D+C

MONTHLY E-PAPER

DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
D+C
ENTWICKLUNG UND ZUSAMMENARBEIT
E+Z

International Journal

ISSN 2366-7257
April 2020

COVID-19
Why Iran's health system was fast overwhelmed

RIGHT-WING POPULISM
International agencies must consider how to promote rule of law

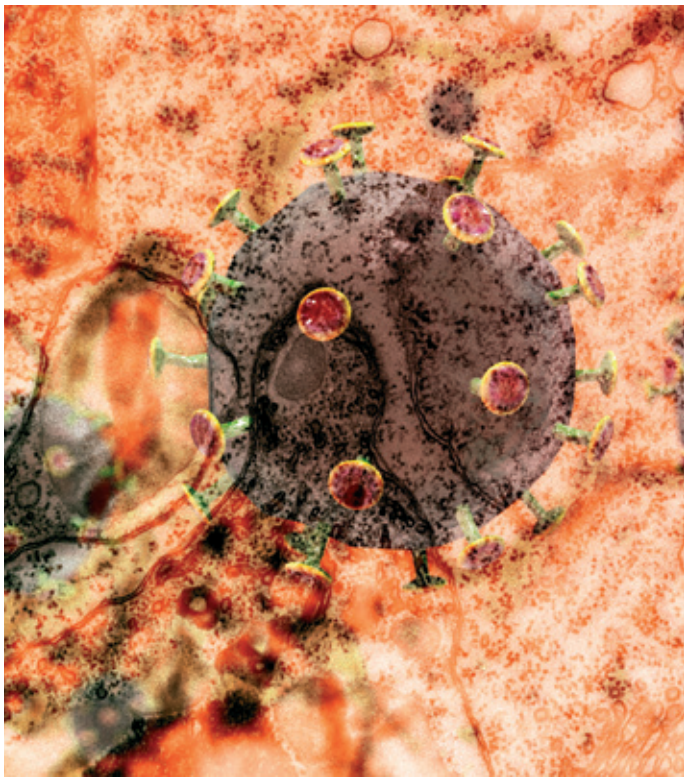
DIGITALISATION
How teenagers in developing countries use smartphones

Demographic trends

Two-pronged corona crisis requires global cooperation

In response to Covid-19, policymakers must rise to a double challenge: protect human health as well as economies. International cooperation is indispensable. On their own, nation states can neither contain the spread of the new corona virus conclusively nor stimulate markets economy sufficiently.

The Covid-19 pandemic is teaching us an unusual lesson. Protecting ourselves is the same as protecting others. To shield ourselves from infection, we keep a distance – and that distance shields others should we ourselves unknowingly be infected. We share a collective interest in slowing down and eventually containing the spread of the disease. The common good depends on health systems not becoming even more overburdened than some already are.



Stylised image of the novel corona virus.

This is a global challenge. Success in our own country will not last long if the pandemic escalates devastatingly elsewhere. Sooner or later, the virus would return. Borders can be closed temporarily, but not completely, and there will always be illegal crossings. The worse a crisis gets, however, the more people flee. Like SARS and HIV/AIDS before, Covid-19 is a global challenge.

The international community must share relevant resources equitably. All countries must become able to test and treat patients. Attempts to monopolise medical goods for one's own nation will only lead to bottlenecks. Most countries depend on imports for some of those goods – and some for all.

Italy, a prosperous country with a comparatively strong health sector, is struggling with bottlenecks already. Most likely, all countries will experience bottlenecks. Allowing Covid-19 to wreak havoc uncontrolled in the poorer ones could backfire brutally. It is now imperative to boost production of medication, protective gear and equipment to the maximum extent and ensure that all countries have at least a minimum supply. New or at least provisional hospitals are needed. Research regarding preventive vaccines and effective cures must be stepped up fast and coordinated internationally.

Not only because of medical goods is international trade of undiminished importance. Financial markets are in turmoil. For good reason, investor confidence has dropped dramatically. The shutdown of public life makes economies grind to a halt too. The sales of most private-sector companies are affected negatively. Shortly before this issue was finalised, more people in the USA signed up for unemployment benefits than in the equivalent time span after the collapse of the investment bank Lehman Brothers in 2008.

The financial sector is reeling once again. As businesses look increasingly unlikely to meet financial obligations, that is to be expected. A dangerous, self-propelling downward spiral looks very difficult to avoid. If market dynamics are allowed to run their course, the result will surely be a devastating global depression.

Self-regulating markets sometimes fail dramatically. Irresponsible bank lending was the reason 12 years ago. Now economies are stalling because of a global health shock, and once more, policymakers must intervene to prevent the worst. The good news is that central banks and governments of prosperous countries fast began to take action. It is worrisome, however, that they – and especially the governments – did not do much to coordinate such action. All nations depend on the world market. So far, low-income and lower middle-income countries have not been much affected by Covid-19, but they probably will be in the future. They will need financial firepower too, but their central banks and governments are in a much weaker position than those of most G20 countries. Debt problems have been weighing heavily on many of them for some time.

In 2008, the G20 replaced G7 as the main forum for international policy coordination. This time, global coordination is even more important because the challenges are greater and more complex. To ensure least-developed countries are paid attention, it would make sense to give UN organisations a stronger role this time. The depressing truth however, is that global coordination is also more difficult than it was last time. More countries are now run by right-wing populists who claim to be putting their nations first. Let's hope they overcome that stance. In a crisis like the one we are facing now, protecting ourselves includes protecting everyone else. Nationalism does not help at all.

HANS DEMBOWSKI
is editor in chief of D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.

euz.editor@dandc.eu

Photo: Schönherr/picture-alliance/dpa

In German E+Z
Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.
Both language versions
at www.DandC.eu

Monitor

Debate

Tribune

Focus: Demographic trends

Title: Grandmother with granddaughter in a slum in Kenya.
Photo: Jorgen Schytte/Lineair

FOCUS

Demographic trends

Global challenge Africa

Africa has the youngest population in the world. There are far too few good jobs for all youngster, however. This scenario not only poses major challenges for the continent itself – it has global implications according to Samir Abi of Visions Solidaires, a non-governmental development organisation in Togo. There is scope for economic progress in Africa, but no blueprint. Governance matters, especially because several global mega trends are adding to the challenges, as Hans Dembowski of D+C/E+Z elaborates. Florian Jürgens, global advisor at the NGO HelpAge International, points out that over the coming decades, the number of older people is expected to grow fastest in Africa. Therefore, the implementation of social pensions is crucial. **PAGES 19, 21, 23**

More and more, older and older

Although the world population is growing more slowly than it did in the past, it is currently still increasing by around 80 million people a year. Demographic developments are presenting challenges in every world region, and especially so in sub-Saharan Africa. Alisa Kaps, a researcher at the Berlin Institute for Population and Development, presents the global situation. **PAGE 25**

What sex education is really about

Young people in many developing countries are not systematically taught about reproductive health and the psychology of intimacy. It is harmful to keep all things sexual shrouded in secrecy – as is evident in Pakistan, for example. Mahwish Gul, a consultant from Pakistan who specialises in development management, reports. **PAGE 28**

India is turning grey

India's population is still growing, but by mid-century, those of working age will start to be outnumbered by people over 60 and children under 15. Government and civil society should plan now how to improve social services for the elderly population, claim S. S. Sripriya and S. Siva Raju of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. **PAGE 30**

Legacy of China's one-child policy

China is getting old before it has got rich. The one-child policy is partially to blame for this trend. Millions of people lack adequate retirement provisions, writes Felix Lee, a journalist. **PAGE 32**

OUR VIEW

Lay the foundations

To judge by current trends, the world population will peak at not quite 11 billion people around the turn of the next century. Incalculable disasters like wars and pandemics are unlikely to make more than small dents. At this stage, Covid-19 looks frightening, but even if it killed millions, that number would still be relatively small. To put things in perspective: World War II killed an estimated 60 to 80 million people. In recent years, the world population has grown by such a number anually.

Societies change, and social norms vary, but the patterns of how family sizes evolve are clear all over the world. Nations are ageing as life expectancies rise and women bear fewer children. These trends are actually rather stable, so predictions with unusual reliability are possible if one knows:

- how many women there are,
- what age cohorts they belong to,
- how many children they will have on average, and
- at what age they tend to have their babies.

Population growth is slowing down – and that is good news. Otherwise, environmental sustainability would certainly remain illusive. Moreover, declining birth rates result from girls getting better educations and women having more choices. It helps that parents know their babies are likely to survive.

In many countries, the share of the elderly is increasing fast. They no longer have the large extended families that took care of the aged in more traditional times. Social protection systems are needed. That is not only so in the affluent West, but also concerns Asian countries, in particular China. This is not just a question of money. Retirement homes, frail-care facilities, hospitals and other social support systems need to be staffed.

Today, the health-care systems of prosperous but ageing nations are poaching skilled migrants from poorer and demographically younger countries. But what will happen when the adverse impacts of ageing start affecting those countries? To some extent, technology and robots may help. But people need personal interaction too. A large and probably growing proportion of working-age people will have to provide social services professionally.

If things are left to market competition, only the prosperous few will enjoy decent lives in old age. If no one is to be left behind, state-run schemes must ensure that everyone has at least a minimum pension and public services are available. Getting things right requires political will, intelligent policies and effective implementation.

It helps when a country takes advantage of the specific window of opportunity that demographic change offers early on. Emerging markets in East and South East Asia benefited massively from "demographic dividends". Industrialisation took off when large cohorts of young people were available as workers because they had neither many young children nor sickly grandparents to take care of. Greater prosperity is a precondition for stronger social-protection schemes. The big challenge for low and lower-middle-income countries is to ensure they grasp a demographic dividend.

Global cooperation will help to get a grip on the matter. It is also needed to put a check on Covid-19 and to stop global warming. Global trends can and must be managed in a way to ensure that 11 billion people can live good lives on the planet we share.

HANS DEMBOWSKI

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.

Debate

Photos: Rouzbeh Fouladi/picture-alliance/ZUMA Press; picture-alliance/TopFoto

Suddenly overwhelmed

After China, Iran was one of the first countries to be hit hard by the corona virus (Covid-19). The official data are frightening, but the situation is certainly worse. People do not trust government information – that makes it hard to bring the situation under control, explains Deutsche Welle journalist Shora Azarnoush. **PAGE 11**

Humanity or barbarism

A humanitarian crisis is happening at the EU border in Greece: thousands of war refugees from Syria are seeking a way into the EU. Greece, however, is sealing off its border and using force to prevent the defenceless people from entering. This policy raises doubts that the EU takes human rights as seriously as it preaches them to others. D+C/E+Z's Sabine Balk comments. **PAGE 13**

Tribune

Fear and freedom

Liberal democracy is worth defending because it can prevent cruelty, argues Princeton Professor Jan-Werner Müller in a new book. Pluralism and the rule of law limit the scope for brutal atrocities, writes D+C/E+Z's Hans Dembowski. **PAGE 16**

STUDY

Comforted by talking to God

Faith and religion can help refugees to cope better with traumatic experiences. And as a recent World Vision study shows, the same applies if they are children. Caterina Rohde-Abuba, one of the two authors of the study, explains the findings in an interview with D+C/E+Z.

Caterina Rohde-Abuba interviewed by Mira Enders

Why did World Vision do the study?
There is a great deal of evidence showing that faith helps adults to cope with difficult life situations. For children, the research is still in its infancy. We wanted to make a contribution to that research and interviewed children and their families who described themselves as religious and were willing to talk about their faith.

What makes religion a relevant issue?
Religion is a relevant issue because it is very important for many people currently coming to Germany as refugees. Religion is often an intrinsic part of their daily life and identity. Support services and structures used to reach out to refugees must not conflict with their religious beliefs and certainly not discriminate on the basis of religion. Our study also shows the societal potential of religion: many of the children we interviewed are guided by religious values of tolerance and peace towards fellow human beings – wherever they come from and whatever their religion.

What are the main findings of the study?
One thing the study showed is that the different religions' notions of God and even their religious values are very similar. If you listen to children talk about their relationship with God and about religious values that are important to them, you often cannot tell which religion the child belongs to. Another important finding is that unlike many adults, children experience religious diversity on a daily basis at school. It is something they generally have no problem with and do not question.

What did you find out about the ways in which religion can help children to cope better with experiences of war and migration?
For many children, whatever their religion, free prayer, talking to God and even thinking about God is an important way of dealing with stressful situations. Asking for God's aid or support helps them to express their fears and gives them courage and hope. Many children who crossed the Mediterranean by boat report that they prayed during their ordeal. But their prayers are also often for family members left behind in their country of origin. Even young children, around eight or ten years of age, say they find free prayer a source of comfort, strength and reassurance, which indicates the special importance of prayer for resilience.

