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FOCUS

Extreme weather

Events like extraordinarily strong winds, heavy rains, severe droughts and excruciating heats are posing serious threats to human livelihoods, peace and security. Around the world, communities must adapt to climate change if they do not want the suffering to get worse. Both hard and soft infrastructure must improve. Without determined action to mitigate global heating, however, the problems will spin out of control and adaptation will ultimately fail.

Title: Drought-affected farmer in Kenya.

Photo: picture-alliance/Xinhua News Agency/Dong Jianghui





 **Reconstruction efforts in Germany's Ahr valley after the 2021 flooding. Our focus section on extreme weather starts on page 19. It is pertinent to all of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

cally, benefits arise in terms of stronger infrastructure, more employment opportunities, better social protection, a general abundance of both private and public goods and broad-based insurance coverage. Sociologists speak of “functional differentiation”. This kind of modernisation improves peoples’ lives.

Unrestrained growth is not the goal, however. Without radical climate mitigation, adaptation will fail everywhere. If global temperatures keep rising, what we call extreme weather today will be considered normal tomorrow, while new extremes will feel even more shocking. The global impacts will be very serious indeed. For example, failing harvests will dramatically compound inflation, and central banks will not be able to do anything about it. One thing is sure, however: we will not be able to blame nature.

Don't blame nature

It is still common to speak of “natural disasters” when extraordinarily strong storms, heavy rains or long spells without precipitation cause massive harm. The term is increasingly inaccurate. “Natural” basically means that something is not influenced by human beings, and human-made climate change is making extreme weather both more frequent and more extreme. Hurricanes and cyclones now tend to bring more rain than they used to do. In Eastern Africa, severe droughts normally occurred every 10 years or so. Now the region must cope with the excruciatingly third dry year in a row.

The World Meteorological Organization released its State of the Global Climate 2021 report in May. It lists high-impact events for the following categories: heatwaves and wildfires, cold spells and snow, precipitation, flood, drought, tropical cyclones and severe storms. The entire planet is affected. While not every heatwave or blizzard is a disaster, weather events are certainly leading to vast losses and damages. The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction warned in April that, at current trends, humanity is experiencing 350 to 500 medium to large-scale disasters a year. The number is set to rise to 560 by 2030. That would imply a global rate of 1.5 disasters every day.

Both climate mitigation and adaptation must become top priorities. Greenhouse-gas emissions are fuelling global heating. Prosperous nations deserve most of the blame, though China and other large emerging powers are catching up fast. All nations, whether rich or poor, must switch to sustainable energy systems.

At the same time, policymakers and community leaders in climate-vulnerable world regions must help communities to adapt. Where settlements are built inappropriately close to riverbanks, for example, flooding will eventually wash away homes. Where groundwater is depleted, the impacts of drought will be worse. Where monocultures replace diverse ecosystems, extreme weather can wreak more havoc.

Resilience of individuals, local communities and entire nations results from good planning, prudent policies and sustainable economic activity. Development must make that happen. As I argued in this space two months ago, the safety and prosperity people enjoy in high-income countries is not simply the result of high purchasing power. How societies are organised matters even more. Where government, private sector, scientific research, the legal system and other sectors interact dynami-



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Reinold E. Thiel passed away at the age of 88 in Bürvenich on 23 April 2022. From 1991 to 2003, he served as editor-in-chief of E+Z

Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit. He turned the publication, which had been a PR magazine, into a journal that development professionals appreciated. At the time, E+Z was published on behalf of Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung, and its top management wanted E+Z to serve as a forum of debate. Thiel accomplished this mission so successfully, that D+C Development and Cooperation became the German version’s identical twin in 2003. Thiel’s journalism benefitted both from his strong interest in development studies and his long years of experience in development cooperation in Africa and the Middle East. He was an opinionated author who did not shy away from controversy, but always felt bound by facts and empirical evidence.

UNCCD

Restore land-related resources, including eco-systems

Humanity must take urgent action to restore and protect land. That is the core message of the second Global Land Outlook, which the secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) recently published.

By Chimezie Anajama

The UN document calls for ambitious commitments by governments – especially in sub-Saharan Africa – and international financing. Not only is global food security at risk, the authors warn, but land problems also compound the climate crisis. The UNCCD is a sibling of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biodiversity. All three were adopted at the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Due to unsustainable economic activity, 300 million hectares of useful land could be lost by 2050, the UNCCD experts warn. They reckon that up to 30 million square kilometres are lost every year. The impacts include more hunger, worse poverty, greater inequality and resource-driven conflicts. According to their report, land-related resources (including soil, ground water and biodiversity) currently facilitate economic activity worth an annual \$44 trillion. That amounts to about half of global gross domestic product.

Land degradation and the climate crisis are mutually reinforcing. Desertification and drought affect 3 billion people around the world. As the report emphasises, they typically belong to the most vulnerable communities, with women, children and youths suffering most.

The core challenges, the authors argue, are over-exploitation and abuse of land-related resources. Distorted economic incentives lead to destructive investments in many sectors, including not only agriculture and forestry, but also mining, infrastructure development and urbanisation. Government policies are often destructive,

and so is consumer demand, as the UN document emphasises.

Farms are indeed part of the problem, with food production often driving land degradation. About 80% of global deforestation

of forests and grasslands were lost from 2000 to 2015. By 2050, an additional 300 million hectares are expected to become waste land at current trends. The impacts on food production would be harsh.

IMPROVEMENTS ARE POSSIBLE

Things do not have to be this way. The UNCCD report is in favour of redesigning contemporary food systems. It spells out that a transition to plant diets, more eco-friendly agriculture and regenerative farming will help to restore land and boost people's resilience.



Ugandan vegetable farmer: women do most of agricultural work in Africa.

tion is said to result from agrarian activities. Among other things, agriculture uses 70% of freshwater resources. Moreover, 29% of global greenhouse-gas emissions result from food production. The authors point out that some supposedly modern practices are unsustainable, including large-scale intensive monocultures or industrial-scale livestock operations.

Forest destruction, moreover, leads to considerable greenhouse-gas emissions. The report reckons that 125 million hectares

Urban planning matters too. The built environment is encroaching on the natural environment in many places. The UNCCD experts reckon that, by 2050, 6.7 billion people will live in urban areas – more than twice as many as today. Inadequate urban planning, however, can compound land problems. For example, it can cause flooding, putting people at risk and exacerbating soil erosion. Human settlements are also prone to overusing ground water. The authors point out that urban greening and reforms

in urban land governance can restore an ecological balance even in cities.

In the eyes of the UNCCD experts, the Covid-19 pandemic has helped to reframe how policy-makers view land restoration. Human health, animal health and ecosystem health are interrelated to an extent that experts speak of “One Health”. Covid-19 is a zoonotic disease which was transmitted from bats to humans. Such events become more likely where eco-systems are unbalanced. The implication is that restoring land has holistic benefits that transcend food production and rural livelihoods. Indeed, the resilience of local communities benefits from living in healthy environments.

Land governance must ensure people’s fundamental rights are respected, moreover. People use land for their sustenance, and their livelihoods deserve to be protected, the authors argue. Indigenous peoples are especially at risk. On the other hand, they and other marginalised grassroots communities have proven to be important partners for protecting and restoring land-related resources.

There is a gender angle too. In many developing countries, women do most of the farm work. They are particularly affected by land degradation. The UNCCD team therefore insists that they should be involved in decision making.

Global cooperation is the way forward, according to the report. Ecosystems must be restored, for humankind to enjoy a good future. Multilateral agreements and partnerships exist, but the UNCCD authors see a large gap between commitments made and actual implementation. They want governments and other parties to rise to their responsibility, which, in the case of high-income nations, includes delivering ODA (official development assistance).

Not all good intentions lead to good results, however. According to the UNCCD authors, it is wrong to focus only on fast-growing plants to regenerate forest and other eco-systems in Asia, Africa and Latin America. That approach leads to poorer eco-systems that are less able to store carbon, recharge ground water and serve as wildlife habitats.

The Global Land Outlook is the second of its kind. The first was published in 2017. The current edition assesses the global scenario, but also takes account of various international initiatives to improve matters, including the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration from 2021 to 2030 or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example. The message is that decisive action can make a difference.

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FOOD SECURITY

New global alliance

In the fight against hunger, the G7 – the group of the seven world’s largest economies – are teaming up with international partners. The goal is to prevent “the most severe food crisis in decades”, as Svenja Schulze, Germany’s federal minister for economic cooperation and development, has said.

At a meeting in Berlin in mid-May, ministers representing the G7 nations and other international leaders launched the new “Global Alliance for Food Security”. In a joint statement, Schulze and David Malpass, the president of the World Bank, declared: “The world is currently dealing with a series of overlapping crises, including the Russian war against Ukraine, repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, ongoing global economic uncertainty, supply chain disruptions,

significant droughts around the globe and other challenges.” They pointed out

that the poorest and most vulnerable people in emerging and developing economies are the most affected.

A month earlier had Schulze spoken out in favour of such an alliance at the spring conference of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington. To launch the proposal, she had joined forces with Malpass as well as David Beasley, the



Svenja Schulze, Germany’s federal minister for economic cooperation and development.

director of the World Food Programme, and Sri Mulyani Indrawati, the finance minister of Indonesia. Indonesia chairs the G20 this year and Germany the G7, so both countries currently have an even greater international influence than they normally do.

The idea is to create an agile and multilateral platform of the kind that was established in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. By the time of the Berlin meeting, supporters included the G7, the World Bank, the WFP, the EU Commission, the UN Global Crisis Response Group, Norway, Denmark, the African Union and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Other parties willing to join are welcome, including from the private sector and civil society.

Global food prices have increased fast since Russia invaded Ukraine in February (see Claudia Isabel Rittel in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2022/04). Both countries used

to be major grain exporters. In response to food-price inflation, several countries have stopped grain exports, exacerbating the problems at the international level. Schulze has accused Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, of weaponising food.

According to the joint statement by Schulze and Malpass, “the immediate objective is to coordinate closely as we initiate a short-term response over the next months.” Critical issues are:

- increasing the supplies of food, fertiliser and fuel,
- removing trade barriers and
- providing financial support to ease crisis impacts.

Since global-food security will require continued commitment, the joint statement spells out longer-term goals as well: “We need to increase countries’ resilience to current risks and future challenges, including climate change.” Among other things,

it is important to support farmers in ways that make them less vulnerable to extreme weather events. Accordingly, the alliance is meant to help countries build stronger food systems and gradually transition to sustainable agriculture.

As part of their efforts to combat climate change, moreover, the G7 countries agreed to conclude more partnerships with developing countries to promote the equitable transition to clean energy. They reaffirmed their interest in partnerships to mobilise public and private funds for climate-resilient infrastructure. For the first time in a G7 communiqué, they made a commitment to increasing their activities in regard to climate-related damage and loss. In this context, both private insurance and governmental social-protection systems (see Stefan Beierl on page S. 29) are considered to be relevant. Both boost communities’ resilience. D+C/E+Z

UKRAINE

Immediate response

The Philipp Schwartz Initiative (PSI) has responded fast and in a flexible manner to the Ukraine war. It is also lending support to persecuted scholars from Afghanistan, whose situation has become worse than ever before.

By Mareike Ilsemann

When Russia attacked Ukraine in late February, it became evident how strong the PSI, Germany’s network for supporting scholars at risk, actually is. Within a few days, some 200 people from German academic institutions volunteered to host refugee scholars. Thanks to support from the Carl Zeiss Foundation and the publisher Springer Nature, an emergency fund was set up. It has granted 40 Ukrainian women from research institutions six-month scholarships so they can keep doing their work in Germany.

