

akzente

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The GIZ Magazine

Down to the
very last village

Tackling the plague
in the highlands of Madagascar

Dreams you
can touch

Prospects for
young people
in El Salvador

The land of
milk and honey

Liquid gold
from Georgia

Democracy

Spoiled for choice

**AS BUSINESSWOMEN, WE NEED
TO ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS!**

ROSE SWAI

In her coffee production plant, she specifically promotes women and young people. As one of 116 Tanzanian businesswomen, she grasped the opportunity to extend her professional network and acquire valuable knowledge about markets through an exchange programme.

You can find this and other 'Faces and Stories' online at
www.giz.de/stories



Scan the code with your smartphone to watch the video.

MORE FAIRNESS AND DIGNITY

What people across the globe hope for from democracy as a form of government.

DEMOCRACY IS IN CRISIS – or so people are often saying at the moment. They assert that challenges such as increasing global competition, social inequality and digitalisation have pushed this form of government to the limits of its capacity and are now encouraging the rise of autocracies. Broken promises and shattered hopes are therefore often mentioned too. Is that true? We wanted to find out more, which is why this issue focuses on the state of democracy, particularly in countries in the Global South. What do the people there expect of a democracy? What particular challenges and risks arise if a country has to deal with great poverty or major regional differences? What does that mean specifically for countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Nigeria?

THE ANSWERS we found are surprisingly clear. Although the number of democratic states is decreasing slightly, it is still far higher than it was during the Cold War. At the same time, it became clear that living democracies need to do more than merely establish the will of the electorate. They require real participation, an opinion-forming process in which people can really express their views and needs. And people want to have well-run public services for all, such as water, education and health care. If these services are not accessible or affordable for the majority of society, frustration mounts – and this frustration is directed towards the political system too.

THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED IN CHILE: towards the end of last year, the largest demonstrations in the country's history took place –

calling for more 'dignity'. Politics professor Stefano Palestini was in Chile at the time and has combined his first-hand impressions with the latest academic findings in an essay. His conclusion was that, from a global point of view, it would be an exaggeration to talk about a crisis of democracy. But democratic systems have shortcomings that they need to work on. Field researcher Shandana Mohmand from Pakistan reiterates this view in an interview. She recommends strengthening local governments. A report about a community meeting in northern Uganda shows what that might look like in practice.

MORE PARTICIPATION and fairness is also one of the aims of GIZ's work, which is why we are always looking not only for the best way to achieve this, but also for new approaches and new insight. Our goal is to realise fair conditions for all – politically, socially and economically – in keeping with the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, who once said: 'I understand democracy as something that gives the weak the same chance as the strong.'

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and gain plenty of new insight into a political system that is worth fighting for, wherever you are in the world.



SABINE TONSCHIEDT,
Director of Corporate Communications
sabine.tonscheidt@giz.de



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More fairness, participation or well-run public services: what do people expect from democracy today?

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PHOTOS: XINHUA NEWS AGENCY/LAIF (P. 4, TOP), GIZ/MANSUROV AKBAR (P. 4, LEFT), BETTINA RÜHL (P. 4, RIGHT)



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DIGITAL AKZENTE

Our magazine is also available online in an optimised form for mobile devices. akzente.giz.de/en

PHOTOS: IMAGO IMAGES/AAIF (P. 5, TOP LEFT), GIZ/SEBASTIEN CANAUD (P. 5, TOP RIGHT), INTI OCÓN (P. 5, BOTTOM LEFT)

IN FIGURES

18
million

Eighteen million more health care professionals are needed worldwide to achieve and maintain comprehensive health care by 2030. Around half this number – nine million – currently work in nursing and midwifery. To highlight the huge importance of their work, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife.

70%

Around 70 per cent of all people working in health and social services are women. The majority of them are nurses and midwives. The shortage of skilled professionals in this sector is most pronounced in South-East Asia and Africa.

80%

More than 80 per cent of maternal mortality, stillbirths and infant mortality in the first month could be prevented by deploying well-trained midwives and birthing nurses. To mark the 200th birthday of the famous British nurse Florence Nightingale, International Nurses Day is being celebrated on 12 May 2020 with global campaigns under the heading 'Nursing the World to Health'.

Source for all figures: www.who.int



Excellent quality

SUSTAINABLE In the middle of the Jordanian desert, at the end of a sandy track, is Feynan Ecolodge, winner of the World Responsible Tourism Award 2019. The ecolodge in the Dana Biosphere Reserve is fully self-sufficient. It meets its energy needs using a solar plant and collects water from its own well. On behalf of the German Development Ministry (BMZ), GIZ assisted the hotel in introducing a constructed wetland for its wastewater. The purified water is used to irrigate the shady trees around the lodge.

www.giz.de/en/worldwide/32153.html

‘We cannot solve the threats of human-induced climate change and loss of biodiversity in isolation. We either solve both or we solve neither.’

Quote by Robert Watson, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and former Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)



Gone with the wind

FAIRTRADE Farmers who want to cultivate organic cotton in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have a problem: seeds from genetically modified plants growing in surrounding fields are being blown onto their crops. This is jeopardising their certification as Fairtrade producers, because not only eco-labels ban the use of genetic engineering – Fairtrade associations do too. But how can cotton farmers obtain non-genetically modified seed? GIZ is supporting them here on behalf of the German Development Ministry (BMZ). For the 2020 sowing season, 165 tonnes of cotton seeds were pro-

vided that meet the Fairtrade criteria. To protect the cotton plants, taller crops, such as maize, are being planted around them. More than 470 farmers with a total of over 1,100 hectares of land will be able to produce sustainable and non-genetically modified cotton in future. They can ask higher prices for organic quality than for conventional products. In addition, 120 people are receiving training on topics connected with organic farming. The Aldi Nord and Aldi Süd supermarket chains are supporting the project through an integrated development partnership by buying fixed amounts.

PHOTO: GIZ/MANSUROV ARBAR (P. 7), ILLUSTRATION: JULIAN RENTZSCH (P. 7)

THREE QUESTIONS FOR



ARMANDO LAZARO GOMEZ DIAZ

The 41-year-old engineer from Cuba attended a training course at a German vocational college. On behalf of the German Development Ministry (BMZ) and German Environment Ministry (BMU), GIZ is promoting via its programme Proklima the use of natural refrigerants through training, policy advice and technology transfer. These technologies are highly energy efficient and do not harm either the climate or the environment.

What is your job as a cooling engineer?

I work in the national Ozone Technical Office at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment. Our task is to coordinate the national programme for implementing the Montreal Protocol to phase out substances that cause ozone depletion. I specialise in cooling technology.

What did you learn during the Cool Training at the Federal College of Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Technology in Maintal?

We learned how to handle natural refrigerants safely. In countries with a hot climate, it is difficult to use natural refrigerating agents such as carbon dioxide, but it is possible. I also value being able to share ideas and experiences with colleagues from other countries.

How are you using your new skills in Cuba?

Cuba is a pioneering country in the use of natural refrigerants. For example, we draw on a mixture of isobutane and propane in fridges and minibars. We are now organising workshops for engineers, technicians and mechanics, who in turn train their students on how to use natural refrigerants safely. We are also presenting the technology to companies to address the challenge of climate change.

www.giz.de/expertise/html/61049.html

Innovative technology radar

TOOL Hype or valuable innovation? techDetector was created to help assess the potential of innovative technologies for international cooperation more effectively. GIZ developed the pioneering tool with its partner Envisioning in collaboration with the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering. The freely accessible responsive web application showcases 100 innovative technologies. It presents innovations such as biosensors for water quality and explores social issues such as how we can prevent algorithms from creating structural disadvantages for individual population groups. techDetector offers all German development cooperation partners insight into the technologies of tomorrow:

with just a few clicks, they can look at specific examples, an assessment of whether the technologies are already operational and what impact they could have on sustainable development. Technological innovations are key factors in social, economic and organisational change throughout the world. techDetector helps shape these advances and harness their potential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The tool will allow GIZ to take targeted action to gain knowledge and establish networks in the field of technological innovations for sustainable development.