Were you surprised by some of the findings?
I was particularly surprised by parents' openness to interreligious education. Parents positively want interreligious education for their children so that prejudices against other religions can be minimised and children learn to treat

Faith makes strong: two Syrian girls from the Idlib region in a refugee camp in Lebanon.

Photo: picture alliance/Mikhail Voskresenskiy/Sputnik/dpa

others with consideration and respect. I was also surprised how calmly parents deliver religious education. Religion is present and very much integrated in daily life, in the form of prayers for example. Parents regularly invite their children to participate in prayers or rituals but they do not pressure them. They help the children decide for themselves when and how they pray. I was also impressed that even the eight-year-olds we interviewed were able to articulate a free prayer. In Germany, children are not considered to have reached religious maturity until the age of fourteen. Our interviews showed that religion is understood and performed even by younger children.

What methods did you use to interview the children and get into conversation with them?

Creative activities can be used as an aid to discussion of abstract subjects. For example, we asked the children in the interviews to visualise their relationship with God with the help of coloured threads. When choosing our methods, we made sure they were appropriate for an interreligious context. It may be common in Christianity to paint pictures of God but it is not an option for Muslims because of the prohibition of images. It is a fallacy to think that adults have no problems verbalising what constitutes their faith. So creative activities can be used for both children and adults. To avoid triggering traumas, a story was used to prompt the children to talk about their escape. In the story, an old woman called Varenka gets into trouble and prays to God. The children were then asked if they themselves had ever been in a situation where they prayed to God. Most responded by talking about their experiences as refugees.

How can the study help in development work?

The study highlights approaches that can be used to help people – especially children – with traumas. It also flags up the need to train lay workers so that traumatised children can be identified before professional help is available. What is more, from the host of international projects that World Vision supports we have come to appreciate the importance of involving religious actors in educational projects – because many of them teach values. We need to recognise the importance of religion in our society and the potential it holds.

LINK

World Vision, 2020: Flight, religion, resilience: faith as a resource for coping with the challenges of migration and integration. ***https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/World_Vision_Studie_Resilienz_en.pdf***

CATERINA ROHDE-ABUBA is head of research at World Vision Germany and co-author of the study.

caterina.rohde-abuba@wveu.org

IDPS

Greater international commitment is needed

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), nearly 60% of the more than 70 million refugees worldwide are internally displaced persons (IDPs). They are refugees within their own country. However, these people and their problems receive barely any attention at international political level. A new study calls for this to change and for the reinstatement of the UN special representative for IDPs.

By Sabine Balk

Internal displacement has many causes – from wars and violent conflicts to natural disasters, to gradual environmental change and the implementation of large-scale development and infrastructure projects. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the majority of people affected are in Syria, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Many IDPs are as defenceless as cross-border refugees but are not entitled to international protection, explains Anne Koch, author of a study written for the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Since the phenomenon of internal displacement occurs almost exclusively in poorer parts of the world, it remains largely below the radar of the wealthy nations.

Koch also claims that many countries deny the existence or extent of internal displacement because it indicates their own political failings and shortcomings. Moreover, she complains there is only little and incomplete data on the problem because, as citizens of the state, the people affected are legally indistinguishable from the rest of the population: "They often remain statistically invisible."

Although IDPs have the same legal status as their fellow countrymen and -women, in reality they are often unable to assert their rights. Many IDPs do not have the necessary documentation to enrol their children at school, for instance, or to register to vote. In many cases, they also have limited income opportunities and are traumatised.

The author warns that all this is political dynamite. Where a large population group is denied access to basic and civil rights for years, she says, the socio-political costs and political risks are high. They can undo a country's development progress.

Many of the countries affected by internal displacement cannot find effective solutions to the problem, Koch explains, but they are reluctant to admit it. This makes the issue sensitive and often results in governments viewing international support as unacceptable interferences in their country's internal affairs.

Nevertheless, the SWP researcher believes donor states should not be deterred. The issue of internal displacement should be on the development-policy agenda, she says, and stakeholders can engage in the following ways:

- They should reduce the causes of internal displacement and thus prevent it from happening in the first place by taking action to reduce poverty, promote democracy or facilitate adaptation to climate change.
- They should strengthen local institutions so that they have more capacity to develop infrastructure and basic services for IDPs.
- They should work to ensure that the needs of IDPs are systematically taken into account in national development plans.

The author notes that the legal status of IDPs has improved internationally over the past 20 years but that more work needs to be done on implementation. She believes that a strong international actor is needed to stand up for IDPs. The German government should pay more attention to the issue, she says, and work for long-term solutions. In the international process, Germany should push to improve the financial and personnel resources of the office of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. However, it would be politically more effective to appoint a new special representative for IDPs reporting directly to the UN secretary-general.

Children in Al-Karama – a camp for internally displaced persons in northern Syria.

Photo: picture-alliance/ZUMA Press

REFERENCE

Koch, A., 2020: Auf der Flucht im eigenen Land (available only in German), SWP study. ***https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2020S04_binnenvertreibung.pdf***

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Welfare work makes women poor

Differences in wealth and income and the unfair distribution of care and welfare work lead to social inequality. This in turn stands in the way of overcoming poverty and hampers the development of both individuals and entire societies.

By Dagmar Wolf

According to a recent report by Oxfam, the international non-profit organisation, the poorer half of the world population owns less than one percent of global wealth. On top of the scale, 2,153 people – mainly men – own more than the lower 60 % of the world population combined, the authors write.

This striking imbalance is owed to an exploitative economic system in which many people toil without pay while a few skim off the profits.

The report shows how unequal distribution of care and welfare work creates and deepens inequality. Women and girls in particular are economically disadvantaged: on average, they are less educated than men, earn less and are more likely to live in poverty. Worldwide, 42 % of women of working age are unable to work because of care and nursing duties.

They cook, clean, wash, do the shopping, educate children and care for the sick and elderly. In rural areas of the global south, very time-consuming activities such as collecting firewood and fetching water from distant places often add to the unpaid duties. According to the report, women and girls perform more than 12 billion hours a day of unpaid work in families, households and communities. If it was reimbursed, it would have an economic value of almost $11 trillion annually – about three times the global turnover in the IT sector.

In the global south it is usually the task of women and girls to collect firewood: girl in front of Mount Mulanje in Malawi.

Photo: Michael Runkel/picture-alliance/imageBROKER

The climate crisis, to which the growth-oriented economy is heavily contributing, worsens the situation. Oxfam estimates that by 2025, 2.4 billion people will be living in areas without sufficient water supply. Therefore, women and girls will have to walk further and further to fetch water. Increasing droughts and floods are also threatening agricultural production and leading to an increase in diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea. Again, women would have to bear the major burden by investing even more hours in maintaining the life and health of their families.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the economy must focus on people's wellbeing and the things that really matter to society, the authors claim. Oxfam has established the following principles, called "4R":

1. Reduction: the establishment and expansion of public infrastructure (both care and welfare infrastructure plus water and electricity supply) should reduce unpaid care and welfare work.

2. Representation: caregivers must be given more say and representation in politics and business, women's rights and women's organisations must be strengthened.

3. Redistribution: unpaid activities within households need to be redistributed, including through rethinking role models and more flexible working hours.

4. Recognition: the value of care and welfare work within the economy must be increased – both through material recognition and social-security systems.

Moreover, Oxfam proposes higher taxation of corporations and wealthy people to finance necessary investments. If the richest one percent of the world's population paid only 0.5 percent more tax over the next ten years, 117 million jobs could be created in education, health, care and other sectors.

LINK

Oxfam, 2020: Time to care. Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis.
https://www.oxfam.de/system/files/2020_oxfam_ungleichheit_studie_englisch_time-to-care.pdf

Call for Papers

PEGNet Poverty Reduction, Equity and Growth Network

Conference 2020

Addressing Fragility and Conflict in Developing Countries

10-11 SEPTEMBER, 2020 IN BONN, GERMANY

Fragility and conflict are a significant challenge to development and constrain efforts to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable development. Conflicts have severely stunted economic growth in many low income countries and continue to be one of the leading causes of humanitarian crises.

The PEGNet Conference 2020 will provide a platform for development scholars, practitioners and policy-makers to reflect on leading research on conflict, fragility as well as other topics in development economics that are related to the poverty-inequality nexus. Papers submitted through the call for papers will be presented in the parallel sessions. For more information on the PEGNet conference, please refer to www.pegnet.ifw-kiel.de.

Deadline for abstract submissions

The submission deadline for abstracts is April 27, 2020. Notification of acceptance will be sent out in June 2020. The deadline for full paper submission is August 1, 2020.

www.pegnet.ifw-kiel.de

Media Partner: D+C E+Z

Hot time in the city

SuperVia Trens Urbanos, Rio de Janeiro's 22-year-old rapid transit and commuter rail company, has a message for its estimated 600,000 daily passengers: help is on the way.

SuperVia, whose network links more than 100 stations in Rio de Janeiro and 11 surrounding cities, says it is adding 120 new air-conditioned trains and increasing the frequency of service. The rail company also promises to add new routes.

When fully operational, the enlarged fleet of 200 trains will provide more than 2 million seats per day, up from 1.5 million in 2012. The region with its 17.2 million inhabitants can expect its relatively new rail system to offer a comfortable alternative to congested roadways and chronically delayed buses, according to SuperVia.

All of that should be good news to the rail company's passengers. There is one problem, though: many of them don't believe it, at least not yet.

Passengers point to packed, standing-room-only carriages lacking air conditioning. They also complain of a rising incidence of crime – including theft and sexual molestation – that thrives in overcrowded conditions.

Women's groups complain of chronic harassment of female passengers. The train company designates certain carriages for women only during rush hours, but does not enforce the rule. Men hop right on to the women's wagons, and some of them proceed to take advantage of the crowding to touch women inappropriately.

''We always have to be alert," says 23-year-old passenger Thays Rodrigues. "To be a woman on the train is to risk being harassed and robbed. And many people don't care."

Poor conditions plague passengers at all times of day, says Mariana Marques, who uses the system to travel about 20 km each way to her job in a neighbouring city. ''I leave home every morning at 5 am to get to work at 8 am. There is not a day when the wagon is not full," she reports. "There are days when the air conditioning is off and we almost die in the 38 degree heat. Worst of all is the lack of security. When the train is full, you don't know who stole from you. And when the train is emptier, usually at night, there are many mass robberies and thefts.''

Complaining to the police doesn't solve much, she adds. Yet this is exactly what the train company tells affected passengers to do. According to SuperVia, public safety is the responsibility of the state government, since the train company itself has no policing powers. The most it can do is to instruct its employees to call the police if they become aware of a crime committed on the rails, the company says.

That should help. So should following through on the promises the company is making to add capacity and reduce the pressures that make the daily commute a misery for so many of its customers.

THUANY RODRIGUES
is a journalist in Brazil.

thuanyrodriigues@gmail.com

IMPRINT

D+C DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
Vol. 47, 2020
D+C is the identical twin of the German edition E+Z
Internet: www.DandC.eu
D 12 107 ISSN 0721-2178
The production of this e-Paper was completed on 31 March 2020.

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

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

ADVISORY BOARD:
Thomas Loster, Prof. Dr. Katharina Michaelowa, Dr. Susanne Neubert, Imme Scholz, Hugh Williamson

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

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

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

EDITORIAL TEAM:
Dr. Hans Dembowski (chief), Sabine Balk, Katja Dombrowski, Monika Hellstern, Dagmar Wolf (assistant)
Phone: +49 (0) 69 75 91-31 10
euz.editor@dandc.eu
Art direction: Sebastian Schöpsdau
Layout: Jan Walter Hofmann
Translators: Malcom Bell, Claire Davis

Disclaimer according to § 5,2 Hessian Law on the Freedom and Rights of the Press: The shareholders of the company are Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH (40%) and Frankfurter Societät GmbH (60%).

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

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

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

CORONA VIRUS

Suddenly overwhelmed health sector

After China, Iran was one of the first countries to be hit hard by the corona virus (Covid-19). Even the official data were frightening, but the situation was most certainly worse. People do not trust government information – that made it hard to bring the situation under control.

By Shora Azarnoush

Iran's health system was caught off guard. Reasons probably included the upcoming parliament elections and festivities for the Islamic Revolution's anniversary. For a while, the government covered up the fact that Covid-19 had already entered the country.

On 19 February, Iran officially announced that two people were infected. Only a few hours later, both were said to have died. That would have added up to a mortality rate of 100 % and was a clear sign of many cases being either undiagnosed or hushed up. The outbreak was obviously out of control already.

Trust levels are low in Iran. Many people do not believe the statements of the autocratic regime. Accordingly, many do not follow the recommendations of health authorities either. Adding to the problem, the lack of reliable fact-based information creates a fertile breeding ground for conspiracy theories.

