

D+C

MONTHLY E-PAPER

DEVELOPMENT AND
COOPERATION

ENTWICKLUNG UND
ZUSAMMENARBEIT

D+C

E+Z

International
Journal

ISSN
2366-7257
May 2019

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especially need
sex education

ANDES

German scholar observes
Bolivia backtracking
on children's rights

SAHEL REGION

Coordinated humanitarian
relief and development
efforts around Lake Chad



Private education

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Private education

Efforts towards inclusion

Brazil is highly unequal in every dimension of social wellbeing: income distribution, access to public goods, quality of public utilities like health care, transportation, water treatment, sewage et cetera. Education is no exception, says Mariano Laplane, executive director at a public-sector university in São Paulo State.

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“Fierce competition”

Private colleges have been expanding rapidly in Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries. The primary reason is that the capacities of state-run schools and universities are inadequate for offering opportunities to all eligible young people. Sivali Ranawana, a university evaluator, assessed the trend in an interview.

PAGE 22

The parents’ burden

Primary and secondary school enrolment has increased considerably in India in the past 20 years. Because state-run schools still tend to be bad, many parents opt for private alternatives. Even disadvantaged people do so, freelance journalist Roli Mahajan found out.

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Low quality of state schools

In Kenya, private schools are soaring in popularity, even among families that can ill afford school fees. The trend – caused by poor quality public education – is deepening the country’s social divides, criticises Alphonce Shiundu, a Kenyan journalist, editor and fact-checker.

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From boom to bust

Houdegbe North American University Benin (HNAUB) once looked like a promising new private-sector institution. Because of financial problems, it is no longer operational. Karim Okanla, a former lecturer, told Hans Dembowski about how HNAUB went from boom to bust.

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Overrated model

Parents from around the world send their children to the United States for a quality education. But all is not as great as it seems. The recent college admission scandals show that top universities do not offer equal opportunities, writes D+C/E+Z intern Cema Tork.

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Markets leave some people behind

Government-run education systems are failing in many developing countries and emerging markets. Too many children still cannot read after leaving primary school, and too many universities churn out worthless diplomas. Typically, these institutions are underfunded and understaffed. Accordingly, private education has become a growing business in many places – from preschool through to Masters courses. To a considerable extent, international donor agencies appreciate the trend. Proponents argue that private schools:

- perform better,
- are more flexible and innovative,
- lessen the burden on public schools and
- stimulate competition.

Such free-market reasoning is not entirely wrong, but it misses an important point. Markets respond to purchasing power, not to need. Leaving essential social infrastructures to market forces means reinforcing privileges. Wealthy parents can afford to invest in their offspring's education. Illiterate slum-dwellers or smallholder farmers cannot even help their kids with homework. Their children's future opportunities depend on good education too.

The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is "quality education". The big questions are whether private education can contribute to achieving it and whether it is actually the solution. Let me explain why the first answer is "yes", but the second is "no".

Many public institutions are so bad that even people from low-income communities voluntarily opt for private ones. Their choice obviously matters. Moreover, private institutions increase the diversity of an educational system in healthy ways. Not all students have the same needs, talents or interests. The more options there are, the more likely it becomes that everyone finds a suitable school. The more diverse a system is, moreover, the more its elements can learn from observing one another.

However, private schools do not necessarily lessen the burden on public schools. They are likely to poach the best teaching staff, which means that public schools further deteriorate. Expensive private schools attract prosperous clients and become centres of undeserved privilege. There has been some excitement about low-budget private schools outperforming state schools. That may be so in some cases. It is absolutely clear, however, that high-fee private schools outperform the low-fee variety.

Markets are not an alternative to the state – they interact with governments in complex ways. Public policy can counterbalance unwanted market effects to some extent. Scholarships and grants can be made available to disadvantaged children. Affirmative action can ensure that minorities get access to elite schools. Stringent oversight and sensible curricula can safeguard minimum standards at all schools. Successful societies thrive on prudent regulation. To achieve it, governments must be competent and capable. Such governments, however, should prioritise that public schools are well-run.

In every advanced nation, including the market-oriented USA, public-sector institutions educate the vast majority of people. Private schools are an add-on. The public system always requires substantial government spending, which in turn depends on adequate tax revenues. Public infrastructure – including schools – must not be neglected any longer.

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



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Debate



Conservation considered as enemy

Protected areas in the Congo Basin are currently facing heavy criticism. National park rangers are accused of having committed serious acts of violence against local communities. A research team from the Centre for Rural Development (SLE) at the Humboldt University in Berlin has investigated governance in the Lobéké National Park in Cameroon. SLE participant Henrice Stöbesand reports on the results.

PAGE 11

Tribune



Nexus makes sense

The much-discussed Nexus approach is a suitable solution in the complex crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, says Fabian Böckler, a disaster risk management expert of the NGO Plan International. Nexus means to coordinate humanitarian aid, development support and peacebuilding efforts continuously.

PAGE 16

To the detriment of children

A pioneering Child and Adolescent Code had been in effect in Bolivia since 2014. It guaranteed the rights of working children. This law has now been changed in response to international pressure to the detriment of children, argues Manfred Liebel, emeritus professor of sociology at the Technical University of Berlin.

PAGE 14

SAHEL ZONE

“Securitisation does not create security”

Numerous crises have created existential problems for the countries of the Sahel zone. The international community perceives them primarily as security risks and usually reacts by sending military missions. The local civil society wants to address deficits of democracy and governance instead, which it believes are the main causes of the conflicts.

By Katja Dombrowski

The Sahel region, which stretches from Senegal on the Atlantic coast to Eritrea on the Red Sea, has been rocked by crises for decades. Since gaining independence at the beginning of the 1960s, almost all Sahel countries have experienced serious armed conflicts. There have also been military coups, separatist movements, revolts and uprisings, Islamist and otherwise. High rates of population growth and climate change are exacerbating problems in the region. Other destabilising factors include drug trafficking, arms trafficking and corruption. At the moment, Mali and the region surrounding Lake Chad are particularly impacted by violence (see Fabian Böckler in the Tribune section of this e-Paper, p. 16).

Numerous international organisations, groups and individual states are engaged in the Sahel zone (see also Julia Maria Egleder in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/02, Focus section). But representatives of local civil-society organisations complain that there is too strong a focus on security. According to Youssouf Coulibaly, professor of international law and international relations at the University of Law and Political Science in Bamako, the “securitisation” of, for instance, European policy towards the Sahel countries is not an adequate response to the region’s problems. It does not create security or meet the expectations of local people. If the huge sums that are spent on efforts like the UN’s MINUSMA mission in Mali were applied differently, they would be an “enormous help” to local people, Cou-

libaly said at the end of March in Frankfurt at a conference organised by the network Fokus Sahel.

The many participants from various affected countries were critical not only of the focus on security, but also of the fact that security is understood almost exclusively in military terms. They believe that human security should be the goal instead. “That means, among other things, the ability to eat well, sleep well and move without being threatened,” Coulibaly explains. None of that is possible in Mali. “Furthermore, the presence of soldiers stokes fear in the population,” says the expert, who is also involved

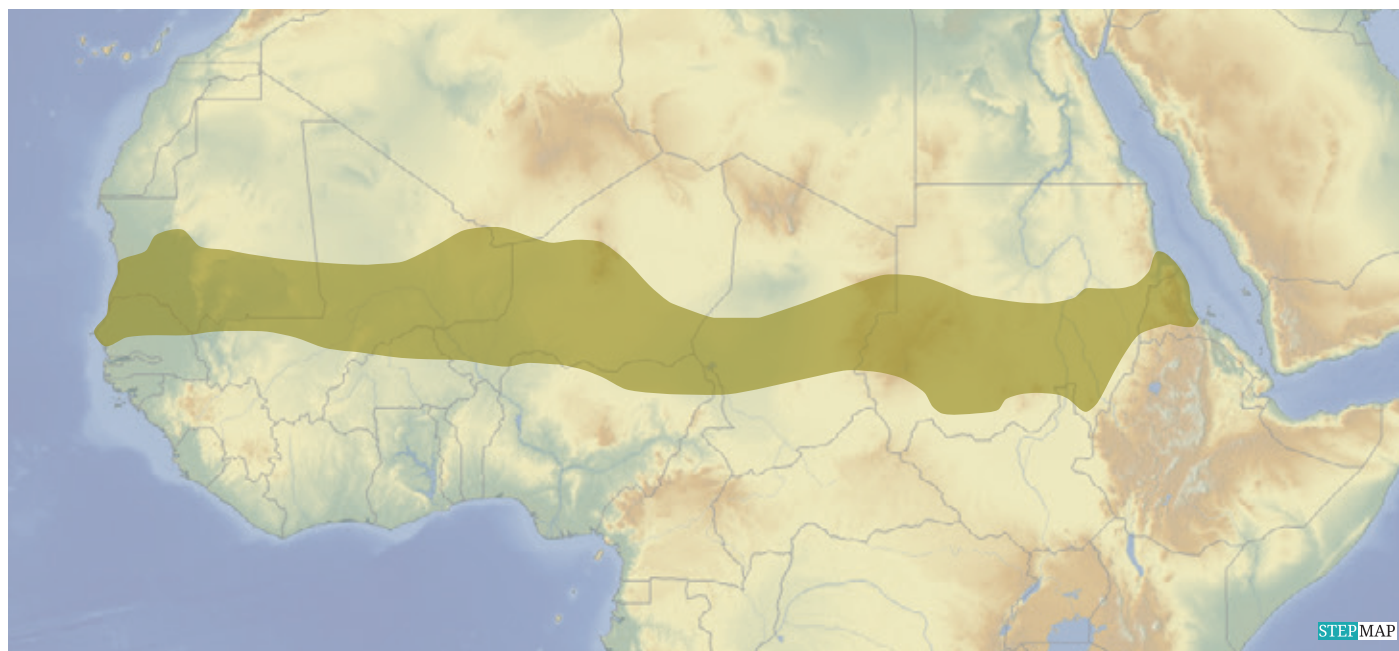
in the training of security forces as an instructor at the Alioune Blondin Peacekeeping School in Bamako.

Numerous speakers emphasised that international actors are pursuing their own interests in the Sahel – sometimes openly, sometimes in secret. They believe that Europe, for example, is primarily concerned with its own security, which it is advancing by attempting to halt migration from Africa (see also the interview with Ibrahim Manzo Diallo in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/04, Focus section). Actors also have strategic, political and economic interests, for instance with regard to arms shipments. “Billions are being poured into these wars,” Coulibaly says. “People are investing in military equipment instead of in social services.”

Badié Hima from the National Democratic Institute in Bamako also believes that the focus on security has shifted attention away from the creation of democratic structures. “Democratisation has become the orphan of international cooperation,” the expert on human rights and governance



The French and German ministers of defence, Florence Parly and Ursula von der Leyen, with their Nigerian counterpart Kalla Moutari visiting the construction site of the headquarters of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in Niamey in 2017.



The Sahel zone stretches across Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea.

criticises. According to him, many of the gains that had been made since the 1990s have once again been lost.

STATE FAILURE

Hima believes that the strengthening of terrorist and Islamist groups in the Sahel can be traced back above all to the fragility of the states. He claims that the governments have not protected the rights of their citizens and have not provided any public services. “The state was absent, a vacuum was created, and this vacuum was filled in part by armed groups.” That is true of multiple countries in the Sahel, the expert says. There are even reports from eastern Niger that jihadists there are collecting taxes.

Civil-society representatives from various Sahel countries explained that people have no trust in their governments and that governments there are illegitimate across the board, even if they were put into office by elections. The crisis has made it possible for governments to hold onto power and to maintain or introduce an authoritarian governing style, criticises Moussa Tchangari from the Nigerian NGO *Alternative Espaces Citoyens*.

International actors are working with these governments and are thereby providing them with a kind of “life insurance”. For instance, critics charge that Chadian Presi-

dent Idriss Déby, who has been in power since 1990, has only been able to remain in office thanks to the presence of the French military, who sees him as a key figure in the fight against the Islamists. In 2014, France chose Chad’s capital, N’Djamena, to be the headquarters of Operation Barkhane, which aims to fight terrorism in the Sahel region (see also interview with Mohamed Gueye in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/11, Focus section). “The military mission provided security to the head of state, but not to the people,” summarises Baldal Oyamta of the human-rights organisation *La Ligue Tchadienne des Droits de l’Homme*. Coulibaly also believes that by cooperating with international actors, the very people who are responsible for the crisis have been able to remain in power.