The PSI reckons it will need an additional € 23 million in the next three years because of the war. Russian scholars are ex-

pected to apply for help too, given that the regime of President Vladimir Putin is radically restricting civil liberties.

Since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, the situation for scholars has become terrible there, especially for women. The PSI has managed to provide short-notice support to refugees who left jobs at

scientific institutions in Afghanistan. Some of the 20 supported persons are women who are now pursuing their research in safety in Germany.

The PSI intends to further enhance its toolkit to improve its capacities for responding to crises fast. It systematically pays attention to creating a longer term perspective for PSI fellows in Germany.



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Ukrainian refugees arriving in Berlin in March 2022.



Conference 2022

Addressing Fragility and Conflict in Developing Countries

1-2 SEPTEMBER, 2022 IN KAMPALA, UGANDA

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 2022 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. For more information on the PEGNet conference, please refer to <https://www.pegnet.ifw-kiel.de/conferences>.

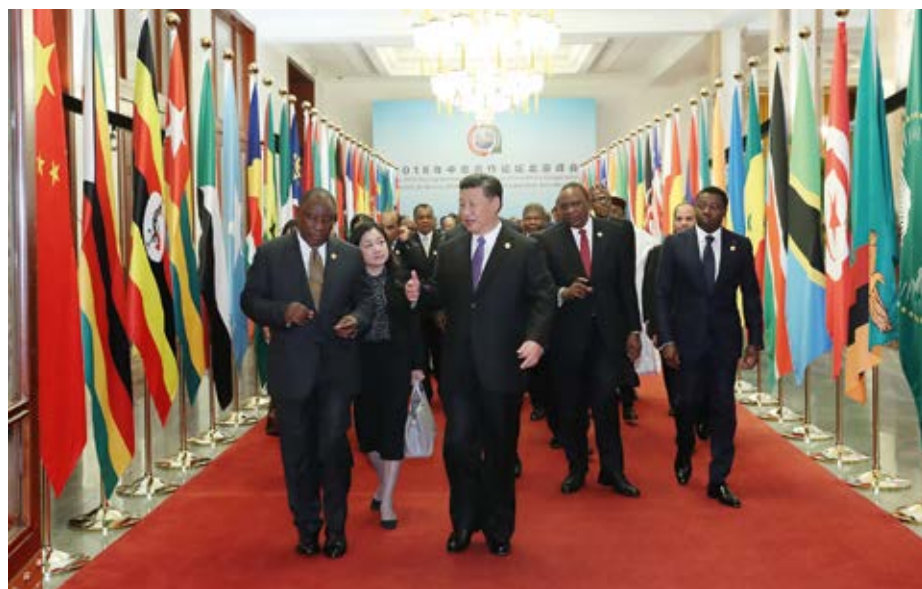
Call for Papers

We invite submissions of three-page abstracts that focus on fragility, conflict and other policy-relevant topics in development economics. Priority will be given to empirical research with clear implications for policy design and implementation. Papers submitted through the call for papers will be presented in the parallel or poster sessions. The submission deadline for abstracts is 15 June, 2022. The email should indicate "PEGNet Conference 2022 – Paper Submission" in the subject heading. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by beginning of July 2022. The deadline for full paper submission is 31 July, 2022.

PEGNet Best Practice Award

Furthermore, PEGNet will award the PEGNet Best Practice Award worth € 3000 for the 12th time to a project that exemplifies cooperation between development researchers and practitioners. At the conference, the winner of the Best Practice Award will get the opportunity to present the project to an international audience of researchers, practitioners and policy makers. All projects that fall within the nexus of poverty reduction, equity and growth are invited to apply. The call for submissions will be open until 30 June, 2022. Please send a three-page project summary to pegnet@ifw-kiel.de. The email should indicate "PEGNet BPA 2022" in the subject heading.

www.pegnet.ifw-kiel.de



China is not interested in democracy and human rights: President Xi Jinping with guests at Africa summit in Beijing in 2018.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Dealing with dictators

The world is witnessing a trend towards autocratic rule. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has made it even more important to stop this trend. Western democracies must do their best – at home and in support of democracies in developing countries.

By Aline Burni and Niels Keijzer

Even before the Ukraine war, recent years have been challenging in terms of international cooperation and democracy promotion. The Covid-19 pandemic halted or even reversed progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The health emergency was the top priority for policymakers and international development agencies. At the same time, a 20-year period of democratic backsliding continued, and in some regions was even accelerated by the pandemic.

Long-standing conflicts worsened in Libya and Yemen. Others flared up again in Ethiopia and Azerbaijan. In Afghanistan, the Taliban are back in power after western withdrawal. Military coups took place in Guinea, Chad, Mali and most recently Burkina Faso.

Moreover, authoritarian populists have been gaining strength in western countries, and while Donald Trump was not re-elected in the USA, his legacy is worrisome. Republicans are doing what they can to make voting harder for minorities, the big lie about President Joe Biden having stolen the election keeps spreading and the masterminds of the insurrection in the Capitol on 6 January 2021 still enjoy impunity. Minority rule looks increasingly likely in the USA. In addition, the two EU members Hungary and Poland are seriously affected by democratic backsliding.

Autocrats and aspiring autocrats across the globe are dismantling democratic mechanisms, freedoms and institutions. This trend poses fundamental questions about what role, if any, development cooperation can play. Western countries' international-development policies are geared to democracy promotion. Relevant questions are thus: At what point does autocratic rule make cooperation inappropriate and what should policymakers do differently?

Autocratisation typically begins with steps to restrict and control the media, curb

academic freedom and reduce the space of civil society. With the aim of polarising people, autocratic forces treat legitimate opponents with disrespect and suggest they are enemies. Once in office, aspiring autocrats use the government machinery to spread further misinformation and delegitimise the opposition. They then typically move on to undermine formal institutions, including the judiciary and election systems.

When democratic backsliding is evident in a partner country, western governments basically have three options. They can try to:

- agree and insist on conditionalities,
- find work-around solutions or
- discontinue cooperation.

As the sanctions imposed on Russia since the start of the Ukraine war show, these issues do not only concern development cooperation. Since western governments have been gearing their international-development policies to democracy promotion for three decades, this field of policymaking is affected in particular. Development cooperation can – and should – play a major role in protecting democracy, and established approaches should be constantly reconsidered.

CONDITIONALITIES

In many cases, development cooperation has been made contingent on democratic measures. The problem with this approach is that it is difficult to insist on conditionalities. Imposing sanctions requires a strong political will, consistent application of rule and close attention to the political dynamics in a partner country. This is a challenging agenda even in cases when the conditions of cooperation are specifically spelled out in formal agreements with a partner government.

Sanctions can work as a short-term response to a military coup and reinforce demands for returning to civilian rule and holding elections. However, setting conditions is less effective as a response to a broader trend towards autocratic rule. A big risk is that an international institution does not apply its conditions consistently or stringently enough. Sanctions then become empty threats. Much depends on the willingness of donor governments to pursue a common policy in a sustained and coordinated fashion.

Once democratic backsliding sets in, simply continuing “business as usual” will not help. Indeed, ongoing programmes may actually strengthen autocrats. On the other hand, development cooperation can make a difference if it boosts institutions and political interests with a minimum degree of democratic legitimacy.

BYPASSING THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Where autocratisation has progressed beyond a certain level, bypassing the national government becomes an option. The idea is to reduce government-to-government cooperation and instead reach out directly to subnational agencies and/or civil-society organisations.

The effectiveness of this approach depends on the national government’s level of control and the degree of repression. It is unlikely to work in contexts where the state is “everywhere” or where civil-society organisations are not permitted to accept external funding. More generally speaking, the effectiveness of work-around solutions depends on the space civil society still enjoys. Of course, partner organisations’ commitment to democratic values matters too. Democratic governments should also take into account that work-around solutions can be expensive. Moreover, there is a risk of resources being “captured” by autocratic forces.

To some extent, engaging in region-wide cooperation may be an option too. For example, reduced involvement in Mali could go along with stronger engagement in ECOWAS (Economic Community of West

African States), the regional organisation to which the country belongs. Two important advantages of this approach are that it makes it comparatively easy to re-engage (1) and make use of experiences gained in neighbouring countries (2).

DISENGAGE

However, once despotism is fully in force, cooperation must be reconsidered. If it bolsters an autocratic government, it becomes part of the problem. In such contexts, a final decision to disengage is warranted, and only fundamental support to the country’s people should still continue, notably through humanitarian aid. Support for long-term development should only resume once the political context improves.

It is important to recognise the limitations of development cooperation. It can support and facilitate a developing country’s own change processes, but it cannot fundamentally change the political dynamics.

On the other hand, the trends towards autocratisation makes it even more important to support democracy. Donors can do so if they find appropriate entry points. They must reassess the impact their programmes have on democracy in partner countries, and change course when and as conditions require.

Liberal democracies such as Germany continue to provide long-term support for introducing and strengthening democratic institutions in countries concerned. Germany has long relied on a “civilian power” approach, cooperating with autocratic re-

gimes in the hope that development will lead to a diversification of mutually interdependent institutions, which will eventually lead to democratisation. While such efforts do not directly drive autocratisation, they might nonetheless support the trend. No doubt, policymakers must pay attention to stopping such programmes before they become inappropriate.

Adding to the problems, non-democratic regimes – especially the Chinese government – are increasingly reaching out to developing countries. Beijing is assertively promoting a different development paradigm, according to which a strong government is essential, but democracy and human rights are not. Both however are essential for achieving sustainability for humankind.

Finally, western governments must consider their own dented legitimacy. One reason is that military interventions, which were supposed to support democratisation, have failed spectacularly. The most obvious cases are Afghanistan and Mali. The other is that democratic backsliding affects the US and the EU too.

In Warsaw in March, Biden prominently spoke of a conflict between democracy and authoritarianism. He had a point, but he failed to address that authoritarian forces are frightfully strong both in the country he was visiting and the country he represents. He should have acknowledged that the conflict is raging within nations and not simply between them.

Democratic governments must certainly promote democracy abroad. That applies to foreign relations in general, not only development cooperation. EU policymakers would do well to coordinate their responses to autocracy and democratic backsliding. Germany’s Federal Government should help to get such a process started.



Insurgents in Capitol in Washington on 6 January 2021.



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RELEVANT READING

The mindset of the super-rich

Poor people are thoroughly researched, but we know very little about billionaires. A book by an American journalist sheds light on their anxieties.

By Hans Dembowski

Many people believe that the super-rich don't have any worries. They are wrong. Though prosperous people know they can pay their bills and will not go hungry, they fret about other things, personal security for example.

The superrich fear they may be assaulted, stolen from, kidnapped and blackmailed. Many thus avoid public spaces. It is common for them to employ bodyguards and security services. Many keep a low profile so no potential criminal will recognise them. The fear also has implications on their choice of homes. They want safety, but they also need space for leisure, sports and various hobbies since they mostly stay away from public and commercial amenities. Some residences resemble fortresses with aspects of amusement parks.

"How the super-rich really live – and how their wealth harms us all" is the programmatic subtitle of "Jackpot", the recent book by the American journalist Michael

Mechanic. The author relies on interviews with some super-rich persons and people who provide services to them. He also uses the existing literature, which is rather scant, because the plutocratic elite normally want to keep things private and avoid being studied by social scientists or psychologists.

As Mechanic writes, the super-rich hardly need public infrastructure. They buy private health care and private education, preferring services that are superior to what state agencies provide. Not needing public institutions, many resent taxation, which, to them, means being denied their money, without getting anything in return.

Their mindset, however, is transactional, as Mechanic writes. Very prosperous people are used to thinking in terms of "what do I get for this"? To many, tax evasion thus does not feel wrong. On the other hand, transactional thinking makes it difficult to have normal friendships. According to Mechanic, plutocrats constantly suspect others are really only after their money. Accountants, lawyers and other service providers are confidants moreover, but fear of being cheated can permeate those relationships too.