techdetector.giz.de



Tax number by mobile

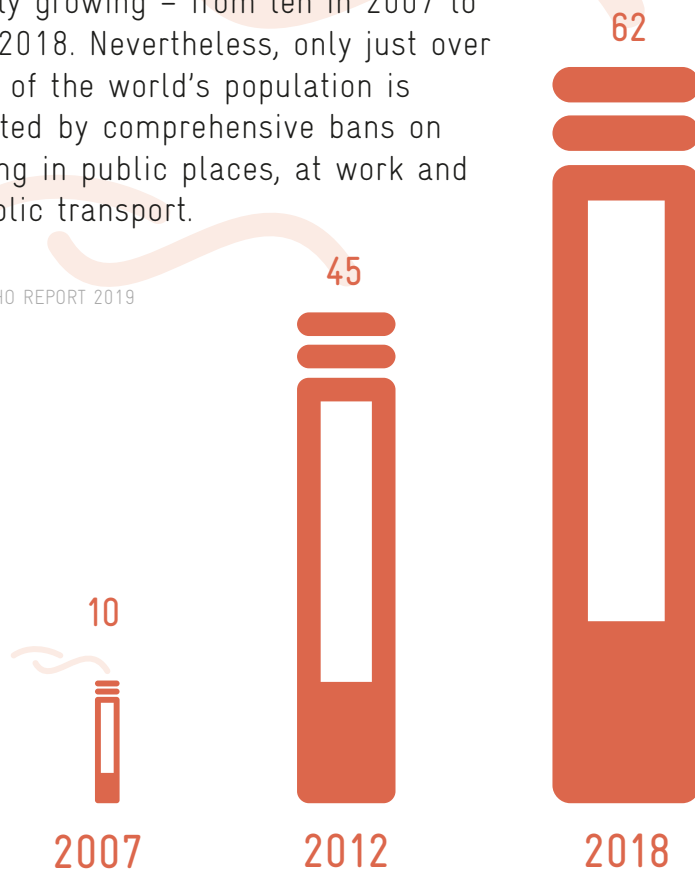
TAX ON PHONE People often pay by cash in Zambia. Clever business people can exploit this to avoid paying tax. The state has no control over cash transactions. An estimated 40 per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises are not registered with the tax authorities. But things are set to change. In future, people are to be able to pay their taxes conveniently and without cash by mobile phone, using code commands that even work on older mobile phone models. Tax identification numbers can already be applied for by mobile. This is important because people now need a tax number to open a bank account. Around 46,000 Zambians have registered since the system was launched. During the first five months following its introduction, the tax authorities reported an increase in revenue of more than EUR 62,000. The cashless tax payment system was developed by the firm ibes AG in cooperation with the lab of tomorrow and the Strategic Partnership Digital Africa. It was implemented with develoPPP.de on behalf of the German Development Ministry (BMZ).

www.lab-of-tomorrow.com/node/152

Smoke signals

IN COMPARISON The number of countries with non-smoker protection laws is steadily growing – from ten in 2007 to 62 in 2018. Nevertheless, only just over a fifth of the world's population is protected by comprehensive bans on smoking in public places, at work and on public transport.

Source: WHO REPORT 2019



Basis for a greener future

OVERVIEW Bosnia and Herzegovina has extensive energy resources and is one of the few Balkan countries that export electricity. However, energy production is not sustainable yet. The country has therefore set itself the goal of using considerably more renewable energy. It also has a diverse supply of biomass. An interactive web atlas now shows the potential of 23 biomass sources in the country. The database was set up as part of a GIZ project on behalf of the German Development Ministry in cooperation with the German Biomass Research Centre in Leipzig and the national Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can be accessed by the public and can be updated. Resource monitoring marks a major step forward for the country. The database provides guidance on how resources can be used more efficiently. It serves as a basis for harnessing biomass effectively in future to generate renewable energy.

<http://atlasbm.bhas.gov.ba>

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA WIKI

Official languages: Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian / **Capital:** Sarajevo / **Form of government:** Parliamentary democracy / **Head of government:** Zoran Tegeltija / **Size:** 51,197 km² / **Population:** approx. 3.5 million / **Population density:** 69 per km² (1) / **GDP per capita:** USD 5,755 (2)



Sources: (1) Statista, (2) IWF

NEW PROJECTS



Health in the EU

GERMAN PRESIDENCY In the second half of 2020, Germany will be assuming the presidency of the Council of the European Union. GIZ is supporting the German Health Ministry in implementing activities during the German presidency of the Council. It is organising an informal meeting of the EU health ministers in Bonn in July and a digital conference with high-ranking participants in Berlin in November. Topics to be addressed include artificial intelligence, big data and the vision of a European data area.



Help for refugees

SYRIA Almost six million people from Syria are registered in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Based on the measures of the Qudra I programme, the BMZ, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation are providing further assistance in the follow-on project Qudra II. GIZ is involved in implementing leisure activities for children and youths, psychosocial support, training and job initiatives, and measures to promote host communities.



Climate protection

WORLDWIDE The International Climate Initiative (IKI) run by the German Environment Ministry (BMU) is now supporting small-scale projects too. A maximum of 100 ideas will each receive funding of up to EUR 100,000 through to 2025. The aim of the new fund is to promote innovative ideas that are adapted to local needs in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to set up weather-resistant and climate-proof infrastructure in municipalities and regions. GIZ is implementing the new IKI components for BMU.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO (P. 8 AND P. 9, LEFT AND RIGHT), DPA (P. 9, CENTRE)

Report

DOWN TO THE VERY LAST VILLAGE

Assignment in Madagascar: on the road with a team of scientists to inform people about the plague in the highlands of the island republic

TEXT & PHOTOS BETTINA RÜHL
PHOTOS TSITOHAINA STEVENSON RAKOTOARIVONJY



Down to the very last village

CONCERNED

The Malagasy village where Mariette Razafimalala (centre) and her family live is particularly affected by a rat infestation. Clay houses offer an ideal habitat for the rodents, which can transmit the plague. People often cannot afford effective protection.





Top: The microbiologist Michael Nagel examines the area around a cooking stove for traces of rats.

Bottom: Along with his Malagasy colleague Raphaël Rakotozandirainy, he informs the village residents about the best protection against the plague.

T

The blade of the penknife disappears into the clay wall right up to the shaft. ‘A rat hole,’ microbiologist Michael Nagel confirms. ‘In the wall right above the cooking stove.’ Then he carries on looking using the light of his head lamp. In the two-storey clay building, it is so dark that Nagel would barely be able to see anything at all without the light on his forehead, and the soot-filled air stings his eyes. He sees something else by the cooking stove. Right next to the rat hole he finds ash, leftover rice grains, the remains of a cassava tuber and rat excrement. The 37-year-old German scientist carefully pokes around in the mixture with the tip of his knife. ‘The excrement is still fresh,’ remarks Nagel to Raphaël Rakotozandirainy, a microbiologist from Madagascar. ‘There’s no better way of showing how strongly rodents are attracted by leftover food.’ Then the biting smoke forces them outside again.

There, the residents of the house and the Malagasy village of Ambohitravorano are waiting. The village is in the highlands around 260 kilometres south of the capital. They already know Nagel and are no longer surprised that this white man has made the effort to climb the long, steep path to their village. It takes a day by car from Antananarivo to the provincial capital Ambositra and from there, after an overnight stay, nearly another two hours to Andina. A few kilometres further on, the only way to continue is by foot up a mountain. ‘The only other foreigners who come here are looking for valuable minerals,’ says the scientist Rakotozandirainy.

A year earlier, in November 2018, an interdisciplinary team of scientists investigated why there are regular outbreaks of the plague in some villages, while other places nearby are spared. Andina, the municipality to which the village of Ambohitravorano belongs, is one of the ‘hotspots’. Nagel and his Malagasy colleague are now presenting their results to the people living in the region. As part of this process, Rakotozandirainy, who is also mayor of Andina, called a meeting on the central square the previous day. More than 1,000 people attended.



Raphaël Rakotozandrainy takes the results of the plague study directly to the people. The scientist is also mayor of a highland community.

The scientists also take their findings directly to remote hamlets, where often only a few dozen people live. Raphaël Rakotozandrainy is head of the Institute of Medical Microbiology at the University of Antananarivo and a partner in Madagascar of the German Epidemic Preparedness Team (SEEG), to which Michael Nagel from GIZ also belongs. This task force is deployed when partner countries ask for rapid assistance because they are no longer able to control an epidemic themselves or want to be better prepared for future outbreaks. In acute cases, the task force can get to the partner country within 72 hours. Interdisciplinary teams are put together from a pool of experts in a variety of disciplines, including GIZ staff and university experts.

In Madagascar, the government asked for support from the German Epidemic Preparedness Team due to the recurrent outbreaks of the plague. Even though the assignments are demanding, the scientists believe that the field work is vital. 'Of course, germs can easily be diagnosed in modern laboratories throughout the world,' Nagel remarks, 'but whether a case of disease turns into an epidemic depends on many different factors.' Preventing epidemics requires a better understanding of how different factors interact – which is exactly what the study in Madagascar was designed to do. The scientists put out traps for rats and mice in villages and smallholdings and asked people about their living conditions and what they knew about the plague. They recorded information on geology, vegetation and land use and collected samples. Most of the laboratory results are now available.