According to Tchangari, France, the former colonial power, has used various military missions to strengthen its influence and presence in this strategically important region. Tchangari says that countries like Germany and Italy are also interested in maintaining a local presence, for instance as a way to facilitate negotiations with Algeria and Libya, both key countries with regard to the refugee issue. Since the 2000s, new actors like Russia and China have arrived in the region to pursue their political and economic interests as well. Tchangari warns that many of these international ac-

tors do not want the situation in the Sahel to change. He believes that there is a danger that armed groups will be instrumentalised in order to preserve the crisis and ensure the failure of new democratic movements.

Civil society wants support beyond security policy so that it can carry out its control function and fight for the rule of law and human security. “We need help on site from the big democracies,” Hima says. Oyamta emphasises that people in Chad need legal protection most of all: “There are no laws that protect the people.” Physical protection is also needed, according to the expert. He considers the education of the security forces and cross-border cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin indispensable. “Most of the troops there can’t even write their own names, which is a big problem,” he explains.

According to Oyamta, traditional authorities should also not be neglected. They have always played a role in conflict resolution in Africa. However, the question is whether traditional and religious leaders represent the interests of everyone involved. Women and young people, for instance, tend to be underrepresented in traditional mechanisms. Tchangari is sceptical for another reason: “There are no traditional structures anymore,” he says. “Nowadays peace is impossible without international help from outside.”

SERVICE PROVIDER

Addressing the planet

Delivery of products, services and even emergency aid is often hindered by poor information on the exact location of the addressee. An algorithm providing a unique, three-word address for everywhere on earth can help.

By Giles Rhys Jones

According to the UN, more than 75% of the world's countries have either a poorly maintained addressing system or no street addressing at all. Yet accurate pinpointing of addresses is an important part of a country's infrastructure. It enables delivery of services – in health care, transport, emergency response and many other areas – which in turn help communities to function effectively.

Particularly in developing countries, street addressing is often outdated or non-existent. A geocoding system known as “what3words” offers a solution. The system, developed by a private company of the same name, divides the world into 57 trillion squares of three metres by three metres. Each square has a unique address consisting of three dictionary words.

Under this system, every location on the planet has a reliable and accurate address. So, for example, the system allows the pinpointing of the location of a family home in South Africa's unaddressed townships, or a small business in one of Brazil's informal urban settlements, or even a particular tent in a refugee camp.

The what3words technology, which enables bidirectional conversion of each three-word address into latitude/longitude coordinates and vice-versa, is used in over 170 countries. The London-based firm works with thousands of partners, including government agencies, NGOs and large businesses such as Mercedes-Benz, Ford, Airbnb, the UN and the Red Cross.

Since its launch in 2013, the technology has become an addressing standard for eight postal services, including those of Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Sint-Maarten and Mongolia.

Unlike conventional addressing solutions, which typically take decades to implement and cost millions, the what3words geocoding system can be used immediately. That is because the system uses a limited database and can be accessed offline.

The what3words app is available in over 30 languages and free for individual users. The firm offers qualifying NGOs help in implementing the technology. As a result, what3words is increasingly used in the developing world. For example, it worked with the HumanTech Innovation Lab (HTiL) and Community Development Centre (CDC) to identify the buildings inhabited by over 100,000 people living in refugee settlements in Arua, Uganda. That enabled health workers to find people in need of medical services and to reach them quickly in emergencies.

In a similar project, the Gateway Health Institute, a South African non-profit organisation, uses what3words to assign addresses to thousands of homes in Durban township. The NGO has trained local ambulance drivers to use what3words to quickly reach patients, including pregnant women in difficulty. In addition, the system enabled authorities to start health records for new mothers and babies. In places that have

adopted what3words, the firm helps individuals to remember their own address by providing physical house signs containing the three words; it also supports local initiatives to distribute the signs.

The firm aims for its coding system to become a global addressing standard, so everyone – whether living in cities, on remote islands or even in tents on the Mongolian plains – has a simple and reliable address to be used as needed. For this to happen, organisations delivering products and services would need to adopt three-word addresses. This would make deliveries more efficient and environmentally friendlier, reduce pressure on crowded cities and help communities to become more resilient.

Among other benefits, a reliable addressing system would promote e-commerce by removing doubts about the precise destination of goods. That in turn could promote economic growth in developing countries, as well as providing equal access to services and opportunities. Beyond that, what3words could become a life-saver in disaster situations by providing precise information to emergency services, rescuers and providers of humanitarian aid.



GILES RHYNS JONES is chief marketing officer at what3words. What3words is available as a free app on iOS and

Android and at <https://map.what3words.com>



Every place on earth has a unique what3words address: house in a remote area of Cote d'Ivoire.

JIHADISTS

Why women join the “holy war”

Worldwide, the number of women joining the “holy war”, or jihad, increases. What causes them to do so? And which role do they play in jihadist organisations? These are the questions two Jordanian Islamism experts have explored in a recent study.

By Dagmar Wolf

From a western mindset, it is difficult to understand why women give up their freedom to wear a full-body veil and submit to strict patriarchal rules. But it is precisely under the particularly strict regime of ISIS that the number of female recruits has risen sharply in recent years. So far, there have been few studies on the subject. With their book “Dschihadistinnen – Faszination Märtyrertod” (Jihadist women – the fascination to die a martyr’s death) the authors Hassan Abu Hanieh and Mohammad Abu Rumman fill the gap.

In fact, the active role of women in Islamist movements is quite a new phenomenon. Until the beginning of the century, the role of women was limited to that of bearing and educating children in the name of jihad and supporting the fighters. This, however, changed as ISIS grew stronger.

Compared to al-Qaida and other jihadist organisations, ISIS has better means of propaganda and recruitment, is much more present in social media and offers communication in more languages. With the capture of the cities Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq and the proclamation of the caliphate in 2014, hundreds of women from all over the world joined the terrorist militia.

While women are still hardly present in leading positions of ISIS, they play a much more active role than they used to by performing administrative and logistical tasks. Hanieh and Rumman stress that their role in ISIS communication should not be underestimated as this gives them the opportunity to influence the actions and development of the group.

However, the authors underline that female jihadists are by no means more feminist or secular than their male counterparts.

They are just as strictly religious and subject themselves to archaic and patriarchal dogmas.

The second part of the book consists of case studies of about 50 women from North Africa, the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Europe and the USA. As it is hard to find reliable sources on the topic, the study is

- the changing global political situation (e. g. the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan or the Syrian conflict) and the often associated humiliation experienced by Muslim societies,
- the treatment of brothers, fathers and husbands in imprisonment and
- the loss of family members.

In conflict areas women not only suffer from war and misery, but also from feelings of revenge and injustice, as the authors state. In the west, Muslim women struggle with the question of self-definition and personal cultural values. The virtual world as well as social relations and mutual influence of other women play a distinctive role in



Western countries are struggling with ISIS returnees: British jihadist Shamima Begum with her baby who died of pneumonia in a Syrian refugee camp in February.

mainly based on written and oral testimonies of the women themselves or of the people around them, but also on documents and court judgements. Therefore, the study is not representative. Nevertheless, the authors manage to give a clear picture of the different motivations of women – and thus provide important hints for preventative work.

The authors challenge the stereotypes of jihad brides or religiously brainwashed, uneducated, desperate or naïve women. On the contrary, it is not the uneducated destitute women who join ISIS. Most of them are academically educated and often well-off, as can be seen in the stories presented by Hanieh and Rumman. In nearly all cases, there is a turning point in the women’s lives that initiates them to leave their lives behind and join the armed conflict. Important factors are:

their radicalisation. The authors conclude that it is both political and personal reasons that drive women to join ISIS. They explain how the jihadist organisation pretends to offer an allegedly “alternative political project” to the modern west as well as to Arab regimes.

Although – according to media reports – ISIS has lost strength and influence all over the world, the danger has not yet been overcome. The ideology lives on in the minds of women and men worldwide, and it can only be fought effectively if we tackle the problems that have led to this mindset.

BOOK

Hassan Abu Hanieh, Mohammad Abu Rumman, 2018: Dschihadistinnen – Faszination Märtyrertod (Jihadist women – the fascination to die a martyr’s death). Bonn, Dietz. (Also available in Arabic.)



Distance learning in Kakuma, a Kenyan refugee camp.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Choosing the right approach

Digitalisation has the potential to drastically alter the future of the developing world: for good and for bad. Agencies linked to Germany's Protestant churches discussed the trends at a development-policy conference in Berlin.

By Cema Tork

On the upside, digital measurement programmes in health care are dramatically reducing the cost of assessing patients. On the downside, jobs are being lost to artificial intelligence. To agencies involved in international development affairs, these trends matter – not least, because they themselves use digital technology in interaction with their partners in the Global South.

Welthungerhilfe, the Bonn-based non-denominational charity, is taking a digital approach to eradicating malnutrition in India, pooling resources with tech companies. Cameras and algorithms serve to take children's measurements. The cost of data collection was thus reduced from \$15 per child to a mere \$0,10. Aid professionals from Protestant agencies appreciate that this method not only reduces costs, but also considerably lessens the work load of

health staff who can use precious time for other tasks.

The developing world is rapidly digitalising. Kathleen Ziemann of the GIZ, a government agency, points out that only four percent of people had access to the internet in Dar es Salaam in 2014. Just three years later the share had jumped to 40%. People around the world are gaining access to the internet and technology.

Access to the internet often enables job creation in places with high unemployment. People in developing countries can even earn money working for foreign companies online. As one participant said, digitalisation supersedes physical boundaries, which could potentially allow people to access more lucrative economies without leaving their home country.

Anke Domscheit-Berg, a maverick politician who currently belongs to the Leftist faction in the German Bundestag, suggests that developed nations should create digital platforms to encourage people in developing countries to bring in capital and reduce their unemployment rates. She wants websites and apps to serve freelancers' marketing needs – for instance, by connecting a programmer in Nigeria with an employer

in Australia or Japan. The idea is to connect skilled, but unemployed youth to established businesses in areas where their skills are in demand.

Moreover, e-learning offers people the ability to become skilled outside typical classroom settings. That can benefit even people in areas with poor transport infrastructure and few educational opportunities – if they have access to the internet. Thanks to smartphones, that is no longer completely unusual.

On the other hand, people in the Global South are losing out to digitalisation. Manual labour jobs are being lost to robots – for example, in harbour's increasingly automated container terminals. Jobs are also lost to artificial intelligence. Meanwhile, programming and robot design are mostly done in the Global North. But this doesn't need to be the case, as participants in the Protestant Church's annual development-policy conference argued this year in Berlin. They want faith-based agencies to empower people in developing countries, including by applying high technology.

Huge challenges persist, however. For instance, racism can be embedded in software programmes. In Berlin, several speakers mentioned "racist robots", which racially profile dark-skinned people by collecting less data for facial recognition. This technological bias was used as an example for why the developing world – especially Africa – needs to play an active role in digitalisation.

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Too little and too unambitious

In their latest report about the “reality of German development policy”, the non-governmental organisations Welthungerhilfe and terre des hommes call for Germany’s federal government to adopt more ambitious policies. The report shows that the government has not provided adequate financing or set the proper targets to meet the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

By Sabine Balk

The development organisations criticise Germany’s government for not meeting its international obligations. The country still does not spend 0.7% of its economic output on official development assistance (ODA) and at least 0.2% of its output on the least developed countries, despite having agreed to these UN goals in 1972. The organisations are demanding from the government a step-by-step plan that shows, in a binding manner, how it will make progress towards its voluntary commitments.

Welthungerhilfe and terre des hommes are also calling for hunger and poverty reduction to be explicitly emphasised. They approve of the special initiative “A World Without Hunger” that was launched by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). They believe it should be made institutionally

permanent and that the funding for hunger and poverty reduction should be increased.

Alleviating hunger and poverty requires strong civil-society organisations. In many countries, the space for political and legal action is becoming more and more restricted. The NGOs believe that the German government should tackle this phenomenon of “shrinking spaces” with an interdisciplinary strategy.

The organisations also stress the importance of not subordinating development policy to migration deterrence: development assistance should not be instrumentalised for domestic purposes, and border-security measures should not be categorised as development assistance. “ODA must not be used as a means of exerting political pressure in negotiations about migration and asylum policy”, write the authors of the report.

Welthungerhilfe and terre des hommes feel that Germany’s Africa policy lacks a strong enough partnership component. According to the NGOs, the government must take more concrete steps to align itself with the initiatives and voluntary commitments of the African Union and its Agenda 2063, which should be implemented with German support. The organisations also want the German government to require corporations to ensure that hu-

man rights are upheld all along their supply chains.