Mechanic adds that the superrich tend to see themselves as superior human beings. Even those who have inherited their wealth,

feel they deserve their fortune. There is very little appreciation for the societal settings that allowed their dynasty to rise.

One implication is that those who fare worse are considered to be stupid, lazy, weak or deficient in some other way. At the same time, many superrich persons tend to be very competitive, according to Mechanic. They want to be in control – and they want to own the most spectacular yachts. Their approach to peers is transactional too.

ATTITUDES RESULTING FROM PRIVILEGE

Every person is different, of course, as Mechanic reiterates. After all, some were not too reclusive to share their experiences with him. Not all individuals will share the attitudes the author describes, but since they result from the privileges enjoyed, they are entirely plausible. Mechanic writes about the USA, but things are likely to be similar elsewhere too.

The superrich only make up a tiny share of any nation's population, but they are a powerful interest group. Mechanic spells out many examples of how rules and regulation benefit plutocrats in the USA. Their lobbying has made a difference. In particular, Republicans have been serving their interests. The National Revenue Service is now understaffed, so tax laws are no longer stringently enforced.

The Kochs, the Mercers and the Murdochs are examples of families with long track records of supporting right-wing activism, sometimes under the label of philanthropy. Typically, their propaganda emphasises individual achievement and disparages "needy" people, including minorities. Where the gaps between the super-rich and ordinary people become too wide, the public good suffers. There is indeed such a thing as plutocrat populism.

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Helicopter on a luxury boat during the Monaco Yacht Show in 2018.

FINANCING

“We consider impact with every investment”

The vision of GreenTec Capital Partners is to support entrepreneurs in Africa in order to create more jobs and greater prosperity. Its goal is to bring German and African companies together and to encourage German companies to invest. GreenTec co-founder Thomas Festerling is pleased that his company has already achieved so much. He wants to reach many more entrepreneurs, however.

Thomas Festerling interviewed by Sabine Balk

How was your company founded?

My co-founder, Erick Yong, was an experienced entrepreneur and I had achieved success in the financial industry. At some point, however, we both had the feeling that we needed to do something that was more personally fulfilling. Then we had the idea that we could share our expertise in creating, expanding, and successfully operating new businesses. This knowledge is precisely what many young enterprises in Africa lack. We always ask ourselves, what do businesses need? We started out in 2015 with just the two of us, and we now have a team of around 30 people, two thirds of whom are in Germany and one third in Africa.

Which businesses do you support?

We identify and direct our efforts towards small technology firms that have a good business idea, but are unable, on their own, to successfully grow a company that is already functioning well because they have no access to certain resources and lack the necessary expertise. A good example is PowerStove in Nigeria. The founder, Okey Esse, identified the need for safe and cheap cooking. Over 90% of Nigerian households still use charcoal and paraffin stoves, millions die from smoke pollution. After studying physics, Okey developed small stoves using pellets from wood and crop residues, being burned residue- and smoke-free. Various

models can additionally generate electricity and via internet connection can use the offer „buy as you cook“. Partnering with GreenTec, a second production plan could be built and another one in Zimbabwe is planned.

By lack of resources you mean money, above all?

No, that's not exactly it. If you don't purchase the right resources with your money, it's useless. The goal is for companies to acquire the right technology and suitable employees. That's precisely what we offer with our experience and expertise. In Africa, for example, there is very little access to good IT specialists and good chief finance officers (CFOs), and accountants are also often hard to find.

Our approach is to find the right companies, the ones with potential. We help them get ready for investors. Our goal is to

encourage them to take things a step further and reach certain milestones. If they are successful, we step in as shareholders, which is more or less how we get paid. We call our approach “results for equity”. In 2017, this idea won us the German Entrepreneurship Award for Development from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). For us, as a very new company, that was an amazing achievement.

What does the work of GreenTec Capital Partners look like in practice?

We are built on two pillars:

- investment and
- consulting – which we don't do in the classical sense. I prefer to call our approach “venture-building as a service”. We see ourselves as an impact investor, meaning that we consider impact with every investment. Our strength is finding really good entrepreneurs with good business models that typically fulfil basic needs like access to food, energy or water. Not everyone can do that. For that reason, we have already attracted the attention of development organisations like the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the French Development Agency (AFD) and have carried out projects with them. Our largest programme to date was identifying companies for AFD



Oven production at PowerStove in Nigeria.

to support in the digital and technology sector. The project ran for two years, primarily in Francophone Africa, and had a 7-digit budget. We found around 150 companies, and many jobs were created. We are now working with AFD to develop a follow-up programme.

You also facilitate business partnerships – what does that mean?

We focus on technical partnerships. We bring German companies and African start-ups together. One example is e-bikes in Zambia. The technology was created in Germany and passed on to an operation in Zambia that uses it and can further develop it. Equal partnerships are very important to us.

Have you also experienced failure in your work?

Yes, of course, that's normal. We have invested in companies that did not develop successfully. But we have learned a lot from the past. In the beginning, we wanted to operate across all of sub-Saharan Africa, but we currently concentrate on six countries and two issues – basic needs and technology platforms. Naturally those two can overlap, for instance in the case of an agritech platform that connects small farmers with markets.

Why do projects and partnerships fail?

We always try to analyse that, of course. However, it's not always very easy, because there are large cultural differences between a German medium-sized enterprise and an African start-up. That's why mediators like us are very important, because we can bring together both sides' expectations. Other-

wise there can be many misunderstandings. Generally speaking, investors are concerned that there could be legal and tax-related problems if they invest in Africa. They also worry that companies from Africa will not actually meet their expectations. This reservation scares many investors away. They make their investments in Germany instead, or they go to Asia, where the situation at least feels more known.

What do you do to dispel these concerns?

One of our initiatives is an investment club for "angel investors". We invite European investors who have already invested in Africa to talk about their experiences in order to help others make their decision. They are the "angels". One example is an attorney from the United Kingdom who has invested in over 20 companies in Africa. His testimony convinces other people more than simply talking about the idea in theory. Co-investment is also interesting. We would like to explore that further this year. We are in the process of creating a co-investment club, where unexperienced members can invest in African companies together with experienced investors. We will inform club members who has already invested how much in which company and ask whether they would also like to participate. New investors will get a sense of security when they see who else is on board. Another advantage is that the entire contract design has already been done and does not need to be drawn up again.

You mentioned that it is particularly difficult to get smaller and medium-sized German enterprises to invest in Africa. What can you do to convince them?

In addition to so-called lighthouse projects, or particularly successful start-ups, it is very important to make the public and the media more aware of this topic. We also organise events like workshops or investor trips that bring 10 to 20 people to Africa. That wasn't possible with Covid, of course. But this year we are planning a trip to Ghana and Rwanda. These trips are unbelievably interesting experiences. When we visit a tech company or a start-up, it is completely different than taking a beach vacation or a safari. Potential investors can see for themselves how innovative and smart people in Africa are.

Your name is "GreenTech" – are there certain criteria that determine which firms you work with?

Yes, we orient ourselves towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We concentrate on four SDGs that can be measured: no poverty, reduced inequalities, economic growth and climate action. We want to measure our success. We also have a list of companies and industries that we do not do business with, because they do not operate sustainably, rely on child labour, promote compulsive gambling or damage the climate. We had a request from a tobacco company that we declined, even though it would have been very lucrative. But we do not support that industry.



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Uber for trucks

GreenTec Capital Partners has already invested in some very promising companies. One example is a Kenya-based technology platform called Amitruck. It works like Uber, but with trucks. The platform links truck drivers and their vehicles with customers and also optimises the

routes. The drivers transport all kinds of goods to the customer.

Cargo transport is very expensive in Africa and costs about five times more than in industrialised countries, according to Amitruck. Goods are primarily transported by road since many regions lack

the infrastructure for rail or air traffic. The platform aims to contribute to the improvement of logistics and transportation infrastructure in Kenya.

GreenTec Capital Partners invested in the start-up right when it was founded. This year, Amitruck has already collected over \$4 million in investors' funds. For a company that has only been on the market for two years, that is a remarkable

success. Amitruck is recording double-digit growth rates every month, which has now allowed it to expand to Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. Amitruck consists of a team of over 50 employees who maintain and market the app. The platform now has over 4000 drivers under contract. The company helped bring them from the informal to the formal sector, and they now earn a steady income. SB

Digital payment fraudsters at work

Digital technologies such as mobile wallets via telecom networks are helping to promote financial inclusion in many developing countries. In Zambia, fraudsters are taking advantage of users and threatening the growth of digital payments.

Sitting unsettled in her business kiosk along Cairo road – one of the busiest highways in Lusaka, Zambia’s capital – 25-year-old Susan Chembo narrated through tears how she had been conned of her hard-earned money. “I’m requesting you to send your money via this number,” the message read, then provided a mobile number.

Coincidentally, Chembo had just told her uncle that she would send him money to help clear her goods at the border. She assumed the anonymous message was from her uncle who works as a clearing agent at Kazungula border in southern Zambia. So, she sent 5,000 kwacha (about \$285) to the number. Her uncle never received the money. Chembo reported the incident to the police, but the mobile number to which she sent the money was no longer in use. It was a fraud and the perpetrator could not be traced.

Mobile digital technologies and innovations such as mobile wallets are becoming popular in Zambia and helping to promote financial inclusion. Many Zambians, especially in low resource environments, now rely on their mobile-phone service providers to host virtual “bank” accounts that are easier to access than traditional banking systems.

With its population estimated at 18 million, Zambia’s two largest mobile operators, local units of Airtel and MTN, both supply mobile-money services. In April 2018, MTN announced a concerted effort to raise the number of agents in the country to expand usage of its platform while the state-owned Zamtel also supplies standard mobile-money services through its Kwacha brand and smart-phone mobile e-wallet app, Zampay.

The Bank of Zambia recently disclosed that mobile-money platforms had

recorded increased usage with numbers growing to 8.6 million users by 31 December 2021 compared to around 4.85 million in 2019. Its statistics showed the number of mobile-money agents in Zambia stood at 47,000 by the end of 2018 compared with 23,000 in the previous year. The number of mobile-money accounts increased from 2.3 million at the end of 2017 to 4.3 million in 2018.

Mobile-money services are a major contributor to financial inclusion in Zambia. However, these platforms have lower security checks than traditional banking systems and have therefore become a target for criminals and fraudsters who take advantage of loopholes to con unsuspecting users.

Raymond Solochi who recently also lost K 500 (\$30) in a mobile-money scam explains how these fraudsters operate. He says, “these thieves are just using psychology, because they know that at one point or another someone might be sending money especially during pay days.”

If left unchecked, digital fraudsters have the capacity to cripple digital payment platforms. Policy makers in Zambia are therefore taking the issue seriously and devising means to check fraud over digital payment platforms.

“As we continue to migrate customers towards digital technologies, it is important to safeguard customer funds, especially new users of such services. We must ensure that we fully exploit these tools. It is therefore imperative that cyber-fraud incidences are addressed to ensure the gains made so far in financial inclusion are maintained and enhanced,” Denny Kalyalya, governor of the Bank of Zambia, recently told stakeholders at a financial event.

Additionally, the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) is on top of things and says it is alert and always sends messages warning people against posting their contact information on social-media networks and to keep their PIN numbers secret.



