramaphosa celebrate his election as president of South Africa.

a few months before, Zuma gave up on 14 February. Otherwise, he would have faced a motion of no confidence in Parliament. The palace revolution was complete.

The procedures prove that – unlike Zimbabwe – South Africa still operates according to the rule of law. Political struggles take place within prescribed limits. Nevertheless, it will still take time and energy for South Africa to recover from the parasitic practices that have been weakening it for years. And it remains to be seen whether the transfer of power took place soon enough to secure the ANC an absolute majority in parliamentary elections that will be held in mid-2019.

### **CORRUPTION SCANDALS AND THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE**

Zambian politics are tense too. Though a comparatively young generation of political leaders is in power, all is not well. The political system seems fragile in view of fast changing governments, and the authoritarian leaning of President Edward Lungu of the Patriotic Front is causing growing turmoil. The fact that his rival, Hakainde Hichilema of the UNDP (United Party for National De-

velopment), is cut from the same cloth is further stoking the potential for violence.

Neighbouring Mozambique is being rocked by corruption scandals and struggling with a worsening economy. The country is a former “donor darling”, but the donor community has lost trust. The discovery of \$ 2 billion in “hidden debt” cost the government its reputation – and the flow of ODA (official development assistance) has declined considerably.

A search for a bright spot in southern Africa turns up the former German colony of Namibia. However, this country has some problems too. In 2016, it slid into its most dramatic economic crisis to date. The recession has almost bankrupted the state. Many grand reform plans remain unfulfilled, and large disparities in income are evident.

Namibia’s dominant party SWAPO (South West African People’s Organisation) is also a former liberation movement. In that sense, it resembles the ruling parties in its neighbouring countries. The difference, however, is that SWAPO managed to consolidate its position of dominance after gaining independence in 1990 (see my article in E+Z/D+C e-Paper 17/02, p. 18). The country is remarkably stable and is not affected by

politically motivated violence. Orderly elections and defined term limits have been upheld by three presidents, and that has contributed to the country’s positive image.

Trouble is brewing in SWAPO’s ranks however. There is some controversy surrounding President Hage Geingob, who has been in office for three years and was directly elected with 86 % of the votes. However, the run-up to the party congress in November 2017 was overshadowed by bitter factional rivalry. More than 600 delegates took part. In the end, “Team Hage” emerged unscathed and secured an unexpectedly clear mandate. Geingob and his entourage were elected to all party leadership positions and the central committee and politburo now do not include any dissenting voices that would be worth noting.

Signs increasingly indicate that internal “consolidation” will force the inner-SWAPO opposition to pay a price for its insubordinate behaviour. The notion of democracy could fall by the wayside. It seems certain that President Geingob will again win the next parliamentary and presidential elections. He would then retire in 2025 as an “elder statesman”, assuming that the fate of a Mugabe or Zuma doesn’t catch up

with him before. The snag is that – despite his undisputed leadership – dissatisfaction is growing among the people. He faces the enormous task of reversing the dizzying economic decline the country has been in since he took office. The people want the standard of life to improve. If he cannot fulfil promises, he will damage himself and the image of his country.

### STATE KLEPTOCRACY

In order to steer South Africa’s domestic affairs into calmer waters, President Ramaphosa will have to devote himself to a similar task as the one facing Geingob and the other “newcomers”. The country needs a more or less systematic approach to responsible government – and that would put an end to the organised plundering of resources under state control. Better governance and an economic recovery are urgently needed.

Zuma’s ousting was not enough to achieve this. He personified a system that used the entire structure of the state and

its operations for personal enrichment. Despite all their differences, state kleptocracy has become so deeply embedded in South Africa, Angola and Zimbabwe that simply replacing the head of state cannot be the remedy. An economic upswing in South Africa would not only help that country and – hopefully – the vast majority of its people, but the entire region. It remains true that when South Africa coughs, the neighbouring countries catch a cold. But even if Ramaphosa brings about the expected relative stability, more must happen for things to settle down in neighbouring countries.

Not least, the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains unclear. If a more or less peaceful transfer of power doesn’t happen there soon, the consequences will be dire. Not only the people living in the DRC will feel the pain. South Africa, for example, would face an even bigger influx of refugees. The hospitality of other neighbouring countries would probably be tested too.

Joseph Kabila took power in the DRC in January 2001, ten days after the murder

of his father. He was confirmed in office in rather dubious elections in 2006 and 2011. He broke his promise to step down by the end of 2017 at the latest; now he says he will choose a successor by mid-2018. But the relative peace has long been disturbed and politically-motivated protests result in clashes that kill people. At the same time, ethnically-motivated violence is flaring up the DRC’s north-east. Thousands of refugees are once again fleeing to neighbouring Uganda.

The 16 countries that make up the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which is still considered the most peaceful region on the continent, must rise to serious challenges. Whether the new leaders of the old liberation movements are up to the task, remains to be seen.



**HENNING MELBER**  
is a senior research associate  
at the Nordic Africa Institute  
and an extraordinary  
professor at the Universities

of Pretoria and the Free State in Bloemfontein.  
[henning.melber@nai.uu.se](mailto:henning.melber@nai.uu.se)



The Democratic Republic of the Congo is still waiting for a transfer of power: President Joseph Kabila after his disputed re-election in 2011.



ASIAN ECONOMIES

# New cross-border competition policy

**The internet is increasingly dominated by the platforms that a few multinational giants provide. To foster effective market competition, multilateral standards are needed, as two leading economists from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) argue.**

**Yasuyuki Sawada and Cyn-Young Park interviewed by Hans Dembowski**

**What impact do the FAANGs – internet titans like Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google – have on Asian economies?**

**Sawada:** Last year, the ADB prepared a report in cooperation with the World Economic Forum, and it reaffirmed the emergence of large multinational titans, the platform companies that dominate the global market. For example, Google's share of the search engine market is 90 %, Facebook controls 77 % of social media and Amazon is running 75 % of e-book market. Evidently, a handful of giant corporations has almost monopolistic power, and yes, they do have an impact on Asia. There are upsides and downsides. The most important aspect is that small and

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are getting valuable new opportunities. Internet platforms give them access to the world market at very low marginal costs. In this sense, a Pacific islands country like Fiji is no longer as remote as it used to be. This is a very positive trend. It drives growth, because it allows small private-sector companies to thrive and take advantage of economies of scale. On the other hand, there is a risk of monopolistic power being abused. Whether the FAANGs are doing so is very hard to tell. It is ultimately an empirical question.

**Economics is a model science, and one of the core tenets is that anyone involved in market exchange wants to maximise benefits. In theory, monopolists will exploit their position.**

**Sawada:** Yes, and that is why we need a new kind of cross-border competition policies. There is a rich set of evidence showing that competition through low entry barriers in industries is a critical source of productivity improvements and growth of economies. The international community must adopt

a legal framework to protect privacy rights and intellectual property, for example, to support fair market competition. So far, that is not necessarily happening – neither in Asia, nor at the global level.

**Park:** Another important question is whether or not Asian economies can foster their own platform companies. The point is that while SMEs benefit from the existing internet platforms, their gains might be even bigger if there was more competition between the platforms. China and India both have more than 1 billion people and they are evidently spawning platform companies of their own. They may be also in the position to define legislative frameworks. But it's not necessarily the case for smaller Asian economies. Chinese and Indian platform companies actually tend to grow quite fast, perhaps thanks to language advantages among other things. But how much do they respect users' privacy or intellectual property? It would be good to have international standards and principles on these matters. To foster effective market competition – both at the macro level of platforms and the micro level of platform users – global rules are needed. These rules should promote innovation, moreover.

**What about taxes? So far, the internet titans hardly pay taxes.**

**Park:** Yes, the global community needs rules on taxation too. It is interesting, for example, that India has declared that it



**Google search at a Thai internet café.**

considers internet interaction that involves a certain number of users in India a “presence in India”. The implication is that the relevant service providers could be taxed. India’s competition agency, moreover, levied a \$ 21 million fine on Google. Consider platforms like Uber or AirBnB that provide transport or hospitality at low costs. While they are disrupting established businesses, they can also make the shadow economy visible, so increasing an economy’s tax base. Their gains can be taxed, to the extent that transactions are formalised. Let me add that taxation is not only about revenues, however. It can also set the right incentives. At present, internet platform service providers are not taxed evenly across borders which influences their location decisions for incorporation or business operations. As we are looking at multinational platforms, international rules are needed – not least to avoid taxation loopholes.

**Who is in charge of making international rules?**

**Sawada:** The OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is considering tax matters. The World Trade Organization is working on a framework for e-commerce. The UN could certainly play a role too. Obviously, the G20 is a forum for tackling global issues, and its leaders have begun to discuss relevant topics, but such action has not resulted in an effective multilateral framework yet.

**In Europe, we have the EU, which is imposing rules on internet giants. Are there Asian equivalents?**

**Sawada:** The ADB is in favour of regional integration which allows nations to create larger markets and pursue interests collectively. ASEAN, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, is probably the most advanced regional institution in Asia, and the ASEAN+3 format also includes China, South Korea and Japan. However, ASEAN+3 does not have the kind of coherence and collective clout that marks the EU yet. That said, an Asian forum of competition agencies has recently been established, and it is meant to deal with issues of cross-border competition policy. This is a promising start. Awareness for related issues is growing fast. Just consider, for example, that the competition agency of the Philippines is quite young. It was only established two years ago.