Another focus of the “Compass” is the impact of violence and war on children: according to the authors, every fifth child worldwide is affected by conflict. In 2017, there were 21,000 known violations of children’s rights as a result of direct violent confrontations. NGOs estimate that between 2005 and 2017, around a quarter of a million children under the age of 18 were forcibly recruited as soldiers. Welthungerhilfe and terre des hommes are calling on Germany to take a leading role in protecting children’s rights. The government should continue and intensify its commitments within the framework of the UN, particularly in its role as current member and temporary president of the UN Security Council.

The NGOs want to see specific initiatives to protect children and the systematic prosecution of serious abuses of children’s rights by state and non-state actors. These efforts would include taking decisive steps against the denial of humanitarian aid to children and against the targeted destruction of vital civilian infrastructure like hospitals, health stations, schools and facilities that provide food and drinking water.

A major problem in conflicts is the availability of weapons, particularly small arms that are easy for children to operate. Germany is one of the five largest exporters of small arms. According to Welthungerhilfe and terre des hommes, the government should completely ban the export of small arms along with their ammunition to conflict regions.

In order to improve the future prospects of children in conflict regions, both NGOs believe that funding for education must be ramped up. That also means making available additional financing for multi-lateral education funds and investing eight percent of the Federal Foreign Office’s budget for humanitarian aid in the promotion of education.

LINK

Kompass 2019 – Zur Wirklichkeit der deutschen Entwicklungspolitik (Compass 2019: The reality of German development policy – only in German):

<https://www.welthungerhilfe.de/fileadmin/pictures/publications/de/studies-analysis/2019-Kompass2019-Welthungerhilfe.pdf>



Development policy must do more to protect children: needy children receive a warm meal in Zambia.

Mangroves against climate change

Indonesia is home to 23% of the world's mangrove forests. They protect the coast against erosion, floods and tsunamis. However, 40% of Indonesia's mangrove forests have been destroyed since the 1980s, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The loss of these ecosystems can contribute to global warming.

Mangroves are shrubs and trees that grow in coastal saline waters in the tropics, where the water temperature is above 20 degrees Celsius. They protect the coasts against storm surges and tsunamis. So when the mangrove forests disappear – often as a result of aquaculture development – the coastline is exposed to erosion and damage by natural forces.

The coast of Palu Bay on the Indonesian island Sulawesi used to be covered by dense mangroves, but these were cut down to build settlements, hotels and docks. The tsunami on 28 September 2018 hit the city of Palu badly and destroyed most of it because there was no natural barrier to stop the high waves crashing on the land.



In Palu Bay, only ten hectares of intact mangrove forest are left. This preserved ecosystem is called Gonenggati. It is maintained by 30 local people. They plant mangrove seeds on damaged coastal lands. “The mangroves saved our village from destruction by the tsunami,” says Yuryanto, the coordinator of Gonenggati. In the mangrove forest, local fishermen catch shrimp and crabs.

Several communities on other Indonesian islands like Java, Bali, Sumatra and Kalimantan also try to rehabilitate and conserve their mangroves. Furthermore, international organisations like Mangroves for the Future have local branches in Indonesia and support the reforestation of the coastlines.

Besides their protective function, mangroves have another important advantage: they are highly effective at absorbing carbon. Research by the National University of Singapore in 2018 concluded that mangroves are the “most cost-effective habitat to mitigate carbon emissions”. Coastal vegetation grows fast and stores organic carbon more efficiently than tropical rainforests or any other ecosystems.

The ground of the mangrove ecosystem is most important: 78% of the carbon is stored in the soil, 20% in living trees and two percent in dead trees. When deforested, the mangrove ecosystem releases carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the air. In Indonesia, 190 million metric tons of CO₂ is set free every year due to mangrove deforestation, which amounts to 42% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmentalists demand to stop deforestation and restore mangrove forests in Indonesia.

According to Rudhi Pribadi, a researcher from the Marine Sciences Diponegoro University in Central Java, this could be a successful “strategy to mitigate climate change”.

LINK

Mangroves for the Future (MFF):
<https://mangrovesforthefuture.org>



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IMPRINT

D+C DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
 Vol. 46, 2019
 D+C is the identical twin of the German edition E+Z
 Internet: 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.

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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.

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ADVERTISING AND SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:
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PRINTING:
 Westdeutsche Verlags- und Druckerei GmbH
 Kurhessenstraße 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

WILDLIFE PARKS

Conservation considered antagonist

Protected areas in the Congo Basin presently face heavy criticism: national park rangers are accused of using violence against local communities. The German government supports the protected areas financially.

By Henrice Stöbesand

The allegations are not new: in 2016, the non-governmental organisation Survival International submitted a formal complaint to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) against the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) over alleged human rights violations by park rangers (“eco-guards”).

A research team of the Centre for Rural Development’s postgraduate programme at Humboldt University Berlin spent three months in Cameroon last year to explore governance challenges of Lobéké National Park. The conflict between eco-guards and local communities were also an issue on site.

Community members reproached eco-guards with allegations of abuse. Remarkably, most interlocutors stated that they had not experienced direct violence by eco-guards themselves but based their claims on the accounts of others. However, reported incidents of direct violence have created an atmosphere of fear and apprehension. The eco-guards, too, reported feeling unsafe during their patrols. According to a young ranger their job is essentially a matter of life and death: “If I confiscate a weapon today, it is not the weapon that will kill me tomorrow.”

The following factors aggravate the conflict:

- The complaint mechanism set up in 2014 by WWF and the local NGO CEFAID to report human rights abuses by eco-guards is ineffective: Local people do not know of the mechanism’s existence.
- Safari companies have taken over law enforcement in the park’s buffer zone and cooperate with the Cameroonian military

– without the involvement of trained eco-guards. According to accounts of local communities, the military regularly resorts to violence and prevents locals from accessing their agroforestry zones.

- The Cameroonian state neglects its eco-guards: The difficult working conditions cause a lot of frustration for the rangers. It is plausible that the eco-guards’ frustration negatively influences their behaviour.

The international attention on rights abuses in protected areas is welcome. But:



In Lobéké National Park in Cameroon there is conflict between park rangers and the local community.

the single focus on the conflict between eco-guards and local population appears misguided. It does not represent the biggest issues on the ground.

Protected areas are surrounded by so-called “buffer zones”. In Lobéké’s buffer zone, concessions of private companies overlap with local communities’ agricultural zones. The resulting legal uncertainty

primarily benefits the more powerful safari, timber and mining companies, which severely restrict the access and usage rights of the local population. The restrictions that these concessions impose are hardly considered in the current media debate.

Furthermore, the conflict between eco-guards and local population is a symptom of a larger conflict: conservation is understood as antagonistic to socio-economic development. That is hardly surprising. The local population is extremely poor and depends on local resource use and hunting to survive. Both, however, are severely restricted. In addition, the state of Cameroon is largely absent in the park’s buffer zone, with little public investment in basic infrastructure like schools, hospitals and water supply. Most interviewees hold the park management accountable for covering their basic needs. The park management, however, is unable to cope with these high expectations, exacerbating the conflict between park authorities and local communities.

In light of the challenges, many call for an immediate stop to donor funding. The already chronically underfunded protected areas of the Congo Basin would then no longer be able to exist. This would have fatal consequences not only for endangered species like gorillas and forest elephants, but also for the local population. If dissolved, it is likely that the area of Lobéké National Park would either be leased to private companies or taken over by large-scale poachers. The latter group especially has no interest in respecting local usage rights – and eludes accountability.

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SEX EDUCATION

Indispensable lessons

According to the UN, there are 1.2 billion adolescents around the world. The age group 10 to 19 accounts for 16% of the world population. Far too many of them do not get the sex education they need. Girls in particular deserve more and better information concerning both reproductive health and the psychology of intimacy.

By Aditi Roy Ghatak

The young generation is not necessarily underserved in terms of sex education intentionally. The big obstacle is socio-cultural taboos. Many parents, teachers and policy-makers are uncomfortable with the topic. Calling it “family lifestyle education” or “family planning information” only helps marginally.

Nonetheless, any money invested in sex education is well spent. There is a triple bottom line. Proper knowledge serves the adolescents today, will benefit them as adults and is likely to contribute to their children’s health.

Adolescents experience complex physical, biological and emotional changes. Puberty has impacts on the body, the mind and the behaviour. Yet the stigma around discussing matters of a sexual nature prevents open and nurturing counselling. Typically, neither parents nor teachers assume responsibility for providing the information. Nor do faith leaders or other persons in positions of authority.

Thus adolescents often only get unreliable information. They depend on what their peers tell them and what they find in the media, which, in the age of internet, is often explicit pornography. Young people who are grappling with physical and mental change need more than rumours and fantasies. Unfortunately, TV programming tends to be poor and inadequate, and many websites are simply awful. Instead of harmless entertainment, adolescents are exposed to distorted role models and destructive narratives. The harmful results are:

- irresponsible sexual behaviour, including violence and rape,

- early marriages,
- unwanted pregnancies,
- abortions, many of which are unsafe and illegal, and
- infections with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Good sex education must inform adolescents about health risks, contraceptive options and emotional aspects of intimacy. Girls need sex education even more than boys. They are the ones who can become pregnant, and they are the ones who get stigmatised for being sexually active. They are also more at risk of violence and infections. According to UNICEF, around 15 mil-

lion adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex. Many of them were never told what consent means. Their self-confidence would benefit from such knowledge. Shame fosters when they do not understand that any sexual transgression that happens against their will is unacceptable and not their personal fault.

India is a technologically advanced country but most of its schools are not on board with sex education. Attempts to introduce sex education at the right age have been derided as violating the country’s cul-

ture and values. As elsewhere in the world, conservative leaders argue that sex education entices teenagers to become sexually active. The irony is that young people in many countries are actually becoming sexually active earlier than their parents did, but far too many of them neither understand what they are doing nor what consequences may await them. It is alarming that, according to UNICEF, half of the 15 to 19 year olds with HIV infections are from six countries: South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Mozambique and Tanzania.

Of course, sex education is controversial in high-income countries too. Teenage pregnancy rates are high in the USA, where religious conservatives have been fighting sex education for decades. According to the New York Times, teen pregnancies dropped by 41% after President Barack Obama introduced a comprehensive sex-education programme. The number is likely to rise again



Condoms save lives – and prevent pregnancies.

as President Donald Trump has discontinued his predecessor’s programme.

Health for all is one of the Sustainable Development Goals the UN has promised to achieve by 2030. Without competent sex education, that will not happen.

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NATURAL DISASTER

Mozambique faces enormous challenges

Cyclone Idai devastated Central Mozambique – particularly the port city of Beira – on 14 March. More than 600 people died and over 1,900 were injured. Idai made it clear that the country is not prepared for such a catastrophe. Government and international donors need to rethink and, above all, implement disaster prevention and urban planning.

By Friedrich Kaufmann and Winfried Borowczak

Mozambique experiences two to three cyclones during every rainy season – from October to March. But Cyclone Idai had unprecedented intensity most likely due to climate change. Shortly afterwards, cyclone “Kenneth” followed and caused further destruction. The force of Idai was comparable to that of Hurricane Katrina which devastated New Orleans in 2005.

The storm also revealed the political and institutional weaknesses that amplified the scale of the disaster. For example, the national weather service INAM had repeatedly pointed out the danger of a tropical storm two weeks before Idai. In the northern provinces of Zambezia and Tete, as well as in the neighbouring countries of Malawi and Zimbabwe, there had already been damages and first victims of the storm.

But the authorities remained inactive – just as they did when INAM issued a red alert three days before the disaster and named the town Beira as the exact spot Idai would hit.

The natural disaster-management centre, the INGC, played virtually no role in the run-up to the disaster or in the following days. The centre, which considerably expanded with international aid – including German – in the years following the floods of 2000, seems to be able to cope only with smaller disasters.

Since 2016, the INGC has been heavily underfunded. This is likely a consequence of the corruption scandal involving leading Mozambican politicians and civil servants,

which led to a discontinuation of budget support of donors and loans of the International Monetary Fund (see comment by Gina dos Reis and Jürgen Kaiser in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2016/09, Debate section). The consequences are drastic cuts in all budget items.

It is no coincidence, that the very first assistance on the ground was provided by a group of 22 volunteers from South Africa. On 13 March, the day before the disaster hit, they set out from Johannesburg in the direction of Beira. They arrived on 14 March with six off-road vehicles and immediately began rescue operations. Together with airport staff they formed something of a first response and rescue centre in an otherwise paralysed city.