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Risks in daily life



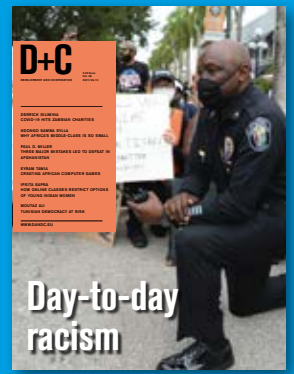
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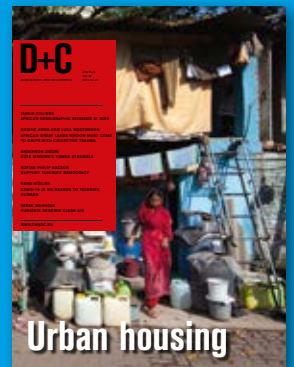
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Climate action



Diaspora



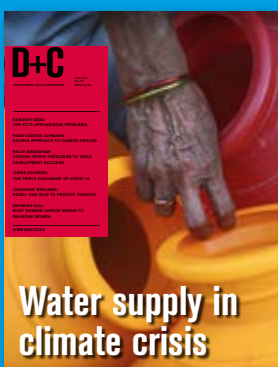
Urban housing



Healthy diets



Understanding development



Water supply in climate crisis



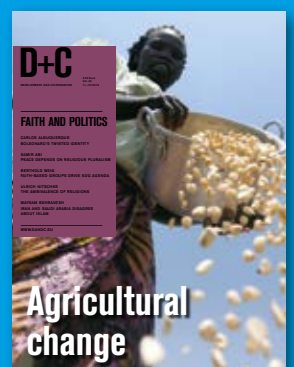
Demographic trends



Poverty and disease



Why the world needs the EU



Agricultural change



Women in positions of leadership: six governors and the mayor of Mexico City.

GENDER JUSTICE

Room for improvement

Mexico claims to pursue a “feminist” foreign policy. The full truth is that women’s rights cannot be taken for granted in the country itself.

By Virginia Mercado

Mexico is known for femicides. In 2020, 948 women were murdered – 2.7% more than in 2019.

For several years, the number of court cases concerning domestic violence has been increasing, which, to some extent, may show that many women have the self-confidence to dare to file charges and refuse to suffer in silence. However, victims say that state agencies are not doing enough to protect them. Feminists definitely found it infuriating that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador spoke disparagingly about the women’s rights rallies that are held every year on 8 March.

His government nonetheless claims to be pursuing a feminist foreign policy that is guided by principles of gender justice and human rights. It is proud of a gender-parity reform it implemented and points out that women are serving in more positions of political leadership than in the past. The

current federal cabinet has 19 members, of whom eight are women. Eight of 31 Mexico’s states are run by female governors. According to the national statistics agency INEGI, one in four mayors is a woman. These numbers show that female leadership is no longer exceptional, but gender parity has not been achieved.

In 2020, Marcelo Ebrard, the foreign minister, declared that, since the government was feminist, it’s foreign policy was so too. Women’s rights activists appreciate the general stance, but wonder what “feminist” policy actually means in practical terms. The Federal Government’s website offers some clues. It mentions:

- a foreign policy with an eye to gender issues,
- parity within the ministry and the diplomatic service,
- a safe and violence-free institution,
- visible equality and
- intersectional approaches.

Mexico certainly deserves praise for assuming leadership and becoming the first Latin American country to emphasise gender issues in its foreign policy. It is up to debate, however, to what extent a government can promote things abroad which it has not

achieved at home. Gender parity is not Mexican reality, and the human rights of women – especially to live unencumbered by violence – cannot be taken for granted.

The other website buzzwords obviously refer to the ministry itself, and there clearly is room for improvement. The share of women in leadership positions in the foreign service (heads of embassies and consulates, for example) has not changed since the minister made his statement. It is not quite 30% and shows that women’s career opportunities have not improved since the feminist policy was adopted.

Earlier this year, the foreign ministry had to withdraw a man it wanted to appoint ambassador to Panama. There were abuse accusations, and a highly effective social-media campaign demanded that a molester must not become ambassador. It was striking, however, that Panama objected to the candidate, so the decision was not really inspired by Mexico’s feminist policy.

The ministry is indeed making efforts to raise awareness of female achievements. It is publishing biographies and profiles of outstanding women in the foreign service. Moreover, it is running seminars to make officers understand gender issues. They are expected to respond more sensitively to cases of violence and abuse – not only within their own ranks, but just as well when people turn to Mexico’s embassies and consulates abroad. A recent case of sexual abuse in Qatar was revealing, however. The minister became aware of his female officer’s plight only because of public outrage, but then did support her in legal terms.

In expert jargon “intersectionality” means that discrimination must be considered in cross-cutting ways, taking into account both sexism and racism for example. Questions arise concerning how migrant women from different ethnic and indigenous groups are treated and whether they are separated from daughters and sons when transiting through the country. Not only in regard to migration, various shortcomings still mark daily life in Mexico.



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Patient in Kolkata in May 2021: when the Covid-19 wave escalated, not everyone who needed oxygen found access.

CORONAVIRUS

Dramatically diverging numbers

A dispute is raging between the government of India and the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding the Coronavirus death toll last year.

By Suparna Banerjee

India suffered a terrible second wave of Coronavirus last year. The number of deaths was substantial. TV screens kept displaying burning funeral pyres – but also the wailing and crying of desperate relatives who hoped to prevent the worst from happening. However, efforts to save loved ones often proved futile. The death toll rose fast every day.

The cause of the death was not simply the virus. It also mattered that India's health-care infrastructure was overwhelmed by the sheer number of patients. Lack of oxygen and the unavailability of hospital beds affected patients, even those belonging to quite affluent families.

While the inadequacy of public health services became undeniable, the exact number of lives lost to Covid-19 in India remains contentious. The WHO reckons that the pandemic claimed a staggering 4.7 million lives in 2021. That is about 10 times more

than the Indian authorities acknowledge from January to December.

The background is that India's official statistics only count those who were explicitly diagnosed with Coronavirus as pandemic casualties. By contrast, the WHO considers "excess death". The methodology is to compare a specific year's death figure with those of previous years. The difference between the actual number and the long-term trend is then attributed to the pandemic. This approach obviously makes sense, though there certainly is room for debating details.

As a matter of fact, the WHO estimates diverge substantially from governmental data in many countries. According to the WHO's excess-death calculations, Covid-19 has so far killed about 15 million people around the world. That is 2.5 times more than the roughly 6 million dead that official statistics indicate.

India's government now accuses the WHO of faulty methodology. According to its own civil-registration data, the number of deaths in 2021 increased only by about 475,000 (or about six percent) from 7.6 million in 2020. Officials insist, moreover, that not all of the additional deaths can be attrib-

uted to Covid-19. The Indian government argues that, in view of its country's size, population and diversity, the WHO's "one size fits all" approach is not applicable.

The WHO does indeed not only rely on government data, but other sources including media reports and academic studies as well. It has stated it will reconsider its India estimate, but there are no signs it will substantially change it.

It matters, of course, that many Indians do not trust their government's Covid-19 statistics. Barkha Dutt, a prominent TV reporter, recently summed up reasons for suspicion in the *Washington Post*. To get "a death certificate listing Covid-19 as the cause of death", she writes, families had to navigate "the maze of bureaucracy". Moreover, community leaders in "every village" she visited told her that deaths were spiking. The high-profile journalist is known for extensive front-line reporting. She adds that stigma made people shy away from tests, which was especially true in rural areas. In lack of oxygen, moreover, many hospitals simply did not admit new patients anymore. "Despite this catastrophe," she points out, "India's Parliament was informed this year that there was not a single death from oxygen shortage reported by any state during the pandemic."

Nonetheless, the Indian government's response to the WHO is valid in a specific way. It points out that the WHO is not treating all countries equally. In particular, China remains unquestioned by WHO, not just regarding the origin of the virus but also the systemic underreporting of the actual number of deaths. Shanghai is in lockdown and 500,000 cases have been reported. The official number of 285 is plainly not credible.

All governments want to manage public perceptions. They should not be allowed to get away with falsehoods, and the WHO should contribute to ensuring that they are not. That said, arguing that Chinese statistics are simply not believable is no excuse for India's government to not answer all pertinent questions conclusively.



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TWITTER

A plutocrat's toy

Elon Musk, a tech-sector billionaire, wants to buy Twitter, turn it into a private company and change it profoundly. The implications for political discourse and democratic deliberation may turn out to be substantial – not least in the global south.

By Charles Martin-Shields

In the global south, Twitter is not as popular as other social-media platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok or Facebook. It is nonetheless an important global forum that shapes public debate and influences people.

Many internet users will not personally notice Twitter's relevance to political discourse, since it has a comparatively small user base. What matters is that specific groups heavily rely on Twitter, including journalists, public intellectuals and policy-makers. What makes Twitter valuable is the networks of people who belong to these elite circles.

Prominent persons have the greatest reach on Twitter, as personalities from politics, the media, pop culture et cetera have the most followers. Bots – software that automatically shares and retweets specific

messages – are known to boost propaganda in manipulative ways. However, an average person would probably be unable to attract a large number of followers even with the support of an army of bots.

Musk has more than 90 million followers on Twitter. He is known for jokes, sarcasm and leaking proprietary business information, which earned him the attention of the Security and Exchange Commission, the stock-market regulator in the USA. To him, “freedom” seems to mean doing what he wants without a government agency getting in his way, an attitude we often see among oligarchic populists.

Depending on how Musk might change Twitter's rules, the platform may either strengthen democratic deliberation or authoritarian populism in the future. Crucial issues will be who is allowed to use Twitter and what kind of messaging is permitted. Musk claims to be a “free-speech absolutist”. For all practical purposes, that will probably mean that anyone with a loud voice will be free to state whatever they want – including disinformation, hate speech and lies. When this manuscript was finalised in mid-May, the prospective Twitter owner had tellingly just said he does not want former US presi-

dent Donald Trump to stay barred from the platform.

In the global south, Twitter will most likely keep amplifying powerful members of the elite. Debates that start on Twitter often find their way onto other social-media platforms as well as into mainstream media. India's reactionary Hindu supremacists typically rely on WhatsApp to amplify messages, whereas Russian and Ukrainian actors are using Telegram channels for the propaganda campaigns as part of the ongoing war.

Would a new Twitter leadership make matters worse? It is unlikely that the platform will become an unusable hub of mis- and disinformation. Though Musk denies he has an economic interest in Twitter, he would not have become a billionaire without caring for money. To generate revenues, he has proposed charging Twitter users “a small fee”. That might make the platform even more elitist.

Should Musk try to turn Twitter into a commercial platform like Instagram or Facebook, the constant flow of advertising would probably make serious voices from civil society, politics and journalism abandoned. Twitter's current role would be compromised. In the USA, pro-democracy Twitter users have begun to leave the platform. Such a trend might well prove harmful to both Twitter and democracy.

Musk has also said he wants the Twitter algorithm, which determines what people see on their timelines, to be transparent. Transparency would reduce the scope for manipulation. However, the algorithm is quite complex, so only few people would actually understand it.

What is more publicly relevant is who Musk hopes will support his \$44 billion acquisition. Relevant allies include an investment fund controlled by the reactionary Royal House of Qatar, a superrich Saudi Prince and software billionaire Larry Ellison of Oracle.

Twitter is an important platform of international debate. Now it seems at risk of becoming a billionaire's toy. We should consider that a warning.



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Elon Musk wants to buy Twitter.



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Reconstruction efforts in Germany's Ahr Valley after the flooding last year.



FOCUS

Extreme weather

“Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017.”

MARJORIE PONS PIÑEYRO, P. 20

“Today, Bangladesh has an effective early-warning system.”

MD BODRUD-DOZA, P. 22

“The devastating heat wave that hit Pakistan in April is not a good omen.”

IMRAN MUKHTAR, P. 24

“44,000 Burundians were forced to leave their homes because of extreme-weather events in 2020.”