**Amazon and Alphabet, the parent company of Google, are leaders in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). Do you worry about automation disrupting young manufacturing industries in Asia and displacing masses of workers?**

**Sawada:** Well, not everything that is technologically feasible is economically viable. It is true that robots are becoming ever more advanced, but so far we are not seeing Bangladeshi garment workers being displaced by sow-bots. Labour-cost advantages are still considerable. But in the long run, change will occur of course. For example, AI may displace jobs not only in manufacturing, but also in service sectors such as call centres and business-process operations in general. At the same time, there can be positive spill over into other sectors. Greater productivity achieved by AI means higher incomes and expanding markets. The net impact of technological progress can be positive, but we will have to minimise the frictions too. The big question is: will change lead to more equality or greater inequality? After all, redistribution policies will be critical, and governments will have to invest in people’s skills.

**Park:** No doubt, there is a need for prudent policies on taxation, income redistribution and social protection at national and international levels. But we must not forget that we need to ensure equal and fair opportunities. In this context, it is important to substantially increase infrastructure investment first of all. Digital infrastructure must improve in developing countries, and the multinational corporations that benefit in particular should contribute to making that happen. It is okay to worry about the downsides of recent trends, but it is even more important to ensure everyone has a chance to benefit from the upsides.

**Facebook has actually been offering to provide poor people in remote areas with what it calls “free basics”, promising access to a limited number of websites free of charge. Is that a step in the right direction?**

**Park:** Well, everyone knows by now that internet services are never free. If they are not paid in money, they are paid in data. Giving away data means to give away economic opportunities. Big platform corporations are actually interested in investing in internet infrastructure, and one reason is that it

will allow them to include ever more users. There would be huge network effects. Since we must consider both data and monetary flows, it is very difficult to analyse costs and benefits accurately. Accordingly, it is very difficult to define some kind of fair burden sharing. Moreover, people in remote regions deserve full access to the internet. In this context, access to the internet can be basically a public good, which requires public policy and prudent regulation. To manage these matters well, policymakers need to understand the issues well. The challenge, of course, is that change is happening so fast.

**Sawada:** At this point, nobody knows how things will develop. We must try to understand the trends and make the most of the technological revolution that is happening. It would be important to note that ADB has set up a new digital unit. What we know for sure, however, is that Asia needs massive infrastructure investment to continue its growth momentum and to achieve the global climate goals. According to ADB’s estimates, an annual \$ 1,700 billion will be required. The multilateral development banks such as ADB have been able to contribute only about few percent to that total. Under this situation, the ADB and the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank have agreed to cooperate to meet Asia’s infrastructure demand naturally. Several co-financing projects have already been started. Indeed, we need to leverage our resources as best as we can.

**LINK**

**ADB and WEF, 2017: ASEAN 4.0.**  
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/379401/asean-fourth-industrial-revolution-rci.pdf>



**YASUYUKI SAWADA**  
 is the chief economist of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).  
[ysawada@adb.org](mailto:ysawada@adb.org)



**CYN-YOUNG PARK**  
 is the ADB’s director of Regional Cooperation and Integration division.  
[cypark@adb.org](mailto:cypark@adb.org)

Pupils of the Ecole Polyvalente  
Carolus Magnus (EPCM), run by the  
Fondation Stamm north of  
Burundi's capital Bujumbura.



## Tough childhood

Children's opportunities in life differ dramatically, depending on what social stratum and what country they were born in. Such inequality is unfair. All children deserve equal opportunities. The international community has assumed the responsibility to improve matters. A principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is not to leave anyone behind. It must apply to children in particular. Relevant policy areas are health, food and education.



# From garbage scavenger to chef

**Cambodian street children face a number of issues including drug use and labour exploitation. Families and children at risk need more support.**

By Sun Narin

According to official data, the number of homeless people in Cambodia is 5,188. Out of this total, 1,745 are said to be women and 715 children under the age of 18 years, including 280 girls. The real numbers must be much higher.

For various reasons, Cambodian children opt for life on the streets. Some have no parents, others are neglected by their extended families, yet others suffer domestic violence. Typically, street children come from poor families, and migration often compounds the problems.

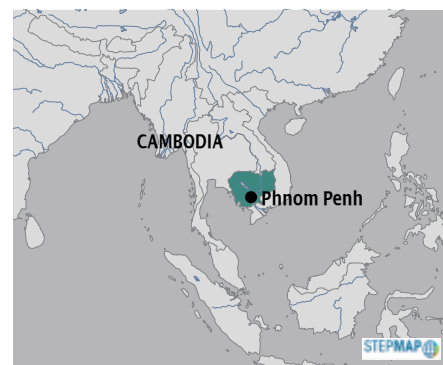
“Children living on the street are at risk of violence, sexual abuse, trafficking, exploitation and dangerous labour,” says Bunly Meas, the spokesperson for UNICEF in Cambodia. “They are also exposed to drug use, unsafe sexual activities and gang crime.” The UN Children’s Fund is working with several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help homeless Cambodian children.

Mith Samlanh – which means “Friends” in English – is one of these NGOs. It was established in 1994, works with marginalised children and youth and reaches out to their families and communities. Pin Sokhom, who works as a programme coordinator for Mith Samlanh, points out that not all street children are homeless (see box, p. 22): “Some parents use their children to beg for money or to sell things. Some people, who are not the parents, may also use children to make money on the street.” Mith Samlanh tries to convince parents to act responsibly and stop abusing the children.

## NEW LIFE AFTER DRUG USE

Street children who have no other options can find a temporary home at one of Mith Samlanh’s four centres in Cambodia. Kek, 23, is now learning how to cook thanks to the NGO’s vocational-training programme. The aim is to educate former street children so that they will eventually become self-reliant.

Kek used to stay on the street. He worked as a garbage scavenger, sniffed glue and used drugs. He says he started living on the street at the age of eight when his mother passed away, leaving his father to raise six



children by himself. But the father, who is disabled, couldn’t work to earn money.

“I begged for food and water,” Kek reports. “And I stole some money to buy glue for sniffing.” After years on the streets, he was taken in by a child centre. He stopped sniffing and was happy to receive an education. He lived there for one year. Unfortunately, the centre closed down, he says, so he returned to the streets and started using glue as a narcotic again.

At a later point, Kek was introduced to Mith Samlanh and taught sewing. He only stayed at the NGO facility for around four months, and was then employed by a garment factory in Phnom Penh. The job earned him money and he found new friends, but eventually, Kek became addicted to drugs and lost his job.

Last year, he returned to Mith Samlanh and spent three months in rehabilitation from the drug addiction. “Now I have



**Mith Samlanh runs a restaurant in Phnom Penh, where former street children work as cooks or waiters.**

a new life,” Kek says. He is now learning English and computer skills on top of his education as cook. He will finish his schooling next year.

According to Mith Samlanh coordinator Pin Sokhom, drug use is still a critical issue among street children in Phnom Penh. He adds that some of the children concerned are unable to adapt to life at the centre. “They need freedom, and at the centre, we have rules about what they should do and must not do,” he explains. “So some children leave the centre.”

### BUILDING A FUTURE

Since June 2014, Phnom Penh municipal government has taken action to sweep the capital’s streets clean of beggars, street children and homeless people. The Cambodian government has also adopted an action plan for the years 2017 to 2021 to prevent violence against children – and to respond to incidents of violence. The evidence shows that street children are particularly vulnerable to violence.

NGOs play a key role in helping the street children. According to its annual report, Mith Samlanh worked with more than 9,300 children and 5,100 children’s guardians in 2016. Children were offered aware-

ness raising, education and job opportunities. First the children must be brought to a safe place, Sokhom says, and then they can build their future. Apart from cooking and sewing, Mith Samlanh offers vocational training in electricity, motor repairing, hairdressing, cosmetics and steel working. Young children are re-integrated into state-run schools after getting some basic education at the Mith Samlanh school.

The outreach to parents focuses on enabling them to earn some income. If they make enough money, they need not send their children to beg or sell small merchandise on the streets.

UNICEF has been funding Mith Samlanh’s street children services through the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC). This tripartite outfit includes the national government, UNICEF and NGOs. Every year, 3PC provides child-protection services to about 8,000 vulnerable children, including street children. On the agenda are basic medical care, literacy classes, counselling and life skills. Knowledge concerning substance abuse and reproductive health is vitally important.

UNICEF’s Bunly Meas says: “The programme provides immediate and long-term assistance to vulnerable children who are at risk of – or exposed to – violence.” All too of-

ten, children are separated from their families, he adds. “The range of services covers basic needs such as food and housing, medical and educational support, but also harm reduction from drugs and alcohol, as well as family reunification and alternative care placement when required.”

In his eyes, more investment in social services is needed since families and children who are at risk should be supported. “The streets are clearly no place for children. However, taking children off the streets and placing them in institutions is not the solution.” Children should only be separated from their families in extreme circumstances, he argues, since family and community-based solutions normally result in more appropriate care for children.