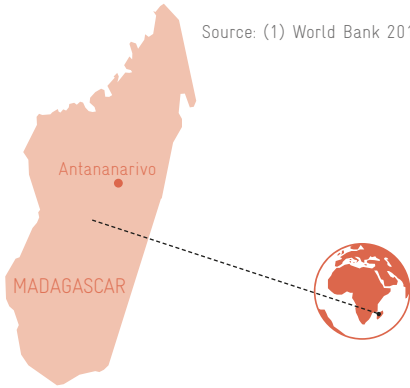
FIGHTING EPIDEMICS

The German Epidemic Preparedness Team was initiated by the German Development Ministry (BMZ) in cooperation with the German Health Ministry in response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa in 2014-2015. A core team based at GIZ tracks reports of the outbreak of disease worldwide. In consultation with the **Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine** and the **Robert Koch Institute**, it evaluates the situation and assesses the risk of an epidemic. In addition, a pool of experts has been set up for flexible deployment. The German Epidemic Preparedness Team therefore supports countries in preparing for and **responding to outbreaks of disease** and in taking preventive measures. GIZ coordinates the assignments, drawing on its contacts with partners throughout the world. The team was deployed to Madagascar to tackle the plague, which occurs there at regular intervals. The microbiologist Michael Nagel and his team investigated the causes of the outbreaks. A professor of geology, a bacteriologist, a field biologist, a human genetics expert and a doctor of tropical medicine made up the group of researchers from Europe who worked with Professor Rakotozandrainy and other experts from Madagascar.

Contact: Michael Nagel, michael.nagel@giz.de

MADAGASCAR

Capital: Antananarivo / **Population:** 24 million /
GDP per capita: USD 510 (1) /
Economic growth: 5.8 per cent / **Human Development Index ranking:** 162 (out of 189)



Madagascar is Africa's largest island state and the fourth largest island in the world. The republic is one of the world's least developed countries. More than three quarters of the population live in extreme poverty, and the share of poor people is particularly high in rural areas.

www.giz.de/en/worldwide/322.html

'We were pleased that someone investigated it,' comments Mariette Razafimalala, a 34-year-old farmer who lives with her family of seven in the house that Nagel has just left. Almost everyone here is barefoot, and the children have runny noses. It is very cool at night in the highlands, so the boys and girls often have colds. And as the houses only have small windows and people cook over open fires inside, people's respiratory tracts are vulnerable. 'We not only found the bacteria that cause the plague here, but lots of other dangerous germs too,' explains Nagel, and his colleague Rakotozandrainy translates this into Malagasy, the language spoken in Madagascar.

Squeaking rats in the straw roofs

Rats can be heard squeaking from one of the straw roofs in the village. In Ambohitravorano, the scientists caught a particularly large number of rats in their traps. During the subsequent examination in the laboratory, it became clear how many lethal germs they carry. Nagel was surprised and alarmed at the wide variety. An assessment of the findings showed that *Yersinia pestis*, the pathogen that causes the plague and that was imported to Madagascar from Europe around 120 years ago, is widespread here. However, hantavirus, another deadly pathogen, was also found; the variety they identified causes serious fever and, like Ebola, leads to haemorrhaging. The scientists also found the bacteria responsible for trench fever, which causes meningitis, among other things.



The project contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



The team of scientists and a member of staff from the health station in Ampasina familiarise themselves with new rat traps.

The results of the study have clearly disproved two working hypotheses. Firstly, that some villages are free of plague germs. ‘The plague germs are everywhere all the time here,’ Nagel emphasises. Secondly, the results did not confirm that people in some villages are immune to the disease for genetic reasons. The men and women said that people had already died of the plague in their village many years earlier, but that their hamlet had always been spared in recent years, even in 2017, when the epidemic was particularly virulent in Madagascar. ‘You still need to protect yourselves better,’ Nagel impresses on everyone. Then he lists what they can do: ‘You need to get rid of the rats and mice in the houses and keep your food supplies firmly shut,’ he recommends, adding that there should be no leftovers either inside or in front of the houses. The people listen to him attentively, sometimes nodding. Then Nagel points to a hole in the straw roof of Mariette Razafimalala’s house: ‘Can you see that? A rat hole! The straw roofs make an ideal home for rodents. Best to swap them for corrugated iron roofs.’ The clay walls of the buildings also provide an ideal habitat for the dangerous creatures. ‘Fill the holes in your walls with concrete, cement or stones,’ Nagel advises them.

‘We can’t afford corrugated iron roofs,’ remarks Mariette Razafimalala. Depending on the size of the house, a roof like that costs the equivalent of EUR 300 – a fortune in the villages of Madagascar. The same is true of cement or supply boxes that can be shut so tightly that mice and rats cannot squeeze their way in.

Saved by laboratory results and a health station

In Tsararivotro, the next village, some of the houses are built of burnt bricks, not just put together out of flattened clay. ‘Rodents have virtually no chance there,’ Nagel explains. He even thinks one of the buildings – made of bricks and built on a rocky plateau so that the rodents cannot eat their way into the house through the floor – is ‘almost ideal’. Moreover, the roof is made of corrugated iron. The inhabitants were not trying to ward off rats, however. ‘There are a lot of armed cattle thieves here,’ explains 42-year-old Rasoa Zararia, who lives in the house. ‘They often set fire to the straw roofs.’ The family sold two of their cows to pay for the corrugated iron roof. Cattle thieves in Tsararivotro have now stolen around 60 cows, almost the entire cattle stock of the village – including the last two cows belonging to the Zararia family. In Tsararivotro, there have repeatedly been cases of the plague; in 2017, Rasoa Zararia’s daughter caught the disease. ‘I didn’t know what was wrong with her,’ Zararia explains, ‘but I took her to Ampasina as quickly as possible.’ In the main village of the municipality, mayor and microbiologist Rakotozandrainy has set up a health station partly funded by GIZ. The German Epidemic Preparedness Team brought the equipment for the laboratory and trained the medical staff in the microbiological diagnosis of plague bacteria. That was what saved Zararia’s daughter. Eighteen years old at the time, she was promptly diagnosed as having the disease and recovered thanks to the antibiotics she was given.

Since then, people trust Rakotozandrainy even more. That is an invaluable advantage now. The village inhabitants are more motivated to follow the recommendations to protect themselves against



A young patient at the health station in Ampasina, which was set up with support from GIZ

the plague – at least if they have enough savings. And while he accompanies his German colleague back to the capital, the Malagasy mayor and scientist cannot stop thinking about how the work to renovate the houses could be financed. At one of the next local council meetings, Rakotozandrainy proposes that sustainable coffee could be grown and sold through a cooperative to subsidise the building material. The people of Andina are taking up the fight against the plague themselves. That could be a signal for the entire highlands of Madagascar. —



BETTINA RÜHL has been reporting from Africa for around 30 years. Her research in the remote regions of Madagascar is one of the special projects in her career. **TSITOHAINA STEVENSON RAKOTOARIVONJY** is a journalist from Madagascar.



IN FOCUS

DEMOC RACY

More fairness, participation or well-run public services:
what do people expect from democracy today?



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‘It’s a matter of equality’

Social scientist Shandana Khan Mohmand advocates empowering local government. **p.32**

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EXAMPLES OF GIZ’S WORK

The strength of democracy

Examples of how GIZ is promoting participation and good governance **p.35**

In focus: Democracy



Information and discussion: a baraza (community meeting) in northern Uganda. Anna Peter and Benson Apita (below, left) attend the baraza as often as possible.

Learning democracy

For the first time, Ugandans are helping to reshape their country's energy policy. Lawyer Claudia Apio takes her message around local villages calling for real change.

Text MARKUS SPÖRNDLI Photos MARTIN KHARUMWA

It is Tuesday at a baraza in northern Uganda. Forty people from the surrounding villages have squeezed onto the benches at the primary school in Amuca for this community meeting. This scene is repeated every few weeks in the village, which lies a good 300 kilometres north of the capital, Kampala. The chairwoman presents today's subject: Energy and the Environment. Then a woman gets up from her plastic chair at the side of the classroom and walks to the front. Claudia Apio introduces herself briefly. She runs the Lira NGO Forum, an umbrella group for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the district of Lira. Radiating energy and with all eyes on her, Apio captivates the entire audience. 'It's really important that you tell us what your concerns are,' the 37-year-old says. 'That is the only way we can influence policy so that the energy projects benefit you, the communities.' She urges them to stand up for their interests. 'Do you remember the petition you sent to the district authorities? You needed a new road, and it was built. You should do the same

with energy policy.' Those present nod in agreement.