One rumour was that "drinking alcohol prevents Covid-19". When this comment was written in mid-March, more than three dozen persons had died because they had consumed methanol, a toxic alcohol variety. It turned out that manipulated methanol was being sold on black markets, with demand being driven by Covid-19 fears.

At the same time, Covid-19 had killed more than 300 people and infected some 9 000, as the London-based The Economist reported. A considerable number of government leaders and members of parliament are known to be infected. Their seemingly high infection rate is probably the consequence of a testing bias. Privileged persons have access to the diagnostic kits which are otherwise in short supply. Ordinary Iranians are only tested if they show severe signs of Covid-19. Patients with milder symptoms are likely to walk around, unwittingly infecting others. The situation is certainly worse than the official statistics indicate.

The new virus has reached both poor and rich. However, not only test kits are scarce, medical goods in general are hard to get. Treatment is therefore expensive – and often unaffordable to people who lack money.

Nonetheless, Iran's doctors and nurses are exhausted. Posts on social media platforms show overcrowded hospitals with patients resting on beds in hallways. They also show health workers on duty without the proper protective gloves and sanitary masks. According to official data, Covid-19 killed about 20 health-care professionals in less than 20 days after the first cases. The situation in the hospitals is set to get worse for some time.

International aid, moreover, has been slowed down by the US sanctions. In strictly legal terms, the sanctions permit humanitarian products to be sold to Iran, but banks shy away from the risk of trading with the Islamic republic. Moreover, rich nations are increasingly blocking the export of goods that are relevant to their own Covid-19 response.

Whether in rural or urban areas, economically disadvantaged people tend to share small homes with large families which often include grandparents and even great grandparents. Moreover, their communities tend to be densely populated. For Iran's poor, self-quarantine and social distancing are hardly an option.

It is too early to tell what toll the disease will take in Iran. On the upside, Iran's population is quite young so the mortality rate is expected to stay comparatively low. Covid-19 affects the elderly worst. However, the economy is fragile, and so is society in general.

Iran is not a least-developed country. The health sector is actually considered to be quite strong, but it is constrained by economic sanctions and hampered by a general lack of trust. In this setting, Covid-19 looks overwhelming. It is scary to consider what may lie ahead. Nonetheless, the disease is likely to prove even more devastating in least-developed countries. That is especially true if a history of authoritarian rule following colonial despotism has undermined their people's faith in authorities.

Desperate, but largely symbolical effort: disinfecting a bazaar in Tehran.

Photo: Rouzbeh Fouladi/picture alliance/ZUMA Press

SHORA AZARNOUSH
works for Deutsch Welle's Farsi programme.

shora.azarnoush@dw.com

SOUTH ASIA

Rule-bound governance matters

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, violation of human rights and suppression of dissent are becoming normal in India. International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) are finding it ever more difficult to work in this country of more than 1.3 billion people. Governmental and multilateral providers of official development assistance (ODA) should reconsider their stance.

By Richa Arora

India has a long history of INGO engagement. Their work tends to focus on marginalised groups, including women, for example, as well as Dalits, Adivasis or Muslims. INGOs have been critically perceived by previous governments, but the Modi government is taking things further. In particular, it radically restricted their funding channels under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA). The offices of globally active civil-society organisations such as Amnesty International or Greenpeace have seen funding cancelled. Moreover, their offices were raided with the pretext of law enforcement.

According to the government, foreign NGO funding was reduced by about 60% from 2014, when Modi became prime minister, to 2017. Some 4,800 non-governmental organisations, most of them Indian ones, lost their license to operate in 2017 alone. Things will get tougher. The new Financial Bill 2020 requires NGOs to renew registrations every five years.

The current government is striving for Hindu supremacy ("Hindutva"). Its anti-minority policy affects Muslims most of all (see box by Arfa Khanum, Tribune section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/03) but other minorities as well. Christian organisations, for example, are facing harassment. Compassion International was accused of facilitating religious conversions and told to shut down.

The phenomenon of a shrinking space for civil society is currently evident in many countries, including, for example, Russia, Brazil or the Philippines. Inward-looking nationalists have a pattern of entrenching their power with aggressive identity politics, but not solving pressing problems of poverty or environmental destruction.

India's government has created a narrative according to which anyone who opposes it is anti-national and even a potential security threat. Since December, it has been facing an unprecedentedly broad-based and non-violent social movement that wants to uphold India's secular constitution, which forbids discrimination on religious and other grounds (see Arfa Khanum in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/03, Tribune). In response, Hindutva proponents have been using hate speech ("shoot the traitors"). The pogrom they launched in Delhi in late February claimed more than 50 lives (see blog post from 26 February on D+C/E+Z website).

India's economy is in a downturn. The recent insolvency of Yes Bank, a major private-sector outfit, is compounding the problems. International financial-market turmoil will certainly not help. Many Indians, including Hindus who do not endorse the government's ideology, fear that oppressive Hindutva action will make things worse.

India is a major recipient of official development assistance. Only a small share is channelled through INGOs. Financially more important providers include multilateral organisations such as the UN Development Programme or the World Bank and bilateral government agencies such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) or the German GIZ. They are only involved in politically sensitive issues like human rights or the rule of law to a limited extent because they focus on things like infrastructure, energy and climate protection. However, it is well understood that good governance is essential for related projects to succeed, so rule-bound governance must matter to them too.

For several reasons, they cannot withdraw from a nation with 14% of the world population fast or entirely. To a large extent, moreover, ODA programmes are geared to global public goods such as the climate. On the other hand, multilateral and bilateral agencies' infrastructure funding gives the Modi government scope for pursuing other agendas.

International media have become aware of how dangerous Modi is and INGOs are not giving up the fight for equality and human rights. For diplomatic reasons, multilateral and bilateral agencies cannot spell out criticism in public, but if they told India's current leadership that they wanted to get more involved in governance issues, Modi and his cabinet might get the message.

RICHA ARORA
is an Alexander von Humboldt fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik – SWP).
https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/

Muslim women assessing arson damage at a mosque in Mustafabad in north-eastern Delhi in late February.

Photo: Mattoo/picture-alliance/ZUMAPRESS.com

HUMAN RIGHTS

Humanity or barbarism

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, recently thanked Greece for serving as Europe's protective shield. Who was threatening Europe? Alien armies? The new coronavirus? No, von der Leyen was speaking of desperate, but unarmed refugees, most of whom escaped Syria's civil war and wanted to cross the Turkish-Greek border. However, Greece is not admitting asylum-seekers.

By Sabine Balk

Syria is witnessing a dreadful new phase of bloodshed in the strife that set in in 2011. The regime of President Bashar al-Assad has been bombing the city and region of Idlib, the last rebel stronghold. It is close to the Turkish border, and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan supports the rebels. He feels let down by the EU and NATO, but he actually failed to coordinate his Syria policy with them. For a while, he teamed up with Assad-supporting Russia. In regard to Idlib, however, he is now on the side of those Russia is attacking.

To put pressure on the EU, Erdogan made refugees in his country believe they could move on to Europe. That was only true in the sense of Turkey allowing them to leave. The context is complicated. According to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, Turkey has taken in some 3.6 million Syrian refugees, more than any other country on earth and many more than all EU nations combined. The EU struck a deal with him, pledging monetary support in exchange for Turkey not letting refugees move on to Europe. Whether Turkey deserves more money, is amongst other details a matter of debate.

EU leaders fear that migration to the EU will further boost anti-democratic and racist populism. For this reason, the EU applauds Greece's harsh stance. The border scenario is violent and cruel. Witnesses report of defenceless men, women and children being tear-gased and even shot at by Greek security forces. By mid-March, at least one person had been killed. The Coast Guard was firing warning shots and did not let migrants in rubber boats land on Greek islands. Due to the rampant coronavirus, the EU borders have been completely shut since 17 March.

When this e-Paper was being finalised in late March, some 10,000 to 20,000 people were stuck in the no-man's land between Greece and Turkey. They lacked shelter and provisions. It is scary to consider what impact Covid-19 may have on them. Matters looked similarly desperate in Greece's overcrowded refugee camps. Doctors without Borders, the international non-governmental organisation, demanded that the camps be dissolved immediately in view of the virus threat as things would otherwise spin out of control.

To stay credible, the EU must live up to the principles it endorses and uses to judge others. One of those principles is the human right of asylum. The EU is therefore guilty of a scandalous dereliction of duty. People who cannot live in safety in their home country are being locked out at the Greek border. In Africa, Asia, but also in Europe itself, citizens wonder to what extent the EU really takes human rights seriously.

In public discourse, European policymakers are caving in to right-wing populists. This approach is irresponsible and destructive. Research shows that migration cannot really be stopped. When people leave their homes to escape bombs or natural disasters or because they no longer find any prospects, nothing will stop them in the long run. Fences and violent action can only be effective for a rather limited time. The use of force along Greek's border is a breach of humanitarian principles.

European leaders have a point when they say they refuse to be blackmailed by Erdogan. The sad truth, however, is that they are helping him politically in Turkey by turning refugees away. The more the EU's credibility is eroded, the less convincing Erdogan's domestic opponents, who insist on democratic norms, appear in the eyes of their compatriots.

Desperate refugees in front of the Greek border in Edirne, Turkey.

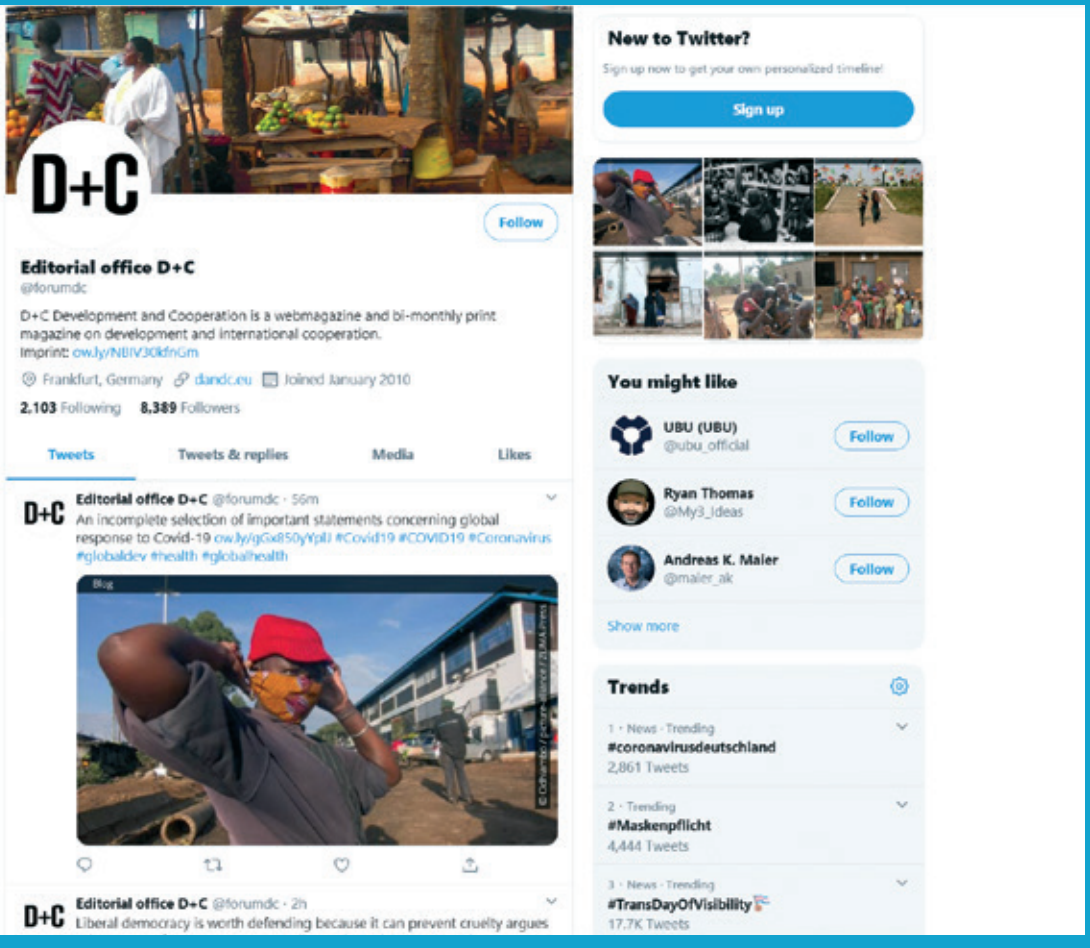
Photo: picture-alliance/abaca

SABINE BALK is member of the editorial team of D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.
euz.editor@dandc.eu

Follow us on Twitter!

To stay in touch with what is happening on our website, follow us on twitter.

www.twitter.com/forumdc



TECHNOLOGY

No level playing field

A book by an Indian scholar shows that youngsters in developing countries use digital technology for similar purposes as their peers in rich world regions. They face considerable disadvantages however.