### LINKS

**Mith Samlanh:**

<http://www.mithsamlanh.org>

**Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children:**

<http://3pc-cambodia.org>



**SUN NARIN**

is a Cambodian journalist and lives in Phnom Penh.

[snnarin@gmail.com](mailto:snnarin@gmail.com)

## Making money on the street

When the sky gets dark in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, a city of more than 2 million people, some young children walk into bars or street restaurants hoping to sell flowers, fruits or little books with fairy tales. Some customers give them money without buying any of the goods.

At a food stall in downtown Phnom Penh, next to a 20-story hotel, 12-year-old Phorng Phorse asks people who are enjoying their dinner to buy a fairy-tale book for the equivalent of \$ 1.5 each. Phorse does not live on the streets, but he is

forced to earn some money. His family is poor. “I go to school in the morning or afternoon and sell books at night,” he says, adding that his father takes him and his 9-year-old sister to specific locations by motorbike. His father is a construction worker and his mother is unemployed.

“I want to earn money by myself,” says Phorse when asked who makes him sell the books. He spends the evening from 6 to 9 pm walking around and selling. His share is 25 cents for each book he sells – and sometimes he is given tips. (sn)



In Cambodia, school-aged children who work as vendors are a common sight.

# Crime is the best of many bad options

**Organised crime groups in Bangladesh hire street children to conduct serious crimes. They carry weapons, sell drugs, collect extortion money and commit political violence. Some young people are involved in land grabbing and even contract killings. The children and juveniles concerned should be considered illicit child labourers since they are neither entirely innocent victims nor full-blown criminals. More should be done to protect their rights and to halt the spread of organised crime.**

By Sally Atkinson-Sheppard

There are street children in almost every country in the world. In Bangladesh, their number is particularly high. The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) estimates that there are 1.5 million street children across the country and that their number is set to rise substantially. According to the UNICEF definition, the term includes youth up to the age of 17.

Bangladesh's police and aid agencies have published similar statistics. The issue is of particular concern in Dhaka. Of the 16 million people who live in the capital city, 10 million dwell in slums or on the streets. Many of them are children. Urbanisation exacerbates the problems: millions of people migrate from rural areas into the city to find work. Bangladesh's street children live in abject poverty, either on the streets or in makeshift homes in slums. They have no chance to claim their rights, they struggle to access education, and they are marginalised from mainstream society.

Street children often have to work. In Bangladesh, some do so within the lower echelons of organised crime groups. Organised crime is prevalent in Dhaka. The bosses are called "mastaans", and their groups operate in slums across the country and particularly in the capital. There is very little reliable information on these groups, but research suggests that mastaans control the city's poor areas. Slum dwellers' access to basic services

depends on paying mastaans inflated prices for housing, gas, electricity and water.

In response to the lack of knowledge about organised crime and the involvement of street children, I conducted a three-year in-depth study in Dhaka. It included participant observation, which I did within the criminal justice system. Moreover, I conducted 80 interviews with adult practitioners and did a year-long embedded case study with a group of 22 street children. Because of the roles that mastaan groups play

manage their members by organising them in street gangs. Street children often become embroiled at the lowest echelons of mastaan groups. They are hired to conduct a variety of heinous crime.

There is a range of reasons why street children become involved in these activities. The most important is that these children are incredibly vulnerable. They live on the streets, often without parental supervision. Most of them must work to survive. Mastaan groups offer them ways to earn money. In doing so, they coerce them into a life of crime. The children involved in my study explained that young people see committing crimes as "work": a way to support their survival on the streets. One of the children in my study explained further: "There is a boss, a group leader, and there are jobs for people, like you are going to a market and you will steal this thing and you are going to a shop



„The big question is what can be done to better protect these young people.“

in society and the kind of "social protection" they provide, I argue that they are mafia organisations.

As is typical of organised crime, their outfits engage in a variety of crimes including drug dealing, weapons smuggling and trafficking. They also run protection rackets, which many scholars consider to be the distinguishing feature of mafia organisations. The data from my study suggests that mastaan groups operate across the whole country, but mainly in urban areas such as Dhaka. They have distinct hierarchies and

and steal this. The boys steal things and then give what they stole to their boss. This is their job; in this way they earn some money." The structure of the mastaan groups in hierarchies with bosses and different echelons foster children's understanding that they are part of a business, albeit a criminal one.

My work demonstrates how street children in Dhaka are hired by mastaans to carry weapons and sell drugs. Children are also hired to collect "tolls" from slum dwellers – for simply living in the area or for accessing basic human services. Land grab-





Dhaka grows fast.

bing is another “business” they are involved in. In many slums, land is valuable and land rights are not protected. The fight for land has become a predominant occupation of organised crime groups. Mastaans hire children to occupy an area in a slum to threaten the land owner to give up the property.

Furthermore, street children are hired for political violence and, in some instances, contract killings. A young person involved in this study explained further: ‘You can rent someone to kill someone else for you. You can hire a 10-year-old to kill someone for you! But it goes up, you can hire older children too. The age is not fixed, it’s more dependent on how much you can pay them. But it is possible to just rent someone to kill, actually, it’s really easy’.

## A BETTER TERM

Children involved in mastaan groups are often viewed as innocent victims who are coerced into organised crime as a way to survive. This argument makes sense. However, my work in Dhaka revealed a more complex scenario. Street children actually have some agency over their decisions. They often see involvement with mastaan groups as an easy way to make money and gain a level of social inclusion within the group. The term “victim of exploitation” fails to depict this reality.

Other terms such as “gang member” or “criminal” are just as inadequate however. They fail to indicate the childrens’ acute poverty, need and dependency, which make them join criminal gangs. In my view, these



children should be considered “illicit child labourers”. This conceptualisation captures both the kind of work that street children engage in and why they do so.

The big question is what can be done to better protect these young people. Millions of children in Bangladesh – and in many other countries around the world – work in crime groups. They are exploited and abused, but they actively choose this lifestyle. It is the best option they have in

desperately difficult circumstances. Not much is known about their plight, so raising awareness for the issue in Bangladesh and wider afield is the first task.

Legislation is another problem. Although there are many laws in place which aim to protect child labourers and children in general, they insufficiently cover the children working for organised crime. The International Labour Organization’s definition of the worst forms of child labour, for example, only mentions drug dealing and trafficking, but it fails to comment on under-age people involved in political violence, extortion or contract killings.

In Bangladesh, a great deal is being done at the grassroots level to protect street children. The new Children’s Act is testament to this, alongside a wealth of initiatives driven by both the government and non-governmental organisations operating in the country. However, children will continue to be exploited and abused at the hands of mastaans and organised crime in general. More expansive, global approaches to the issue must be considered, and pan-Asian understanding should be sought. Children’s involvement in organised crime should be tackled at local, national and international levels. Otherwise, it will not be possible to protect children and to halt the spread of organised crime.

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**SALLY ATKINSON-SHEPPARD**

is a criminologist, strategist and international consultant.

Her thesis on children’s involvement in organised crime in Dhaka earned her a PhD from King’s College, London. [sallyatkinsonsheppard@gmail.com](mailto:sallyatkinsonsheppard@gmail.com)

# Break the vicious cycle

**An NGO-leader from Bangladesh argues that children with disabilities must enjoy inclusive education. Her message makes sense in other countries as well.**

**By Masuda Farouk Ratna**

Sandipawn Inclusive School was established in the year 1990 in a village in the Narshingdi District. It is designed to teach children with disabilities, aspiring to promote an inclusive society. Sandipawn is run by Gram Bikash Shohayak Shangsta (GBSS), a non-profit organisation, of which I am the executive director.

We know that all students deserve a learning environment that suits their needs to fully tap their potential. By providing such an environment, Sandipawn enables students to grasp opportunities later in life.

It is essential to break the vicious cycle of poverty that is typically set of by a disability. In developing countries, persons with disabilities tend not to get a proper education, so they cannot develop skills. As adults, they struggle to earn money. Instead of contributing to the family income, they become a life-long burden.

This need not be so. People with disabilities have special needs, but if those needs are taken care of, they can live productive lives. In economic terms, it makes more sense to enable them to play a full role in society than to simply leave them and their families to misery.

The teachers cooperate closely with the parents. Mothers and fathers play a crucial role in preparing their children for life – and they have the most to gain by ensuring their daughters' and sons' inclusion in mainstream society. To the extent possible, moreover, we involve the students in decisions concerning their curriculum.

One of our principles is: "All students will have equitable opportunity to be included in the typical learning environment." We ensure that our students are regularly taught together with same-aged peers from the neighbourhood school in the same classroom. The earlier they get used to in-

teracting with one another, the better. It will help them to understand that community rights and individual rights are not opposed



**People with disabilities need deserve special-needs support right from the start.**

principles and that diversity can – and must – be valued.

We focus on the child's abilities, not disabilities. We allow meaningful relationships and friendships to develop as students

with and without disabilities spend quality time with one another.

In Bangladesh, social inclusion remains a huge societal challenge. Respect for the rights of people with disabilities must grow throughout the country. Vulnerable minorities must be protected from violence and maltreatment, in the public as well as in the private sector. All too often, institutions are still not accessible to people who rely on wheelchairs, for example.