In Beira electricity, water and gas supply as well as food supply collapsed. Ninety percent of all buildings were damaged or destroyed. The hinterland was devastated by the cyclone. In the west of Beira, along the rivers Pungue and Buzi, a 30 by 120 kilometre lake formed within a few hours. The people of Beira, as well as those in the hinterland, could only flee to the roofs of their houses, trees, or to higher places such as the airport. Because of the destruction and flooding around 1.8 million people in central Mozambique

were and will be dependent on food aid for a long time to come.

The cyclone revealed the fundamental problems of Beira’s geographic location. When the city was founded around 1880 it seemed well suited for settling a few thousand people directly on the Indian Ocean. Today, Beira has almost 600,000 inhabitants. To consider the situation in German proportions, if the city would be located at the end of the Weser river in the North Sea it would be partially submerged in the Wadden Sea and surrounded only by tiny dikes and dams with an inefficient drainage system.

A simple reconstruction of the city, a few cosmetic measures on dikes and dams and a modernisation of the alarm systems in the river areas of the hinterland are not enough. The challenge is to protect the city permanently from the sea. It needs new, resilience-based urban and environmental planning.



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Cyclone Idai survivors rescued in boats to Beira, Mozambique, which had also been largely devastated.



Bolivian working children and youths rally for their rights in 2007.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Bolivia bows to international pressure

A pioneering Child and Adolescent Code had been in effect in Bolivia since 2014. The code guaranteed the rights of working children and promised them better protection. Now, to the detriment of working children it has been changed in response to pressure from the International Labour Organization and the United States government. Bolivian President Evo Morales, who himself worked as a child and had previously pledged solidarity with working children, has forsaken their cause by rubber-stamping the code's revision.

By Manfred Liebel

Bolivia's Child and Adolescent Code promised a new approach to child labour. It was

no longer simply a ban, but rather contained provisions to improve protections for children who wanted to work or were forced to out of social necessity. It also made it possible for them to work with dignity. In the spirit of the holistic approach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, other rights, like the right to education, health and recreation, were upheld as well. The position of children in society was to be improved through child protection commissions and children's and adolescents' committees, which were to be organised by the children themselves. The code was also pioneering given the fact that, despite facing strong opposition, it was drafted with the active participation of working children. Finally, it

implemented standards that are enshrined in the Bolivian constitution.

The code sparked an international controversy. While it was enthusiastically celebrated by working children in Bolivia and other countries and was greeted as ground-breaking by many children's-rights NGOs, the International Labour Organization (ILO) protested that it infringed ILO conventions on child labour. In June 2015, the ILO demanded that the code should be changed. The Bolivian government rejected its call by referring to cultural traditions and the country's own constitution. That document expressly forbids "every form of violence against children, in the family or in society", but does not issue a blanket ban on child labour. "Forced labour and exploitation of children" are not permitted. However, the document states that "the activities that children perform in their families and social environments promote their development as citizens; they have an educational function".

The paragraphs of the Child and Adolescent Code that addressed children's work were based on these constitutional provi-

sions. However, they represented a compromise between the articulated interests, practical needs and everyday realities of working children on the one hand and the requirements of international organisations, financial donors, the Bolivian trade-union federation and the Bolivian employer association on the other. In order to satisfy the agreements that previous governments had made with the ILO, the minimum age at which children could perform paying work was generally set at 14, and work permits for younger children (starting at age 10 or 12, depending on the type of work) were treated as an exception. Such permits could only be obtained through complicated bureaucratic procedures. Applicants had to demonstrate that the rights of the child were being upheld, the parents had provided their consent and the child was working of his or her own free will.

Now, Bolivia's Parliament and Senate have made fundamental changes to the code in accordance with ILO guidelines without public discussion and without consulting the working children, organisations and local-government agencies that campaigned for the law's enactment. On 20 December 2018, President Morales signed the amendment. All legal protections for working children under the age of 14 were removed, which amounts to a general ban. The code's provisions and guarantees relating to labour law are now limited to adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18. The only remaining mention of younger children is an exhortation to uphold compulsory education and the ban on child labour. The code also states that government agencies can be expected to show greater sensitivity for their need for protection.

This "sensitivity" consists in spreading slogans against child labour under the government's official hashtag "#YoPorLaNiñez" (#ImForChildhood) and the motto "protection against violence". These efforts are being sponsored by UNICEF and the state-run company Teleférica, which operates a cable car in the capital of La Paz. On the cars and at other locations in the city, children's work is equated with neglect and sexual violence in statements like: "the right to protection from neglect and child labour" or "against sexual violence and child labour".

In a speech on 1 December, the vice president of Bolivia, Álvaro García Linera, justified the upcoming revision of the

code by saying that the US had threatened to remove Bolivia from the list of countries that enjoy advantageous customs tariffs on exports to the US. Three years ago, some deputies of the European Parliament made a similar threat with regard to the EU, but did not carry through. Following an invitation from other deputies, delegates from the Latin American movement of working children (MOLACNATS) and the Bolivian union of working children (UNATSBO) travelled to Brussels to defend the code. Their arguments played no role in the recent resolution by Bolivian legislators, however. Prior to taking their decision they made no mention of the situation of working children in Bolivia and the history of the code. The formal justification of the change was that the Bolivian constitutional court had declared that the articles in question were incompatible with an ILO convention on child labour.

The previous version of the code was not without its flaws, and the central government worked only half-heartedly to enact it. The government never provided the necessary means to implement the protection mechanisms. In order to allow children and adolescents to work while preserving their rights and guaranteeing their protection and dignity, the code put bureaucratic requirements into place that were difficult to fulfil in practice. That is why, at a conference of the municipal commissioners for children's rights in November 2018, participants called for the elimination of the complex process to obtain work permits for children and adolescents. In the years since the rule had been in effect, permits had been granted only in rare cases. Furthermore, the commissioners for children's rights lacked the time to ensure that children were truly being protected. For adolescents, the code frequently had the effect that companies preferred to hire adults rather than jump over bureaucratic hurdles. As a result, the only job options young people had left were in the legally unprotected informal sector.

Nevertheless, numerous organisations and individuals in certain provinces worked to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles and involved the affected children and adolescents in the code's implementation. They were and still are convinced that the code was better than any legal regulations that had come before. It is disconcerting that the many experiences that have been gained over the past four years were neither



evaluated nor taken into consideration during the latest resolution. And the fact that working children were not even consulted goes against the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Bolivian constitution and the Child and Adolescent Code itself.

The sudden and surprising change to the code ultimately shows that the old power structures have now been resurrected in Bolivia as well, and that the perspectives and rights of working children and of the commissioners for children's rights are being ignored. The Ministry of Labour has gone so far as to charge the latter, which are already overworked, with carrying out the counterproductive permit procedure for adolescents.

The constitution's promises of a "good life" and respect for indigenous traditions have largely evaporated. The UNATSBO succinctly summed up the new regulation: despite its anti-imperialist rhetoric, the government of Bolivia has now bowed to the "empire" as well.

With the change to the code, working children under the age of 14 and municipal commissioners for children's rights are once again left to tackle the real problems on their own: exploitation, violence, impediments to child development and discrimination against working children.



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LAKE CHAD REGION

Nexus makes sense

In the protracted, complex conflict in the Lake Chad Basin, the oft-discussed Nexus approach is good, argues Fabian Böckler, a disaster risk management expert. Nexus means to coordinate humanitarian assistance, development support and peacebuilding efforts continuously – and with increasing intensity.

By Fabian Böckler

The protracted crisis in the Lake Chad Basin is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Statehood is chronically fragile in this region: poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment and a lack of opportunities for young people keep fuelling extremism. The situation is exacerbated by environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. The development crisis of the impoverished region has resulted in armed conflict, which has plagued the people of the four countries concerned for the past ten years (see Lea Diehl in the Monitor section, D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/09).

In recent years, the crisis has spread from north-eastern Nigeria to the neigh-

bouring countries of Cameroon, Niger and Chad, with devastating effects for more than 17 million people. Eleven million people, more than half of them children, depend on humanitarian assistance. More than 2.4 million people have been forcibly displaced; they now live as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or as refugees, either in camps or in host communities across the region.

In this context, the traditional LRRD approach (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development) is not suitable. It assumes that short, medium and long-term operations will be coordinated in the event of a disaster and that humanitarian assistance first serves rehabilitation and then further developmental measures. This assumption has proven untenable in complex crises and conflicts. Therefore, the Nexus approach makes much more sense in the Lake Chad Basin (see Sid Johann Peruvemba in Focus section, D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/06).

MEETING NEEDS SIMULTANEOUSLY

People in conflict regions have a variety of concurrent needs: They require

humanitarian assistance, development assistance and peace promotion at the same time. In this sense, it is important to define what peace promotion means and what civil-society organisations can contribute.

Currently, social tensions are rising at the local level in the Lake Chad Basin region. Such strains appear in various contexts, including:

- tensions between internally displaced persons, refugees and host communities regarding access to livelihoods and basic social infrastructure (schools, health centres et cetera),
- tensions between farmers and herders, compounded by restrictions on movement caused by the conflict, and
- stigmatisation and marginalisation of victims of gender-based violence and of people seen as supporters (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) of non-state armed groups.

The integrated Nexus approach aims to relieve those strains through coordinated action. The idea is that organisations involved in humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peacebuilding assume responsibility together. The approach recognises the importance of meeting immediate humanitarian needs while also addressing the region's development deficits, which have caused the crisis and keep driving it.



A village destroyed by Boko Haram near Maiduguri in Nigeria: The terrorist militia contributes to the destabilisation of the Lake Chad region.

It is very important to use an area-based approach because the nature and severity of the different types of needs – i.e., humanitarian, development and peacebuilding – vary across the region. Even communities that are only a few kilometres apart and which belong to the same administrative region, may have quite different needs.

Accordingly, intervention must be tailored to the local situation. A major success factor in this regard is starting with a joint context analysis, both across organisational boundaries and across the different types of assistance (humanitarian, development and peace-promotion). This analysis should lead to joint planning that takes into account the strengths of the various stakeholders.

At this stage, humanitarian organisations tend to point out that the humanitarian crisis must be relieved as a matter of priority – and certainly this is the case. Yet the experience of the Lake Chad Basin shows that the work of humanitarian groups is not constrained by joint analysis and planning. The truth is that these groups often struggle to do their work in conflict areas. In the northeast, humanitarian organisations currently lack access to around 800,000 people.

JOINT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

Throughout the Lake Chad Basin, humanitarian assistance is not delivered in a vacuum. Typically, that is done where develop-

ment work and peacebuilding are going on as well. To support the people affected, joint analysis and planning is essential – at the community level and beyond. Especially for organisations with a dual mandate, Nexus offers a great opportunity.

The international community is adopting this logic. Initially, both the Nigerian government and the international community ignored the crisis in north-eastern Nigeria. Only from 2016 on was there a significant increase in humanitarian efforts, and in the following year a famine was averted with joint action. The Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region (Oslo I), which took place in Norway in February 2017, had a predominantly humanitarian focus. Discussions were essentially limited to protection, education, food security and nutrition. Afterwards, however, the focus of debate widened.

Following the Oslo I Conference, regional cooperation was reinforced to address underlying causes of the crisis. The goal was to stabilise the region and prevent the crisis from spreading further. The efforts culminated in August 2018 in the Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Reconstruction and Resilience of Boko Haram-affected Areas in the Lake Chad Region. It was adopted by the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the national governments concerned.

The second conference on the Lake Chad region, also called “Oslo II”, took place

in Berlin in September 2018. Participants included the governments concerned, the international community, donors and civil society organisations. They discussed humanitarian assistance, crisis prevention, stabilisation and sustainable development together. This approach allowed the crisis to be addressed in a more comprehensive and coordinated way from that point on.

The new Regional Refugee Plan 2019/2020 for Nigeria focuses on the countries hosting refugees from Nigeria in the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon, Niger and Chad), and was drawn up for the first time on a two-year basis under the shared responsibility of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The aim is to create lasting solutions for both refugees and host communities. This approach makes sense in a setting where the local population in the host communities lives below the poverty line, where there is great gender inequality and inadequate access to basic social infrastructure.