By Hans Dembowski

In international development discourse, the opportunities of digitalisation have long been emphasised. M-Pesa serves as an example of empowerment because it allows people in remote areas of African countries to transfer money by mobile phone. Experts also like to tell stories of how Facebook has given a voice to formerly disenfranchised people, giving rise to unprecedented political movements. Initiatives such as One Laptop Per Child even argued that digitalisation as such would lead to greater educational inclusiveness.

In her book "The next billion users", Payal Arora puts such narratives in perspective. She convincingly points out that the promises of technology itself bridging educational divides have not come true. Her book elaborates research findings in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where she studied how poor young people use digital technology. The scholar was born in India and is now a professor and chair in technology, values and media cultures at the Erasmus School of Philosophy in Rotterdam.

Arora's core message is that the youth in developing countries are like their peers everywhere. To some extent, they use smartphones to enhance their livelihood prospects, but mostly they are interested in entertainment and connecting with others. They make considerable efforts to optimise their profiles on social media and are likely to spend extra money on photoshopping selfies. The author insists that the poor must not be considered especially thrifty, industrious or creative. Yes, the lack of resources forces them to economise and find new ways to enhance efficiency. Their basic motivations, however, do not differ from those of other people. The limitations they face in daily life reappear in the digital sphere.

Poor youngsters in developing countries are more at risk than their prosperous counterparts in advanced nations. One reason, according to the social scientist, is that a lot of digital activity takes place in informal settings in developing countries, and the hacking of existing systems is common practice.

Informality, however, blurs into illegality, especially as major internet corporations are paying ever greater attention to issues of intellectual property and the enforcement of related laws. To some extent, the multinationals are willing to cooperate with inventive young hackers from developing countries, but such practices basically serve to entrench their own predominance, further marginalising latecomers.

Media piracy is an example of how important the informal sector can be. Illegal copies of international films are typically distributed via networks of black-market shops. Locally produced entertainment is distributed via the same networks. Without them, national video or audio industries would hardly take off. The trend of dominance by multinationals is being exacerbated by digitalisation, warns Arora.

Young slum dweller in the Manila agglomeration.

Photo: Favila/picture-alliance/AP Photo

ROMANTIC LONGINGS

Privacy is a serious concern for many netizens. In the slum areas of big Indian or Brazilian cities, however, young people have particular concerns. They tend to live in one-room homes with extended families and have very little space to themselves. As Arora elaborates, social media platforms offer them a space where neither relatives nor neighbours are watching. Teenagers take advantage of that space to practice flirting, for example, but they must pay attention to not being found out. Interaction with someone of the other sex tends to be forbidden. Girls in particular have a reputation to lose.

Arora reports that male youngsters in India have developed a pattern of befriending Brazilian girls on Facebook, because female youngsters from their country are unlikely to respond. Having international contacts, moreover, boosts a person's reputation. In their daydreams, the people concerned intend to meet one day. On the other hand, youngsters regularly have the experience of being ripped off online. Someone responds enthusiastically to their romantic advances, then asks for the transfer of money or airtime for extended communication and then goes silent once that transfer has occurred.

Adding to the problems, the internet offers easy access to pornography, which is considered unacceptable by society even though it is quite popular, Arora finds. The author does not delve into this topic deeply and could have spent more space on elaborating how pornography is often the only sex education teenagers get and that most youngsters do not find the kind of comprehensive information they would need on the web. That happens in rich world regions as well, but is even more likely in societies where sex is still largely taboo. They are not told that pornography merely depicts fantasies without conveying what else intimate relationships are about. Moreover, girls need reliable information concerning reproductive health (see Aditi Roy Ghatak in the Debate section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/05). They should certainly not be expected to discover all relevant information by searching google.

Young slum dwellers find e-commerce attractive, writes Arora, and the main reason is that goods they desire are hard to get where they live, especially at affordable prices. At the same time, many of them find it creepy when they notice that online businesses are targeting them personally, which means that the companies are exploiting personalised data.

Gaming is popular, but there are downsides. Arora mentions "gold farming". This term refers to masses of young people replaying the cumbersome early stages of digital games in order to earn those games' virtual currencies which are then sold on to users in rich nations. The gold farmers are frowned upon as cheats, though it is their clients who use the gaming currencies. As Arora reports, gold farming is an organised mass business, with a few bosses raking in most profits.

Since her book was published, Arora has been invited by many tech companies to discuss her insights, as she told a conference on the media and digitalisation held at Deutsche Welle in Bonn late last year (for impacts on journalism see report in Monitor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/01). Those companies obviously want to expand their market reach. She finds it disappointing that development agencies are not taking a similarly keen interest in her work. Her assessment of governments and international agencies fully endorsing the idea that the digital revolution as such would solve all poverty related problems is a bit overblown, but it certainly would not hurt policymakers and implementing agencies to consider the empirical reality of young people's digital experiences.

Arora does a good job of showing that what members of this age group are looking for is not so different from the patterns known in rich countries. She also shows that the internet is not a level playing field. Youngsters from poor communities tend to be less well educated, and while time spent on the web may improve their English, they start with a linguistic disadvantage. Moreover, they need to spend a greater share of their income on mobile phone subscriptions, enjoy fewer legal protections and are more likely to be exploited online.

BOOK

Arora, P., 2019: The next billion users. Digital life beyond the west. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

POLITICAL THEORY

Fear and freedom

Liberal democracy is worth defending because it can prevent cruelty argues Princeton Professor Jan-Werner Müller in a new book first published in German. Pluralism and the rule of law limit the scope for brutal atrocities.

By Hans Dembowski

The onslaught of authoritarian populism on liberal democracy is evident in many countries and has led to heated media debate in recent years. As a public intellectual, Jan-Werner Müller, a German scholar who teaches political science at Princeton University, has been one of the most important contributors. In a new academic publication, he takes a close look at what makes liberal democracy worth defending.

The terms "liberal" and "liberalism" have a long history in political theorising. They mean different things to different people. In the USA and Canada, for example, liberals endorse social-protection systems and generally belong to the centre-left. In Australia, by contrast, the Liberal Party is the established conservative force, which under its current leader, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, looks ever more populist. It expresses xenophobia and denies climate science, for example.

"Populism", of course, is another term that is not defined precisely in public debate.

In a previous book (2016) with the title "What is populism?", Müller did a great job of defining the term (see Hans Dembowski in Focus section in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/02). It basically means that a political leader or party claims to represent the people directly, discredits the legitimacy of all other political forces, and agitates against what it calls an exploitative elite as well as abusive minorities. Typically, populists cast themselves in the role of victims, and once they rise to power, they do what they can to do away with any restraining checks and balances. In D+C/E+Z, we use Müller's definition when we speak of "populism".

His new book focuses on the various meanings of "liberalism" and rejects several of them. Müller does not endorse market radicalism, for example, which imposes strict discipline on anyone who must work for a living, but basically allows financially potent forces to do what they please. It is wrong to argue that only state agencies limit freedom, private-sector corporations can do so too.

PREVENTING CRUELTY

Müller argues that a just social order must protect the vulnerable from powerful forces' cruelty, and that only a liberal democracy can do so systematically. This idea was first

One lesson of Nazi atrocities is that a just social order must prevent cruelty: inside one of the women's barracks in Auschwitz in 1945.

spelled out by Judith Shklar (1928 – 1992). She was a secular Jew from Eastern Europe who escaped the Nazi Holocaust and later became a Harvard professor of philosophy. Adopting her theory, Müller writes that the starting point for designing a fair social order is to pay attention to the victims of cruelty. He wants fear of cruelty to guide policymakers in ways to make that fear obsolete.

Müller does not pretend that every liberal democracy always lives up to this ideal, but insists that they can do so, while other political systems are plainly not even designed to serve that purpose. Self-declared majoritarian victimhood, the driving ideology of populists, for example, is geared to authoritarian governance and the hounding of minorities.

The book has so far only appeared in German, and Müller says an English version will be prepared, but he cannot say when at this point. The German title "Furcht und Freiheit" means "Fear and Freedom". The message is important, but this essay is not easy to read because the author delves deeply into the history of political philosophy. He elaborates, for example,

- that France was once considered to set a liberal example (autocratic Napoleon introduced the Code Civil which did away with aristocrats' privileges and defined business-facilitating individual rights),
- that prosperous elites historically preferred liberal democracy to unqualified democracy (because a stringent constitution would constrain the masses' political desires) and
- that the liberal idea of equal opportunity only developed rather late and did not lead to consequential government-interventions in markets everywhere.

The vast panorama Müller paints of what has historically been considered to be "liberal" is fascinating. The book's strong point is to ground the demand for liberal democracy in the overarching ethical imperative of preventing cruelty.

However, it does not offer diagnostics for what is currently happening around the world.

Climate change is only mentioned in passing, for example. Moreover, Müller does not deal with the oligarchic super elite that tends to promote populist nationalism. Its members include billionaires like the Koch brothers, Rupert Murdoch or the Mercers. These super rich people benefit from international opportunities, but resent regulation. It has been argued that this is precisely the reason they promote nationalism (see article by Hans Dembowski in Monitor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/09).

The background is that regulation increasingly requires supranational cooperation and cannot be enforced by national governments acting on their own. In this context, the insistence on national sovereignty does not make governments more powerful. It reduces their scope for shaping the global order which, so far, has benefited oligarchs more than anyone else. Müller told D+C/E+Z that he is working on a new book that will tackle related questions – and it will first appear in English.

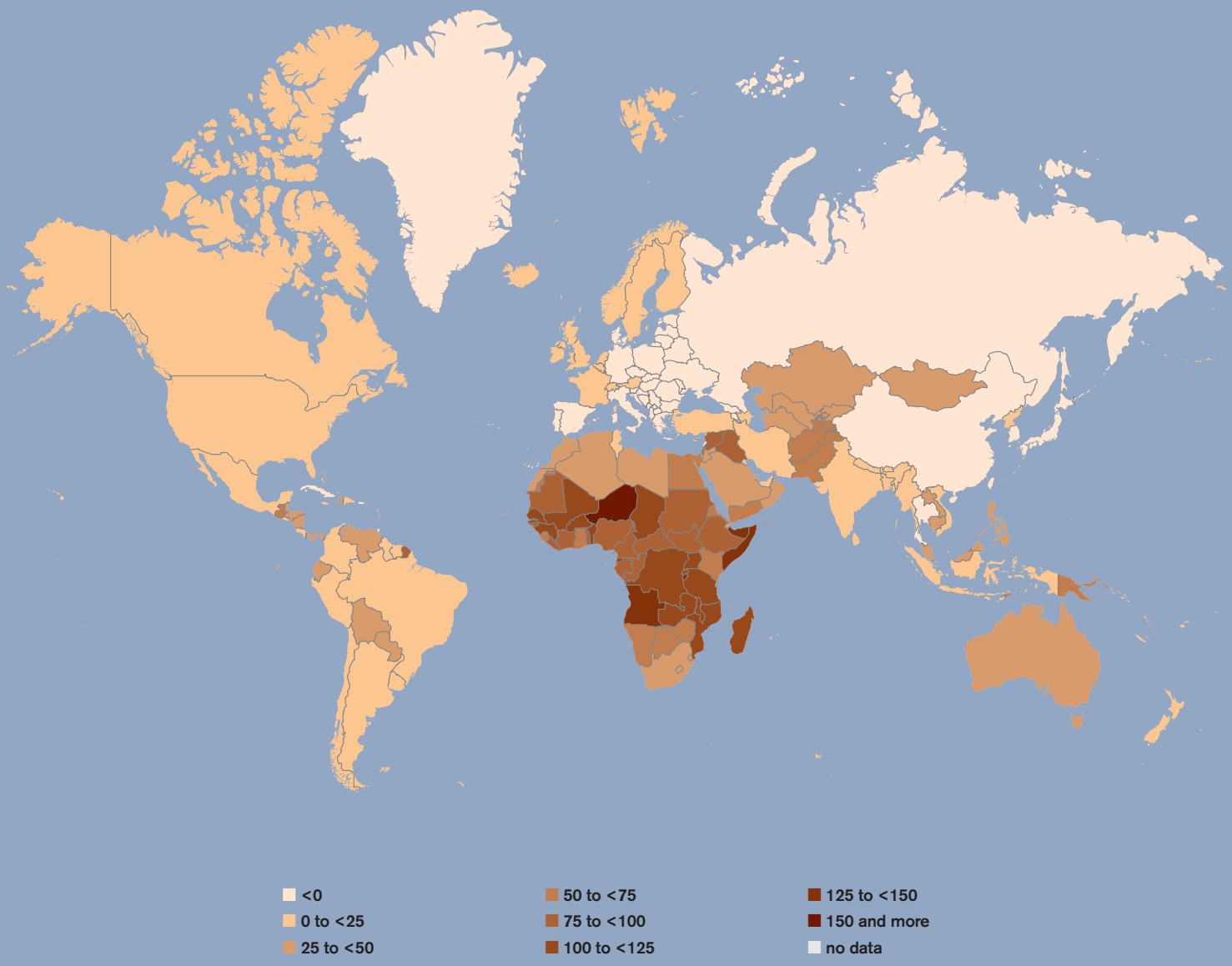
REFERENCES

Müller, J.-W., 2019: Furcht und Freiheit – Für einen anderen Liberalismus. Berlin, Suhrkamp.