Bangladesh must rise to these challenges. A good way to start is to ensure that children with disabilities are empowered properly. If they become self-confident persons, they will be able to demand their rights. If they develop vocational skills, they will be able to make money. If they learn to engage able-bodied peers early on, they will know how to find allies later in life.

Sandipawn students have special needs, so they deserve special attention. We offer classes in sign language, for example, and provide systematic health counselling. In our context, speech, music and dance therapy deliver good results.

We are a charitable agency, so our resources are limited. Sandipawn currently teaches 160 girls and boys with disabilities from preschool to class 5. We also provide vocational training. The students are 12 to 22 years old, and not all of them have a disability. We teach device repairing (computers, refrigerators et cetera), sewing and handicrafts, for example.

An evaluation has shown that we are making a difference. In our village, more disabled children are enrolled in school than ever before, and the drop-out rate has fallen by more than half. Awareness of disability-related issues has grown in the community.

No doubt, inclusion requires efforts. Shying away from those efforts, however, does not solve any problems. It will only make them worse. Investing in children with disabilities is not a drag on society's development – it actually contributes to general prosperity.



**MASUDA FAROUK RATNA**  
is the executive director of  
**GBSS, the non-governmental**  
organisation that runs  
**Sandipawn Inclusive School.**

[gbss1988@gmail.com](mailto:gbss1988@gmail.com)  
[www.grambikashbd.org](http://www.grambikashbd.org)

# This matter cannot wait

**Education is a crucial driver of societal development. The impacts are lifelong and the relevance of education is obvious even to people who were denied access themselves. African policymakers must do more than pay lip service to the related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4).**

By Belay Begashaw

Education is a crucial prerequisite for fulfilling all essential needs of society (health, food, energy et cetera). This is a multi-dimensional issue because quality education is the key to success in all other sectors. Accordingly, the question arises whether societies pay education appropriate attention and commit sufficient resources accordingly.

Unfortunately, policymakers tend to be obsessed with delivering visible results fast. This makes them shy away from investments that only lead to results in the long run. Ensuring that the young generation goes to good primary and secondary schools does not pay off immediately. If they go on to university, which is even more costly, the returns will accrue even later, though they may be even more substantial.

It is generally agreed that access to schools is a basic right, and that governments must make it happen. Nonetheless, the quality of education remains inadequate in many places. Too many youngsters drop out, and too many, who finish schools, are not trained in the skills they need to earn a living.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that the international community adopted in 2000 have made a difference. As pledged, primary school enrolment has increased dramatically in developing countries, especially in Africa. However, quality was often neglected, and so were secondary and tertiary education.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the UN adopted in 2015 as the follow-up agenda to the MDGs, are more comprehensive. SDG4 is “quality education” at all levels, including vocational training and special education for those with disabilities.

Achieving SDG4 will require resources. Additional schools must be built and more teachers need to be hired. Class sizes must decrease and infrastructure must improve – not least to ensure access to information technology (IT). According to estimates, Africa will need about \$60 billion annually. It is very unlikely that Africa will be able to meet the needs without partners. To encourage official development assis-

of universities increased by 115 % from 2000 to 2010, and enrolment more than doubled from 2.3 million to 5.2 million students, according to UNESCO. However, only one African university was among the worlds 100 best, to judge by the world universities ranking of 2016. Africa’s future depends on educational institutions becoming better at all levels.

No, doubt, the future is about knowledge. It is time for Africa to take advantage of the new demographic realities and maximise its dividends by transitioning to knowledge-based societies. Africans must become competent and competitive in all sectors.



Girl in a classroom in Madagascar

tance, however, African policymakers must prove they take education seriously.

Tertiary education must not be neglected. One reason why tertiary education matters is that it boosts the quality of primary and secondary education. The better teachers are trained, the better their work will turn out.

More generally speaking, higher learning is the key to future success, not least because it will form the next generation of leaders. It is shameful that national governments and the donor community used to consider higher education a luxury for developing countries.

The truth is that African colleges are mostly in a rather poor shape. The number

Unless we aspire to roles of global leadership, we will not become global leaders. Paying lip service to education is not enough. African governments must rise to the challenges and deliver results. They must set in motion a virtuous circle in which better education at all levels further improves education at all levels. This is an issue that cannot wait. Postponing the matter means to postpone the future.



**BELAY BEGASHAW**  
is director general of the  
Sustainable Development  
Goals Center for Africa  
(SDGC/A) in Kigali, Rwanda.

[bbegashaw@sdgcafrica.org](mailto:bbegashaw@sdgcafrica.org)





the Domestic Violence Act and the Employment Act. It demanded that schools should review their rules and regulations to replace corporal punishment with positive learning sanctions or actions.

However, the major challenge in Uganda is not a lack of laws and policies. Weak implementation is the core problem. Many teachers, especially in rural areas, are not even aware that they are breaking the law when they beat a child. Others have heard about such legislation, but they know that no one will arrest them for caning pupils. The children themselves typically do not know about their rights. That's why civil-society organisations closely collaborate with schools to teach children about their rights and offer trainings for teachers as well.

At first, students in Uganda appear to be very shy. It seems difficult to get them to share their views. They are simply not used to adults being interested in what they think. But as soon as they realise that it is allowed to ask questions and nobody will punish them or laugh when they share their ideas, it is amazing how active these formerly intimidated children become. And their thoughts are often very interesting. In Kivulu Primary School, corporal punishment was obviously applied on such a regular basis that it became normal to pupils, and they did not even consider it as something wrong or frightening.

Nonetheless, they fast came up with various ideas for alternative disciplining methods like writing an apology letter or doing physical work. However, some pupils preferred being caned to alternatives like cleaning toilets. Considering the condition of the school toilets, that is not surprising. One wonders, however, whether corporal punishment serves its purpose if pupils do not care much about being caned anymore.

Listening and talking to pupils is very important, but training teachers is necessary as well. The teachers of Kivulu Primary School welcome the initiative of Joy for Children. Most of them admitted that they applied corporal punishment regularly, but some of them simply did not know which alternative methods to use. However, some teachers are unwilling to change their methods. They are convinced that caning is necessary to instil discipline in children, and they are afraid that they will not be able to handle their huge classes of 100 children and more without their stick.



Having collaborated with more than 80 schools, social workers from JFC have gained rich experience in introducing positive discipline in schools. While most of the pupils enthusiastically embrace the idea of a “violent-free school”, some teachers complain that pupils threaten them with the police if they continue with caning, and especially the older pupils became arrogant. Teachers feel disempowered. Yet, abolishing corporal punishment does not mean that there won't be any consequences for misbehaviour at all. Child rights constitute only one side of the coin, responsibilities are their counterpart. The social workers emphasise the importance of explaining to children what is wrong and why. Rather than caning pupils whenever they open their mouth or perform badly in exams, it is better to teach them how to improve.

For many pupils it is harder to write the lines of an apology letter than bearing the stick for a few minutes – but they actually learn something, including how to write properly. This is meant by “positive discipline”. Another way of involving pupils in learning and at the same time increasing their participation in decision-making processes is the establishment of so called pupils' committees. These committees consist of children who have been selected by teachers and fellow pupils. They act as children's courts deciding how to deal with pupils who continuously misbehave. In each of the schools JFC is working with, such committees have been founded, but of course their success depends on the level of support given by teachers.

It is nice to see how schools change when pupils are aware of their rights and teachers are willing to adopt new methods. An evaluation conducted by JFC showed

that the relationship between pupils and teachers significantly improves. Trusting teachers is particularly important for vulnerable children who are more likely to drop out of school, even before completing primary education. Amongst other measures like introducing counselling and guidance, the replacing of corporal punishment by positive discipline has contributed to decreased dropout rates in the schools JFC is collaborating with.

However, there still is a long way to go until the new law will be fully implemented. And it is insufficient to prohibit corporal punishment in schools only. Some teachers complain that as long as children are still beaten by their parents, things will never change. At home, parents face the same challenges teachers do in school – in families with up to 13 children it is hard to establish a strong bond to each child, explaining always why certain rules are necessary. When parents are overwhelmed, beating seems to be the easier way. With a fertility rate of 5.8 in 2016 (CIA World Factbook), Uganda has one of the highest population growth rates worldwide.

Nonetheless, positive changes are taking place in a visible manner. To enhance progress, it will be important both to maintain the momentum and to strengthen the efforts aimed at ending corporal punishment in schools and homes. More positive role models such as the above mentioned head teacher is what Uganda's schools need. Inspiring others by demonstrating them the positive effects of alternative disciplining methods can have a tangible impact.

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#### LINK

**Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children:**

<http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/>



#### MOSES NTENGA

is the executive director of the NGO Joy for Children Uganda in Kampala.

[ntengam@joyforchildren.org](mailto:ntengam@joyforchildren.org)

<https://www.joyforchildren.org>



#### ANGELINA HENRICH

is a social worker who volunteers at Joy for Children Uganda.

[angelina@joyforchildren.org](mailto:angelina@joyforchildren.org)

## Forgotten breadwinners

**In contemporary Nigeria, one vulnerable group has evaded the much needed attention of authorities: under-aged youngsters who head households and look after their younger siblings.**

By Damilola Oyedele

Olawumi Ishola was 15 when her parents died. That incident made her a substitute-mother. She now had to take care of her siblings aged 13, nine and three. They live in Abuja, the Nigerian capital.