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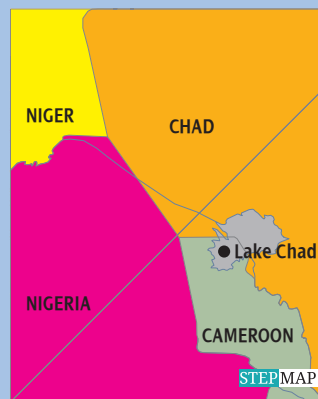
Points to keep in mind

For the Nexus approach to succeed in the Lake Chad Basin, a number of conditions must be met.

The people living in the area must trust the stakeholders: On-site groups will not be perceived as humanitarian or development organisations, but rather will be assessed according to whether they meet the needs of the local population. In this regard, it is es-

sential to put the local people at the centre of all efforts. The priorities must be to strengthen their coping strategies and skills, and to involve them in decision-making.

The effects of the conflict and the crisis must be analysed in their broadest sense as well as in relation to the various groups affected (host communities, internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees,

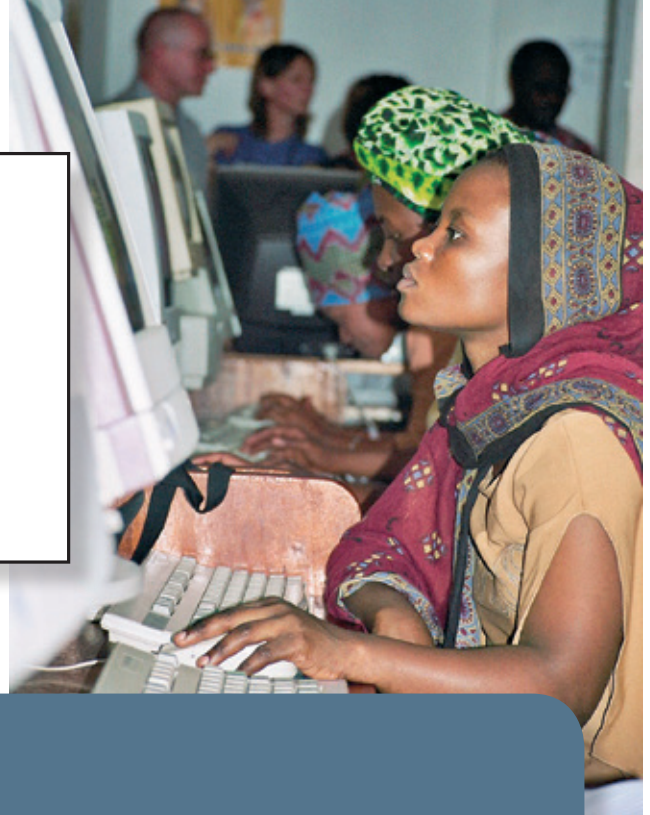


vulnerable groups, gender and age groups).

Projects and programmes must be implemented both in areas still affected by the conflict and in areas not affected. Otherwise, tensions are likely to build up and the conflict will spread to so-far-unaffected areas.

The focus on a comprehensive approach should not distract from the fact that humanitarian needs in the region remain high and need to be met fast. It is particularly urgent to get access to communities that are currently cut off from humanitarian aid. (fb)

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Students in the lab of a private college in São Paulo State in 2012.

Private education

State-run educational institutions normally do not have a good reputation in developing countries. All too often, they do not perform convincingly. That is true at all levels, from primary schools to universities. In response, private-sector education is expanding fast. On the upside, private institutions are creating additional opportunities. On the

downside, they are most likely to further deepen social disparities.



This focus section directly relates to the UN's 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Quality education. It also has a bearing on the other SDGs.

Efforts towards inclusion

Brazil is highly unequal in every dimension of social wellbeing: income distribution, access to public goods, quality of public utilities like health, transportation, water treatment, sewage et cetera. Education is no exception, but it has become more geared towards inclusion in recent decades.

By Mariano Laplane

Brazil is a large country with a sizable population, so the educational system is huge and complex. For a long time, it has been one of the factors reinforcing social disparities. In recent years, however, there has been a conscious effort to make the system more inclusive.

According to the Brazilian constitution, access to education is the right of every citizen. Accordingly, public authorities are required to guarantee such access. A division of responsibilities exists among local, state and national authorities:

- municipal governments are responsible for primary education,
- state authorities are in charge of secondary education and
- the Federal Government handles higher education.

At all three levels, the authorities must provide free education in public-sector institutions. Moreover, they must supervise private-sector institutions, whether profit or non-profit.

In practice, the areas of responsibility are not completely clear-cut; there is some overlap. For instance, some local and state authorities run higher-education institutions, and national and state governments fund local authorities to run their primary-education institutions.

Historically, poor people had only restricted access to education. Things started to change with Brazil's industrialisation and urbanisation from the 1950s onwards. Until then, elite public-sector schools had served

the upper and upper-middle classes. As the network of those schools was expanded with the aim to reach a wider and more heterogeneous range of social groups, the schools became less selective in the 1960s and 70s. At that point, high-income groups migrated to private institutions that were more exclusive and offered better quality. In spite of the stated policy goals, the country ended up with a segregated educational system that reflected extreme income disparities and reinforced social inequality.

After two decades of military dictatorship, democratic rule was re-established in 1985. For consecutive governments, education became a top concern. There was a consensus about the need to make educational services more accessible in quantity and quality, especially for the children of lower-income families. Local as well as state educational systems were reformed and expanded with the help of federal funding.

By the mid-90s it became evident that enrolment in higher education had to expand to allow the increasing number of high-school graduates to continue their education. At that time, the federal authorities considered the expansion of public universities too expensive and decided that the only



Library of a private college in São Paulo State.

alternative was to increase the enrolment in private colleges, both profit and non-profit. Accordingly, a large number of private institutions obtained licences, but the public-university segment remained stagnant.

MARKET SOLUTION

The move towards a market solution was strongly criticised by opposition parties and by officials in the public higher-education system. In its defence, the government argued that, since most poor students did not make it to university, it was a matter of social fairness to allocate scarce public funds to public primary and secondary schools rather than to public universities, which admitted almost exclusively children of the middle and upper classes.

The government's position in this regard was similar to that of multilateral institutions. For example, the World Bank argued that offering free higher education should not be a priority since Brazil still had problems in primary and secondary education. That was where public funds were said to be needed. Nonetheless, government-run universities remained publicly funded and did not charge tuition fees.

By the end of the 1990s, the Brazilian education system showed severe imbalances and deficiencies. Obvious shortcomings included the poor performance of Brazilian students in international tests, the high drop-out rates among high-school students and the shortage of trained teachers in MINT subjects (mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology).

With few exceptions, public universities outperformed private competitors. They offered a better education and were leading in research. At the same time, many private colleges specialised in professional skills that are in labour-market demand without preparing graduates for top-level positions. Lower-income students were underrepresented in public universities. The highly competitive admissions process favoured candidates from private high schools which were better than public sector ones.

Moreover, many students from disadvantaged families could not afford to study full-time. They had to work to earn money and therefore became part-time students at less prestigious institutions, where they had to pay tuition. Career opportunities, how-



ever, depend on the prestige of the institution one graduated from. The brutal irony was that rich families could afford to send their children to the expensive high schools which best prepared them for the university admissions process. Once they studied there, they benefited massively from government spending on higher learning.

GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT

Though that system is basically still in place, the scenario has kept changing and has become more inclusive in recent years. Important reasons are:

- Additional resources fuelled a significant expansion of enrolment, both at public and private universities. Within a few years the total enrolment in higher education in Brazilian institutions doubled, surpassing 8 million students. One-third went to public and two-thirds to private universities.
- Existing public universities expanded, and new public universities were created as well. Previously, higher-education opportunities did not exist in small towns and rural regions. They were only available in the large metropolitan areas and state capitals. That has changed.
- A new nationwide admissions and placement process was established for public universities. It has improved access for candidates regardless of their family's place of residence.
- New legislation was passed to make affirmative-action programmes mandatory at all public universities. Quotas now ensure that members of specific disadvantaged communities are admitted, and that benefits candidates from lower-income families.
- Private institutions also expanded enrolment significantly. It helped that lower-income candidates could apply for widely available publicly funded scholarships and subsidised student loans for paying tuition.

- Investment funds, both Brazilian and foreign, became major shareholders of private for-profit institutions, and acquisitions resulted in a rapid consolidation of the market. To some extent, the private sector reduced tuition fees.

In both the public and private sector, a significant number of entrants now report to be the first in their families to study at university level. Meaningful progress has thus been made, though current political circumstances may yet reverse the trends of recent years. It is too early to tell what impact the administration of Jair Bolsonaro, the new, right-wing president will have.

It is also too early to assess the results of the broad range of new initiatives in regard to social inclusion and the overall performance of higher education in Brazil. Some imbalances and quality issues remain to be addressed, but the experience of recent decades allows for some preliminary conclusions:

- First, the dilemma over whether to expand public or private enrolment seems to have given way to a more flexible vision. Both public and private institutions can play a positive role in expanding higher-education opportunities for young Brazilians. The core concern must be to ensure everyone has good educational opportunities. Whether that happens in the public or private sector is less important.
- Second, mitigating social inequality can and must be the concern of the overall expansion, regardless of the ownership of higher-education institutions.
- Third, in a context where so many mechanisms reinforce social disparities, the educational system alone cannot bring about equal opportunities – but it can reduce inequality to some extent.

Recent experience in Brazil shows that the right policies, strongly supported by the leading actors in the system and perceived as legitimate by society, can lead both the public and the private sector to build less segregated and more inclusive educational institutions.



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“Fierce competition”

Private colleges have been expanding rapidly in Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries. The primary reason is that the capacities of state-run schools and universities are inadequate for offering opportunities to all eligible young people. Sivali Ranawana, a university evaluator, assessed the trend in an interview.

Sivali Ranawana interviewed by Hans Dembowski

Why have so many private colleges and universities been set up in South Asia in recent years?

This trend has more than one cause, and it affects education in general, not only the institutions of higher learning. Important aspects include:

- In our world region, education is valued highly. Most parents, therefore, give priority to the education of their children and are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices.

- During the long colonial period, Protestant and Catholic churches established schools according to the models prevalent in the imperialist countries. They levied fees and served the elite sections of society, but were not profit-driven. In British colonies and affiliated princely states, they produced English-speaking graduates who could be absorbed into the colonial administration. By the time of independence, these schools were well established and highly regarded. These schools – some of which are now supported by the state – adapted to the changed conditions after independence and are now an integral part of the education system.

- In Sri Lanka, “free education for all” was introduced in the early 1950s for primary, secondary and tertiary education up to the bachelor’s degree. As a result, all children attend at least primary school, and Sri Lanka’s basic literacy and numeracy rates approach 100%. After all these years, free education is considered a basic right and, therefore, politically extremely sensitive.

- Since the 1960s or so, the number of state schools has nonetheless fallen short

due to increases in both population and demand. Therefore, we have seen a rapid growth of private schools in recent decades. The situation is similar in other countries in our world region.

- South Asian governments do not expend the resources needed to improve all

recent increase in the demand for private schools.

- Although the number of government-run Sri Lankan universities has increased to around 25, the total number of places available is far from adequate. Less than 20% of the students who are, in theory, qualified to attend them can be admitted. Accordingly, competition is fierce at the national advanced level examination (level 13). Again, the scenario is not much different in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. In India, the government decided to allow twice as many



Students rallying for education rights in Colombo in late 2017.

educational state institutions resulting in a hierarchy in the quality of schools. In Sri Lanka, the government conducts a national examination around grade 5 level (age 10), and the best students are given admission to one of the elite schools which have all the facilities. This procedure has several negative consequences: it drains the best students from the provinces and villages, thwarts the development of village schools and leads to a great deal of heartburn among parents who cannot gain admission to “good” state schools. This is the primary reason for the

students into government-run universities, but did not appoint additional professors or expand teaching facilities accordingly.

- The private sector, seeing the situation of need with so many young people wanting to get higher degrees as a business opportunity, stepped in, resulting in a large number and broad range of fee-levying tertiary institutions. Most of them are profit-driven and include public-private partnerships. Some are affiliated to universities in western countries.

An increasing proportion of pupils of primary and secondary school levels attend

private schools. The share of South Asia's tertiary students who attend private-sector colleges is even larger and growing fast. Private colleges are better able to adjust to changing skills demand in the labour market and mostly focus on employment-oriented business-school programmes with subjects such as business management, human resource development, public relations, hotel management et cetera. By contrast, the state universities are more academic and conduct research.

Are all institutions of reliable quality, and who assesses that?