Anna Peter (48) and her husband Benson Apita (56) both took part in the baraza. They live just a few minutes' walk from the school. On their farm, which covers an area equivalent to around half a football pitch, they grow maize, peanuts and the root vegetable cassava, among other things. Anna Peter recently sold her orange harvest, and soon, for the first time, she expects to have a crop of coffee beans ready for the market. They also keep pigs, cows, goats and chickens. Of her six children, two are still school-aged.

'We go to the barazas whenever we can,' says Benson Apita. 'It's a chance to find out important information, explain what our needs are and pass on our own knowledge as well.' With regard to the environment and energy, for example, there is still a need for greater awareness. Like most people in the village, Anna Peter admits that they still use charcoal for cooking: 'We should really buy a biogas cooker. That would be cheaper in the long run and protect the forests.' The couple have a small solar power system

ESTABLISHING NEW LINKS

On behalf of the EU and BMZ, GIZ is trying out a new approach in Uganda that involves combining support for civil society organisations with its priority areas of **energy, water and rural development** – starting with the energy sector. Building on a strong track record of cooperation, GIZ persuaded the Ugandan Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development that energy policy-making will improve if it draws on the knowledge and responds to the demands of civil society. According to the Ministry, the approach has been so successful that there are now plans to expand the role of civil society groups.

At the same time, on behalf of BMZ, GIZ is focusing on measures to **strengthen human rights** in Uganda. These include courses, legal advice and campaigns for women's rights and for tolerance towards minorities, such as LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, queer) groups.

Contact: Wolff-Michael Mors, Head of the Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme, cusp@giz.de



Radiating energy: 37-year-old lawyer Claudia Apio campaigns for greater public involvement in policy-making in Uganda.

that allows them to light a room, charge the mobile phone and listen to the radio. For household appliances that need more energy, they would have to connect their home to the electricity grid. ‘The line passes right by our house,’ says Benson Apita. ‘But electricity is still too expensive for us.’

His wife hopes that electricity prices will soon fall, thanks in large part to the work of civil society organisations that stand up for people’s interests. Now that they are getting older, Anna Peter would like an electric iron and a television. Above all, an electricity supply would make it easier and cheaper to process their maize crop into flour. For now, they have to hire a generator to power the peeling and grinding machines.

It was in 2015 that Claudia Apio started highlighting the issue of government accountability in her region at the traditional community meetings, which have always been held to express local concerns and negotiate how policies are implemented. ‘We are all responsible for what we do,’ she says at her office in the district town of Lira. ‘That includes citizens, civil society

organisations and, above all, government representatives. We need to make sure that our taxes are used properly.’ More and more meetings are now attended by local non-governmental organisations offering support. Claudia mainly goes along whenever a contentious issue is due to be discussed – confrontations between the army and villagers, for example.

Expanding role for civil society under an authoritarian regime

Democratic practices, including mechanisms for public involvement in decision-making and holding the government to account, cannot be taken for granted in a state such as Uganda. This landlocked country in East Africa has a population of almost 45 million and has been ruled since 1986 – in an increasingly authoritarian manner – by President Yoweri Museveni. Uganda is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and human rights violations are commonplace, especially against sexual minorities (see interview).

Despite these circumstances, Claudia Apio believes that considerable progress has been made in recent years: ‘When I first got involved in civil society activities in 2003, there were still regular arrests of many high-profile figures,’ she recalls. ‘They were treated as members of an opposition movement who supposedly wanted to overthrow the Government.’ Today, she explains, civil society is in a much stronger position with respect to the state. ‘We even receive money from the Government to control construction projects, for example,’ she says. Nevertheless, civil society activists are still arrested if they adopt an overtly political stance. ‘When that happens, though, the security forces notify me. Then I can call the police station and negotiate.’

Narrow childhood escapes from the terror of the LRA

Whenever Apio sees a problem, she wants to solve it. Not for a second does she doubt that everything must have a solution. Perhaps it was this mindset that helped her to survive at all as a child. She grew up in northern Uganda in the midst of the war that the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) began to wage in 1987 against the then new President Museveni. The guerrilla army, led by Christian extremist Joseph Kony, kidnapped thousands of children and abused them as soldiers or sex slaves.

Apio spent her childhood in a ‘protected village’, as it was officially called, which also took in people from elsewhere who had been driven out of their homes. The village was guarded by some 250 soldiers. Even so, LRA troops repeatedly entered the village. ‘I was nearly kidnapped four times,’ she says. ‘I tricked the men every time, hid in the house or ran away.’

Later, as the LRA was gradually expelled from Uganda, the young woman wanted to do her bit to ensure that Kony and his commanders were held to account for their crimes: ‘So I studied law.’ Apio set up her first civil society organisation as a student. After graduating from university, she worked for the German aid agency Workers’ Samaritan Federation (ASB) and

had one big goal: to enable hundreds of thousands of displaced people in more than 150 camps to return to their villages. ‘We didn’t just have to rebuild the infrastructure. People also had to learn all over again to look after themselves,’ she recalls. ‘It was no longer about providing humanitarian aid but about development, and to make that happen I had to find ways of getting people involved in the political process.’

Apio has pursued that goal ever since. She joined the Lira NGO Forum in 2014, helping its seventy member organisations to perform their role as a mouthpiece for local people more effectively. She organises training courses, in financial management or in the area of advocacy and lobbying, and encourages public involvement in decision-making, for example at the barazas held in local communities.

The Lira NGO Forum is supported by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union (EU). ‘For me, the focus is not on money,’ says Apio. ‘What’s more important are the new opportunities created by sharing ideas and having access to information and networks.’ Together with other NGO colleagues, she is now also directly involved in a review of national energy policy.

For Claudia Apio, it’s a promising start, albeit not yet a democratic transformation. But where there is a problem, there must also be a solution. After the energy debate during the community meeting at the primary school in Amuca, she makes a final appeal to the audience: ‘It is your duty to elect politicians who serve you. Register now for the coming election and urge your neighbours to do the same!’ —

The project contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



MARKUS SPÖNDLI is a journalist in Nairobi, Kenya. He specialises in development issues and writes for German-language media, for example the Swiss newspaper Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

MARTIN KHARUMWA is a free-

lance photographer in East Africa. He also collaborates with artists to create artwork that shines a light on his part of the world.

INTERVIEW



ADRIAN JJUUKO

Human rights lawyer and Executive Director of the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum in Uganda

Recently, the human rights situation for members of sexual minorities has got even worse. Why is this?

Uganda is already gripped by election fever, although people will not go to the polling stations until 2021. The musician Bobi Wine – who is particularly popular with the younger generation – is causing embarrassment and anger among the party of Yoweri Museveni, the current president. The party members feel their power is under threat. In order to secure a majority, they are now adopting a homophobic stance to secure votes.

How exactly are they doing this?

In October 2019, Simon Lokodo, the Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity, announced his intention to reintroduce a law that provides for the death penalty as punishment for engaging in homosexual activity. Shortly afterwards, some activists were arrested, as were all the people at an LGBTIQ-friendly bar.

Why are so many voters getting behind homophobic slogans?

First of all, it is important to make clear that the situation for the LGBTIQ community in Uganda is not quite as bad as media reports make it sound. The vast majority of citizens have other concerns and don’t really know anything about the issue. However, homophobic violence is now becoming an issue with two murders of LGBT persons recorded towards the end of last year. Many ordinary people are manipulated by evangelical preachers who brand non-heterosexual practices as a mortal sin and capitalise on the human fear of the unknown. On this basis, homophobic political campaigns are gaining a foothold.

How can the situation be improved?

The law prohibiting homosexual acts dates back to the British colonial period, and most activists want to abolish it. However, I don’t think it should be the priority right now. Instead, we should focus on the core aspect: equality for all. We need to talk to politicians, and even evangelical preachers. The human rights training course for police officers, which was supported by GIZ, should also be resumed. This is the only way we can make perceptions change throughout Ugandan society.

Hidden champions

Alongside prominent figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan, there are a great many less visible individuals and initiatives that have made invaluable contributions in the pursuit of civil rights and liberties. We have put together some brief profiles.