Olawumi's father died after a prolonged illness, and her mother passed away

a few months later, seemingly from a broken heart. "I remember that they were very close," she says. "As his illness got worse, my mother had to take him to our hometown in Osun state. After they both died, no relative was willing to take all four of us in."

An aunt promised to take care of the two youngest children, however, so Olawumi returned to Abuja with her brother Michael who was 13. After a few months, she heard reports that the nine-year old was being maltreated by the aunt. "I could not bear it. I was told he was made to do all chores and that she beat him constantly. I borrowed

money and went to bring him and our little sister back," she reports.

She had neither a job nor any vocational skills, however, so she was not really in a position to rise to the responsibility of raising her siblings. There was no help from any quarters, government or groups. The orphaned family struggled to get by. As was to be expected, they dropped out of school. The older two did menial jobs so they could feed and clothe the family, and pay rent for the room they called home.

"We went through struggles I never want to remember, no one can imagine what we have been going through unless the person experiences it," she says as tears well up in her eyes. Her brother Michael worked on construction sites and eventually became a bricklayer. "I now earn some more money and pay for our brother to learn a skill," he says.



Olawumi Ishola and her brother Michael: still living together eight years after their parents' death – and still struggling.



Eight years after their parents' death, it is obvious that all four siblings have been terribly affected. They lack quality education and professional skills, so they face a bleak future.

The youngest girl was three when their parents died. She managed to finish the six years of primary education at a government-run school. Tuition was free, but the quality of teaching was poor. Today, the girl does not plan to go to secondary school. She does not want to be a financial burden on her older siblings.

Their story is similar to that of Chinwe Okafor (name changed). She was a teenager who was in charge of two young brothers. At the age of 15, she got married hoping that things would become easier. Her gamble did not pay off. Her husband abused her, so she had to abandon him. Now 17, she is saddled with another child from the brief union, and is still looking after her two brothers.

Orphan breadwinners are in a tight position. They hardly ever have enough money to take care of their young families' basic needs. Usually they lack an education, so they take up the most menial jobs. They work as household helpers, cleaners, porters in the markets, water sellers et cetera. Out of desperation, some become sex workers or get involved in petty crimes.

Faith-based groups, non-governmental organisations and other agencies cater to the needs of orphans in Nigeria. However, most of them do not take into account the specific needs of orphaned breadwinners who are doing their best to keep together what is left of their immediate family.

There are no reliable statistics on such teenager-headed households. It is quite obvious, however, that their number must have grown in recent decades. The HIV/AIDS epidemic killed many parents, leaving the children orphaned. Ethnic riots, religious violence and terrorism are relevant too.

The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) of 2013 put the number of orphaned children under 18 at six percent of the population. At the time, Nigeria had an estimated 180 million people. South East Nigeria had the highest percentage of orphaned children with 11 %, while the north-west and north-east recorded the lowest at four percent each. The survey is done every five years. It is safe to point out that the situation in the north-east must have become



much worse due to the escalation of Boko Haram terrorism. The next survey is expected to be released early next year.

## HELP NEEDED

According to the official data, 95% of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) are neither supported properly by government agencies nor by relatives. They lack access to social services, education, medical and psychological assistance and all too often even food and safe drinking water.

Children who grow up in orphan-headed homes often have to drop out of school, though many do their best to keep their younger siblings in school. They lack adult guidance, of course, and many engage in sexual activity early, before they turn 15. Early marriage, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS compound the problems. These youngsters are struggling to survive and provide for their small families. It should not come as a surprise that many become engaged in criminal activities such as thug-gery, stealing et cetera to make a living.

It is important to point out, however, that they are assuming responsibility as best they can. They choose to stay together with their brothers and sisters, because they derive emotional support from one another, which helps them to cope with the loss of their parents. It would make sense to offer targeted support to this specific group of traumatised people. However, most organisations that take care of OVCs do not do so.

One example is UNICEF. The United Nations Children Fund, is running several projects in Nigeria, particularly in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, it does not specifically cater to children in orphan-headed homes.

Some orphanages take a different approach. Alpha and Omega Orphanage is one of them. It is located on the outskirts of Abuja. This institution takes child breadwinners under its wings, provides them with some basic assistance and offers some adult supervision. At the same time, it allows the children concerned to live in their own places.

Elizabeth Ariyo is the proprietor of the orphanage. She says she stays in touch with child-headed families. However, there are limits to what she can do. After all, her orphanage is struggling to sufficiently take care of the needs and education of the 55 children it has taken in.

Ariyo reports: "We have volunteer caregivers who keep an eye on child breadwinners, just to provide them with some sort of guidance and caution to stay out of trouble. This is necessary because no matter what their challenges are, it gets worse if they get on the wrong side of the law, there would be no consideration for their status," Ariyo says.

Kiema Ogunlana is the executive director of Sam Empowerment Foundation, a charity. She argues that extremely vulnerable groups like teenage-headed families should be targeted for specific support. "It's like in dealing with physically challenged persons, the sight-impaired would be treated differently from the hearing-impaired, because their challenges are completely different," she argues.

Ogunlana laments that there are no social programmes targeting them for education or welfare and other benefits. She believes the government should set up resource centres for the poorest communities. The goal would be to help teenage breadwinners:

- to keep their immediate family together,
- not to get into trouble (through involvement in crime, for example) and
- to get some education and learn some skills.

They deserve support so they can become self-reliant and properly take care of their younger siblings at the same time.



**DAMILOLA OYEDELE**  
is a journalist based in Abuja,  
the Nigerian capital.

[damiski22@yahoo.com](mailto:damiski22@yahoo.com)

# Children of war as breadwinners

**As South Sudan's civil war enters its fourth year, children are struggling to bear the most staggering costs of the war. Many are orphaned, and older children assume responsibility for their younger siblings.**

By Parach Mach

Kamisa Nyagoa, a South Sudanese teenager from the northern town of Bentiu, wakes up at 6 am to prepare her four siblings for the day ahead. She washes, dresses, and feeds them before sending them to school. While they are at school she must look for work to help finance her family. She assumed the parental role of the family when their mother died in 2016. "We were always my mother's top priority," Nyagoa recalls. "My mother said I would have to look after the little ones if anything ever happened to her. So this is my promise and gift to my mum," Nyagoa says.

According to Nyagoa, the hardest part is managing her own grief, with that of her siblings. She is 13 years old. Orphaned at a young age, Nyagoa's determination is to keep the rest of her family intact. "I have to stay strong for my siblings and to keep my family's name," she maintains.

In South Sudan, Nyagoa's circumstances have become all too common. Many youths must take on a parental role. The war has left many orphaned or abandoned by their extended families (see box, p. 32).

## CHILD BREADWINNERS

Jima Deng, a 15-year-old boy, became the sole breadwinner for his younger siblings when he lost his parents at the outbreak of the civil war four years ago. Deng and his three siblings went to live with their maternal uncle, who was supposed to take care of them. They attended a local primary school in the northern town of Bor in Jonglei state.

However, Deng's uncle was very poor. It turned out that he was unable to feed four young kids, so he expelled the children from his home. "Ever since we lost our parents, none of our relatives have been supportive,"

Deng reports. "My uncle – despite his promises – turned his back on us." Life becomes especially hard when the youngster is sick and cannot earn money for his brothers and sisters.

Deng is currently working as a waiter in Konyokonyo, the busiest market in Juba, the capital city. He and his siblings live in a tent-like hut made of poles and plastic bags in Mahad, one of the camps for displaced people. He feels safer here than outside the camp. Another advantage is that "all my siblings attend school here". Deng expresses the hope that the future will be better.

Nyon Manyok, a 17-year-old orphan, is not so optimistic. She has to take care of her five younger brothers and sisters. "The burden is too much on my shoulders; life is unfair," Manyok says. She shares a one-room mud shanty with her siblings in Juba. The monthly rent is 2000 South Sudanese pounds (approximately \$ 10).

The family used to live in Yei, in the south of the country. Their house was burned and the parents were killed when the war engulfed that region. Manyok was displaced with her siblings when fighting between rebel forces and government troops flared up again in 2016. They fled to Juba.

Manyok dropped out of school to take care of her brothers and sisters. "I see no future – I am not in school and my siblings need my support. This responsibility does not allow me to do anything to improve my life," she says. She remains in a precarious situation with having to look for odd jobs to help sustain her family's needs. Like other under-age household heads, she is rising to a responsibility that is beyond her capacity.

Many orphans have been left at the mercy of churches or international organisations to assist them with their day-to-day needs. Thirteen year old Sunday Lam Ojuk is an example. He recounts that his mother, who was the family's breadwinner, was tortured to death by an armed group. Lam was left behind with two younger siblings aged 10 and 7. He is now their sole guardian. "There was no one but myself to take care of them," he says. "If I had not assumed my



UN camp in 2015 in Juba.



parents' responsibility, nobody would provide for them."