MIREILLE KANYANGE, P. 26

“The Horn of Africa is experiencing one of its worst droughts in recent history.”

CHRISTOPH SCHNEIDER-YATTARA, P. 27

“Strong social-protection systems can reduce the need for humanitarian relief.”

STEFAN BEIERL, P. 29

“Germany should consider what other countries have achieved in terms of disaster preparedness.”

WOLF R. DOMBROWSKY, P. 31

“Forest fires are happening more often – even where they used to be quite rare.”

MAHWISH GUL, P. 33



Roseau, the capital of Dominica, after Hurricane Maria in 2017.

TROPICAL STORMS

Boosting Caribbean resilience

The Caribbean archipelago has 13 independent countries and 15 dependent territories. Thanks to the warm tropical climate, it attracts tourists – especially in winter. The downside is the exposure to hurricanes, which are becoming more dangerous due to global heating.

By Marjorie Pons Piñeyro

Hurricanes are a natural hazard that forms over ocean areas close to the equator. They are powered by moist and warm air. The same kind of storm is known as “typhoon” in the Pacific and “cyclone” in the Indian Ocean.

In the Caribbean region, hurricanes occur in the months June to November. The “hurricane season” peaks between mid-August and mid-October. These extreme weather events can be very destructive. In 1979, for example, Hurricane David killed 2068 people. The Dominican Republic suffered more than half of those casualties, and 70% of the electrical system was destroyed.

A more recent example was Hurricane Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico in 2017. According to research done by scholars from George Washington University, close to 3000 people died. The entire population of this US territory was left without electric power, which was fully restored only after 11 months.

Small-island nations are particularly exposed to climate risks, but in most cases, the international public only takes note of the damage in the worst-hit places. Other islands suffer too, however. In 1979, Hurricane David made some 60,000 people – or about 75% of the population – homeless in Dominica, a small island that was a British colony in the past. In 2017, Hurricane Maria caused damages amounting to \$930 million there. According to the UN, four months later, 80% of the houses still had inadequate roofing and 15% of the children had not returned to school. The island counted 31 dead and 37 missing people.

It is important to understand that natural disasters cannot be avoided. Socie-

ties must learn to live with them. However, global heating is compounding the problems with extreme weather becoming more extreme. This is an important reason why Caribbean societies are not better prepared for these calamities. The risks are familiar, but they have become greater than they were in the past.

Hurricanes, as stated above, gain their strength from warm and moist air. Hotter temperatures lead to stronger hurricanes that last longer, bring more rain, and cause more damages. Once a hurricane reaches land, it becomes weaker. The problem, however, is that they are now gaining more power as they build up over the sea water and accordingly take longer to dissipate after landfall. Research has shown that hurricanes used to lose 75% of their intensity during the first day over land. Now, that ratio is merely 50%. If the climate crisis continues to escalate, it will be further reduced.

Hotter temperatures lead to more devastating storms. The future of the Caribbean looks bleak unless climate change is mitigated. At the same time, the region obviously must adapt to the change that has already occurred or is no longer preventable. The archipelago must become more resilient. That requires new approaches and coherent action.

Regional institutions are rising to the challenge. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) have done important work in this regard.

First of all, they adapted the UN definition of “resilience” to regional needs. According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), resilience means that a system, community or society which is exposed to hazards, is able “to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects in a timely and efficient manner”. This includes the “preservation and restoration of essential basic structures and functions”. CARICOM and CDEMA added that resilience also means “bouncing forward quickly and in a manner that reduces susceptibility” to the same kind of hazard in the future.

PILLARS OF RESILIENCE

On this basis, they have listed five “pillars of resilience”. They are:

- social protection for vulnerable and marginalised people,
- safeguarding infrastructure,
- improved economic opportunities,
- environmental protection and
- operational readiness for recovery.

The supra-national policymakers have made detailed recommendations for each pillar. Moreover, they spelled out that policy and regulations should create an “enabling environment”. Good governance, in their eyes, also includes involving the public – and especially the young generation – in meaningful ways. They have called for capacity development, research, data management and funding for better disaster-risk control. Finally, CARICOM and CDEMA have stressed that good plans are worthless unless they are properly implemented.

It matters, of course, that 11 of 13 independent Caribbean nations are developing countries. They cannot be expected to build resilience by themselves. After all, they are struggling to cope with worsening disasters they did very little to bring about. Caribbean countries are not major emitters of greenhouse gases, but repairing disaster damages requires considerable resources which they could otherwise use for developmental purposes.

After a particularly devastating hurricane season, the CARICOM-UN High Level Pledging Conference took place in New York

in November 2019. It resulted in donor commitments worth \$1.3 billion, including over \$1 billion in loans and debt relief. Major partners included the EU and its members, the USA, the World Bank and many others. UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated: “Countries in the Caribbean need support now to rebuild, and to take effective climate action.”

According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, which was compiled by the German civil-society organisation Germanwatch, two Caribbean territories were among the countries most affected by extreme weather events from 2000 to 2019. In that list, Puerto Rico ranked first and Haiti came in third.

While the exposure to hurricanes is basically the same, Puerto Rico’s and Haiti’s socio-political circumstances differ considerably. Puerto Rico is a US territory, though not a state, so its scope for self-government is limited. Its people are US citizens, but do not get to vote in national elections. A serious debt crisis has compounded the problems. Though the standard of living is comparatively high, half of Puerto Rico’s people live in conditions of poverty. Migration to the mainland USA is easy, however, and Puerto Rico’s population indeed dropped by almost 12% to 3.3 million in the past decade.

Haiti, by contrast, is one of the countries the UN lists as “least developed” – and the only one in the Americas. It is struggling with a dreadful combination of high poverty, disintegrating statehood and multiple disasters, not all of which are related to climate change. Examples were the earthquake of 2010 and the subsequent cholera

outbreak. The country’s population has increased by about 12% to not quite 11.4 million in the past decade.

In view of Haiti’s multi-layered misery, the global media do not pay much attention to how much suffering hurricanes regularly cause. It is well known, for example, that Hurricane Sandy hit New York in 2012, but the global public is unaware of the same storm killing at least 108 people, leaving 21 missing and depriving 200,000 people of their homes in Haiti.

The Caribbean finds itself in an attractive, but tricky location. Thanks to its constant warm weather, many outsiders think of it as a kind of paradise. Widespread poverty and the poorly developed infrastructure, especially in remote villages, tell a different story. The relentless rise of temperatures is leading to increasingly extreme hurricanes. Caribbean people cannot rise to the challenges on their own. They deserve support for adapting to climate change – and their future also depends on major greenhouse-gas emitters radically reducing their carbon footprints.

LINK

Germanwatch: Global Climate Risk Index 2021:
https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_2.pdf



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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Turning vulnerability into resilience

The Ganges Delta has always been exposed to extreme weather events. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress towards becoming climate resilient. More will be needed since global heating is getting worse.

By Md Bodrud-Doza

Due to its geographic location and high population density, the entire country is a climate hotspot. Common issues include heat waves, erratic rainfall, flooding, droughts, cyclones, river bank erosion and ground water becoming saline due to the rising sea level. People who live close to river banks or the Indian Ocean Coast are especially at risk.

The nation must cope with both slow and rapid-onset crises. Climate change is

affecting water availability, food security, nutrition, health and livelihoods in general. Loss of land or a failed harvest often push people below the poverty line. The results are displacement and social crisis.

The good news is that impressive progress is being made. The death count of major cyclones has gone down spectacularly. In 2020, Amphan claimed 26 lives. In 1991, Gorky was of similar magnitude, but killed almost 140,000 people. Another two decades earlier, the death toll of Bhola was even worse: more than 500,000 dead.

These numbers show that the action taken by both government agencies and civil-society organisations has been successful. Today, Bangladesh has an effective early-warning system. Among other things, it re-

lies on cell-broadcasting. Before an imminent catastrophe, text messages are sent to every mobile phone in the area concerned. Volunteers have been trained to manage evacuation efforts, with an eye to supporting needy people in particular. The coastal areas have an extensive network of cyclone shelters, and many of them serve other purposes too. Some, for example, are primary schools in ordinary times, for instance.

Preparing for disasters obviously includes teaching school children what to do when a cyclone strikes. It has become part of the national curriculum. When the need arises, the shelters can accommodate entire village populations. Indeed, most people flee there when disaster strikes, though some of those who do not, still perish.

The role of non-governmental organisations cannot be over-emphasised. Bangladesh has a vast network of them, and many are involved in raising awareness of climate change and its impacts, disseminating knowledge among local communities and building capacities to tackle socio-economic hazards.

In this brief essay, the example of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society must suf-



Cyclone shelter in Bangladesh: Amphan destroyed many homes, but only claimed few lives.

fice. After the deadly devastation of Bhola in 1970 and the war of independence in 1971, it established its Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) in 1972. Today, it has 70,000 volunteers who, in a unique institutional arrangement, serve communities at the grass-roots level.

Cyclones, of course, do not only harm human bodies. They cause economic devastation which is harder to limit. Homes are destroyed, livestock killed and fields made useless. It adds to the problems that many families who depend on small farms or fishing are too poor to afford private insurance. The assets they lose – a boat, a cow or artisanal tools, for instance – may not be worth a lot of money, but to the people concerned,



they are most precious. Their livelihoods depend on them.

For people to bounce back after a disaster, several things are helpful, they include reliable social safety nets and infrastructure that is strong enough to survive extreme weather. Economic opportunities matter too. In all areas, nature-based solutions are best because they are not only comparatively inexpensive, but also enhance, rather than deplete the resilience of the local eco-system. The rehabilitation of mangrove forest along the coast, moreover, has reduced the impact a cyclone has after landfall, with the trees serving as a first barrier. Moreover, locally-led interventions are to be preferred, because they tend to be both efficient and effective.

In recent decades, Bangladesh has adopted several policies, plans and strategies for coping with climate change. Important ones include:

- the National Adaptation Programme of Action of 2005 (NAPA), which was updated in 2009,

- the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) of 2009,
- the Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD) of 2010, which were updated in 2019,
- the Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) of 2013,
- the National Disaster Management Policy of 2015,
- the National Disaster Management Plan for the years 2021 to 2025,
- the Eighth Five Year Plan 2020-2025,
- the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 of 2018,
- the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP) of 2021.

In the context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, moreover, the Government of Bangladesh has prepared a national adaptation plan and spelled out the nationally determined contributions to multilateral climate action.

COMPREHENSIVE VISION

The focus of policymaking has been expanded from initially identifying and tackling problems of an immediate nature to increasingly holistic approaches that boost the resilience of individual people, local communities and ultimately society as a whole. The vision is to eradicate poverty and achieve economic and social well-being. The Government of Bangladesh's idea of climate resilience is both pro-poor and gender-sensitive. It keeps updating its policies in the light of new evidence and insights.

So far, two national ministries play lead roles. They are the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. Other ministries, however, are expected to design their own programmes in accordance with the overarching policies. Subnational government institutions matter too, of course, including district administrations and municipal authorities. All ministries are expected to prepare their own detailed work plan in accordance with the SOD guidelines. Moreover, there are Disaster Management Committees (DMC) at all subnational levels.

In terms of implementation, Bangladesh has been relying on its own financial resources to a large extent. The Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) was established in 2010. The national government uses it to distribute funding. So far, the BCCTF has disbursed the equivalent of about \$450 million.

Most of the related projects have focused on things like water infrastructure, food security and disaster risk reduction. Apart from multi-purpose shelters, other kinds of built infrastructure are helpful, including for example drainage and irrigation channels. River regulation and hydraulic systems matter too, and strong embankments protect people and fields from flooding. In a more general sense, agricultural adaptation, afforestation and reforestation help to reduce disasters risks too.