RAFAEL MARQUES DE MORAIS
An Angolan journalist who denounces human rights abuses

Rafael Marques de Morais campaigns for press freedom and fair social conditions in Angola. In the course of his work as an investigative journalist, he has confronted the country's powerful elites time and time again. In 1999, for example, he published an article about then-President José Eduardo dos Santos in the weekly magazine Angola, calling him a corrupt dictator. This earned him a prison sentence of 43 days. Later Rafael Marques de Morais denounced human rights abuses carried out in the country's diamond mines and accused the attorney general of acquiring land illegally. This led to a string of further convictions and also another prison sentence. The country now has a new government. President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço himself has declared war on corruption and encouraged Marques to continue expressing his critical views. –



LUCIA DIAZ
A Mexican mother in search of her son

Lucia Diaz fights against the culture of silence in the face of injustice and the lack of action by Mexico's government agencies, which all too often allow perpetrators to escape punishment. Her son was abducted in the city of Veracruz in 2013 and has not been seen since. In 2014, she responded to his disappearance by setting up a non-governmental organisation, Colectivo Solecito de Veracruz, which tracks down clandestine graves and attempts to hold those responsible to account. Together with a few hundred other mothers, she calls for justice, effective government based on the rule of law and more active law enforcement measures. 'We're not going to stop looking for our children,' she says, while admitting that the likelihood of finding them alive is not very high. Diaz also supports a programme called Shelter City that offers a temporary refuge to human rights activists who are in danger so that they can build up new strength. –



ARTHUR KHARYTONOV
A Ukrainian lawyer and civil rights advocate

Arthur Kharytonov campaigns in favour of liberal democratic values in Ukraine. He is a lawyer and both founder and president of the Liberal Democratic League of Ukraine, a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that evolved from a student initiative. All of its members are young people born after 1991, the year the country gained its independence. With its motto 'Life, Liberty, Happiness', it promotes civil rights and civil liberties in Ukraine and beyond. Kharytonov is 24 years old and has also written three novels and various short stories. He wants to use his work to make a statement against the old structures in his country. 'We are the representatives of a new generation,' he says, 'not the puppets of oligarchs.' As well as educational work and campaigns, the League's activities include events to show their solidarity with the demonstrators in Hong Kong. –



AYLEEN JOVITA ROMERO
*A Chilean soprano who sings
from a balcony*

During the protests in Chile, Ayleen Jovita Romero supported the cause by using her most potent weapon – her voice. On 21 October 2019, undaunted by a government curfew that had been imposed in many cities, the opera singer delivered a rendition of a well-known protest song from her balcony. Laced with great passion, the words of ‘El derecho de vivir en paz’ (‘The Right to Live in Peace’) thundered out across the otherwise relatively quiet capital city, Santiago de Chile. The response was one of overwhelming support – first of all from her immediate neighbourhood, which acknowledged her singing with frenetic applause, and later on social media, where her performance soon attracted millions of followers in Chile and far beyond. Since then, Ayleen Jovita Romero has enjoyed cult status in Chile. –



JOSHUA WONG
*A student in Hong Kong
demonstrating for democracy*

Joshua Wong is a leading voice among the protesters who have been taking to the streets of Hong Kong for months, demanding free elections and democracy. Their trademark is the colourful umbrellas they use to protect themselves against attacks by the police. The 23-year-old, who founded a student activist group as early as 2011 and has been politically active ever since, has been arrested and convicted several times but so far has always been released. The demonstrators have achieved their core demand not to extradite suspects to courts in mainland China for trial. The extradition bill has been suspended. Now they are calling for it to be permanently withdrawn and for China’s influence in Hong Kong to be curtailed. Wong believes he and his comrades are on a kind of demarcation line: ‘If we are in a new Cold War, then Hong Kong is the new Berlin,’ he said recently. –

A critical eye on social media

Myanmar is on the road to democracy after a long period of military dictatorship. However, past ethnic and religious conflicts, combined with the rapid expansion of the internet, have fuelled an increase in hate posts on social media. To make matters worse, Facebook is the only source of information for most people in Myanmar. According to the United Nations, the fact that members of the country’s Rohingya Muslim minority are being brutally persecuted, with more than 700,000 fleeing in 2017, is partly linked to Facebook, which has, it maintains, played a ‘crucial role’ in the incitement of hatred. In response, GIZ has launched a pilot measure entitled Supporting Voices of Pluralism, which is designed to promote diversity of opinion by supporting the work of civil society organisations dedicated to filtering out and analysing hate speech against minorities on social media. Another goal is to ensure that less frequently heard voices are able to gain an audience on Facebook. –

Scrutinising elections

Bitter arguments regularly break out over whether elections were really free and fair. One solution is to request a judgment from neutral international observers appointed by a body such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). OSCE is a conference of states parties for peacekeeping and the successor organisation to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which was established in 1975 at the height of the Cold War. In recent years, among its many other activities, OSCE has audited more than 300 elections in its 57 member states. That involves deploying observers with different areas of specialist knowledge, in most cases for several weeks. In the post-Cold War period, OSCE’s attention was focused primarily on the transition countries of Eastern Europe. More recently, it has started working with other groups of states, partly in response to the emergence of electronic voting systems, which present new dangers. For example, OSCE was involved in the last presidential elections in the USA. It also dispatched a small team of neutral observers to report on the 2017 Bundestag elections in Germany. OSCE is one of the most renowned election-monitoring organisations in the world. –



In focus: Democracy



Wanted and threatened

People around the globe yearn for democracy – at least when it offers more than elections. They expect equality, participation and basic public goods such as health, education, housing and transport. Professor **Stefano Palestini** explains why the Chilean example is a case in point.

Illustrations: Florian Bayer

On 25 October 2019, the largest demonstration in Chilean history took place. Around one million people marched in the capital, Santiago de Chile, holding aloft banners demanding ‘dignity’. Three decades ago, huge numbers of Chileans also took to the streets demanding an end to the military dictatorship and the election of a democratic government. Today, Chileans are pressing for radical changes to a socio-economic model perceived as deeply unfair and to political institutions seen as abusive and corrupt.

Are demonstrations like the one in Chile an indicator that democracy is in crisis, or are they on the contrary a way of demanding more and better democracy? In its most basic sense, a democracy is a political system in which a variety of political forces compete for the support of citizens, as expressed through suffrage. Almost 40 per cent of the global popula-

IN THIS ARTICLE

1. SITUATION

In Chile and around the globe – what minimum requirements does a democracy need to meet?

2. RISKS

Free elections, the rule of law, freedom of opinion – where the political system is at risk.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

We can help democracy with clear rules and regulations, media pluralism and robust modern systems.

tion lives in a country that fulfills that minimal condition. A more complex definition of democracy goes beyond the narrow focus on elections. It includes three other sets of criteria: institutions that check the power of the elected authorities and that protect the equality of citizens before the law; institutions that enable the deliberation among citizens necessary for electing representatives and taking informed decisions. And finally, institutions that deliver public goods in basic areas of social life such as health, education, housing, and transport.

Some European countries display features of all these institutions. Yet, for most citizens around the globe, this ideal-type democracy is simply an aspiration. In Chile, the calls for dignity mean more and better public goods; in Hong Kong, citizens are protesting for more political rights; and in Sudan, citizens are calling for a transition to a democratic civilian government. The demands are different, but they all pursue the

goal of putting in place a political system based on democratic institutions.

Not every conflict is a crisis

It has become commonplace among academics and commentators to say that democracy is in crisis. But we must examine this statement carefully. To begin with, not every conflict is a crisis. Democratic societies are by definition prone to disagreement and conflict, since they are composed of a plurality of groups with different visions of how society should be organised. In contrast to an autocracy – such as a monarchy or a one-party system – in democracies social groups can express their visions freely and compete for the control of the state. Only when conflict and disagreement turn holders of diverging opinions (the ‘other’) into enemies to be harassed, attacked or even eliminated, is a country facing a crisis that may ultimately even see the breakdown of that democracy.

In Venezuela, for instance, the government and the opposition saw each other as enemies. This led to a failed coup against President Hugo Chávez in 2002, who responded by suppressing the opposition and capturing the judiciary. In 2017, Chávez’s successor, Nicolás Maduro, stripped the opposition-controlled parliament of its powers and has since trapped the country in spiralling repression.

‘Not every conflict is a crisis. Democratic societies are by definition prone to disagreement and conflict.’

Different sets of democratic institutions can be under threat in democracies: elections, political rights and the rule of law, public deliberation, and public goods. Firstly, irregularities in the electoral process are a common threat to democracy. Although over the last thirty years elections have become freer and fairer according to available measurements, this trend was recently reversed: in 27 out of 158 countries, elections in 2018 were less free and fair than in 2008.

When governments cling to office

Crises of electoral processes can afflict any type of democracy, but are particularly re-



current in younger and less stable democratic systems, as seen in the recent presidential elections in Kazakhstan and Bolivia. The governments of young democracies are tempted to use the power of the state to cling to office and make the life of their opponents harder. They can obstruct the opposition's political campaigns, as Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev did during the last presidential elections. Or they can gain influence over the authorities in charge of organising elections and counting votes, as President Edgar Lungu from Zambia did in the 2016 elections.