Lam and his brothers – like thousands of other internal displaced persons (IDPs) – live in a so-called Protection of Civilians site (PoC). It is run by the United Nations. They receive food rations and clean water, as well as psychological support. Not everything is well, however. "Although the UN is providing food, it is never enough. Most people have no hope for better lives," Lam complains. "We are tired of war. Many of us children here don't go to school." He feels that his sibling's future will be jeopardised "if we stay here in this camp much longer."

Despite being in a desperate situation, Lam likes to study and hopes to become a medical doctor. "I will study if circumstances allow me," he says. He and his brothers intend to go back to their hometown of Magwi, 60 miles south of the capital Juba, as soon as a lasting peace is achieved in the country. "Without peace, we cannot go back home."



**PARACH MACH**  
is a journalist and lives in  
Juba, South Sudan.

[parachmach@gmail.com](mailto:parachmach@gmail.com)

## Collateral damage

The South Sudan conflict began in December 2013 as a power struggle within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). President Salva Kiir clashed with his then deputy Riek Machar. The conflict quickly escalated into civil war. Since then, tens of thousands have been killed. Almost half of the people have been displaced. Many citizens face life-threatening malnutrition, lack of access to health care or clean water.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the number of children in South Sudan in need of special protection is rising. However, data is scarce and unreliable. "Children without parents are at a greater risk of being exposed to abuse and neglect and will face greater problems including stigma, isolation, lower education achievement, delinquency and homelessness," an official in South Sudan's UNICEF Child Protection Unit says. "We link children with adults to foster them, or we do parent tracing

and look for their family members," explains the child protection officer, adding that "South Sudan has a proud history of strong and cohesive communities, as evidenced by the widespread practice of kinship and informal foster care."

Traditionally, an orphaned child is taken care of by either the extended family or unrelated community members. Community cohesion, however, has collapsed in war.

The upheaval is "threatening an entire generation", according to a recent report by

UNICEF. More than half of South Sudan's minors are probably affected by forced recruitment, food shortages or lack of formal education. UNICEF reckons that more than 19,000 children have been recruited into the army or militias since the conflict began in December 2013. Some 2 million children are out of school. Another 1 million have been displaced by the conflict. Hunger and malnutrition affect masses of people. Many orphans have to work to feed themselves and their siblings.

Awut Deng Achuil, South Sudan's Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, says there is no foster-care unit in the country and that her min-

istry is struggling to fund child-related activities. "The country is in a crisis of civil war and economic woes," she maintains, "but there is a strong need for the government to formalise and regulate these types of alternative care arrangements, in order to provide adequate support to vulnerable children and ensure their well-being."

The minister stresses that South Sudan is "committed to work in partnership with local partners, as well as national and international organisations to support the development and formalisation of a foster-care system in the country."

Her government is not in control, however. Renewed conflict since July 2016 has deepened the on-going humanitarian crisis. Since the violence erupted, 2 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Almost 70% of the refugees are children.

Meanwhile, a deteriorating economic situation, with skyrocketing inflation, has triggered a food-security crisis. An estimated 42% of the population is experiencing severe food insecurity as of December 2017, and children are among the most vulnerable. (pm)



Young refugees in a camp in northern Uganda.



# Stolen childhood

A carefree childhood is something that many girls and boys in Burundi have never known. The long civil war, broken homes and poverty force innumerable children onto the streets. Many must do hard work or marry early instead of going to school. A non-governmental foundation is trying to give at least some children the chance of a better life.

By Verena Stamm

Burundi's children have the same desires as children anywhere else in the world. They want to play, go to school, have enough to eat, enjoy a comfortable family life and live in peace. For decades, they have been virtually denied these things. Families have been worn down by constant turmoil and civil war – with particularly devastating effects in 1972 and 1993. Many children have lost one or both of their parents.

Since the middle of 2015, the situation has deteriorated again and taken on a new dimension. In late April 2015, demonstrations were staged in and around the capital Bujumbura in protest at the highly controversial re-election of President Pierre Nkurunziza (see D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2016/02, p. 47). After a failed coup attempt, the government response became brutal. The police shot and killed many young people, and families fled the area. Youngsters who took part in the demonstrations were tracked down, arrested and physically abused. Since 2016, children and teenagers have regularly been picked up on the streets and taken to a remand centre. Many are small street traders, and their merchandise is confiscated. Children report that the police perpetrate the worst violence they experience.

The fact that lots of children live in the streets in Burundi is due to a num-



ber of reasons. Years of civil war have plunged the people into grinding poverty and made common the collapse of family structures. The country's many widows re-marry because, to be fully recognised and respected in Burundi, a woman needs to be a wife. In many cases, children from the first marriage suffer as a result, because the new husband does not treat them well.

The kids concerned are almost always exploited for labour. In urban areas, they must do housework while their half-siblings go to school. They are denied schooling. In rural areas, they fare no better. They have to look after livestock, fetch water and firewood and, at night, may have to sleep outdoors. Unless other relatives intervene, many youngsters run away to the capital Bujumbura to fend for themselves on the street.

## THE PLIGHT OF GIRLS

Girls suffer particularly under these undependable family circumstances. Traditionally, the eldest daughter is responsible for looking after the younger children. This means she is usually not allowed to go to school. She has to tend her young siblings, help her mother in the fields and carry out other household duties. If she does get the chance to go to school, she is rarely allowed to stay beyond grade six. She will then have reached puberty, and is thus considered to be of marriageable age in many parts of the country.

The law forbids marriage at such a young age, but the parents ignore that. Poverty makes the situation worse – because marriage means providing a dowry. What is more, the girl becomes part of her husband's family. She leaves the family home forever – at traditional weddings often in tears. Girls



Children in the school of Fondation Stamm.

who are married too early are exposed to the risks of pregnancy and hard work.

If a girl is half-orphaned and gets a step-mother, she is often badly treated and exploited for labour. If she gets a step-father, there is a risk of rape and unwanted pregnancy. And a girl who gets pregnant finds herself in a desperate plight because her family rejects her.

Pregnant girls left to fend for themselves are helped by Fondation Stamm at a home exclusively for underage mothers. This non-profit foundation also runs a number of homes for orphans and street children in Bujumbura and rural areas, and it operates schools and a hospital (see box below).

Even in an intact family, life is not easy for children in general – and for girls in particular. In Burundi, the security that extended families used to provide has been eroded by poverty. Girls are often sent out to work from an early age, employed for a pittance as a nanny in a well-to-do family, for example. Looking after lots of small children is exhausting for a 12-year-old. And there is always the risk of her being raped by a member of the household.

Sometimes these girls are forced to marry another member of the household staff, and that typically soon results in a pregnancy she does not want. One of the

girls helped by Fondation Stamm is Adèle, who lost her parents in the civil war. She went to live with her grandmother and got pregnant, whereupon she was ordered to leave and went to work as a nursemaid in Bujumbura. When it was noticed that she was pregnant, she was fired and had to leave the house. Fondation Stamm took her in and enabled her to attend school again. Today, Adèle has a decent educational background and works as a book-keeper. She is one of the lucky few.

### BOYS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Life is not easy for boys either, even for those who do not experience a broken home. One of a boy's traditional responsibilities is to support his parents in old age. So, boys are more likely to be sent to school. In exchange, the parents hope and expect that they will receive support and recompense later for the money they spend on schooling.

Today, that system of inter-generational give and take has been undermined by high unemployment. Many youngsters, whatever skills or qualifications they may have acquired, are unable to find work. Some start a small business to earn money, but the majority ends up on the street selling nuts, boiled eggs, second-hand clothing

from Europe or SIM cards. Youth unemployment is a time-bomb that either spreads dependency or sparks rebellion.

Girls are not seen selling on the street. Many with qualifications look for work in bistros or food stores – rarely in positions that match their qualifications. Girls with no education sell themselves, making a living as prostitutes.

Children who are able to attend school do so with enthusiasm. In urban areas, there is now widespread evidence of girls achieving ever-better results in the classroom. In rural areas, there are major obstacles to children attending school and completing their education. Families live widely dispersed and the nearest school may be difficult to reach.



#### VERENA STAMM

is the founder of Fondation Stamm, which supports street children and orphans in Burundi. A German partner

organisation is burundikids. In November 2017, Verena Stamm was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit for her work. Engagement Global has supported several of her projects.

[verenast@fondation-stamm.org](mailto:verenast@fondation-stamm.org)

<https://www.fondation-stamm.org/>

<http://burundikids.org/index.html>

## The work of Fondation Stamm

Fondation Stamm was established as a non-profit organisation in 1999 and has since opened a number of homes for street children in urban and rural areas of Burundi. The first children we took in were street kids who had fled the brutality of living as child soldiers.

One of them was Reverien, who was found on the street after deserting from a rebel group. At our school, he became a fully qualified male nurse. "I prefer healing people to killing them with a Kalashnikov," he says.

The goals of Fondation Stamm are:

- to protect and defend children's rights,
- to secure access to education for all,
- to secure access to basic medical care for all and
- to promote sustainable development and protect ecosystems.

The pursuit of these goals led to the creation of various institutions. Initially, a number of schools were established, and some of them were financed by Germany's Federal Ministry for

Economic and Cooperation and Development (BMZ). As well as schools that provide a general education, Fondation Stamm also opened vocational schools that specialise in social services and technical training (nursing, medical technician, pharmaceutical technician, administrative studies, hotel management, electromechanical engineering, computer science). One rural school specialises in agriculture, animal husbandry and environmental protection.