Müller, J.-W., 2016: What is populism? Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press (in German: Was ist Populismus? Berlin, Suhrkamp).

Photo: picture-alliance/TopFoto

Estimated population growth worldwide, in percent, 2019 to 2015.



Demographic trends

The growth of the world population is slowing, and societies around the world are ageing. Countries with low and lower middle incomes would do well to grasp a demographic dividend while many young people are joining the labour force without having to take care of many children and elderly parents. The better they succeed in doing so, the better they will be able to ensure that senior citizens who increasingly depend on public support rather than extended families can live well.

This focus section has a bearing on several of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

STEPMAP

Sources: UN DESA, Berlin Institute

POPULATION GROWTH

Global challenge

Africa has the youngest population in the world. There are far too few good jobs for all youngster however. This scenario not only poses major challenges for the continent itself; it has global implications.

By Samir Abi

Africa is home to more than 800 million people under the age of 25. They account for 62% of the total population. In Asia and Latin America, the same age group makes up just slightly more than 40% of the population. In the industrialised countries of Europe and North America, the share is only around 25%.

One of the reasons for Africa's abundance of children is simple. Traditionally, offspring are regarded as a sign of prosperity as well as a gift of nature that must not be rejected for fear of invoking ancestral wrath. There is a gradual trend in the cities towards smaller families, but in rural areas especially, change is very slow.

Across Africa, women today have an average of four to five children. In some countries, such as Niger, the figure is as high as seven. The counterbalance is in the North African countries and South Africa, where two children per woman have become the norm. The main reasons are higher levels of female education, more women in employment and easier access to contraceptives.

Another reason for Africa's large youth population is the fall in infant and child mortality, and better care during pregnancy, moreover, has resulted in less risky births. Improvements in health care, moreover, have generally increased life expectancy. So, compared with the first half of the 20th century, for instance, more children are being born in better health and they live longer.

AFRICA IS GROWING

When the countries of Africa started to gain independence in the 1950s, the continent had a population of around 280 million. That was seven percent of the world population. In the next 60 years, the absolute number rose by more than a billion. Today, there are 1.3 billion people in Africa, accounting for 14% of the world population. Their numbers are still rising. According to the 2019 revision of the UN World Population Prospects, the population of sub-Saharan Africa will increase by more than a billion people by the middle of this century and will continue to grow beyond the year 2100 in contrast to population figures in the other regions. They are forecast to peak before the end of the 21th century.

The question for African countries is what impact demographic change will have on their medium and long-term development. In the past two decades, vigorous economic growth averaged about five percent. That trend has led to the belief that economies will keep gaining strength through to 2030. The problem, however, is that, with population growth at 2.5% a year since the end of the colonial era, the economic performance has been too modest to really shift African economies into a higher gear. At the same time, governments need the increased revenues that high growth makes possible in order to rise to the social challenges population growth presents.

More people, especially more young people, mean fast growing demand for education, good jobs and homes. Many countries cannot meet that demand on their own. Therefore, many African governments simply rely on the private sector meeting the majority of people's needs. In both the health and education sectors, for example, extensive privatisation is common.

Every year, many young people enter the labour market, but fail to find a decent job. There simply is not enough public and private investment. Nonetheless, African governments continue to draw up development plans that count on the demographic dividend (see box, p. 20) to propel their economies forward. Whether that dividend will materialise, however, is questionable.

At present, there are far too few decently paid jobs. Many young people only make precariously little money in the informal sector. To tackle rampant youth unemployment and underemployment, African governments would need to create 450 million jobs over the next 20 years. But because their economies still depend on commodity exports at prices beyond their control, even very good economic growth will not enable them to create more than 100 million jobs by 2050 according to the Africa Competiveness Report 2017.

In Rwanda, as elsewhere in Africa, lots of children are seen as a sign of prosperity.

Photo: kd

Life expectancy in Africa has risen thanks to improved health care: mass vaccination in Ethiopia.

ONLY ONE IN FOUR COUPLES USE CONTRACEPTION

Economists who believe in the demographic dividend also assume that population growth will change due to social progress, which includes better education of girls. However, the pace of that change is significantly slowed by cultural factors, and the strong influence of monotheistic religions that reject contraception. Advocates of a stricter family policy, with governments promoting birth control, call for a "contraceptive revolution". They argue that it is high time for state agencies to intervene. In their view, governments could get three quarters of all African couples to use modern contraceptives. So far, only around a quarter do so.

Without major structural changes in the international economic system and the governance of African countries, Africa's population growth does not bode well. Its impacts are also a matter of concern for the rest of the world – especially neighbouring Europe and the Middle East.

African youth are a time bomb for governments across the continent. Political and economic power tends to be concentrated in the hands of small minorities, and that drives many unemployed young people to rebel. The Arab Spring and the present protest movements in all parts of Africa must be read as signs of widespread instability. The continent must address this problem in the coming decades.

Protest movements are typically suppressed because those in power fear the loss of privileges. All too often, freedom of expression is restricted because political leaders do not want corruption and nepotism to become exposed. Western and Asian multinationals are facilitating corruption and nepotism. They are not creating enough employment, however. Corporate interests are fuelling fears of neo-colonisation among Africans. Some respond with armed insurrection and terrorism.

Another phenomenon deserves attention. It is the mass exodus of young people from Africa. The desire to find decent work turns them into migrants. Ageing populations in the west and demand for cheap labour in the east tempt more and more young Africans to risk their lives on perilous journeys. For these reasons, Africa's demographic development is clearly of global, and not merely African relevance.

LINKS

UN, 2019: World Population Prospects 2019 – Highlights:
https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_Highlights.pdf
African Development Bank, World Economic Forum and World Bank Group, 2017: The Africa Competiveness Report 2017.
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_ACR_2017.pdf

SAMIR ABI
works for Visions Solidaires, a non-governmental development organisation in Togo.
samirvstg@gmail.com

Photo: kd

Demographic change as a driver of economic growth

The "demographic dividend" is something that has helped Asian countries in particular, to achieve marked economic growth. It occurs when there is a surge in the number of people of working age, while the birth rate falls and there are not many old people in need of support. In such a setting, young workers can accumulate assets, and if the savings are productively invested in the country, the economy grows.

Several things must happen for a demographic dividend to materialise. It is not enough to have a comparatively small share of dependent people who need support. There must also be enough jobs for the large demographic group of 15- to 65-year-olds. Only then will increasing disposable incomes lead to higher savings.

Governments can benefit from such an economic boon and harness it for development. Higher productivity and higher incomes can then facilitate more elaborate care for the elderly. In the long term, though, the ageing of society means that a diminishing share of working people has to support a growing number of pensioners, so new problems arise. Whether African countries will benefit from demographic dividends remains to be seen. sa

LABOUR MARKET

Masses of young people, too few jobs

African economies must generate an additional 25 million decent jobs every year to employ all young people and transform the informal sectors. There is scope for economic progress, but no blueprint. Governance matters, especially because several global mega trends are adding to the challenges.

By Hans Dembowski

The figures are stark. Tilman Altenburg of the Bonn-based German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) reckons that some 350 million Africans are toiling away in grim informal employment with no social protection and meagre incomes (see Hans Dembowski in the Monitor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/11) Compounding the problems, an additional 13 million young people crowd onto African labour markets every year. Altenburg concludes that an annual 25 million new decent jobs are needed.

A demographic dividend of the kind that East and Southeast Asia's emerging markets enjoyed in past decades would be good. As Altenburg elaborates, industrialisation there was facilitated by the mass availability of young workers who did not have to fend for many dependent family members, whether children or grandparents (see box page 20). The work in light manufacturing was certainly tough, but even though the wages were low, the incomes were unprecedented. Exports expanded fast and nations began to prosper.

The big question is whether such dynamism can be triggered in Africa. At a DIE-conference in Bonn in February, Altenburg pointed out that several mega trends must be considered. They can prove both helpful and harmful. Demographic change is one. African birth rates are falling slowly, but they are still comparatively high. Other important mega trends include urbanisation and changing patterns of world trade.

Experts currently see no single driver of economic growth that might prove as effective as the advent of light manufacturing in past decades in Asia. They agree that the scenario is bewilderingly complex (see box below for insights from the UN Economic Commission for Africa).

Some scholars hope that Chinese manufacturers will shift production to low-wage countries as wages rise in the People's Republic. However, the expectation of millions of jobs being created in Africa is probably exaggerated. That is what studies published by the DIE and the London-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI) respectively suggest. The researchers argue:

- that Chinese companies tend to prefer to invest in Asian countries,
- that rationalisation and digitalisation mean they actually need fewer workers and
- that those Chinese companies that have strong foreign shareholders are the most likely to invest abroad, which implies that western investors are still particularly important for foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa.

Lindsay Whitfield of Roskilde University in Denmark has studied international supply chains. She warns that it has become difficult to promote light manufacturing simply by setting up special economic zones. In spite of huge efforts, Ethiopia struggled to gain a foothold in global supply chains,

Interrelated challenges

African policymakers must rise to several daunting challenges, argues Vera Songwe of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Crosscutting trends matter very much.

For example, climate change will have a strong impact. Africa is on the equator and comparatively hot already, Songwe says. On the upside, innovative renewable-energy infrastructure looks promising.

Digitalisation offers opportunities that African countries must grasp, Songwe argues. In Nairobi, for example, the number of young people providing internet-based services to foreign customers is growing fast, though it is still small in absolute terms. At the same time, the economist sees digital development bypassing not only Africa, but even Europe to a considerable extent. The reason is that the leading corporations are based in the USA and China.

Songwe wants African governments to do a better job of raising taxes and building infrastructure. As economies grow, they cannot keep relying on official development assistance (ODA). On the other hand, she praises their decision to create the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), which should facilitate trade between African countries and allow new supply chains to emerge. She sees the CFTA as a new kind of multilateralism that is challenging the old variety.

Songwe warns that African countries are at risk of missing the opportunity to grasp a dividend from demographic change. In her eyes, South Africa and Nigeria have already failed to do so (see main story). On the other hand, the economist appreciates that 92 % of African girls are now in school and that gender equity has been achieved among university students.

Things are different in the workforce however. For example, only seven percent of financial-sector employees are female, Songwe points out. Experts agree that unemployment and under-employment affect young women even worse than young men, reinforcing stereotypes of motherhood and homemaking – potentially slowing down the decline of fertility rates (see Samir Abi on p. 19 in this issue). dem

Whitfield reports, because low wages are not enough to attract investors. Rather, it is essential to involve global retail brands early on. The reason is that international competition is fierce. Supply chains are now very sophisticated and tightly managed. In Whitfield's eyes, Ethiopia is now seeing results of its light-manufacturing strategy, but the approach will not work in many countries.

The informal sector remains huge: book seller in Nairobi.

FEEDING URBAN POPULATIONS

Another hope is that urbanisation drives inclusive development, with the demand of surging middle classes increasing fast. Growing cities need to be fed after all. Ousmane Badiane of the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) sees a huge potential for creating gainful employment in the modernisation of rural-urban supply chains. Farm produce should be processed regionally, and the goods could then be distributed efficiently to retail customers (see essay he co-authored with Shenggen Fan in the Tribune section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/12). High-tech applications would prove useful moreover (see interview with Peter Njonjo in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/11).

There is certainly scope for urban demand to drive rural change, but Abebe Shimeles of the multilateral African Development Bank (AfDB) warns that things cannot be taken for granted. He says the continent's new urban middle classes still tend to be "vulnerable or fleeting". While many families plunge back into poverty, others newly rise to lower middle-class status. Inequality remains great, the scholar says.

Education can make a difference, Shimeles points out, but while individual returns tend to be high, social returns do not. Higher productivity should propel entire economies, but the economist does not see education making that happen. Neither skills training nor colleges have made a decisive difference yet.

Given that the private sector, on its own, is unlikely to generate employment as needed, Joachim von Braun of Bonn University proposes public works schemes. He insists that nations must provide work to their people. At the same time, there is a great need to build infrastructure. Public work schemes would thus serve a double purpose.

There is no obvious recipe for reaping in a demographic dividend. Policy choices will matter very much. Governments, for example, must identify which sector has competitive advantages and might therefore deserve targeted support. Unfortunately, there is reason to doubt that African leaders will be up to the task.