Secondly, the institutions in charge of protecting citizens' political rights can be affected. As in the case of breaches to elections, threats against political rights and the rule of law are often perpetrated by the incumbent governments themselves. These threats have even emerged in relatively stable democracies, such as the United States, where President Donald Trump is endeavouring to erode the rule of law by arguably abusing the right of presidential pardon for political allies, and continuing attacks against the media as exemplified by a recent lawsuit against The New York Times. In Hungary – a country that had an exemplary transition to democracy in the 1990s – the ruling party Fidesz has suppressed civil society organisations, claiming that non-governmental organisations pose a risk to national security, and removed checks on the executive by restricting the competencies of the constitutional court.

But incumbent governments are not the only ones directly responsible for the erosion of the rule of law. In socially segregated societies like Nigeria or the Philippines, crucial institutions such as judges and prosecutors are captured by corporate actors and their economic power. In these societies, trust in institutions has plummeted and the rule of law is perceived to serve vested economic interests rather than citizens' rights. This is a common cause of disaffection with democracy. It is also a breeding ground for 'strong leaders' and demagogues like the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro or President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. They promise to give the power back to 'the people', while frequently rolling back the very same politi-

'The governments of young democracies are tempted to use the power of the state to cling to office and make the life for their opponents harder.'

cal and civil rights that citizens seek to strengthen.

Independent media under threat

Thirdly, as in the case of the rule of law, the institutions that support public deliberation such as independent and pluralist media can be undermined by incumbents and market actors. In Poland, for instance, the ruling Law and Justice Party took control of state broadcasters and intimidated foreign-owned media outlets such as the US-owned TVN. The opposite is happening in Brazil, a socially and racially segregated country with a population of about 210 million, in which three corporate groups linked to elite families control the 19 most important national media outlets. Among them, Grupo Globo alone reaches almost half of the population through its media network. These groups also operate in other economic sectors such as financial services and real estate, thus concentrating a very worrying amount of political power in Brazilian democracy in their hands.

At the same time, digital politics through social media can hinder public deliberation when used to spread hate speech that bullies minority social groups and fake news that hampers people's ability to make informed decisions. This might play a role in the recent mass protests in Hong Kong or in Chile, where protesters and bystanders struggle to distinguish the truth from the fake news.

Moreover, foreign powers and firms, such as Cambridge Analytica and Ponte Estratégia, are subject to investigations because they are suspected of having influenced electoral campaigns during the last presidential elections in the USA and in Brazil. They are alleged to have used digital profiles of millions of citizens in terms of social characteristics, ethnicity, and political preferences, and then to have placed targeted ads, misinformation and counter-campaigns. However, the recent emergence of these 'digital politics' must be seen in the existing context of the traditional media sector captured by the state or corporate actors. In countries where the media sector is

plural and free of state or private influence, citizens are arguably less prone to manipulation and disinformation through digital social media.

Finally, democracy is also at risk when states fail to provide public goods to their citizens. This threat is common to all countries, although different levels of development and degrees of democratic maturity surely determine where citizens set the bar to assess the quality of the goods. In more prosperous countries like in Western Europe, citizens are more demanding regarding the quality of public goods. This is a particularly prominent source of democratic crises in liberal-market economies where the state has rolled back its function as a provider of public

goods and in some cases even as a market regulator.

In contemporary neoliberal societies, education, health and housing are not universal rights but either expensive commodities for the high and middle classes or low-quality public goods for the lower-middle class and the poor. In parts of the United Kingdom and in Chile, leading neoliberal economies, even water is a fully privatised commodity. Access to health, education and housing is divided: it either comes at the cost of household indebtedness or is limited to under-funded and sub-standard public goods. The intrinsic unfairness of this socially segregated model is the underlying cause for demonstrations in Chile, Ecuador and Colombia.



Extreme differences provide fertile ground for populists

As Aristotle warned 2,300 years ago, 'a polity with extremes of wealth and poverty is a city not of free persons but of slaves and masters, the ones consumed by envy, the others by contempt.' In the United Kingdom, these social problems are said to have had a crucial impact in the Brexit referendum.

International actors have a particular responsibility

The role of international and transnational actors is especially crucial in the context of global economic turmoil and increasing competition between global powers. For the first time since the 1930s, the number of countries facing an erosion of democratic institutions exceeds the number of countries undergoing an improvement of democratic institutions. Furthermore, this democratic erosion is apparent in states that, due to their size, population, and geopolitical location, are pivotal in the international system such as Turkey, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and the USA.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the 1930s, states are nowadays embedded in a network of international norms, international organisations, and transnational advocacy groups that promote and defend democracy. Organisations such as the African Union and the Organization of American States are equipped with instruments to monitor, mediate, and even impose sanctions on member states in response to breaches of democracy. These instruments can prevent electoral irregularities or flagrant coups against democratically elected governments.

However, international organisations can become irrelevant if powers in their respective regions turn less democratic themselves. Hence, there is still much to be

'For the first time since the 1930s, the number of countries facing an erosion of democratic institutions exceeds the number of countries undergoing an improvement of democratic institutions.'

done. We must advance the global governance of the global media and social media platforms in order to reduce the manipulation of information. We must improve the enforcement of norms that regulate the practices of transnational corporations and global production chains that increase segregation and social inequality in democracies in the global South and global East.

Democratic states must also improve cooperation initiatives that aim at strengthening judicial and law enforcement institutions in young democracies. And multilateral financial institutions must provide leeway for progressive democratic leaders to adopt non-orthodox redistributive policies in the interests of the lower and middle classes, while preventing the emergence of authoritarian leaders. In doing so, the international community could help to fulfil the promises of democracy.

In conclusion, protests like the one in Chile reflect both threats to democracy but also demands for a better democracy. Chileans are embarking on a process that should lead to a new political constitution that is democratically written and approved by Chileans, in which dignity and social justice shall be at the core. But as the experiences of the Colour Revolutions and the Arab Spring have demonstrated, these are fragile processes in which domestic and international political actors will be crucial in preventing the emergence of authoritarian forces that could lead to a further erosion of democratic institutions or a total breakdown. —



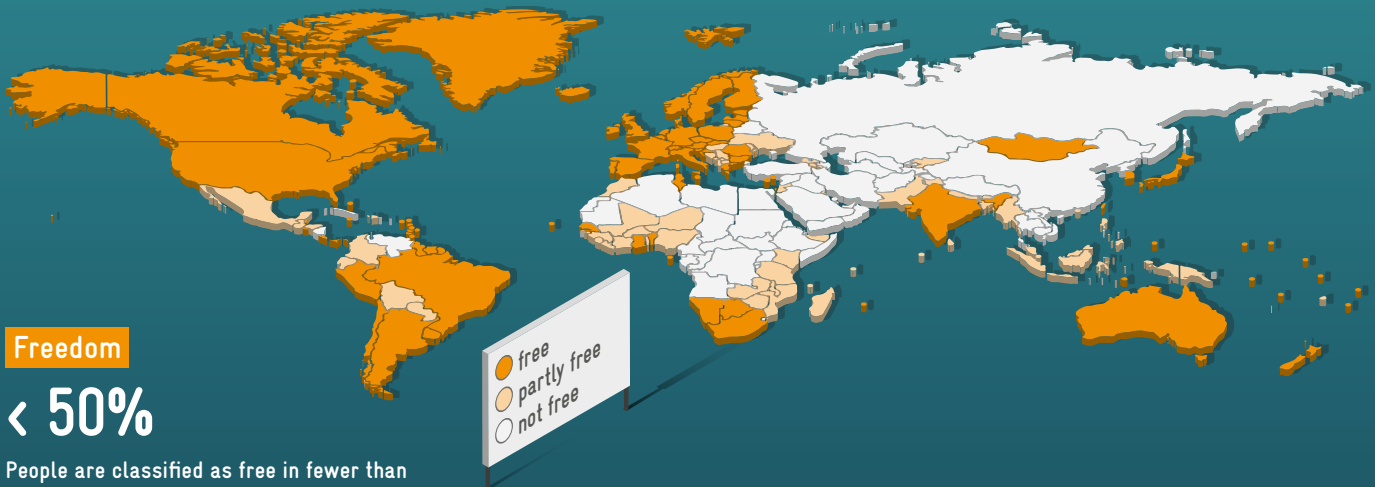
STEFANO PALESTINI

is a Chilean sociologist and political scientist.

He is co-author of the study 'Regional Organisations and Mechanisms for Democracy Protection in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union'.

How do things stand?

Opinions, feelings and hypotheses about the state of democracy abound. A look at the world of figures helps to put things in perspective.