The foundation also runs a hospital, which now has 40 beds and two operating theatres. It includes a maternity unit and has a medical team that performs caesarean sections.

A "discreet" home has also been opened for difficult cases. These include children whose parents have disappeared or are in prison, children who have been wounded, girls who have been raped and teenagers whose membership of an opposition party has been held against them. We provide legal assistance for young people exposed to arbitrary arrest.

In addition, we provide educational support in the form of schoolbooks and uniforms and do a great deal of awareness-raising work to show parents how important schooling is. All in all, we try to give children their childhood back. (vs)

# Life on hold

Some of the refugees seeking shelter in Germany or elsewhere in Europe are unaccompanied minors. Lacking the support of a family, they struggle to start a new life. Government agencies and civil-society organisations help them to find their feet in the host country.

By Rayna Breuer

In Dormagen, a town in the western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, a teenager is sitting in his small room on the second floor of an apartment building. Scattered on his desk are a German-English dictionary, some loose sheets of paper and an exercise book with vocabulary lists. Omar (name changed) is from Sierra Leone and arrived in Germany on 27 December 2017. He had travelled through Guinea, Mali, Algeria and Morocco before crossing to Spain in an inflatable boat. He spent four months on the run.

Up to the age of 10, he says, he attended school. But after his mother died, he stopped going there. With daily life marked by violence, fear and threats, he simply wanted to escape. That is all the 16 year old wants to say. For the last week he has lived with other young arrivals in an apartment run by an organisation that seeks to help minors and young adults lead an independent life.

“Please turn off the light” is written in Persian over the light switch. “They often forget to do it,” says Pinar Inal. She heads the independent project. It is run by “Türkische Biographien” (turquoise biographies), a civil-society organisation that focuses on intercultural child and youth services and is based in Neuss. Türkische Biographien was set up in 2009 and has walk-in centres and residential units in four different cities in North Rhine-Westphalia.

## MOTIVATED YOUNGSTERS

Inal has been with the organisation right from the start. The focus was initially only on Turkish children and teenagers, but now she provides support for families and children from 16 different linguistic groups. In



Omar from Sierra Leone (name changed and photo anonymised), who lives in a shared apartment in Dormagen where he receives support to help him lead an independent life.

Germany, people often talk about “migrant backgrounds”. In contrast, Inal says: “We are concerned with biographies.” The biographies she refers to are those of children, teenagers and the adults who work with them. Omar is one of many biographies.

“He is very motivated to learn German. When we are out together on the street, he will ask: What’s the German word for truck? And lights? And street? He wants to know the colour of cars and traffic lights. He says the word in English, I say it in German. So we teach each other languages – I learn English from him, he learns German from me,” Inal reports.

The social worker draws on years of experience with child and teenage refugees. A great deal has changed since the end of 2015 when Chancellor Angela Merkel uttered those memorable words: “We can do it”. In mid-September, Germany’s Federal Government had decided to accept the refugees stranded in Hungary at Budapest’s main railway station. Hundreds of thou-

sands of refugees, mostly from Syria, came to Germany via the Balkan route and were welcomed by crowds of cheering people.

“Facilities were overstretched. In some cases, we had to ask the local youth-welfare office for permission to exceed capacity limits for a while,” Inal recalls. In the meantime, the numbers have gone down. “We don’t get anywhere near as many enquiries now.” That tallies with the official statistics: in 2015, asylum requests were submitted by 22,255 unaccompanied minors. In 2016, the figure was up to 35,939. But in the first half of last year, it was a mere 5,702.

At present, there are five youngsters in the Dormagen apartment: four from Afghanistan and Omar from Sierra Leone. The oldest is 18, 16-year-old Omar is the youngest. They get seven hours of support a day, seven days a week. “We go shopping with them. They need to learn to check prices and not buy just any milk. We discuss learning targets and draw up meal and cleaning plans. I am surprised at how tidy their rooms are. It is really not what I’d expect from five teenagers,” Inal says.

It was Omar’s turn to cook on Monday. He made jollof rice. Asked what it was and what ingredients went into it, he responds with surprise. It is a typical West African dish, he says, very well known. He lists the ingredients in English. “Chicken, rice, tomatoes and those long red ...” The word escapes him and he sprints into the kitchen and returns with a red chili pepper from the fridge. “The dish must have gone down well,” Inal says, “because there wasn’t a scrap left in the pan the next day.”

The four Afghan teenagers living in the apartment with Omar are on a government programme for 16 to 25-year-old new arrivals – “Fit für mehr” (fit for more). They will receive up to a year of training at a vocational school. The curriculum includes German, math as well as cultural and socio-political studies. After completing the programme, the youngsters can either attend a normal school and acquire normal school-leaving qualifications, or they can apply for an apprenticeship. In Germany’s “dual education system”, an apprenticeship means that a fully operational business trains a young person who is also obliged to spend some time in school. Germany has a reputation for high-quality skilled labour, and the dual education system is the reason. Omar will start to go to vocational school



next week. He is very excited. And his hopes are high.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

“These youngsters come to us with high expectations,” Inal says. “Some think the state has to pay for everything, and that they have lots of rights and few responsibilities.” They also come with many misapprehensions about education. “We explain to them that

are now my family.” Today he is alone in the apartment, the others are buying carnival costumes. “I am not going to celebrate carnival, it is too cold outside,” Omar says. His body is not yet accustomed to local temperatures. It is minus 3° Celsius outside; his skin is very dry. Inal looks for a cream in the medicine cabinet.

The social worker approves of the fact that help is available for children and young people. They find open doors. “I

some cases.” She expresses regret: “The youngsters panic immediately when they feel rejected.” The phase between their appeal to stay in Germany and the final decision is very difficult. “It is a time of uncertainty, they lose interest in school and drop everything. They don’t see the point of making efforts any more; they just wait,” she adds. Deportations, moreover, frustrate the support workers. After all advice and support they have given, it is hard to see the youngsters being taken away.

## TOUGHER LAW

New legislation actually makes deportation easier. On 29 July 2017, a law facilitating the enforcement of compulsory departures came into effect. Among other things, it extends the scope for detention pending deportation. It foresees internment in reception facilities and allows the interception of asylum-seekers’ mobile phone data. In 2016, a total of 25,375 people were deported, most of them from the Balkan states of Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia. But in the same year, Afghan, Iraqi and Syrian nationals were also deported from Germany or “transferred” to other EU countries under the so-called Dublin rules, according to which a refugee seeking asylum needs to submit the request in the country where he or she first sets foot in the EU.

Three of the five youngsters in Dormagen have had their asylum requests rejected and have filed an appeal. One of them is described as troubled, despondent, depressive. Omar’s clearing phase is about to begin. It consists of a series of interviews aimed at ascertaining, amongst other things, what medical or psychological treatment he requires. Once the application for asylum is submitted, the waiting begins. It can take the authorities up to one year to decide. In the meantime, Omar can do nothing but hope – and learn German.

## LINK

**Intercultural child and youth services organisation “Türkise Biographien”:**  
<http://www.tuerkise-biographien.de/>



**RAYNA BREUER**  
is a journalist and lives in Cologne.  
[rayna.breuer@googlemail.com](mailto:rayna.breuer@googlemail.com)



**Pinar Inal, head of the facility in Dormagen.**

it is hard to get an apprenticeship without a school-leaving certificate. They all want to work – and that’s a good thing – but school comes first,” the social worker points out.

A great deal of wrong information is disseminated about life in Germany. A distorted idea of what kind of rights and responsibilities mark a welfare state has been spread and reinforced by hearsay and social media in recent years.

Omar has no great expectations. He is happy in the shared apartment, he says. “Mrs. Inal and the other support workers

think the financial support that they receive is very generous, even if some people feel it is still not enough.” But she also thinks that closer scrutiny should be given to who actually needs help and who does not – especially where women and children are concerned.

Inal insists that youngsters who can speak German and are socially integrated should not be deported to their countries of origin. “We have seen a number of youngsters sent home when they came of age. It does not happen often but we have had

## Unaccompanied minor refugees

They are a special group of refugees in need of special protection. They are from different countries of origin and had different reasons for leaving them. But they do have one thing in common: they are young, alone and vulnerable. Unaccompanied minors are children and teenagers up to the age of 18; they have been separated from both of their parents and they do not have the support of at least one adult with parental authority.

Children become refugees for many reasons: war, trauma, poverty, privation, death. Some are separated from their parents on the long trajectory of flight. Others are orphans who want to escape hardship and violence

in their homeland. Yet others place themselves in the hands of people traffickers in the hope of reaching a safe place.

Unaccompanied children account for two to three percent of all asylum applications submitted in Central Europe. Between January and September 2017, more than 25,300 children arrived in Greece, Bulgaria and Spain, and over 14,800 (58%) of them were unaccompanied and lost children. In the third quarter of 2017, the absolute number was 14,800 – about a third more than in the second quarter.

In the first nine months of 2017, Greece and Italy transferred more than 9,800 children to other EU countries. Among them were 329 unaccompanied and

lost children. The percentage of boys was higher than girls (an average of 7 boys to every 3 girls).