This is a sensitive issue with several dimensions:

- For political reasons, all Sri Lankan governments have maintained the myth of “free education for all”, officially ignoring private institutions that have recently been established. Accordingly, we do not even have the legal framework for a proper regulatory mechanism.
- State schools at the secondary level and those established during colonial times have systems of inspection and quality assurance. These schools train students for two national examinations – at level 11 and level 13 – and need to meet the respective standards. Due to the intense competition for the A level examination, most students follow additional classes in tutorials, so that has become a thriving private industry.
- At the undergraduate level, standards and systems of quality assurance have been introduced in state universities over the past two decades. They are now quite well established. There is no regulatory process, however, for postgraduate programmes. One consequence is that tuition varies widely. A semester in pursuit of an MBA (Master of Business Administration), for example, will cost anything from the equivalent of €500 to €4,500.
- Legislators have been considering a new law to regulate higher learning for more than a decade, but the legal framework for accreditation of degrees – both undergraduate and postgraduate – is not yet in place.

Are there new centres of excellence that are equals of the best government-run institutions or perhaps even superior?

Generally speaking, private universities are no match for Sri Lanka's state universities



due to the lack of staff and facilities. As I said, they are mostly business schools and teach a rather narrow range of subjects. It is noteworthy, however, that a handful of private, elite-oriented secondary schools has recently emerged. They prepare students for overseas examinations, so their graduates have the London GCE (general certificate of education) or the International Baccalaureate and are thus officially entitled to study at British and Swiss universities respectively. These exams are accepted in many countries. The schools concerned cater to the better-off and teach almost entirely in English. They use up-to-date methods such as outcome-based education (OBE) and learner-centred teaching (LCT) which have not been introduced to the local state schools.

Does the trend towards private education reinforce the privileges of the wealthy few?

The establishment of state universities in the late 1940s allowed previously marginalised people to become upwardly mobile. In the 1960s, entry into university did not depend on merit alone, but was also based on the area of origin – a form of positive discrimination to underprivileged areas. Children from villages could aspire to obtain university degrees and reach the highest levels in the public service. By contrast, I think that the more recent trend of greater privatisation of education at all levels mostly benefits the more affluent.

Is there a gender angle, with families more willing to invest in the education of sons, for example?

Although there may be some differences between the four communities – Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim – I think most parents are happy to spend on their daughters as well. In fact, due perhaps to their stu-

diousness, the proportion of girls entering universities is generally higher than that of boys. That is even so in Sri Lanka's Muslim community with girls being encouraged to study and work. This is now spilling over to the workplace with more female than male workers in many sectors.

If educational institutions are simply profit-driven businesses, some of them are likely to fail. What happens to students, who make considerable investments, if their school goes bankrupt – or if their degrees turn out to be substandard and are not accepted internationally?

This has already occurred with parents and students left “high and dry”. A common marketing strategy is to promise that a private institution's degree is equivalent to that of a foreign partner institution, but that is not always true. Students became very angry when they discovered that their studies were not worth what they had been told. So far, all Sri Lankan governments have abrogated their responsibility to those students and their parents. There is little doubt that Sri Lanka must regulate private universities properly. That must be guided by a sound policy and done in a transparent manner.

I have been told in Bangladesh that the government is keen on students getting degrees from private universities, hoping that they will be able to migrate to high-income countries and send home money. Is there a hidden agenda of promoting migration through private education?

If so, at least that is a policy which seems to have borne fruit. Bangladesh has a healthy balance of payments due to remittances from those who work abroad. In Sri Lanka, the lack of opportunities for private higher education drives parents to spend a lot of money so their children can study in foreign countries.



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The parents' burden

Primary and secondary school enrolment has increased considerably in India in the past 20 years. Because state-run schools still tend to be bad, many parents opt for private alternatives. Even economically disadvantaged people do so.

By Roli Mahajan

Pinky works as a maid in about seven households in Lucknow, the capital of one of the most populous states in India. Her husband's income is erratic, but nonetheless, she sends her 10-year-old girl to a low-cost private school in the city. She wants her child to learn English and not to depend on menial jobs in future.

The girl is the first person in the family to attend a school. She represents a transformation that is changing India. Both in urban and rural settings, young Indians are surpassing their parents' levels of education. In the 1990s, a rule of thumb said that about half of India's school-age population was not going to school.

Today, about 70% of those aged 18 still attend school. In 2001, the rate was a dismal 25%. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018, the percentage of unenrolled girls has dropped. For the age group 11 to 14, it has fallen to a mere 4.1% from 10.3% in 2006. Even in

rural areas, girls have caught up with boys to a very large extent. At the age of 14, now 94% of girls and 95% of boys are enrolled in school.

This is good news. Nonetheless, serious problems persist. Far too many students who pass elementary school are still barely literate. For recent years, ASER data consistently shows abysmal learning outcomes.

Today, some 250 million young Indians are going to school. That is about 20% of the nation's population and more than three times the population of Germany. The future of the economy depends on this generation getting a good education, and obviously, their personal futures too. Nonetheless, the burden of ensuring that they really are taught properly lies heavily on the parents. And parents are choosing private education alternatives as student enrolment in government schools is declining.

There has always been a bias for private education over public education in India. Wealthy parents have a long history of sending their offspring to private institutions. A more recent trend is the emergence of low-cost private schools. Their enrolment numbers have increased from 44 million (2010/11) to 61 million (2016/17), while those in government schools fell from 126 million to 108 million in 21 states for which data was

available. School fees can be as low as the equivalent of \$10 per month.

These low-cost schools are profit-driven and distinct from institutions that some non-governmental schools run in slums and villages. Charitable schools deliver valuable services to some marginalised communities, but there are far too few of them to educate the masses of children from poor families. In contrast to the past century, however, most of those families are no longer so poor that they barely survive, so they can afford to invest small sums in the next generation's future. Moreover, the average number of children of low-income women have has dropped to 3.2. That also makes it easier to spend money on tuition.

Geeta G. Kingdon, a professor of University College London, has written a book about private schools in India. She suspects that not only enrolment in low-cost private schools has increased, but that their number has grown too. The official statistics are not reliable because many schools are not officially registered.

One reason parents find them attractive, Kingdon points out, is the use of English as the language of instruction. For several reasons, it is important to speak good English in India. The tongue of the former colonial power is still widely used in government, law, business, academia et cetera, and the internet is reinforcing its relevance. It also matters that especially south Indian people tend to resent the use of Hindi, which is officially the national language, but linguistically very different from south Indian languages.

Increasingly, even villagers want their daughters to learn: girl doing homework in Madhya Pradesh, India in 2007.





State-run primary and secondary schools tend to be dilapidated and dingy, the professor adds. Public schools typically lack basic things like electric power and proper toilets. They do not have enough teachers, and staff tends to be unmotivated. On the other hand, low-cost private schools generally have better infrastructure and provide a better environment for learning. It is a problem, however, that they are neither properly regulated nor monitored.

In the Indian political discourse, leaving things to market forces is highly controversial. Advocates of private schools

bemoan what they consider a hostile environment for education entrepreneurship. They argue that low-cost private schools are an affordable and better alternative to public schools and only require a fraction of the government funding. Others, however, want governments at both the central and state levels to finally do their job. They point out that the liberalisation of primary and secondary education means that the poorest will be left behind, and equal opportunities will become even more elusive.

The central government is using the principle of competitive federalism for ensuring better educational facilities and opportunities. The idea is to put “pressure on policymakers across states to perform better on predefined goals and metrics”, says Amitabh Kant, the leader of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), a government body designed to drive economic development. NITI Aayog has developed the School Education Quality Index (SEI) to assess performance at the level of the individual states.

The current central government, moreover, has made various efforts to

streamline a range of education-related programmes. However, to judge based on its initial intentions, it is behind schedule. After taking office five years ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s team planned to implement a New Education Policy (NEP). Two parliamentary committees and 115,000 consultations later, it is still work in progress. With general elections around the corner, it is unlikely that NEP will see the light of day.

In the eyes of non-governmental activists, India definitely lacks a coherent education policy. They see shortcomings with regard to quality, innovation and outcomes. Moreover, schools do not teach the skills that are in demand in the labour market. “A broader education policy is a need,” says Parth J. Shah of the Centre for Civil Society, a liberal think tank. A core demand of its School Choice Campaign is the improvement of low-cost private schools.



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Dissatisfaction with “free” public education

In Kenya, private schools are soaring in popularity, even among families that can ill afford school fees. The trend – caused by poor quality public education – is deepening the country’s social divides.

By Alphonse Shiundu

In Kenya, the fissures in society between rich and poor are nowhere more visible than in the system for educating the country’s children and teenagers. The gap is obvious in the mundane daily trip to school. In Nairobi, the children of the poor trudge a long way to hopelessly overcrowded and ill-equipped public schools. They often share textbooks and desks.

Slightly better-off children head to somewhat more comfortable and better-equipped low-cost private schools. Their future chances are probably better than those of the public-school pupils.

Meanwhile the privileged ones – the offspring of wealthy parents – ride in comfort in chauffeured vehicles to well-equipped schools with better-paid teachers, substantive curricula and a rich assortment of extra-curricular activities. Some even travel in helicopters: The super-rich of Kenya’s highlands fly their children from their ranches in Nanyuki to school, high above the congested roads.

This scene is not what the Kenyan government had in mind when it declared in

2003 that primary education will be free and available to all. That pupils of different backgrounds get to school by different means indicates contrasting chances of future success. The root cause is the poor condition of public schools.

Following the 2003 reform, enrolment in public schools soared by 1.3 million new pupils in the first year alone. With inadequate infrastructure and limited teaching staffs, the public schools could not cope. They became overcrowded and the quality of education suffered.

Many parents then pulled their children out of public schools and sent them to private ones. Often those families could ill afford the change and had to make difficult decisions between paying school fees and paying for other necessities such as food and utilities.

Overall, private education is not cheap. The fees vary considerably, however. According to the International Schools Database, private school fees typically range from KSh 635,000 a year to KSh 2.9 million (the equivalent of about \$6,300 to \$30,000)



Overcrowded state-run primary school in Kisumu, Kenya.

a year. Even a private kindergarten costs \$3000 a year – 17% more than a PhD student pays per year at a public university! The international Bridge School Academy, however, runs schools that only charge about seven dollars per child and month (see box next page).

According to a 2017 study on the rise of private schools (Zuilkowski et al., 2018), many families choosing private education earn between \$600 and \$1,200 per month – only slightly above the national average of \$500 per month. Nonetheless, these families are “willing to pay up to 40% of their income to educate all the children in their households,” the report says.

As demand for private education soared, so did the number of private schools. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the number of private primary schools grew by 773% between 2003 and 2017, compared to a growth of only 33% for public primary schools.

At the secondary school level during this period, the number of private schools grew by 216%, compared with 154% for public schools.

Despite those trends, public schools still outnumber private schools. Today, 33% of Kenya’s primary schools are private, and so are 15% of all secondary schools. The gap

keeps closing as demand for private education remains strong.

WHY THEY PAY MORE

Why do even impoverished parents pay private-school fees when public education is ostensibly free? To begin with, public schools are not entirely free. Parents are sometimes asked to pay for improvements to the buildings, school uniforms and other things.

A more important reason is the perceived quality of education. In private schools, teachers generally spend more time with each pupil. They are also more likely to assign homework. The curricula offer more substance and the facilities are better than in public schools.

In some private schools the floors are carpeted, and teachers use smart boards – interactive electronic boards on which class notes can be projected. It’s not only the children who receive more individual attention in private schools; parents do too, when they visit.

“Private schools are obviously better equipped, not congested, and mostly well-organised and structured,” Geoffrey Wango, an education lecturer at the University of Nairobi, recently told the Daily

Nation, a highly respected daily newspaper.

In public schools, in contrast, it is common for up to three pupils to share a single desk. Textbooks are typically in short supply. Teachers are poorly paid. A government plan to install laptops in public primary schools failed due to corruption and mismanagement.

Beyond those objective differences is a subjective factor: Parents typically see private schools as a place to climb the social ladder, and public schools as a place to stagnate. Therefore, they wish to keep their children away from public-school pupils. One parent told the authors of the 2017 report: “Public schools are very insecure because of the high population of children who come from poor families”. Others said public-school pupils were “always dirty”.

A DIVISIVE TREND

The migration from public to private education – however understandable the reasons – is controversial. On the one hand, low-cost private schools typically provide better learning environments than the public schools, thereby improving their students’ chances.

On the other hand, some private schools promise more than they deliver, meeting only minimal standards for certification. It is even more important that their very existence takes the pressure off the government to deliver universal quality education through public schools, as the 2003 policy envisaged.