Freedom

< 50%

People are classified as free in fewer than half of all countries around the world. In the others, they enjoy only limited civil liberties. Alongside the right to vote, this is one of the main features of democracies. Source: freedomhouse.org

Ageing

Parliaments are considered the heart of a democracy, but where are the young people? Only 2.2 per cent of all parliamentarians worldwide are under 30, and fewer and fewer young people are joining political parties. Source: ipu.org

2.2%

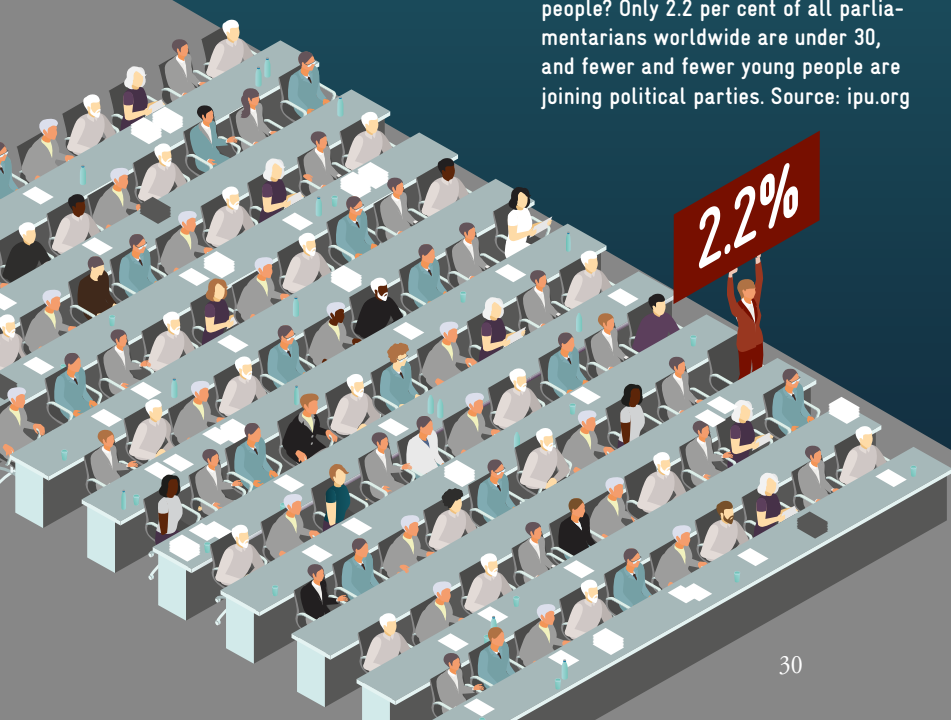
The smallest and the largest

1.3 billion

The smallest democracies in the world are the Pacific island states of Tuvalu and Nauru, each with a population of slightly over 10,000. The largest is India, which is home to over 1.3 billion people. Source: thecommonwealth.org

Monarchies

Almost four dozen countries today still have kings or queens as their head of state – many of them in democracies, with elected governments and parliaments. This includes the United Kingdom of course, but also Japan, Andorra, Jordan and Thailand. Source: usnews.com



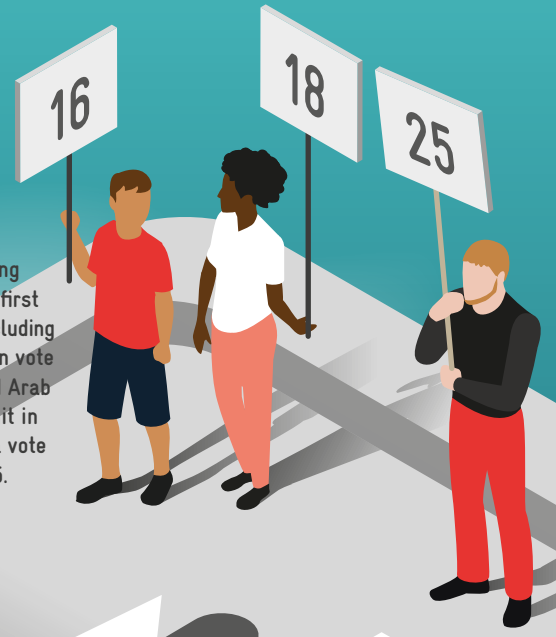
More and more voters

2 billion

In 2019, almost 2 billion people – about a quarter of the world’s population – went to the polls in over 50 countries. The largest election was held in India, with an electorate of almost 800 million. In Indonesia, a total of nearly 190 million people cast their vote. Source: globalsecurity.org

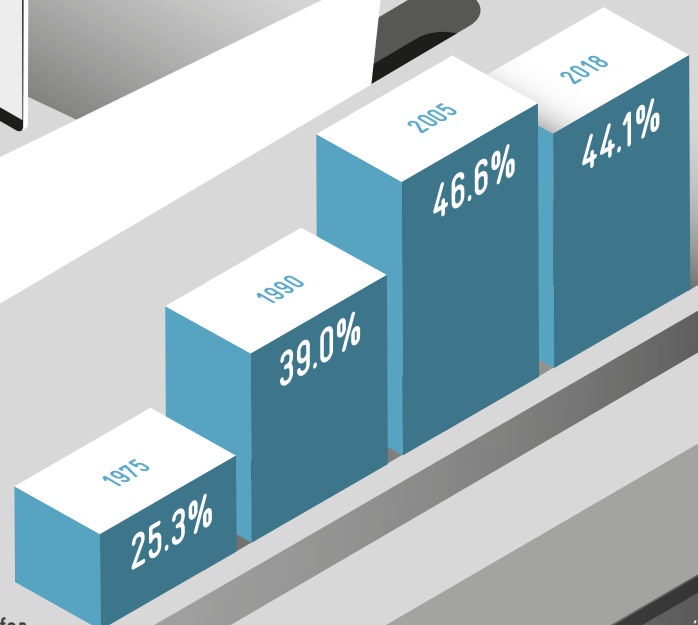
First-time voters

In most countries (over 100), young people are allowed to vote for the first time at the age of 18. In others, including Cuba, Brazil and Austria, they can vote earlier, at the age of 16. The United Arab Emirates has the highest age limit in the world for suffrage – to cast a vote there, young people need to be 25. Source: worldatlas.com



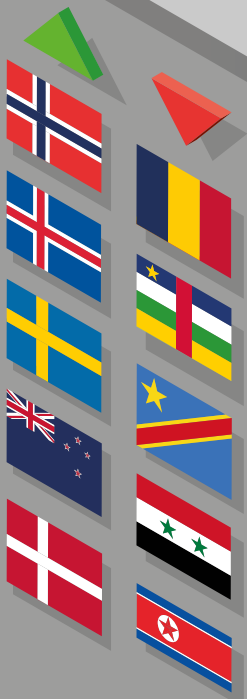
E-democracy

Digitalisation offers the best prospects for greater citizen participation in political processes. Estonia is currently the most advanced country in the world in terms of digitalisation. Almost half of all Estonians already cast their votes online. Source: e-estonia.com



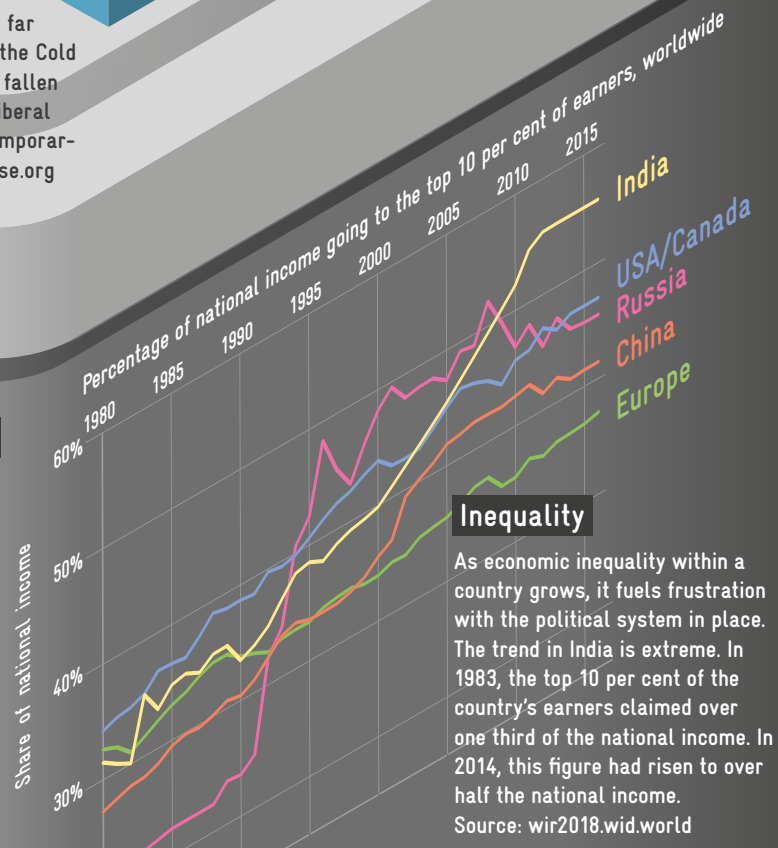
Downward trend

The number of ‘free countries’ is far higher today than it was during the Cold War, but recently numbers have fallen slightly. The forward march of liberal democracies has been halted temporarily at least. Source: freedomhouse.org



The strongest and the weakest

The most robust democracies, measured in terms of five criteria including suffrage, governability and civil rights, are currently Norway, Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Denmark. At the other end of the scale stand North Korea, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Chad. Source: The Economist



Inequality

As economic inequality within a country grows, it fuels frustration with the political system in place. The trend in India is extreme. In 1983, the top 10 per cent of the country’s earners claimed over one third of the national income. In 2014, this figure had risen to over half the national income. Source: wir2018.wid.world

‘It’s a matter of equality’

In democracies, towns and local authorities should be given more powers. They shape people’s everyday lives and are vital in ensuring that people are content, says social scientist **Shandana Khan Mohmand** from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex.