In the first six months of 2017, the majority of refugee minors submitting applications in Germany were 16 or 17 years old (82%) and male (86%). The main countries of origin were Afghanistan (25%), Eritrea (22%), Somalia (10%), Guinea (8%) and Syria (8%). The overall acceptance rate – the percentage of refugees confirmed as being entitled to protection – was around 80%. This was moderately below the 2016 acceptance rate (89%).

Reliable data on the number of unaccompanied minors arriving or present in European countries tends not to be readily available. The number of asylum applications indicates a trend but does not necessarily supply a precise picture. This is

due to backlogs in national asylum systems, onward migration or refugees failing to submit asylum requests.

Europol believes the true figures are much higher. In 2016, the EU law-enforcement agency reckoned that 27% of all refugees arriving in Europe were minors. It also pointed out that around 10,000 of the unaccompanied children registered in Europe can no longer be traced. They may have found a home with relatives – or they may have been picked up by criminal gangs who exploit defenceless minors or force them into prostitution.

Mariyana Berket of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) says that “unaccompanied minors from conflict zones are by far the most vulnerable group of refugees”. (rb)



**Unaccompanied minor refugees are particularly vulnerable and in need of protection: children in the Idomeni refugee camp on the Greek-Macedonian border.**



# Digital childhood

**According to UNICEF, over one-third of all internet users are children and youths up to the age of 24. A large minority resides in developing countries. The internet offers opportunities, but also exposes kids to risks.**

**By Drake Jamali**

Digitalisation is increasing the tremendous opportunities the young generation has with which to engage the world. UNICEF's "State of the World's Children 2017" report points out that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are giving ever more people access to high-quality educa-

tional content, including textbooks, videos and remote instruction. The costs are low.

However, the proliferation of educational internet content cannot simply replace competent pedagogy in schools, the UNICEF report warns. Guidance and adult supervision are necessary. The internet is valuable for learning new things, but it is no substitute for the engagement with parents, teachers and other educators.

According to UNICEF, the internet contributes to bridging social divides. It makes information available to both genders, for example, and it is becoming accessible in ever more remote areas. In the

developing world, it can serve professional and vocational training, offering new economic opportunities. As the authors write, young people with disabilities can benefit too, not least because they can find information and interact with others without having to leave their homes. Digital divides persist, however. Disadvantaged communities tend not to enjoy access to the web to the extent that better-off communities do. Connectivity infrastructure depends on private as well as public spending. Social disparities are further deepened if the latter is inadequate.

UNICEF outlines three kinds of risks:

- **Content** – are risks when a child is exposed to inappropriate and unwanted content, such as sexual, violent or racist imagery. Such content can be deeply disturbing and even traumatising.
- **Contact** – are risks when a child unknowingly participates in dangerous com-



Computer class in a Cameroonian school.



munication with predators seeking youths for commercial, sexual or political purposes.

- Conduct – are risks when children produce online materials that are harmful to other children such as racially charged statements or even sexual content that they create themselves (sexting for example).

Youths (aged 15 to 24) are the most well connected group in the world, according to UNICEF. About 71% use the web compared with 48% of the global population. Evidence indicates that children are accessing the internet at ever younger ages. Accordingly, the dangers of cyber bullying, cyber crimes (theft) and unwanted sexual experiences are growing. UNICEF states that children from poor families are especially at risk of being victimised online because they are very curious, but unaware of what rules apply to internet interaction, who their potential correspondents might be and how they might be abused. The UNICEF authors want educators to make children digitally literate so they can navigate the dangers. At the same time, they want content providers to limit existing risks.

Although the internet helps to bridge gender gaps, such gaps persist. In 2017, only 44% of internet users were female around the world. In India, the share was a mere 29%. Girls are affected by such cultural exclusion too. One result, according to the report, is that they cannot use the internet to fill knowledge gaps concerning sex or reproductive health. Such information matters to them, but it is not taught in schools or discussed in family circles.

African youths are the least connected in the world. Around 60% cannot go online, according to UNICEF. The reasons are socio-economic limitations and cultural barriers, especially in the case of girls. In Europe, only four percent of the people aged five to 24 do not have internet access.

UNICEF notes another important divide. In 2016, just 10 languages made up the majority of websites, with English alone accounting for around 56%. Accordingly, many children and youths who are daily online users cannot find much information in their own languages. Some African and Asian languages have no written form, and some governments do not report in indigenous languages.

Cyber bullying is a concern. It can affect children, youths and adults. People of all age groups are sharing intimate information with friends on social media – and to some extent with the world at large. The

young generation in particular uses connectivity to either bolster existing friendships, or create new ones. Children connect with each other more than ever, yet have changed the platforms of communication from offline interactions to online interactions. According to UNICEF, people are more likely to be harassed if they are not part of the mainstream because of:

- their physical or mental condition,
- their cultural, ethnic, religious or political affiliation,
- their sexual orientation or
- their economic situation.

Harassment happens online and offline, but while societies have ways to deal with offline bullying, cyber harassment is a new phenomenon. Victims are more inclined to abuse alcohol and drugs, not regularly attend school and have lower self-esteem, UNICEF warns.

## PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

There is an ever increasing need to protect the privacy of children and youths in regard to not only cyber bullying but also sexual predators, traffickers and radical agitators. New online platforms increase the access online predators have to children. Cryptocurrencies and the growth of the deep web and the dark web facilitate criminal activity, including sexual exploitation. UNICEF demands that these areas of the web should be policed.

Parents around the world worry about their children spending too much time in front of a screen. Research on the matter is inconclusive, according to UNICEF. Online interaction connects children from all geographical backgrounds, yet it may also make them less present in their current locality. Too much screen time, moreover, might result in insufficient physical activity. However, in a 2010 study drawing on a survey of 200,000 adolescents aged 11 to 15 in Europe and North America, showed that children already tended to lead inactive lifestyles back then.

There is a growing divide between how children and adults use digitalisation to engage with one another. Children see connectivity as a way to break down communication barriers, while parents worry that screen time may hurt their mental well-being. Parental concerns should not be ignored, argues the UNICEF report, but

parents should better understand what the platforms mean for their children. The more adept they are in engaging with their children, the better they will be able to protect them from harm.

Parents should also make their children aware of which companies dominate the internet. A handful of corporations (Facebook, Apple, Netflix and Google) influence what billions of people around the world do with their time.

The youngest generation is the most diverse generation in history, and is only a few clicks away from copious amounts of information and people. Today's children and youths are digital natives and the internet has become their second home. UNICEF argues that prudent policies must ensure that the internet becomes a safe place for them. Relevant stakeholders include governments, UN agencies, pro-children organisations, development institutions, educators and parents. Important goals are:

- Provide affordable access to high-quality online resources to all children.
- Break cultural, social, and gender barriers.
- Protect children from harm.
- Support law enforcement.
- Safeguard children's privacy, identities and reputation online.
- Teach digital literacy to keep children informed, engaged and safe.
- Develop ethical standards for business and technologies.
- Involve private-sector companies in advancing appropriate ethical standards and practices.
- Give children and young people a voice in the development of digital policies.

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## LINK

**UNICEF, 2017: The state of the world's children 2017. Children in a digital world.**

<https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/>



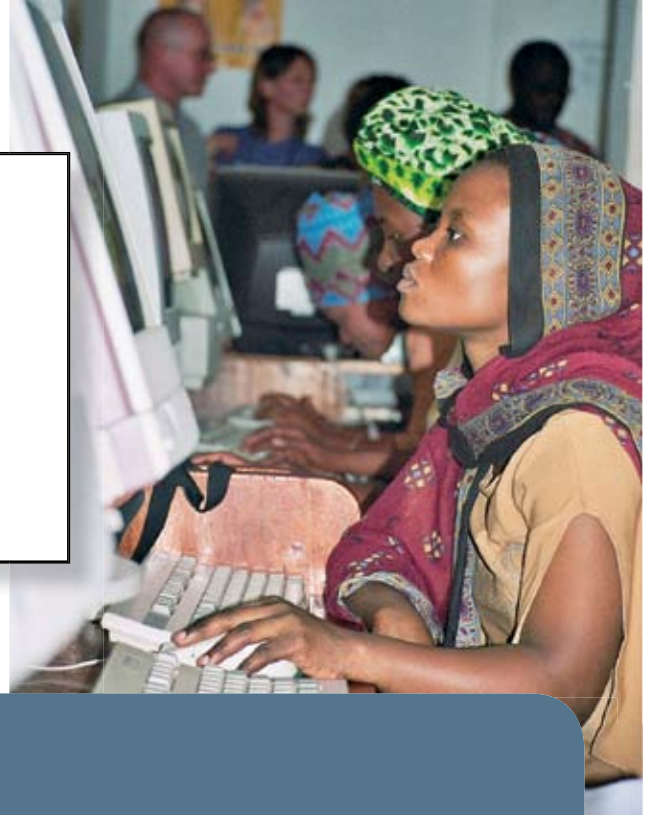
**DRAKE JAMALI**

is an intern at D+C/E+Z, sponsored by the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX), a programme that

invites 75 young Americans to work in Germany and 75 young Germans to do so in the USA.

[drakejamali@gmail.com](mailto:drakejamali@gmail.com)

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