As Collins Musanga has argued in the *Standard*, another newspaper, the spread of private education is deepening Kenya's socio-economic divides, potentially creating something akin to a caste system. "We will soon have those who attended privileged private education fill all the positions in the public and private sectors, while those who schooled in public schools contend with menial jobs," he pointed out in a comment in the paper.

The stakes for Kenya's 15 million children are high. A good education – whether public or private – is a key to future success. This is true at all levels of society, not only at the upper echelons where parents tend to aspire to send their children to the best universities in Europe or America.

Private schools support such aspirations by offering foreign curricula. Accordingly, they meet the standards of British, North American, German or French schools. Public schools generally do not. This difference, along with the gap in educational standards, exacerbates social inequality, beginning at an early age.

If Kenya is to avoid fostering an education-based caste system, the government should live up to the commitments it made in the 2003 reform. It must invest in qual-

ity public education, ensuring that young Kenyans' future opportunities do not only depend on their parents' ability and willingness to invest in schooling.

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Low-cost private schools

Private education in Kenya covers a wide range of offerings, from expensive, well-equipped academies with top-notch staffs to bare-bones, ramshackle schools that meet only minimal certification standards. Unsurprisingly, some low-cost private schools do not deliver on their promise of a quality education.

Typically, the low-cost private schools are located in informal settlements or in remote rural areas. They tend to lack the amenities on offer at medium- or high-cost private schools. They certainly do not have clubs for art, music, soccer, swimming and ballet.

But what they lack in comfort, the low-cost private schools make up in utility and educational value. They typically supervise teachers closely, to the point of some schools having been accused of exploitative labour practices.

There are many different kinds of low-cost public

schools, and many are informal. A particularly controversial case, however, is the international Bridge Schools Academy, which is endorsed by the World Bank and the Gates Foundation. It is running a chain of more than 400 schools in Kenya, teaching over 100,000 pupils. According to Maria Pawelec of Tübingen University, they basically do rote learning. Teaching staff use tablet computers that monitor every minute of their work and force them to stick to a pre-defined curriculum. The upside is reduced absenteeism, but the downside is that there is no scope for individual interaction with children or adaptation to local cultures. Indeed, Pawelec argues that the international curriculum is actually undermining national sovereignty. Bridge schools charge only seven dollars per child and month.

In November 2017, the World Bank announced it would be evaluating Kenya's



experience with Bridge schools, but so far, no results have been published. Critics have pointed out that low-fee private schools in developing countries tend to lack professionally trained teachers (see "relevant reading" on p. 32 of this issue). In Kenya, that is not typically so. Teaching staff at low-cost private schools are generally drawn from the large pools of trained but unemployed educators or other university graduates who cannot find better jobs. These teachers are paid less than their counterparts in the wealthier private schools, but more than

their colleagues in the public schools.

Significantly, teachers in private schools – unlike those in public schools – tend to receive bonuses if their pupils do well on tests. Such incentives can make a big difference. Low-cost private schools may not provide the same posh conditions as high-cost ones, but they offer inducements aimed at boosting students' future chances. To some extent, they actually outperform dysfunctional government schools – but they definitely do not offer poor children anything close to the opportunities rich children get at high-fee private schools. (as)

LINK

Pawelec, M., 2018: *How Bridge International's tech-driven for-profit schools in Africa may reinforce global power inequalities*.

<https://www.sicherheitspolitik-blog.de/2018/06/19/how-bridge-internationals-tech-driven-for-profit-schools-in-africa-may-reinforce-global-power-inequalities/>

From boom to bust

Houdegbe North American University Benin (HNAUB) once looked like a promising new private-sector institution, with campuses in Cotonou and Dékanmey. Because of financial problems, it is no longer operational. Karim Okanla, one of its former lecturers, told Hans Dembowski about how HNAUB went from boom to bust. He still thinks that private universities have a role to play in African low-income countries.

Karim Okanla interviewed by Hans Dembowski

How important are private-sector universities in Benin today?

They are certainly making a difference and account for about 20% of enrolment in higher education. This sector has been

growing fast. An important reason is that public universities are overcrowded and do not perform well. A student who wants to attend a lecture has to be there hours in advance to get a seat, for example. It is unfortunate that business leaders are not impressed by graduates' skills, so degrees from state universities do not always help people find a good job.

Are private-sector institutions better?

Some are pretty good. One example is the African School of Economics in Abomey-Calavi. It was founded by scholars from Princeton University in the USA. Recently established IRGIB Africa University has a good reputation. The acronym stands for Institut Régional du Génie Industriel des Biotechnologies et Sciences Appliquées

(Regional Institute of Industrial Engineering, Biotechnology and Applied Sciences). I currently have a teaching assignment at ESGIS, the École Supérieure de Gestion d'Informatique et des Sciences (University of Management Science and Technology), which is doing pretty well with campuses in Benin, Togo and Gabon. I could name several other schools with acceptable standards. The scenario is confusing, however, because there are many different institutions, and some of them probably do not even have a license. Colleges are not necessarily good just because they are private.

You used to work for Houdegbe North American University Benin (HNAUB), but aren't doing so anymore. What happened?

The experience was mixed. Things were going well when I started teaching there in March 2010. But unfortunately, HNAUB was poorly managed. It ran into financial trouble. In 2016, lecturers' pay became erratic. Rumours of insolvency spread like wildfire. The situation kept deteriorating, and it did not inspire confidence that the university wanted tuition to be paid in cash. Cash transactions often serve to avoid accountability, after all. By early 2018, the number of remaining students had dropped to a few hundred, and teaching stopped entirely in the second half of that year. At least two lecturers passed away because they could not afford medical treatment. Many of us had hoped that the situation would improve again, but it did not.

You witnessed HNAUB's rise and fall. How do you assess its history?

Well, the business idea was brilliant, but unfortunately some courses were substandard. The background is that Nigeria, our neighbour, has a huge population and is comparatively rich. However, it has too few universities to serve the needs of millions of young people who are eager to get a degree. Octave Houdegbe, the founder of HNAUB, spotted the opportunity to provide education to young Nigerians from middle-class families. On average, they paid the equivalent of about \$1000 tuition per semester, which is a lot of money in Benin. Students enrolled in business and economics courses paid more, and those who stayed in HNAUB dormitories with full accommodation paid still more. In contrast to anglophone Nigeria, the official language in Benin is French. HNAUB



A screenshot from better days: HNAUB homepage in 2012.

was bilingual, but most courses were offered in English. It grew very fast. At one point, HNAUB had some 15,000 students. Most, though not all, were from Nigeria. After the turn of the millennium, the Nigerian economy was growing fast. Oil prices had surged as a consequence of the Iraq war. The finances of HNAUB were never transparent, but it is probably no coincidence that the problems started to grow when Nigeria's economy was in recession in 2016. What is clear, however, is that Mr Houdegbe ran his university like a family business and was increasingly absorbed by other issues. He is a traditional voodoo chief, for example, and he became a member of parliament. It is well known that election campaigns normally cost a lot of money.

What was substandard?

There were many shortcomings:

- HNAUB did not have a proper admissions system. Anyone who paid tuition was accepted.
- The teaching facilities were inadequate. The library was outdated, for example, and we didn't have textbooks. I mostly relied on textbooks I had brought home from Senegal, Europe and North America, or I just ordered them overseas. I sometimes told students to buy e-books online.
- I worked for the departments of mass communication and international affairs. We had neither a university newspaper nor a campus radio station, so we couldn't teach aspiring journalists any practical lessons. We didn't even have computers, so there was no scope for any multimedia teaching. I regularly told students to skip summer school at HNAUB and do an internship at a media house or a PR/advertising agency instead.
- Classrooms and lecture halls were increasingly overcrowded. In our hot and humid climate, things became particularly bad when electric power failed.
- HNAUB graduates in mass communication did not have to do any research in their final year of college. After 120 credit hours, they got their bachelor degrees.

So those degrees were probably worthless. Did they help alumni to get good jobs?

The degrees were not totally worthless. The feedback I got is mixed. Some alumni are definitely struggling, others have thrived. To a considerable extent, I think, the latter

benefited from their families, for instance by assuming positions in family businesses or getting jobs thanks to connections.

In view of HNAUB's shortcomings, why did so many students go there? And why did you stay there?

Well, as I said before, there is a market for higher education, and government institutions are not up to the task. Moreover, HNAUB had momentum. For many years, money didn't seem to be an issue at all. At one point, lecturers like me got a pay rise of 50%. It made us very happy. We had reason to hope that things would get better. We wanted the university to grow, not only in terms of enrolment but performance too. The institution was generally appreciated. For example, the German ambassador once came to the department of international affairs to discuss international issues with our students. Students, moreover, were impressed by the fact that some lecturers were white people from the USA.

What was the fate of the students who could not finish their studies as teaching stopped?

All they could do was to pack up and go home. They only had their eyes to cry. There is not much point in suing HNAUB. The rule of law is weak in our country, and neither students nor staff are likely to recover any money by taking Mr Houdegbe to court. He is a member of parliament and thus enjoys immunity. Moreover, he is well connected to the political parties that support the incumbent head of state. In our country, institutions do not tend to be strong, and hiring a lawyer often does not help.

What lessons should Benin learn from the HNAUB experience?

First of all, I see this as a missed opportunity. If HNAUB had lived up to its promises – and it could have done so – we would have been training part of Nigeria's future elite. Instead, the failure of HNAUB has dented Benin's reputation, at least as far as the affected students and their families are concerned. More generally speaking, I think the big lesson is that education requires very high commitment to the cause. Tuition revenues, for example, must be re-invested in teaching facilities, faculty staff and research. Universities should not be run as profit-maximising businesses, and at very least they must be regulated in a way



that ensures that students get value for money.

So you think that Benin's higher education sector needs reform?

Yes, it does, and government oversight must improve too. However, reform has to be introduced gradually because our capacities are poor and we depend on whatever capacities we have. A few years back, for example, the government wanted to introduce a rule according to which anyone who lectured at a university would need a PhD. That wasn't viable. There simply are not enough potential lecturers with PhDs for all subjects in Benin. In our country, many lecturers, including myself, have a master's degree and many years of professional experience. I previously worked for the UN and the World Bank, for example. Policy has to take the existing capacities into account. Change should be based on consensus so it does not cause disruption in this very important sector. That said, there are things that could be done fast. For example, it would make sense to lower taxes paid by private-sector institutions and allow them to import educational goods tariff-free. Benin needs an enabling environment for both private and public universities, so more of them can start to meet internationally accepted standards. Things are not different in many other African countries.



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Overrated model

Parents from around the world send their children to the United States for a quality education. But all is not as great as it seems. The recent college admissions scandals show that top universities do not offer equal opportunities, but serve the interests of prosperous families.

By Cema Tork

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that in 2015 the USA ranked number 36 in the world for maths scores amongst 15-year-olds, 19 in the world for science, and 15 for reading. Some 84% of high school senior students graduate. These rates seem good, but without a high-school degree, people in the USA have little chance of ever getting a well-paying job.

The US scores are not bad, but they clearly are not the best. Other countries do

better. For several reasons, many choose the USA nonetheless. The reasons are that:

- students typically already speak English,
- degrees from the US are accepted all over the world and
- migrants have historically found opportunities in the USA.

What many people do not know is that the US education system is very complex, multi-faceted and not easy to navigate. Many people believe that private-sector institutions make the system great, but they are only a small part of the system.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

At the primary and secondary level public schools educate the vast majority of US Americans. Attending school is obligatory and free of cost in public schools up to the

age of 16 to 18, depending on state laws. Public schools are regulated by state laws, so curricula and funding vary. The National Center for Education Statistics, an agency of the Federal Government, reported that in the school year 2014/2015 government funding per student amounted to almost \$12,000 on average – that was about 29% more than the OECD average.

Despite the substantial funds spent per student, the quality of public schools is not good enough for many wealthy parents. These families choose private schooling. About 10% of primary and secondary students attended private schools in 2015, according to the National Center. Many of these schools are religiously affiliated, but many parents do not opt for them for faith reasons. They want to give their children a competitive advantage over those in the public schools. What they have in mind is university admissions, status and prestigious future careers.

The disparity between public and private schools is great. Students in private schools generally have access to better facilities and resources than their public school



Affirmative action does not mean that students of colour have an easy path to university degrees.

counterparts, according to the OECD. The schools tend to be safer in terms of crime and violence too. They are also able to pay more for the best teachers, in contrast to public schools, that notoriously do not pay well and overburden their teachers. Understandably, students at private schools tend to perform better.