The country has also received financial resources from abroad in past decades. Official development assistance (ODA) and various forms of climate finance has helped Bangladesh to gradually turn vulnerability into resilience. It is disappointing, however, that high-income countries have not been living up to all climate-finance commitments (see Saleemul Huq in the Focus section of D+C Digital Monthly 2022/02).

Although Bangladesh has come a long way in achieving resilience, there is still room for improvement. According to the most recent assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, one of the problems Bangladesh will most likely face is even more frequent and more intense cyclones in the future.

The IPCC has also mentioned maladaptation to environmental change as a serious challenge. In Bangladesh, shrimp cultivation is an example. Converting agricultural land to aquaculture ponds brought short-term benefits, but the long-term impacts have proven to outweigh them. The business is now seen to be unsustainable. Future development plans must be better geared to eco-friendly, but broad based prosperity.

LINK

Government of Bangladesh, 2021: Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan – Decade 2030
https://mujibplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Mujib-Climate-Prosperity-Plan_ao-21Dec2021_small.pdf



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Sowing cotton in a field in Punjab.

AGRICULTURE

Climate crisis affects cotton cultivation

Pakistan is one of the world's five major cotton-growing countries. However, production has been dwindling in recent years. Global heating is one of the reasons. Experts are making proposals regarding how to rise to the challenges.

By Imran Mukhtar

More than two thirds of Pakistan's people depend on agriculture. According to the governmental Pakistan Economic Survey for the financial year 2020/21, farming accounts for 19.2% of gross domestic product (GDP). Cotton is relevant both for agriculture and the garments industry. This commodity is declared to account for about 0.6% of GDP.

In the past 10 years, however, cotton production has almost halved, as the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) has reported, from 13.6 million bales in 2011/12 to about 7 million in 2020/21. In this period, the land

used for cotton cultivation was reduced from about 2.8 million hectares to 2.1 million hectares.

Several factors are driving this trend and consider global heating to be one of the most important. Its increasingly destructive impacts have been felt since 2015, argues Saghir Ahmad of the Cotton Research Institute (CRI), which is an agency of the provincial government of Punjab. For example, strong rains eliminate the pink-bollworm resistance that genetically modified BT cotton normally has.

It also matters that average temperatures are increasing. Pakistan is contributing to this global trend. On the one hand, woodlands and green areas are being cleared because of rapid population growth, and on the other hand, traffic and industry emit greenhouse gases.

Though cotton thrives in hot and dry climates, excessive heat reduces both the

quantity and quality of harvests. Moreover, the plants become more susceptible to white fly and other pests.

Muhammad Arif Goheer of the Islamabad-based Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) points out: "There are year-to-year seasonal shifts in Pakistan, both in the shape of unexpected rains and dry weather, which have affected cotton production."

POOR RETURNS

Other experts say that cotton production has been declining because the cultivation of other plants has become more lucrative. While farm inputs have become more expensive, cotton prices remained low, reports Zahid Mahmood of the Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI), an agency of the national government. Accordingly, many farmers have opted for rice, maize or sugar cane. One consequence is that local micro-environments have become less suitable for cotton production.

To encourage cotton production, farm inputs should be subsidised, says Saghir Ahmad. He considers price controls to be another valid option.

Pakistan's garments industry is growing. In view of declining domestic cotton production, it must import more cotton. Pakistan's Central Cotton Committee reckons

that about 5 million bales of the 12 million the sector used from August 2020 to April 2021 were imported. The implication is higher production costs.

There is an upside too, however. “Imported cotton has ten percent better quality,” says Naseem Usman, a Karachi-based consultant. The reasons are inferior seed, the intensive use of substandard pesticides and increasing temperatures.

BUDDING HOPE

There are reasons for optimism. Both government agencies and private-sector companies expect cotton production to increase again in coming years, not least because the commodity’s price has become more attractive again. The Central Cotton Committee reckons that this season’s production will exceed the previous one by about one third.

Higher temperatures remain a challenge, of course. Innovative seed with greater heat resistance and stronger pest tolerance would help. Saghir Ahmad of the CRI is in favour of genetic engineering, but regrets



that Pakistan is only spending very little on research and development. He insists that there “should be strict measures to ensure the quality of both seed and pesticides”. The scholar is proud of a new variety which is pink-bollworm resistant and was developed by his Institute. More must be done however. “We still have to find a solution to save the crop from the attack of white fly amid increasing temperatures,” he admits.

Changing the cropping patterns would help too, says Arif Goheer of the GCISC. In his view, the data of the past two decades should be used to adapt the time of sowing in every district in order to protect the harvest from the worst heat. He adds that water-

ing the crop when temperatures rise above 40° Celsius would help too. Whether sufficient water can be made available, of course, is another question. The devastating heat wave that hit Pakistan in April is definitely not a good omen. Goheer says it has disrupted water availability for farms by up 51% in the cotton sowing months of April and May.

LINKS

- Pakistan Economic Survey 2020/21: 02-Agriculture.pdf** (finance.gov.pk)
- Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Area and Production of Important Crops: Table 1 Area_production_crops_0.pdf** (pbs.gov.pk)
- Pakistan Central Cotton Committee, Daily Cotton Market Report: daily market report dated as on 31.03.2022.pdf** (ccri.gov.pk)



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Harsh conditions

Most Pakistani cotton pickers are women. They work in harsh conditions and are paid very little. Both civil-society organisations and development agencies point out that government agencies should do more to ensure a living wage and protect workers’ occupational health.

As most cotton pickers have informal jobs, they are not registered. Accordingly, there are no reliable statistics. In Pakistan, the province of Sindh is the second most important cotton region after Punjab, and it accounts for about 1 million cotton pickers. That is the estimate of Javed Hussain of the independent Sindh Community Foundation. He assumes that three quarters are women.

They work in the burning sunlight without any kind of protection. Some of the women are even pregnant. Risks include hand wounds, contact with

dangerous insects and pesticide contamination.

Pesticides are a slow poison that eventually affects cotton pickers’ health, says Khalid Mahmood Khokhar of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, a farmers’ union. He wants the central government and the provincial

governments to do more to protect farm workers.

Bonded labour is an issue too, insists Akram Khaskheli of the non-governmental Hari Welfare Association. According to him, cotton pickers earn about 350 to 500 Pakistani rupees per day. That is the equivalent of €1.75 to €2.60. To earn the money, they must pick 30 to 40 kg of raw cotton, which is called “phutti”. Greater amounts are hardly feasible. The women’s meagre incomes are not enough to make ends meet, the activist says. According to him a legal minimum wage of 1000 rupees for 40 kg would be appropriate.

He raises an additional demand: “The government should start registration of women workers involved in cotton picking to provide them benefits of health and social security.”



Cotton picker in a field in Sindh.



The shores of Lake Tanganyika are increasingly unsafe.

GLOBAL HEATING

Forced to leave their homes

Burundi is one of the 20 countries that are most exposed to climate change. Tens of thousands of people have been internally displaced in the past two years. The most important reason was flooding. State agencies and international organisations are making efforts, both to provide humanitarian assistance and to prevent further damage.

By Mireille Kanyange

According to official statistics, 44,000 Burundians were forced to leave their homes because of extreme-weather events in 2020. In 2021, another 35,000 people were displaced. About 90% stayed in the country. Government offices report that the main reasons were flooding on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, Africa's second largest lake, as well as those of the Rusizi River, which flows into it. The provinces of Bujumbura, Rumonge and Makamba were affected in particular.

Though the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are given food, they live in precarious circumstances. They need shelter. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is one of the agencies involved in humanitarian aid. So far, it has supported

more than 1600 families financially so they could find new homes. The IOM considers Burundi to be one of the 20 countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. It states that more funding is needed.

The IOM published a report on Burundi's more than 113,000 IDPs. The research was done in the months January to November 2021. Natural disasters including landslides, excessive rains, storms and flooding had driven 83% of them from their homes. Climate change is considered to be a main cause of these events.

Worsening drought is another serious issue. It particularly affects Kirundo province on the Rwandan border. In this region, the impacts of the climate crisis have been felt for many years. Regional authorities plan to build a reservoir in Busoni, a municipality. It would serve to irrigate 5000 hectares, considerably boosting farm productivity in an area of great agricultural relevance.

People affected by drought in Kirundo are engaged in self-help groups. In a spirit of solidarity, they are collecting food and other goods in order to share them with the needy. Moreover, they are cultivating vegetables, especially red onions, with an eye to better

prepare for crisis situations. In past years, people fled to Rwanda when severe drought struck, but that is hardly the case anymore.

For people hit by disaster, Burundi's Red Cross is an important institution. It has recently been expanding its network and now covers all municipalities. It can deliver first aid fast and supports evacuation efforts where needed.

The national government appreciates the support people in distress get from the Red Cross and the IOM. The minister in charge of disaster measures, Gervais Ndirakobuka, has made appeals to other organisations to provide similar support in natural-disaster situations. Government agencies are relevant too, of course, helping IDPs find shelter and lending financial support.

To prevent future flooding and protect public infrastructure, the government plans to build a levee along Lake Tanganyika. However, rivers cause concern as well. Apart from the Ruzizi River, two others are of particular relevance. They run through Bujumbura, the country's commercial centre, where flooding causes particularly serious damage.

Rivers typically flow from the hills to the lake. The government recommends measures to manage them. Moreover, fortifying the riverbanks with support from the World Bank and the UNDP (UN Development Programme) is considered to be a good idea.

The identification of risk-prone areas is another preventive measure government agencies are taking. As a government officer has declared, a place like Gatumba would today no longer be considered suitable for residential purposes. It is located on the shore of Lake Tanganyika and has been exposed to severe flooding since 2020.

Marc Rugerinyange, an engineer specialising in environmental matters, says it is necessary to regulate building projects on slopes. The prohibiting of informal construction sites would contribute to preventing disasters. In his eyes, risk-prone areas must urgently be identified and action taken. That way, foreseeable damage would be reduced in the rainy season, which begins in September.



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A villager shows the remains of his dead cows on a farm struck by drought in Kenya in March 2022.

DROUGHT

Multiple nexus

The Horn of Africa is suffering the third year of devastating drought in a row. Experience shows that humanitarian relief must not only be linked to longer-term development, but peacebuilding efforts as well. In the eyes of our contributor, an even more comprehensive “sustainable development nexus” would make sense.

By Christoph Schneider-Yattara

Ethiopia’s big famine in the 1980s was one of the 20th century’s worst humanitarian crises. From 1983 to 1985, an estimated 1 million people starved to death. The country’s north was affected worst when drought, border conflicts and ethnic tensions became a deadly mix. Throughout history, such combinations of human-made and natural disasters have reoccurred. We are currently witnessing another one in Eastern Africa.

According to UN OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), the Horn of Africa is experiencing one of its worst droughts in recent history. More than 13 million people are suffering severe food insecurity in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

In the past, droughts occurred in this region in intervals of five to ten years. Then they started to happen every three to five years. Now they seem to be becoming permanent. This year will most likely be the third year in a row in which the broader Kenyan-Ethiopian border region and large parts of Somalia will see very little rainfall in the season that used to be “wet”.

Apart from natural disasters, the past decade was also marked by human-made ones. Somalia has been a fragile and strife-torn state since 1991. South Sudan’s civil war erupted in 2013, forcing people to flee to Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. In late 2020, an insurgency in Tigray triggered another civil war in Ethiopia which is not over yet.

The full truth is that extreme weather and other natural phenomena are making violence more likely, while strife is compounding resources issues. In this sense, natural disasters and human-made crises are mutually reinforcing. Humanitarian agencies must respond to both – and large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people add to the challenges. After all, local people in need often consider the

newly arrived as competitors for scarce resources.