Stefan Dercon of Oxford University warns that neopatrimonialism still marks many states: policymakers use government resources to forge alliances with powerful interest groups, and those alliances then entrench the privileges of their members. According to Dercon, too few African countries have what it takes to define something like a "national growth bargain". Nonetheless, he believes that some may succeed – including Kenya and Ethiopia in East Africa and Ghana and Senegal in West Africa. To do so, they need the kind of policy consensus that proved beneficial in Asian tiger nations. The preconditions, he says, are:

- peace and political stability,
- an affective state and
- leaders and elites committed to growth.

Carlos Lopes of the African Union acknowledges that the complexity of the challenges exceeds the capacities of many governments concerned. At the same time, he expresses the hope that policy debate will improve leadership.

Lopes also points out, moreover, that Africa's population peak may actually come sooner than currently expected. In his eyes, the reduction of both maternal and child mortality are promising. The societal ageing of nations on other continents, moreover, could make Africa's youthfulness, which now looks like a time bomb, actually become something like a global public good.

Photo: dem

Beneficiaries of Zanzibar's universal social pension in 2018.

AGEING AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Africa's demographic transition

Over the coming decades the number of older people is expected to grow fastest in Africa. As a result, the continent will face a number of challenges that must be identified and tackled now. The implementation of social pensions can be an important pillar.

By Florian Jürgens

The median age of Africans is currently 19 years. For comparison, Europe's median age is 43 years and Asia's 32. But this is going to change. In the coming decades the proportion of older people in some African countries will come close to rates experienced currently in industrialised countries.

While this might be news to some people, it has been a long time coming. There has been a steady increase over the past 40 years in the number of older Africans, and this trend is expected to accelerate. Its population of people aged 60 or older is projected to increase more than threefold between 2017 and 2050, from 69 to 226 million (see Alisa Kaps in this e-Paper, p. 25).

For some countries, an ageing population is already a reality. For instance, the proportion of over-65s in Tunisia and Mauritius is around seven percent, twice as much as it was 20 years ago. Similar patterns can be observed in Botswana, South Africa and Libya.

Life expectancy on the African continent still remains lower than in any other region, but the greatest gains over the past two decades were also experienced in Africa. According to UN data, life expectancy at birth rose by more than six years between 2000 and 2005 and between 2010 and 2015. As improvements in poverty reduction and health are expected to improve further, African life expectancy at birth is projected to reach 71 years by 2045 to 2050, from 60 years in 2010 to 2015.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy at birth is hugely influenced by high levels of infant mortality and therefore reveals little about the survival of older adults. For that, life expectancy at 60 is a better indicator. Currently, a 60-year-old African can expect, on average, to live another 17 years.

It is important to look beyond survival to consider how people are living their older age – whether these extra years are spent in good or poor health. Healthy life expectancy (HALE) is a World Health Organization measure of population health and indicates what is happening. Globally, HALE is rising, but in many places, not at the same rate as life expectancy. This means that the proportion of life spent in poor health is likely to be increasing for some people. For example, in Kenya, the gap between life expectancy at 60 and HALE at 60 increased for women and men between 2000 and 2015.

CHANGE OF ATTITUDE

The demographic transition touches on every aspect of society, from ensuring universal access to age-appropriate health care and support, to enabling older people to remain socially and economically active and ensuring income security through adequate and sustainable pension systems. In broad terms, the challenge for all countries, whether rich or poor, is to develop systems that can provide care and support to people of all ages in line with their human rights.

If societies do not adapt to population ageing, there is a real risk that millions of older people will fail to get the opportunities and support they need. Given the still predominately young age of Africa's population, it is not surprising that ageing is not

Photo: Kate Holt/HelpAge International

always high on the political agenda of most governments. However, this should soon change. Fortunately, there is now a window of opportunity to learn from the experiences of others – in particular Asian countries – and adapt policies and systems that can meet the needs of populations of all ages.

Now is also the time to challenge ageism and pervasive stereotypes of older people as inherently dependent and vulnerable. For example, a recent study in Uganda found that 63 % of interviewed older people had experienced situations where they were not being taken seriously because of their age.

Bias and misconceptions can also lead to a failure to recognise disability in older age as functional impairments. It is often wrongly identified as a natural consequence of ageing and thus ignored.

New narratives need to be developed that reflect not only the myriad contributions of older people to African families, societies and economies, but also firmly recognise that people's human rights do not diminish with age.

Older women, such as this one in Zanzibar, are particularly disadvantaged, because they very often faced a life of discrimination and unpaid work.

Photo: Kate Holt/HelpAge International

EXPANDING SOCIAL PROTECTION

Most people in Africa lack income security when they grow older. Ensuring income security throughout the life-course is a core responsibility of the government, clearly established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, at the regional level, the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Pensions are the main mechanism to ensure income security to older people and the most widespread form of social protection. At the global level, 68 % of older people receive a pension, and there has been significant progress in recent years. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa the rate is less than 30 % according to the International Labour Organization.

In most African countries, contributory pension schemes based on formal employment cover only small percentages of older people. The main reason is that most of them are not formally employed. This challenge is likely to persist, as only around six percent of workers in sub-Saharan Africa contribute to a pension. While the better-off may be able to ensure income security in their older age through savings, assets or family support, most Africans' sources of income are low and unreliable, even during the most productive years.

Older women are particularly disadvantaged. After a lifetime of discrimination and unpaid work, women often arrive at older age with limited economic and social assets to call upon.

The good news is that more and more African countries are implementing tax-financed social pensions, often provided on a universal basis, to provide at least basic income security for all older people. Africa, and in particular eastern and southern Africa, has a rich tradition of social pension. The oldest of these schemes is the Old Age Grant in South Africa that was introduced

Pioneering universal social pension in Zanzibar

In 2016, the government of the island of Zanzibar that is part of Tanzania established the Zanzibar Universal Pension Scheme (ZUPS), East Africa's first fully government-funded universal social pension. The ZUPS entitles all Zanzibari residents aged 70 years and above to a monthly pension of about eight euros. A recent evaluation found that the guaranteed income had a positive effect on older people and their households, enabling them to increase their spending on food, health and education. Qualitative evidence further highlighted that the pension improved older people's well-being. Recipients spoke about how the pension had given them a renewed sense of dignity and independence. For some people, the pension is the only source of income. "Because we did not get money in the past, some of the people were eating one meal per day, now the situation is better," says a female recipient, and another adds: "I now have my own money without being dependent on anyone. We were not used to see money regularly but now we do. This is a proud thing."

fj

in 1927, followed by Namibia (1942), Botswana (1996), Lesotho (2004) and Swaziland (2005). Small island states such as Mauritius and Seychelles also have long standing social pensions, introduced in 1950 and 1979 respectively.

Most recent examples of countries ensuring the income security of older people through the implementation of universal social pensions include Kenya (2018) – reaching close to 1 million older people – and Zanzibar in 2016 (see box, previous page). Meanwhile, Uganda's Senior Citizens Grant reaches 348,000 older people and is currently being rolled out nationally, targeting an additional 200,000 older Ugandans.

Receiving a pension can have a transformative impact for older people. Growing older is often associated with increased challenges to earning a living, particularly due to ill health, chronic disease and disability. Indeed, almost half of all people over 60 years experience some form of disability, and both the risk and prevalence of disability increases with age.

The unique role of pensions is repeatedly emphasised by older people themselves and has been reinforced by a growing evidence base. Pensions not only help older people to meet daily expenses but can transform their role within families and communities to one of dignity and independence. Evidence suggests that cash transfers, including social pensions, can have very positive effects and play an important role in removing some of the barriers to health care for older people. They can also improve older people's wellbeing through better access to food and sanitation, self-esteem and dignity, as the aid organisation HelpAge found out in a study.

Pensions also indirectly support adults and children living in pensioner households. The documented benefits for children include better nutrition, increased school enrolment and reduced child labour. Pensions also support inclusive economic development by enabling households to improve their livelihoods. Moreover, equitable pension systems are crucial to ensure that gender inequalities are not carried into or amplified in older age.

REFERENCES

UN, 2019: World Population Prospects. The 2019 Revision.
https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/
UN, 2019: World Population Ageing.
https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf
ILO, 2018: Social protection for older persons. Policy trends and statistics 2017–19.
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_645692.pdf
HelpAge, 2017: Cash transfers and older people's access to healthcare. A multi-country study in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.
http://www.helpage.es/silo/files/cash-transfers--.pdf
HelpAge, 2019: Impact Evaluation of the Zanzibar Universal Pension Scheme.
https://www.helpage.org/newsroom/press-room/press-releases/older-peoples-lives-transformed-in-zanzibar-through-pioneering-universal-social-pension-scheme/

FLORIAN JÜRGENS
is Global Advisor – Social Protection at HelpAge International.
florian.juergens@helpage.org

POPULATION TRENDS

More and more, older and older

Although the global population is growing more slowly than it did in the past, it is currently still increasing by around 80 million people a year. Demographic developments are presenting challenges in every world region, and especially so in sub-Saharan Africa.

By Alisa Kaps

In 2018, for the first time in human history, the worldwide number of people over the age of 64 exceeded the number of children under the age of five. According to UN estimates, the number of people of retirement age will double once more in the next 30 years. The older age groups would then also outnumber people between 15 and 24. In any case, the world population will definitely keep getting older.

This information will hardly surprise people in Italy, Portugal or Germany. In these countries, the median age, which divides the population into two equal groups, is above 45. Those are the peak figures in Europe, the demographically oldest world region. Japan, however, is the oldest country – with the median age of 48.

The fact that people are getting older and older is causing problems, especially in places where the ratio of elderly people to people of working age is increasing. The latter group must generate the funds needed to care for the pensioners. The question of how social and pension systems can best adapt to an ageing population is a hot topic in the global North. Finding sustainable solutions is becoming ever more urgent. The ageing of the baby-boom generation means that difficult times lie ahead for the countries concerned.

The ageing of society does not only have impacts on the global North, however. It increasingly affects newly industrialising and developing countries. Since life expectancies have risen in Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East in recent decades, the share of people over 64 there is expected to double by 2050. National governments face the challenge of expanding their health-care systems and social services so they will have the capacities to meet the needs of a growing number of older people.

Population ageing is the result of a development path that is called the "demographic transition" (see box, p. 27). At the end of this process, populations start to shrink. By 2050, 55 countries will experience

Japan's population is the oldest in the world.

a population decline of at least one percent. Many of them are in Europe. In absolute terms, however, China is expected to see the greatest loss. According to UN estimates, this demographic giant with a current population of 1.4 billion – more than the entire African continent – will have about 37 million fewer residents by the middle of the century. The consequences of China's one-child-per-family policy are forcing it to rise to new challenges (see article by Felix Lee on p. 32).

Generally speaking, the world population will grow more slowly in the future than it did in the past. Since the mid-1960s, the global population growth rate has been halved. It used to be two percent, but has dropped to one percent. However, today significantly more people of reproductive age live on earth than six decades ago. Therefore, the world population is currently still growing by about an annual 80 million. By 2050 it is expected to grow to a total of 9.7 billion people – an increase of around 2 billion in just three decades. Growth will certainly be concentrated primarily in South and Central Asia as well as in Africa. Over half of the global population growth in the next 30 years will occur in sub-Saharan Africa, which will add 1 billion people during this period.

DEALING WITH THE TRANSITION

A growing population doesn't pose a problem as long as the increasing number of people can be well cared for. That precisely is the challenge in sub-Saharan Africa: many countries in this world region do not even have enough food, sanitary facilities, hospitals and schools today. Moreover, there is an almost universal shortage of jobs, so people lack attractive prospects and cannot enjoy adequate standards of living (see article by Samir Abi on p. 19).

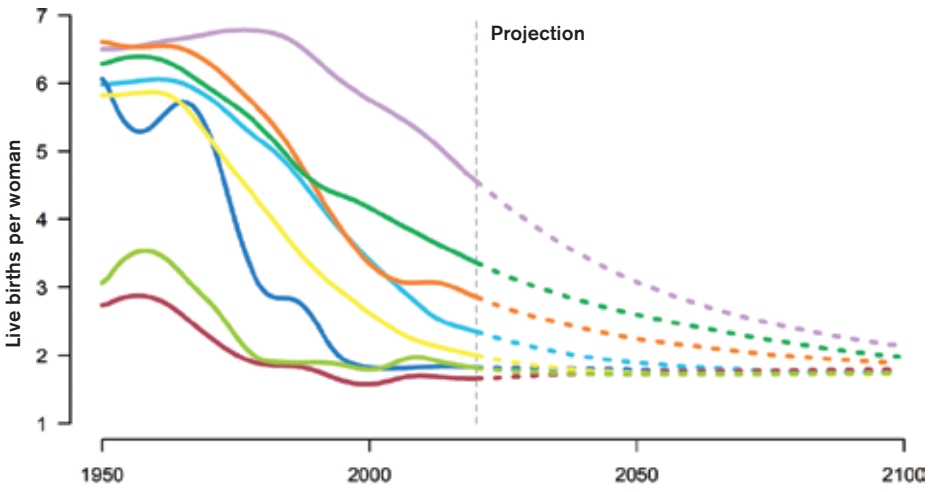
The main reason for Africa's rapid population growth is that fertility rates continue to be high across the continent. Death rates have fallen sharply, but the decline of fertility rates is significantly slower than it was in other world regions. Over the course of their lives, women in Africa currently give birth to 4.5 children on average, almost twice as many as in any other part of the world.