Due to the costs, children who attend these schools tend to be from socio-economically privileged backgrounds. Moreover, private schools are known to admit students on the basis of family networks and status.

Inequality within the public-school system is also immense. The graduation rates for Indian/Alaska native, black, and hispanic high-school students are lower than for white students. Black students are also less likely to enrol in universities than their white classmates. Public schools in predominantly black inner-city neighbourhoods tend to be much worse than those in predominantly white suburbs. School funding tends to depend on property taxes, so local governments with high-income families can spend more on public education.

A history of segregation has led to minorities living separated in distinct neighbourhoods. Disadvantaged communities, of course, are poorer on average. According to the National Center, members of minority communities are particularly likely to attend high-poverty schools.

Inequality in education is a topic of intense public debate, but so far, governments at various levels have not been able to change matters much. They have reduced the income gap between the families of students enrolled in college, but that gap still exists. The disparity in life opportunities begins from an early age. It reflects a child's race and family income.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

People who do not graduate from high school have little chance of ever getting a job with decent pay and working conditions. For a well-paying career, however, one needs to go to college – and tertiary education is expensive. All colleges – whether private or public – charge tuition fees. Thanks to the high fees, many of them offer a wide range of student services, well-kept grounds and extensive resources, including libraries and laboratories.

There are different kinds of colleges. The most prestigious universities are the internationally known private universities like Harvard, Princeton or Stanford. The second tier consists of state universities that do solid academic work. Both categories do cutting-edge research. The third category are profit-driven diploma mills, that hardly do research and do not meet high academic standards. Accordingly, their names are not well known.

For many US Americans, the costs of higher education are an obstacle they cannot overcome. College Board reports that the average cost for a full year at a public bachelor's college for the school year 2018/2019 is \$8,600 dollars for a full-time student. Those at elite private universities as Harvard, Princeton and Yale, pay the largest bills. Sums of \$50,000 are not unusual.

Those who graduate at the top of their high-school class get automatic entrance into public universities, which tend to cost less than the best private universities. Typically, students who attend one of their home state's public universities pay lower tuition fees than those from other states. Many students take out loans to attend these universities and are burdened with debt for decades. It is possible but difficult to get financial aid – not least because one needs to understand the bureaucratic processes, financial jargon and legal language which accompanies them. Student debt has become a major political issue because so many young people are struggling to pay off their loans.

For lower-income families there are many different kinds of scholarships and grants, so students apply to help fund the cost of tuition and living expenses. Some ambitious students can benefit from this system. Michelle Obama, the former first lady, is an example. She is from a working class family in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Chicago and managed to get a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and later a law degree from Harvard University. She then joined a leading law firm in Chicago.

Many other US Americans cannot even afford a college education. The high costs of the best schools and universities lead to rich and white students getting the best opportunities, often without putting in much effort. White students from prosperous background dominate campus culture, so black

and brown students often feel marginalised. Some minority students suffer the impostor syndrome, questioning whether they really belong in the institutions. Problems are compounded by prosperous white families dominating university politics as well.

BRIBES FOR ADMISSIONS

President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner is a good example of how privilege works in the US. According to the New York Magazine, Jared Kushner's father donated millions of dollars to get his son admission into Harvard. Even Kushner's high school acknowledged that he was unqualified to go there.

That was two decades ago, but things have not changed. In recent weeks, US media have been uncovering a vast college-admissions scandal, implicating about 50 people, including 33 wealthy parents. The plain truth is that because their children are unable or unwilling to meet admissions standards, some parents bribe their children's way through. Students without that kind of support actually have to work hard and achieve good academic results for the chance of being admitted.

For many years, affirmative action has been a controversial topic. It means that universities must admit a certain share of students from minority communities. Conservatives say that it thwarts competition and discriminates against white students and that people should only be admitted on merit. What they willingly overlook is the masses of white students that have been admitted on the basis of family connections, wealth and systemic privilege. Far too many do not make it into top schools based on merit – and they crowd out their more deserving competitors.

LINK

National Center for Education Statistics:
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018144.pdf>



CEMA TORK
 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.

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Some people have no other choice

In the debate on how to finance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is frequently said that the private sector must step in because government budgets are overburdened. This argument is made in regard to the education-related goals as well.

By Hans Dembowski

In 2017, the consultancy Caerus Capital published a report with the title “The business of education in Africa”. The authors estimated that 21% of African children and young people were already being educated in the private sector at that point in time and reckoned the share would rise to 25% by 2021. The report identified an investment need of up to \$20 billion over five years.

While people with centre-left leanings in Europe tend to worry about private-sector education worsening inequality, many people in developing countries see it more favourably. The reason is that public-sector schools are normally quite trustworthy in advanced nations, but often perform dismally in developing countries.

Concerning development countries, the Caerus report states: “Even with increases in resources, the public sector lacks and will continue to lack sufficient capital or capacity to operate alone. Complementary solutions from the private sector, both for-profit and not-for-profit, can help to fill the gap.” According to the authors, the three key challenges are “access to, quality of and relevance of education”. The document raises several points:

- Competition from private schools can stimulate better performance in public ones.
- Private institutions are likely to introduce innovations that public ones may eventually copy.
- Private providers often have a greater focus on skills that are in labour market demand.
- Government-run higher education tends to be inadequate in particular.

The Caerus report notes that private education can reinforce inequities, but argues that the upsides outweigh the down-

sides. It insists that governments must perform three key roles as “stewards, enablers and partners” of educational institutions. The authors want governments to create a healthy regulatory setting for both public and private schools. In their eyes, an essential duty is to define national learning goals.

The Caerus report was produced with support from major donor agencies, including USAID, the Aga Khan Foundation and Britain’s Department for International Development (DfID). An interesting aspect is that it emphasises the great role of informal-sector education. The consultants reckon that up to \$20 billion of investments are needed in African private education, but only expect the formal private sector to provide \$2 billion at most. They particularly see scope for local conglomerates and international education chains to become involved in African private education.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a World Bank subsidiary, published a short, six-page essay on private education in 2017, coming to similar conclusions as Caerus. Among other things, the IFC points out the relevance of informal “slum schools”. Government planning

typically does not take account of families who try to escape rural poverty by moving to urban areas. The IFC paper states: “For populations in some of the world’s poorest countries, the choice of private education is in fact one over no education.”

The authors argue, moreover, that parents have more influence on what happens in private schools. They are said to be more cost-effective than government run schools, but also more expensive for families. In higher education, the IFC sees ample scope for web-based “massive open online courses” and praises respective initiatives of private elite universities from the USA.

What the Caerus and IFC publications spell out is plausible. Whether it is empirically valid is another question. The IFC authors explicitly call for more research. To a large extent, their essay is based on a comprehensive and “rigorous” review of academic literature that was carried out by scholars on behalf of DfID (2014).

The scholars analysed available studies of private education in developing countries and tested a set of hypotheses. They only found “strong evidence” for one hypothesis: “Teaching is better in private schools than in state schools”. There was only “moderate evidence”, however, for:

- private schools’ pupils actually achieving better learning outcomes,
- private schools being more expensive and
- governments having the capacity to regulate and monitor private-sector education properly.

The empirical data was said to be inconclusive in regard to issues such as gender equity, outreach to the rural poor and accountability to users.

LINKS

Caerus Capital, 2017: The business of education in Africa.

<https://edaficareport.caeruscapital.co/thebusinessofeducationinafrica.pdf>

DfID, 2014: The role and impact of private schools in developing countries. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439702/private-schools-full-report.pdf

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Cover of the Caerus report.

Unsatisfying low-cost schools

Some chains of profit-making private schools claim to bring education especially to disadvantaged communities. Experts from civil-society organisations have assessed low-fee business models and found them utterly unconvincing. The most prominent provider is the US-based Bridge International Academies.

The Global Campaign for Education is an umbrella organisation of civil-society agencies. With editorial support from Oxfam and Action Aid, it published a report entitled “Private profit – public loss” in 2016. The documents spells out very clearly that for-profit, low-fee schools are not an appropriate response to the primary education crisis that affects many countries with low and middle incomes. One conclusion is: “Further investment in low-fee private schools would be a dangerous experiment that could rob a generation of the world’s poorest children of their best chance to thrive, with lasting impacts on public education systems.”

The authors acknowledged that public schools are not up to task in many countries. They insisted, however, that such failure results from insufficient funding. Accordingly, the report calls for raising taxes and improving public finance in order to enable governments to invest in education and ensure that schools serve their purpose. It points out that state-run school systems in high-income countries generally perform well, serving the vast majority of people.

The authors considered it alarming that the share of private school enrolment at the primary level was a mere five percent in developed countries at the start of this decade, but 13% in developing countries. They pointed out that the public sector actually outperforms private schools in terms of learning outcomes in some countries, including Taiwan, Thailand and Luxembourg. In other places, private schools were not found to be good, but merely better than poorly performing and neglected public schools.

According to the report, Bridge is not the only problematic brand. Others are the Omega chain in Ghana, APEC schools in the Philippines and similar institutions in other countries, including Nigeria and South Africa. The authors emphasised that nobody in high-income countries would expect the poorest to invest in private schooling, and added that many developing countries raise sales and value added taxes, which means that poor communities bear a large share of the tax burden. Accordingly, they should be entitled to free public services.

The experts assessed the available empirical evidence and found that low-fee private

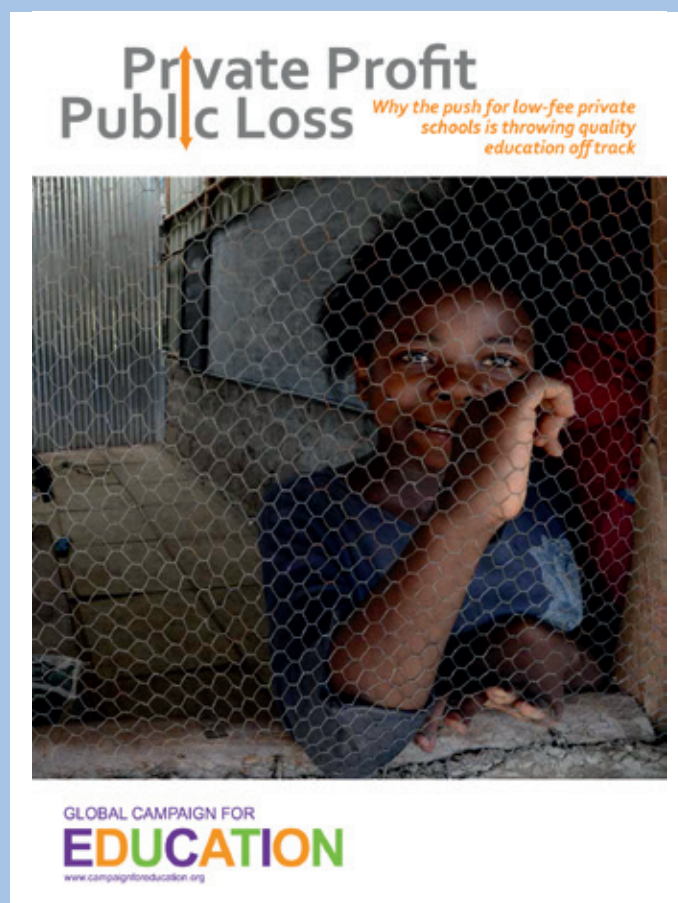
schools generally did not live up to the expectations. They proved wrong the claims of low-fee schools being affordable to the poorest. They warned that poor parents often have many children, so most cannot pay even low-fee tuition for all of them. Parents will be less likely to invest in their daughters than their sons, and children with disability will probably be neglected in particular, according to the report.

The conventional wisdom says that private schools are more innovative and have better trained teachers. The civil-society authors’ response is that low-income countries generally do not have enough of them, and that teachers at low-fee schools often do not have any professional training at all. Compounding problems, the low-fee business models are based on standardisation to maximise scale and profit, which obviously flies in the face of the pupil-focused approaches that cutting-edge educationists promote.

In view of the data, the civil-society report lambasts donor agencies that endorse private education as a solution of the poverty problem. The authors’ message is that “the failings of public-sector education are not inherent, and can be solved with sufficient financing, strong policies and political will.” (dem)

LINK

Global Campaign for Education, 2016: *Private profit – public loss* (executive summary available in French, Arabic and Spanish). <https://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/2016/06/29/private-profit-public-loss/>



Cover of the Global Campaign for Education report.



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