“ONE OF THE WORST CLIMATE-INDUCED EMERGENCIES”

What is happening in the Horn of Africa is well understood. International agencies, including OCHA, UNICEF and the Red Cross/Red Crescent, have been reporting extensively. According to OCHA, the disaster is “becoming one of the worst climate-induced emergencies seen in recent history in the Horn of Africa”. Communities’ livelihoods have been depleted. People are becoming weaker and will not be able to cope with yet another food crisis. OCHA reckons that:

- up to 14.1 million people face acute food insecurity and water shortages every day in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia,
- some 5.7 million children are malnourished,
- the recent cereal harvest was 60 to 70% below average in parts of Kenya and Somalia, and
- more than 3 million livestock animals died in the drought-affected crises of all three countries.

The oblivious implications are that masses of people can no longer depend on agriculture, while food prices are rising. The inflationary trend is being exacerbated by international issues, including Russia’s attack on Ukraine which has drastically re-



duced the availability of wheat and barley in global markets. More generally speaking, the climate crisis is causing increasing harm. The recent heat wave in India, for example, may yet prove to have an harsh impact on the wheat harvest there, making further food-price hikes inevitable internationally.

In regard to the Horn of Africa, OCHA reported in March that “families are taking desperate measures to survive, with thousands leaving their homes in search of food, water, and pasture”. The agency called for urgent action to help people as well as to build resilience against future shocks. To a considerable extent, the traditional pastoralism that is common in the region is becoming unsustainable (see box below).

The lasting drought shows that natural phenomena do not respect national borders. That was similarly evident in the locust infestations of 2020 and 2021, when swarms of pests haunted communities from the Arab peninsula to East Africa. South Asian countries like Nepal and Pakistan were affected too.

More generally speaking, the climate crisis is hurting communities all over the world. The most vulnerable people are always the poor. Accordingly, humanitarian organisations and development agencies face huge challenges.

In regard to the Horn of Africa, OCHA reports that aid agencies have “appealed for more than \$4.4 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to about 29.1 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia in 2022”. How much funding will actually become available, remains to be seen.

Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), the Protestant development agency I work for, and its twin Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (Diakonie Emergency Aid) are cooperating with drought-affected communities. The goals are twofold. We must help them to cope with the current food and water shortages but also contribute to building resilience. Today’s interventions focus on linking relief with rehabilitation and development (LRRD). In our professional jargon, we speak of the needed “nexus”.

Accordingly, short-term interventions focus on providing water and food, especially for lactating mothers and children, but also fodder for livestock. Interventions with longer term impacts include the supply of improved seed, the maintenance of communal water points and the rehabilitation of degraded community land. Obviously, health centres and other institutions that serve social-protection purposes need to be established where they do not exist yet and

strengthened where they are permanently overburdened even in good times.

In the development and humanitarian community, people are now discussing a “triple nexus” or “HDP nexus” linking humanitarian and development interventions to peace-building. Two insights are driving this debate:

- The underlying issues are interrelated, so it makes sense to tackle them in a holistic manner.
- In view of globally increasing needs, agencies’ resources are becoming ever more stretched and thus must be used in the most efficient way possible.

I think the international community should go even further and consider a “sustainable societies nexus”. Ultimately, we should consistently pay attention to all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving them would slow down the cycles of recurring disasters, and we might even escape them to a large extent.

LINK
UN OCHA, March 2022: Horn of Africa drought: Humanitarian key messages
<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/horn-of-africa-drought-humanitarian-key-messages-23-march-2022>



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Pastoralism-related problems

Pastoralists do not own financial assets, but measure wealth in terms of livestock. Animal husbandry results in products such as milk, meat and hides. To some extent, these goods are sold to make money, but a large share is used by the communities themselves.

Most people in the drought-stricken regions of Eastern Africa (see main story)

practice a pastoralist lifestyle. They depend on herds of animals, especially camels, cattle and goats.

Water and pastures are the most important resources. Herding work is done by the men, especially young men. They roam vast areas with the herds in search of water and grasslands. They typically carry arms to protect their ani-

mals and themselves. In times of crisis, herders travel very far and cross international borders to ensure the animals survive. Women, children and the elderly stay behind in the villages, with the women caring for children as well as the elderly.

As vital resources – especially water and pastures – are becoming increasingly scarce, clashes occur more frequently. Sometimes, herders fight with competing herders and sometimes with farmers. Such violence is often interpreted in

terms of ethnic, cultural or tribal belonging and may trigger wider inter-community strife. Traditions of revenge are common, leading to further loss of life and depletion of resources.

Women are particularly at risk, as villages can be attacked too. Moreover, drought means that they have to walk excruciatingly long distances to fetch water. When food become scarce, moreover, they often prioritise feeding the children, radically limiting the amounts they eat themselves. CSY



Beneficiaries of India's MGNREGA, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Multiple advantages

Social protection systems help to shield vulnerable people from climate risks and reduce social disparities. The great challenge is that they tend not to exist where they are needed most.

By Stefan Beierl

For poor and disadvantaged people around the world, the climate crisis is a double threat. On the one hand, they are especially vulnerable to climate risks such as extreme weather events which are becoming more frequent and more intense. On the other hand, measures to mitigate climate change can put these communities at a disadvantage, further adding to their marginalisation. Social-protection systems make it easier to tackle both problems. Accordingly, they should be established and extended everywhere.

The term “social protection” covers a range of policy instruments, from welfare handouts, financial transfers and employment schemes to government-sponsored health insurance or pensions. The instruments have in common that they support individual persons and families. They can end extreme poverty – and prevent it from childhood to old age.

A core function of social-protection schemes is to boost peoples’ resilience to shocks. That includes individual shocks, such as an illness or job loss, as well as collective shocks, such as a drought or flooding. Experts speak of “adaptive” social protection when schemes are designed to respond fast to collective shocks by adjusting modalities and scaling support. In the event of a collective shock, affected people who already receive benefits can temporarily get extra support. Moreover, coverage should

be expanded to additional people who now qualify for support. An adaptive system does so in a far-reaching, fast and flexible manner. Ideally, the system will anticipate collective shocks and provide additional support even before they hit, boosting vulnerable peoples’ resilience and preventing the shock from triggering a full-blown crisis.

The adaptiveness of a social-protection system hinges on several factors, including:

- data and information-processing systems that facilitate the identification of vulnerable people and link that information to risk assessments,
- robust delivery infrastructure, including for digital payments, so people are reached reliably,
- financial buffers to allow urgently needed money to be disbursed fast,
- financial buffers for reserves lined up for rapid disbursement.

One example is the multilateral “Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program” (SASPP). It is run by the World Bank. Germany is its most important donor. The SASPP is being implemented in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad. The idea is to gradually develop the countries’ nascent social-protection programmes into comprehensive and adaptive systems.

The SASPP focuses on preventing drought-induced food crises. Due to its adaptive nature, it nonetheless proved useful during the Covid-19 pandemic, with more than 4.6 million people in the Sahel region receiving additional cash transfers by September 2021.

It is possible to combine basic social-protection schemes with measures that help people to adapt to climate change, for example by diversifying economic activities. Experts speak of “economic inclusion”. The Partnership for Economic Inclusion is a global network which is coordinated by the World Bank and promotes such approaches, for example in Niger in the context of the SASPP.

Moreover, strong social-protection systems can reduce the need for humanitarian relief in times of crisis. An increasing number of developing countries are buying sovereign climate-risk insurance. It entitles them to financial payouts, for example, should they be hit by severe drought. So far, the insurance payouts are mainly channelled through the humanitarian system to

people in need. Yet, efforts are underway to use the national social-protection systems instead.

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

In response to Covid-19, almost every country adopted some social-protection measures to cushion the socio-economic impacts (World Bank 2020). Without them, even more people would have fallen deeper into poverty (UNDP 2021). In this sense, the pandemic proved that social protection does indeed mitigate the impacts of collective shocks.

However, dramatic disparities between nations became strikingly evident. Where strong social-protection systems were in place, governments could respond to this major crisis comparatively well. Where the need is greatest, by contrast, such systems are often still in their infancy or do not exist at all. Of the world population, 53% are not covered by social-protection systems. In Africa, the rate is even higher: 83%. Many programmes are quite slow, moreover, and more funding is needed too.

These things have implications for tackling the climate crisis. Where the vulnerability to climate impacts is great, social-protection systems must improve fast. That is a core message of the Global Risk Report 2021, which was published by Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, an alliance of Germany development and relief agencies.

Setting up social-protection systems is a long-term but worthwhile effort, as the Cambodian example shows. German agencies, including the GIZ, have been cooperating with the national government for more than ten years on developing mechanisms to identify poor households and creating the poverty registry IDPoor. During the pandemic, an additional 50,000 people were registered within ten days in May 2020. So far, IDPoor has facilitated timely cash transfers to more than 2 million people.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE PROTECTION

In view of the climate crisis, we must make our societies and economies climate neutral. The core principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the UN adopted in 2015, is to leave no one behind. However, some mitigation policies create or exacerbate social disparities, for example when jobs are lost in fossil industries or when prices of vital goods rise.

This is not only problematic from a social justice perspective. It also threatens the political viability of ambitious climate action. When they affect large sections of the population without compensation, protests may arise that may thwart implementation. In settings of this kind, adaptive social-protection systems have a stabilising and compensatory function. This is how social protection can facilitate a just transition to climate neutrality.

So far, however, there are only few examples of policymakers intentionally using social-protection schemes to make more ambitious climate action politically viable. In practice, such schemes have mostly served to cushion job losses, for example when coal mines are closed.

That said, some social-protection instruments are intentionally used in the context of climate mitigation. So-called “payments for ecosystem services” programmes offer financial rewards either for verifiable eco-friendly action or for refraining from harmful practices such as unsustainable logging. To a growing extent, moreover, public works programmes are geared to green goals. Prominent examples include India’s MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) and Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Programme.

The experience of the pandemic has proved once more just how important adaptive social-protection systems are for societies to cope with collective shocks. In view of escalating climate risks, such systems are becoming increasingly important. Therefore, it is high time to work together across sectors at all levels to strengthen these systems and close coverage gaps. This requires concerted efforts at the nexus of social protection, humanitarian assistance, climate adaptation, climate-risk finance and disaster-risk management.

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Social-protection schemes mitigate the impact of collective shocks such as flooding.



The village of Dernau in the Ahr Valley in Germany was almost completely flooded in July 2021.

DISASTER RESPONSE

Learning from experience

The flooding in the German Ahr Valley in the summer of 2021 could have been less disastrous if authorities had learned lessons from history. When it comes to civil protection, Germany can also take a page from other countries.

By Wolf R. Dombrowsky

On 14 and 15 July 2021, extreme rainfall caused catastrophic flooding in parts of Western Europe. In Germany, over 180 people died and over 800 were wounded, some seriously. Material damages are in the neighbourhood of tens of billions. The German states of Rhineland-Palatinate and North-Rhine-Westphalia were especially impacted. One hundred thirty-four people died just along the Ahr, a tributary of the Rhine. In the Ahr Valley, the terrible consequences of the natural disaster were unfortunately exacerbated by another disaster: the inability to learn.

First of all, authorities could have learned from general history: rivers have always played a central role in the context

of settlement. However, population growth, industrialisation and the sectoral division of labour have reduced watercourses to serving one-sided interests. That is true of many regions of the world, including Germany. Increasingly acrimonious conflicts of interest have caused rivers to be straightened and channelled, soil to be sealed and buildings to be erected in the highest-risk areas. Above all, retention areas, where water can spread out during floods, have been lost. All of these factors increase the potential for serious health and material damages due to flooding.