The average figures mask the fact that the things differ very much from country to country. In some countries the demographic transition has advanced considerably. That is true of Mauritius and the Seychelles, two comparatively well-developed island countries, or Morocco and Tunisia in North Africa. In these places, the fertility rate has dropped below 2.5 children per woman.

Other countries are currently experiencing a rapid decline in fertility rates because of prudent policies. Ghana, for example, managed to increase the incomes of smallholder farmers by investing in agriculture, and that has had a positive impact on children's health. Combined with large investments in education, such policy interventions changed people's attitudes about the ideal family size. Women now have 3.9 children on average. The same trend is evident in Ethiopia, where the total fertility rate fell from over seven children per woman in the 1990s to slightly more than four

Photo: Friedrich/picture-alliance/imageBROKER

Total fertility by region



Source: UN World Population Prospects 2019.

children today. The reasons include better health care, easier access to contraception, improved education and more employment opportunities for women.

These examples show that there are some positive trends in Africa. Other countries can learn from success, accelerating their own demographic transition by following the trailblazers' policy examples.

Lower fertility rates would boost prosperity in sub-Saharan Africa. Caring for small children requires huge efforts from families as well as spending on schools and other public services. In the medium term, a decline in fertility rates would change the age structure which could benefit African economies. After all, as the number of children being born continues to fall, subsequent cohorts become smaller, and the population bulge shifts to people of working age. This means that many people can be productive while the number of children and older people, who need to be taken care of, is small. Provided there are enough jobs available, this window of opportunity can be transformed into an economic upswing, a so-called "demographic dividend" (see box on p. 20).

If things go well in the future, the demographic development could therefore give African countries a competitive advantage over the global North's ageing societies, where the number of people of working age is declining. For that to happen, however, governments in sub-Saharan Africa would have to make sure that fertility rates drop. They need to implement measures in relevant areas such as health care, education and employment. Where the number of children stays high, there will be no demographic dividend.

By contrast, the countries of the global North must deal with both population ageing and shrinking. They need to find ways to keep their economies and welfare systems running at the same time. Migration would help to cushion both trends. So far, however, the advanced nations are displaying discomfort with accepting immigrants. The demographic transformation may very soon force them to admit that they actually need immigrants – with increasing urgency.

ALISA KAPS
is a researcher at the Berlin Institute for Population and Development and is primarily concerned with the demographic challenges of sub-Saharan Africa.
kaps@berlin-institut.org

Demographic transition

The simplified model of the demographic transition describes the shift from a pre-industrial society, in which the fertility and death rates are high, to a society in which fertility rates are low, but people grow relatively old thanks to lower mortality rates.

Death rates always fall before fertility rates do. Therefore, populations initially increase fast. Later, fertility rates begin to fall – provided that prosperity increases, education improves and people have more individual options in their lives. Population growth slows down accordingly, until it stops altogether. Because of the low fertility rate and a high life expectancy, the societies concerned become older and older.

The frontrunners of the demographic transition are the prosperous nations of the global North. They are now in the final phase of this transformation. Their current birth rates tend to be far below the so-called replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, at which a population size is stable in the long run without needing immigrants. In some countries, populations have actually begun to shrink.

In some developing countries and emerging markets fertility rates have fallen below replacement level too. They include Brazil, Chile, Malaysia and Nepal. About half of the world population now lives in countries in which women bear fewer than 2.1 children on average in their lifetime. ak

LINK
DSW data report 2019:
https://www.dsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/DSW-Datenreport-2019.pdf

TEENAGER

What sex education is really about

Young people in many developing countries are not systematically taught about reproductive health and the psychology of intimacy. It is harmful to keep all things sexual shrouded in secrecy – as is evident in Pakistan, for example.

By Mahwish Gul

Sex education is most controversial in Pakistan. It is seen as immoral and vulgar. Common statements include:

- "Our children do not indulge in premarital sex, so why teach them about it?"
- "Our generation did well without it."
- "It is a ploy to westernise our society."
- "Sex comes naturally to everyone."
- "It is unnatural for parents or teachers to talk about 'sex' with children."

These statements reveal a deep misunderstanding. Those who say this, make people believe that sex education is about telling them to have sex. In truth, it is about health, hygiene, family planning and relationship needs.

Pakistan has one of the most youthful populations in the world. More than half of the people are younger than 30. They face huge challenges. The labour market offers too few opportunities, so many will depend on informal livelihoods. Masses are only poorly educated.

Deficient sex education adds to the problem. Young people do not understand how their bodies function, for example, and they have misconceptions of what gender relations are about. In the 21st century, moreover, ideas of sex are shaped by internet pornography which has a known propensity to include pictures of violence. The truth is that sex education is more important today than in the past.

On the other hand, it is clear that older generation would have benefited from better information too. Young girls, for instance, must know that the menstruation all of them experience is a perfectly normal physiological occurrence. Instead, it is hushed up. The result is shame, fear and unhygienic practices. When it occurs for the first time, menarche is a shock for young girls, and from then on, it is dealt with silence throughout their life.

In Pakistan, people – and especially women – still marry at a young age. One out of every three brides is still a teenager. Many become pregnant soon. This puts both their and their offspring's health and life at risk. The experience shows that girls who marry early are less likely to finish school and less likely to find work outside the household. They become economically dependent and are at higher risk of domestic violence. The lack of sex education actually entrenches destructive gender roles and reduces young women's scope for personal advancement. They must learn at a young age how they can become pregnant and what health requirements go along with pregnancy to protect them and their babies from harm.

It is well known that Pakistan must further reduce birth rates. The national government has been promoting family planning since the 1960s to reduce population growth. There have been some, but not sufficient results (see box, p. 29). Pakistani women, on average, still give birth four times in their lives, and far too many young couples still do not use contraceptives.

UNWANTED PREGNANCIES

It is estimated that more than half of all pregnancies are unwanted. Though abortion is illegal in Pakistan, it is common. It

In Pakistan, many brides are teenagers.

Photo: CCPP

is also dangerous – often provided by unskilled persons in settings that are unfit for a medical intervention. Telling teenagers early on how to use contraceptives and where to get them could make a difference.

Knowledge of blood-borne pathogens, such as hepatitis B and C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is extremely low. Far too many people do not know that unsafe sex is not the only mode of transmission. Due to a culture of shame and contempt, no one knows the true extent of prevalence and incidence of such diseases. Sex education could improve matters.

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children is increasingly reported in Pakistan. It was perhaps always there, but always hushed up. Keeping everything related to sex shrouded in mystery does not protect the victims. It ensures impunity to perpetrators. Educating young people about their body makes them aware of their rights and provides them with means to protect themselves.

The sad truth is that young people continue to be neglected in Pakistan's public affairs. The country has no national statistics on youth's social and psychological well-being. No representative survey has ever assessed their mental health. It fits the pattern that they are denied essential information on reproductive health and sexuality.

Civil society organisations have piloted isolated initiatives to impart sex education in Pakistan. They often call it something like "life skills education" or "family life education". By avoiding the word "sex" they hope to convey important knowledge to young people. They understand well that the lack of sex education causes problems.

And they also know that the older generation would have benefited from competent advice too. The plain truth is that sex education really is not about having sex. It is about preparing teenagers for a responsible, safe and fulfilling adulthood. Girls in particular need good sex education – they are the ones who will get pregnant (see Aditi Roy Ghatak in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/05, Debate section).

MAHWISH GUL
is a consultant from Pakistan who specialises in development management and has recently moved to Nairobi.
mahwish.gul@gmail.com

Fast population growth

With over 200 million people, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. In view of its high fertility rate of about four children per woman, it is expected to rise to the fourth rank by 2050, surpassing both Indonesia and Brazil. The irony is that Pakistan has a long history of trying to reduce population growth.

Pakistan's family-planning programme started in the 1960s. It was the first in South Asia, but for a long time it hardly had any impact. Critics pointed out ineffective policies, poor management and low quality of family-planning services.

In addition, cultural and socio-economic factors played a role. They include:

- a strong preference for sons, not least because they are the ones who will take care of the parents in old age,
- the desire for large families and
- early marriage.

Low education levels were another problem, and so was high infant mortality, which meant families wanted more children to be sure some would survive. Fertility persisted between six and seven births per woman until the late 1980s.

The country saw considerable progress in the 1990s, with the fertility rate dropping to around four births per woman on average. The data collected between 1990 to 1997 showed a constant decline. The census in 1998 showed that population growth had slowed down to 2.6% from more than three percent in the 1980s.

One reason for declining fertility was the sharp increase in contraceptive use among women from below 10% in the 1980s to 24% by 1997. This coincided with better socio-economic conditions, improved education and exposure to mass media.

Government action mattered too. The density and quality of family-planning services had improved. Community-based action was supported. Social marketing of contraceptives took hold in rural areas. The national TV channel aired dramas on the need for smaller families, reproductive health and use of contraception. These television programmes were proved quite popular.

The momentum was not sustained, however. Demographic change began to stall at the turn of the 21st century. Fertility kept declining, but at a very slow rate. According to the Pakistan Demographic Health Surveys, the fertility rate went down from 4.1 in 2006-2007 to 3.6 births per woman in 2017-2018. If this trend persists, it will take Pakistan more than four decades to achieve the replacement level of 2.1 births. It means that the population size is basically stable, as is now the case for Bangladesh for example (see Najma Rizvi in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/07, Debate section).

There are several reasons why Pakistan's fertility rate has stalled close to the mark of four births. Early marriages are still common, the culture is conservative and the family system is patriarchal. Families have strong preference for boys for economic reasons – the daughters will leave their parents and take care of their husbands' parents in old age for example.

However, Pakistan's comparatively fast population growth reduces the country's development opportunities. In the long run, sustainable results will only be achieved through improving access to health services, girls' education and women's opportunities in the labour market. mg

SOCIETAL AGEING

Turning grey

India's population is still growing, but by mid-century, those of working age will start to be outnumbered by people over 60 and children under 15. Government and civil society should plan now how to improve social services for the elderly population.

By S. S. Sripriya and S. Siva Raju

India's population growth has declined to 1.1% per year. Given that the country has 1.36 billion people, that will still amount to an additional 150 million persons in absolute numbers by the end of this decade. At the same time, society is ageing – and faster than those of developed countries. The number of people over age 60 as a share of the total Indian population is rising each year.

The proportion of elderly will increase from eight percent in 2015 to 19% in 2050, according to a country report published by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA, 2017). The demographic trends raise questions about how India will support its elderly beginning mid-century, when non-working age people start to outnumber those of working age.

The reasons for the greying of the population are the same in India as elsewhere. People are living longer as a result of better health care, improved nutrition and greater awareness of hygiene. In other words, India's death rates – deaths per 1000 population in any given year – have been falling steadily for decades.

At the same time, families are having fewer children as their education and incomes rise. Both the fertility rate (the average number of children per woman over a lifetime) and the birth rate (a population-wide measure for a given year) have been falling steadily for years. On the other hand, mortality rates for children under five have fallen sharply as a result of control of infectious and parasitic diseases, increased immunisation and public-health improvements. That is why today's children are more likely to survive than those of the past, thereby blunting the impact of the lower birth rate.

In contrast to the population of children, the population of old people is increasing. The index of ageing shows this trend clearly. The index is the number of people over 60 per 100 children under age 15. In 1961 the ratio was 13.7 elderly for every 100 children. By 2011 the ratio had more than doubled, to 28.4.

These trends have big implications for India's future development. Thirty years from now, when today's gradually shrinking cohort of children is of working age, many millions of today's workers will have retired. That future combination – more retirees and fewer work force entrants to replace them – could be a challenge.

For now, India still enjoys the "demographic dividend" understood as having far more working-age than non-working age people. However, projections show the positive ratio gradually coming down.

The data show that in 1971 the working-age population supported a comparatively large cohort of babies and children under 15 plus a relatively small elderly population. The population bulge that year was at the low end of the age pyramid, at ages 0-14.

Forty years later, in 2011, India had received a bonus: the "population bulge" babies and children of 1971 were of working age. People between 15 and 60 years old were the predominant population group – a happy circumstance from an economic perspective.