GERMANY'S EXPERIENCE WITH FLOODING

Second, authorities could have learned from Germany's recent history. Germany has had plenty of experience with flooding, for instance of the rivers Rhine, Meuse, Elbe, Danube and Neckar. In particular, the German Committee for Disaster Reduction (DKKV – Deutsches Komitee für Katastrophenvorsorge), a national platform made up of agencies, research institutes and civil-

society organisations, has made important contributions in this area. There are various field reports, including the flooding and reservoir-management plan that the state of Saxony developed in the wake of the disastrous flooding of the Elbe in 2002. It can be considered exemplary.

Another example is the study “Riverscapes: designing urban embankments”. As early as 2008, it proposed different scenarios to develop solutions for a variety of uses of the Rhine's resources, including work, housing, traffic, leisure, ecology and flood protection. It also created, among other things, risk mapping with simulations of flooding and a unified water management system that takes into account adjacent catchment areas.

Therefore there is no lack of information – but authorities have to take note of it and act accordingly. One of the most important lessons from the past is that rivers are only one element among many in the “water system”. They should be understood as components of branching catchment areas and as dynamic systems, from source to mouth.

A LOOK AT OTHER COUNTRIES

Third, Germany should consider what other countries have achieved in terms of disaster preparedness. Generally speaking, it is true

that the more prosperous the society, the larger the property damage. Conversely, the smaller a society's income is, the more people will lose their health or their lives.

The latter also applies to countries like Bangladesh and China, which for decades have put great effort into regulating water through targeted measures, both on national and international level. Both countries have achieved great progress when it comes to flood protection, for instance by employing systems of dykes and locks, canals, expansion areas, suitable architecture and an effective information, warning and evacuation system. Germany could learn from this work, too.

Japan in particular can serve as an example when looking for ways to improve. The country has a nationwide, electronically accessible risk map that allows users to simulate specific risks, including flood paths, landslides, earthquakes or tsunamis. Japan also operates a unified, comprehensive information and warning system.

From as early as kindergarten all the way up to old age, Japanese people are trained to respond to risks – particularly earthquakes – through regular exercises conducted at the neighbourhood level. Evacuation routes are labelled and meeting points with food and medical care are kept available. Every municipality has crisis centres whose personnel are regularly trained and tested. All of these things would also be desirable for Germany's hazards.

Fourth, finally, authorities could have learned from the specific history of the Ahr Valley region. For the Ahr River, in addition to regular seasonal flooding, historical sources also record 64 above-average water levels, including particularly serious summer flooding in the years 1601, 1804 and 1910. People understood that the combination of storms, precipitation and the steep gradient of the Ahr create both extreme crests and high flow rates. The former are very destructive and the latter reduce the amount of time authorities have to warn the public and react.

SHORTCOMINGS AND FAILURES

Unfortunately, no one seemed to take any notice of all this knowledge in the Ahr Valley. Even though relevant warning data was available, it was ineffectively communicated and did not reach the public.

The municipalities' crisis and disaster task forces were alerted and activated much too late. In many areas, there were serious technical shortcomings with regard to the survey and mapping of the location. The knowledge of the emergency personnel had drained away. A cross-regional coordination of emergency efforts also took an extremely long time to materialise, meaning that the necessary cooperation between organisations was lacking. Instead, in many places unorganised volunteers spontaneously took over all the tasks that regular civil protection is expected to perform.

In light of the many significant failures and shortcomings, the question arises whether the loss of life, health and property could have been avoided. Without a doubt, no one would have had to die if an effective and timely warning system had been in place. Preventive and organised civil protection could have considerably reduced outages and subsequent damage.

In general, German civil protection lacks realistic training exercises, competent leadership and above all well-rehearsed cooperation that transcends the egotism of individual organisations. On the other hand, the damage to infrastructure and development in the Ahr Valley has structural causes, which can only be remedied with fundamental changes that would also alter, or even destroy, some of the iconic character of this wine-growing region. This issue must be considered.

REBUILDING IN A HIGH-RISK AREA

Other aspects deserve attention too. Authorities should consider carefully where future construction can take place. In the entire Ahr Valley, there is no space available for retention areas or structures that would divert water. Almost inevitably, therefore, people are rebuilding in the old, high-risk locations. Politicians tend to tolerate this, and the state, insurers and donors provide financial help. Exemptions are allowing people to continue on "like before" and are thereby literally laying the foundation for the next catastrophe. Insurers are exacerbating the problem by giving preference to the reconstruction of the old rather than to renovations that would help avoid a repeat of the same damage.

It is obvious, therefore, that authorities in the Ahr Valley have not succeeded



Disaster prevention drill in Japan.

in overcoming the forces of inertia to implement higher-level, reason-based civil protection. Their reactions are also telling: they gloss over problems and play the blame game. Supposedly it was impossible to predict this amount of rain and this velocity. They maintain that, generally speaking, the region is "well prepared" and they did what they could. This pattern is familiar in the literature on natural disasters. All too often, other people or uncontrollable circumstances are to blame, whereas the person himself or herself did everything right.

The responsible authorities have to change their attitude and confront the consequences of this catastrophe openly and honestly in order to avoid future suffering. You can only learn from experience if you actually want to learn.

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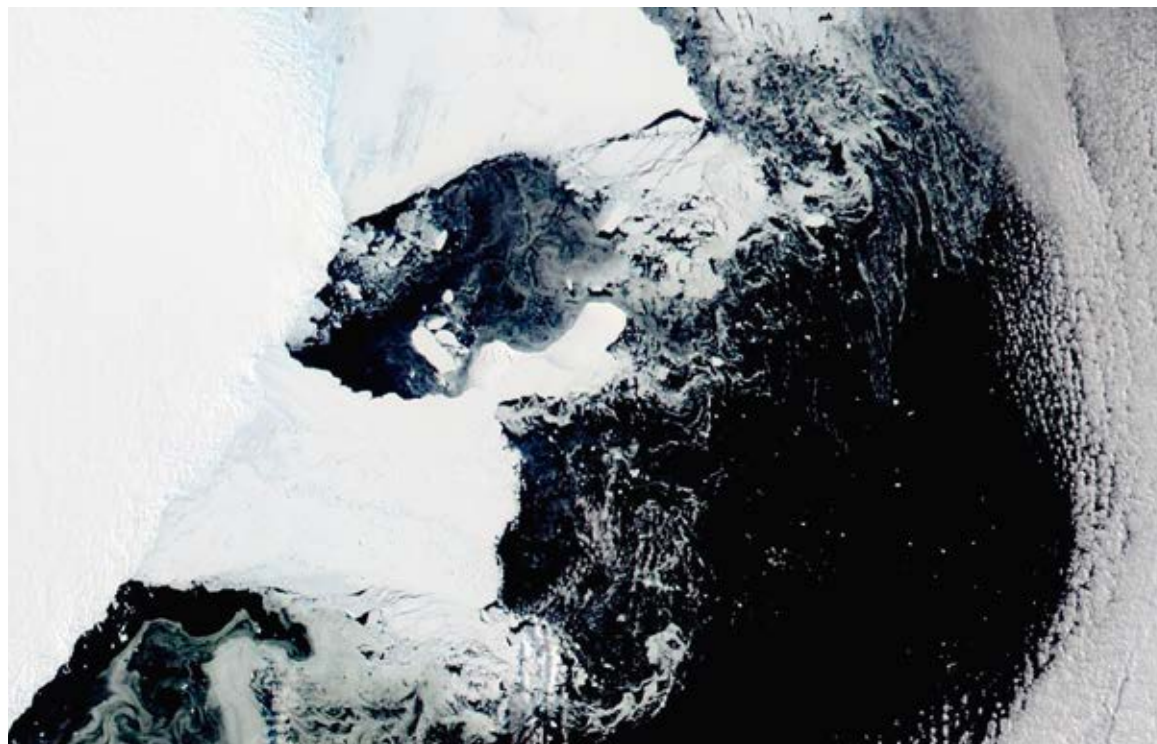
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This satellite image shows a collapsed ice shelf the size of New York City in East Antarctica in March 2022. The area had long been believed to be stable.

RELEVANT READING

Climate hazards are increasing fast

Extreme weather is causing disasters. Scholars and environmental agencies keep warning that global heating is very dangerous. To change course, action must urgently be taken.

By Mahwish Gul

Global ecosystems have already changed drastically. The ice on the Arctic Ocean has been reduced by about one half since satellite measurements started four decades ago, as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) reported in its Foresight Brief 28 in January this year. Should temperatures keep rising at current rates, UNEP expects the Arctic Ocean to be free of ice by 2050.

The trend is evident in the Antarctica too. Since 1979, satellites never detected as little ice as today. The ice shield used to be thicker and extend further.

At the same time, forest fires are happening more often – even in areas where they used to be quite rare. Increasing aridity, hot air, dry lightning and strong winds lead to longer fire seasons. In recent years, Australia's East and the US west coast saw unprecedented and devastating blazes. If greenhouse-gas emissions are not reduced, disastrous wildfires may increase by one third until 2050 and even two thirds until the end of the century, according to a recent UNEP report (2022, 2) on the matter.

CHANGING WATER CYCLES

In eastern Africa, satellites currently register the worst heat and the least rainfall since the technology was introduced. Some 25 million people are reckoned to be exposed to food and water insecurity (see Christoph Schneider-Yattara on p. 27).

Water cycles are changing, making arid areas even drier. Devastating droughts are currently affecting parts of Latin America and western Asia too. According to a report on water published by the World Meteorological Organization (2021), 70 countries suffer drought in an average year.

On the other hand, torrential rains are haunting other parts of the world. South Africa recently saw its rainiest season in history – and it caused deadly flooding. In Sydney, Australia, this March was the wettest on record. Flash floods proved devastating. For the eastern USA, for example, 2021 was an unusually wet year. In India, there was 129% more rain last September than normal. 2020 was the United Kingdom's fifth wettest year, and six of the 10 wettest years occurred in the past 20 years.

Around the world, the number of flood disasters has increased by 134% since the year 2000, according to the World Meteorological Organization, whereas the number and duration of droughts increased by 29%.

1.5° THRESHOLD

In its 6th Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that, due to human activity, global temperatures have risen by 1.1°C since the in-

dustrial revolution began. Most likely, the threshold of 1.5° will be breached. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated in his foreword, “we are on a fast track to climate disaster.” He made an emphatic call to world leaders that “it is time to stop burning our planet and start investing in the abundant renewable energy all around us.”

Scientists warn that global heating will spin out of control and escalate irreversibly if we pass certain tipping points. Cascading impacts would thus result from the melting of Greenland’s ice sheet, the end of Ocean currents or the destruction of the Amazon rain forest.

To get a grip on the climate crisis, 195 countries concluded the Paris Agreement on Climate Change seven years ago. The stated goal was to keep global warming “well below two degrees” and, if possible, stay within 1.5°. Governments committed to drafting and implement actioning plans with nationally determined contributions to global climate action.

When the Glasgow climate summit took stock last year, failure was generally acknowledged. Assessing the summit result in a press release, for example, UNEP declared that the new and updated commitments of 120 countries would only reduce the emissions forecast for 2030 by 7.5%. To limit global warming to 1.5°, 55% would be needed.

According to UNEP’s most recent emissions gap report, ten large economies account for two thirds of global greenhouse-gas emissions. China, the EU (counted as a single economy) and the USA are responsible for 41.5%. UNEP insists that climate protection hinges on action in these huge markets – and that it is still possible to stabilise the global climate.

Nature-based solutions, renewable energies and energy efficiency all have great potential, according to UNEP. At the same time, forests and other eco-systems must be restored. The UN agency makes it quite clear that investments in fossil fuels must stop, subsidies for fossil fuels must stop and ultimately the usage of fossil must stop too.

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