But then the demographers peered into the future by projecting out current trends, and started to see a picture, which is different from the present one. The age distribution pyramid for 2031, only 11 years from now, shows that the big working-age cohort seen in 2011 will start to retire. By 2031, the base of the demographic pyramid – the age brackets where the most people are found – will still be solidly in working age territory, but the entire pyramid will have shifted upwards along the age axis compared to 2011. In other words, by 2031 the age brackets over 60 will have far more people in them than they did in 2011.

Looking a further 20 years ahead, to 2051, the demographers found these trends will start to have a real impact. In 2051 the biggest bulge will be in the 50-55 age group – still in working-age territory, but just barely. Moreover, the age groups above 55 will have many more people than they did in 2031.

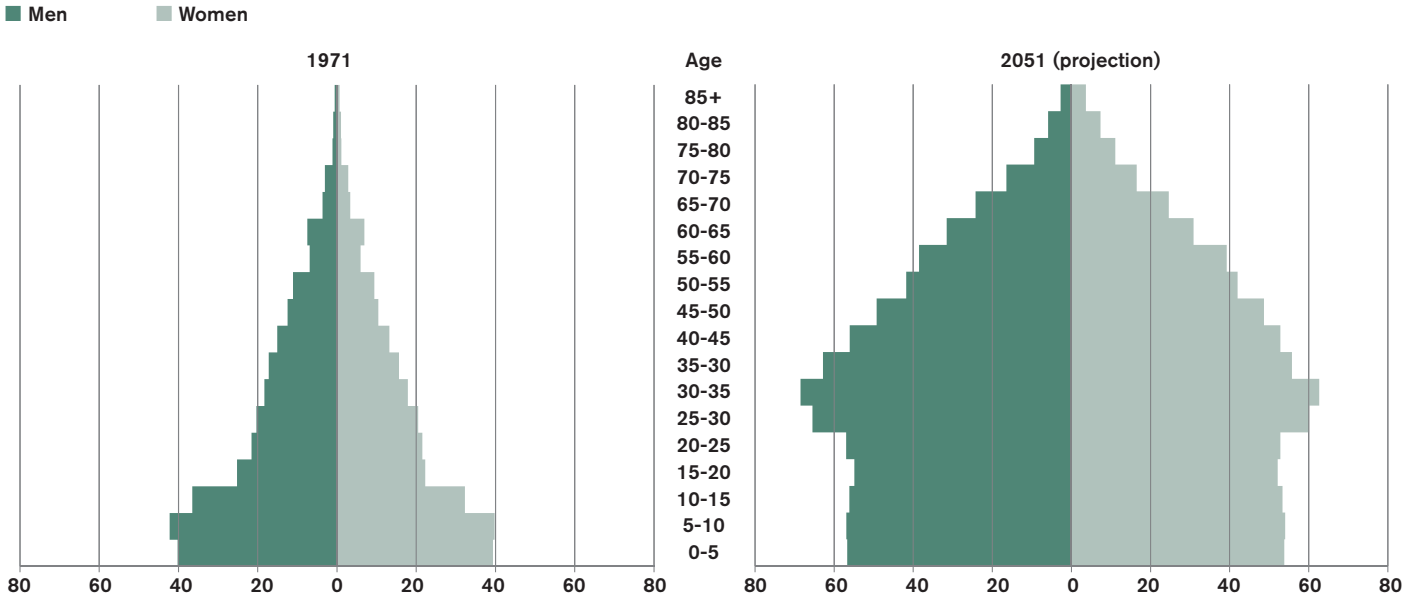
At the same time, the ranks of children under 15 will be smaller in 2051 than in 2031. That suggests the work force from 2051 onward will not receive enough new entrants to make up for all the departures of retirees.

India currently has comparatively few very young and very old persons: an infant and an old man from a rural community in Rajasthan

Photo: Birgit Koch/Lineair

India's population pyramid in 1971 and the projection for 2051.

The graphs show the age- and gender-distribution of India's population over time. For every age group, the horizontal bar charts show the number (in ten millions) of male (on the left) and female persons (on the right).



The non-working age population will start to outnumber the working age population, placing increasingly heavy burdens on workers.

NEW SOCIAL SERVICES NEEDED

These population trends raise questions of where the financial, social and psychological support will come from for India's ageing population. While the family is still the primary support for old people in India's culture, this is changing under the pressures of urbanisation and globalisation.

Aside from financial dependence, elderly people face a range of problems including isolation, neglect, illness and disability. Shifts in societal attitudes that now place a greater emphasis on individual fulfilment can lead older people to feel less valued. Reduced decision-making power and an excess of free time are prone to compounding psychological problems.

Before they become acute, these problems should be addressed by governments, non-government organisations and academics. All stakeholders associated with ageing issues need to come together and play their respective role. India will need a multi-pronged approach based on the different needs of different subgroups of elderly people. Ageing among the poor, among women and among rural residents should receive particular attention.

A concerted effort to improve the quality of life in old age should begin with the demographic facts. India's states have widely varying concentrations of old people. In 2011 the proportion of people over 60 was highest in the State of Kerala (12.3%) and lowest in the state of Assam (6.5%).

Levels of poverty and illiteracy also vary dramatically within the elderly population. Moreover, rural areas tend to have higher concentrations of elderly than do cities, which attract younger workers. There is a gender aspect too: as women live longer than men on average, the over-60 population is more likely to be female.

All these factors – geography, urbanisation, gender, income and education – affect the degree and type of support that elderly people will need in future. So will the more intangible element of changing norms and values, which will influence how much support older people will receive from their families, and therefore how much supplemental help they will need from government and other organisations.

India has started to address the needs of the elderly. The Integrated Programme for Older Persons in 1992, revised in 2008, provides food and shelter, medical care and opportunities for entertainment. The National Policy on Older Persons in 1999 offers food and shelter, financial aid, health care and protection against abuse. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007 supports abandoned seniors by providing old age homes, medical facilities and property protections.

Each of these programmes aims to meet the needs of specific segments of the elderly population. As India's ageing gathers pace, many more such programmes will be needed.

REFERENCE

UNFPA, 2017: India ageing report. ***https://india.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/India%20Ageing%20Report%20-%202017%20%28Final%20Version%29.pdf***

S. S. SRIPRIYA
is a research scholar at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai.

S. SIVA RAJU
is a professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences' campus in Hyderabad. ***https://tiss.edu/view/9/employee/s-sivaraju/***

Source: Registrar General of India

RETIREMENT PROVISIONS

From the iron rice bowl to the filial piety law

China is getting old before it has got rich. The one-child policy is partially to blame for this trend. It is the reason why the world's most populous country can no longer prevent a demographic collapse. Millions of people lack adequate retirement provisions.

By Felix Lee

Retiring at 55 is an option for women working in China's public sector. Women factory workers can retire as young as 50, men at 60. That, at least, is the official rule, but it is also largely theoretical. The reality is far from being so rosy.

Over three-fourths of people over 60 lack the means to retire. If they benefit from a pension scheme at all, the benefits are far too small to actually live on. That is particularly true in rural areas, but things are harsh in cities too. Though urban workers have been entitled to receive state pensions at 50, 55 or 60 in recent years, they cannot count on those benefits for much longer. The retirement age will soon rise to 65 across the board. This is one example of the government's attempts to grapple with a gigantic challenge: China is getting old before it has got rich.

Society is ageing fast, resulting in immense problems. In 2004, people over 60 made up 9 % of the population. In 2017, that share was 16 %. By 2015, the government expects it to rise to 40 %.

One reason is the increased life expectancy. It is currently 72 years on average and will likely rise thanks to improving medical care. But the main reason is China's family policy: for over 35 years, the Chinese leadership enforced a one-child policy in order to stem population growth in the world's most populous country. Even western demographics experts were long in favour of this approach, but it is becoming ever more evident that it is leading to disaster.

"Have one child and you'll be happy." This slogan was repeated in children's songs and featured in TV commercials. The one-child policy was adopted in 1979. It went far beyond slogans. Whoever became pregnant a second time had to face draconian punishments. Millions of women underwent forced abortions, young men suffered forced sterilisations. Second children who were born nonetheless had no claim to places in nurseries or schools.

The Communist leadership was certainly ruthless, but there was good reason for worries. China's population had nearly doubled to about half a billion people from 1949 to 1979. The economy was still underdeveloped, and so was the country's infrastructure. Population growth was thus a daunting challenge.

The radical policy delivered results fast. The birth rate dropped abruptly from an average of eight children in the 1960s to one child per woman. The Communist party boasted that its policy had prevented 400 million births.

Today, however, the negative impacts on the economy, society and social services are being felt. Since 2011, the number of working-age people has been falling sharply, while the number of pensioners who depend on support keeps growing. This development will continue. In 2030, the People's Republic will have more pensioners than kids under the age of 15. By the middle of the century, every third Chinese person will be older than 60. Even today, the state pension scheme has a mere three financial contributors for every beneficiary.

Only in the past 10 years did China begin to establish a public pension system that people might actually live on. Until the 1970s, under Mao Zedong, the revolutionary leader, the population was split into two groups. The urban population lived according to the principle of the "iron rice bowl". They were entitled

The one-child family was the norm in China for decades: a family in Wuhan in 2006.

Photo: kd

to a job, an apartment and food vouchers. With a monthly salary equivalent of less than what € 50 buy today, their entire lives were regulated in great detail from nursery school to retirement.

Urban residents only made up a tenth of the people, however, as 90 % lived in rural areas. They were given parcels of land, and farmers were basically expected to feed themselves. They could sell any surplus to the cities, but most did subsistence farming. Old-age provisions thus strictly remained a family affair. The traditional attitude still made sense: the more children parents had, the better prepared they felt for old age.

Economic reforms began in the 1980s, but they did little to change the rural-urban divide. The leadership initially focused on generating high rates of economic growth. Many Chinese people moved from the country to the cities and coastal regions. They were happy to be able to earn money in the newly established industrial centres and achieve a modest degree of wealth. They sent the little that they could save of their monthly wages back to family members in the countryside. A comprehensive social security system was unthinkable.

However, the one-child policy disrupted the traditional method of rural old-age provisions. A young married couple now had four parents and up to eight grandparents to take care of. According to traditions, married women were supposed to support their husbands' parents in old age, not their own. The implication was that parents who only had a daughter would have no one to care for them when old. Boys were thus more valuable, and many girls were aborted. The result was a significant surplus of men.

For many years, efforts to establish a pension system concentrated on urban people. Until the 1990s, however, a public pension scheme only served government employees, party members and staff of state-run industries. Private-sector corporations did not exist.

Things changed with the economic liberalisation of the 1980s. Millions of young men and women from the countryside moved to the cities seeking work in factories or service industries. They were considered migrant labourers, and the government provided no benefits to them for a long time. Officially, they were still farmers with land to cultivate.

The number of elderly people in China is growing. Providing for them is a major challenge: an elderly man in a village in Yunnan Province.

The number of migrant labourers quickly grew to several hundred million, however. In the 1990s, their numbers amounted to over half of the total population.

The government has since changed its approach. It has created a pension system for private-sector employees. Employers and employees make matching contributions into a social fund, which insures employees against disability or unemployment and guarantees them a basic pension. To some extent, that system also relies on government subsidies.

What should work in theory, however, does not do so in real life. The situation of migrant labourers remains particularly precarious. Their wages have risen dramatically in recent years, but most companies' social funds still do not provide adequate pensions. Legal requirements thus remain unfulfilled, and, as a result, factory workers often go on strike.

The situation of rural people is precarious too. The government has promised to adjust their circumstances to those of city dwellers. Its rural pension system is voluntary however, and in view of farmers' meagre earnings, it adds up to no more than a drop in the bucket. Hu Xingdou, an economist at the Beijing Institute of Technology, says: "Rural people have no choice but to work for as long as they can and to rely on their families in old age, just like they would have done in China in the Middle Ages."

The government wants to alleviate the problem at least somewhat. Five years ago, it replaced its one-child policy with a two-child policy. It has also completely ended its efforts to control population growth. But this redirection of family policy has come far too late. "The demographic collapse can no longer be stopped," says Hu. It has indeed been underway for a long time.

There have been numerous reports on Chinese social media about elderly people who have been found completely neglected in their homes or on the street. Their relatives did not take adequate care of them. In response, the government has passed a law regarding the "protection of elderly people's rights and interests". It stipulates that anyone over 60 has a right to regular contact with relatives. Seniors can not only sue their children or grandchildren to provide them with a living; those relatives are even required to visit them regularly. The law does not define exactly how often. However, government newspapers say "every two months".

FELIX LEE
works for the German newspaper die tageszeitung (taz) and was its China correspondent until 2019.
felix.lee@taz.de

Photo: kd

Join us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/development.and.cooperation