Interview: Friederike Bauer

You have done a lot of research in different countries around the world on political participation and representation – what is the state of democracy nowadays?

There is good and bad news. Almost half of all countries have democratic systems now, more than ever before in human history. However, we have seen some backsliding on democratic values in recent years. And of course half is still only half; it could and should be more.

So is the much-discussed trend towards autocracies and populism overemphasised?

There is this trend, without any doubt, but it is also a bit dramatised. That has probably to do with the fact that it is happening in at least three countries that we had accepted as being established and vibrant democracies: USA, India and Brazil.

Is the retreat of democracy limited to certain geographical regions?

No, you can find cases and similar patterns on almost all continents. Apart from the USA and Brazil, take for instance Burundi, Hungary, Turkey or the Philippines.

Are there differences in what people expect from a democracy?

They all expect their governments to be representative of their needs, to be accountable, transparent and allow them to participate. That holds true regardless of a country’s

level of development. The big difference has to do with what voters are concerned with. In advanced democracies and richer countries there is more talk about ideology and big public policy programmes. In much of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the great concern is still with gaining access to basic services such as water, sanitation, health services and so on.

Does that mean economic wellbeing is more important to people than political freedoms?

Basic electoral procedures and civil liberties definitely go hand in hand with democracy. But beyond that you have to make sure that resources are being spread across all populations and that there is economic and social wellbeing for all. That is precisely where democratic systems have failed over the last 30 years, not that autocracies perform any better.

How could and should governments have prevented that failure?

Many governments relied too much on the market. The whole debate and narrative of the past four decades was about how markets would improve people’s lives. But at least parts of the population cannot be served by the market. The state must step in and redistribute resources to more marginalised populations.

What exactly should be regulated more by the state?

Mainly three things: progressive taxation, health and education. Governments should introduce effective taxation to raise revenues to enable more and better-quality services for everyone. Education is hugely stratified in most countries and this entrenches inequality by pre-determining people’s economic situation. Health services are neither accessible nor affordable in many places. The points on this list might sound simple, but in many countries, they do not define government priorities. Without them, however, social and economic mobility is difficult and that is when people become disillusioned with the political system.

What role do local governments play in this?

They play a very important part because they ultimately have to provide the everyday services people need. And it is on this level that people can participate in decisions and in representing their communities. So, it is essential that national governments effectively empower local governments.

Do you see democracy seriously endangered?

The trend of autocratisation is depressing, but democracy has also strengthened in places. Essentially, I do not see any alternative to democracy because people want to be represented equally and fairly, and to live freely. But democracies have to work on creating greater equality for everyone. —



**SHANDANA KHAN
MOHMAND**

is a research scientist and lecturer at the University of Sussex's Institute of Development Studies. Her areas of specialisation are political participation, decentralisation and political economics. Her work has included conducting research into elections in Pakistan.

Pooling forces for change

People are calling for political and economic participation. GIZ takes a holistic approach to fostering democratic principles and endeavours to involve pro-reform forces.

By MICHAELA BAUR

Two issues in particular affected the world in 2019: firstly, the question of if and how we can get a grip on climate change, and secondly, the lack of trust in politicians' ability to address the concerns of their citizens and resolve problems. In Hong Kong, Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria, Bolivia and Chile, people have taken to the streets to express their rage. In some countries, the lack of political and economic participation is behind the protests. This is compounded by their frustration at the restriction of democratic rights and the failure of governments and public authorities to ensure the reliable provision of basic services.

These protest movements demonstrate the importance of two aspects that I regard as being central to democracy: firstly, the ability of the government to provide people with good, accessible services, and secondly, comprehensive political and societal participation which leads to legitimised decision-making. Respect of human rights is naturally part of this. In our work, we try to take a holistic approach to such issues. These aspects of democracy are not only something for governance projects. Every water, education and waste management project can do its bit to introduce mechanisms to foster participation and make public authorities more efficient, as well as to practice using these new mechanisms. The same applies to employment, climate action and health. One example can be seen in Jordan, where some towns in the north of the country have doubled in size as Syrian refugees have fled across the border. These towns have huge amounts of waste, but few jobs. In our waste management projects, we have drawn up a set of criteria with local authorities to ensure that everyone can get involved and benefit: refugees and locals,



MICHAELA BAUR

is Director General of GIZ's Europe, Mediterranean, Central Asia Department.
michaela.baur@giz.de

women and men, people with and without disabilities.

In its capacity as a federal enterprise, GIZ works with state institutions in almost all partner countries. At the same time, we seek dialogue with key institutions and groups across society. However, there have been, and still are, cases in which GIZ scarcely operates at central government level, if at all. In Ukraine, we operated only at regional level prior to the 2014 Maidan Revolution. When the people forced political change, we were able to support this democratic process on behalf of the German Government and the EU, by strengthening decentralised structures and infrastructure, especially in the crisis-ridden eastern part of the country. In the wake of Ukraine's most recent election, we are suddenly dealing with entirely new politicians – completely in line with the spirit of a smoothly functioning democratic change of government. The change means that we now have new partners, some of whom have no prior po-

litical experience. It is part of our job to help foster more knowledge and to make them more familiar with the tools of the political trade.

During the Arab Spring, almost a decade ago, Germany was also quick to respond. BMZ's special initiative to improve stability and development in North Africa and the Middle East is creating economic and social prospects for people in the region. Another priority area is democratisation and the improvement of public services. Although there have been setbacks and counter-movements following the Arab Spring, people have learned that if they work together they can bring about change. New social contracts are being discussed, since the paternalist deal of 'economic benefits in exchange for loyalty' is now obsolete and no longer works. Demographic trends alone mean that young people with strong opinions now account for a large percentage of society. How does GIZ approach radical reforms of this sort? It is a multi-step process, and without partners we can achieve nothing. It is important to know where the pro-reform forces are in government and in the public authorities, but also in civil society, the business community and associations. We need everyone who shows a desire for change.

It is not an option to bow out, saying that it takes too long and it is too difficult. That is how it is with the major questions facing society: they are complex; we encounter resistance and obstacles; only a small number of people are willing to question themselves and time-honoured patterns. We can see that too in the debate on climate change I mentioned at the start. But we have no choice – there is work to be done! —

The strength of democracy

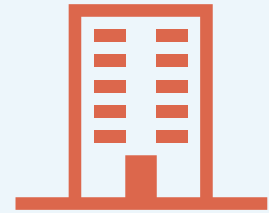
GIZ is working worldwide to promote participation and good governance. Here are five examples of different paths to a common goal.

Political order and value in one

Germany believes in democracy both as a value and as a form of political order. In line with international conventions, GIZ fosters citizen participation around the world. Information, education, participation (including economic participation), legal certainty and state welfare help people to live in dignity. How these challenges can be met is something that GIZ discusses on a regular basis with academics, social policy actors and its own staff, using a variety of forums. —

47%

COMPETENCIES Tunisia's first free local elections in 2018 featured many female candidates, motivated by the 'Democracy needs Women!' campaign, and supported by gender quotas and the fact that gender equality is now enshrined in law. In this North African country, 47 per cent of town and city councillors are now women. As well as networking with other women politicians, their main wish is to have training and upskilling measures that would enable them to execute their mandate better. GIZ is assisting them on behalf of BMZ. —



QUALITY OF LIFE Integrated urban development calls for cross-ministerial administration and involves actors from the realms of politics, civil society and the private sector. In Ukraine, there is a great deal of interest in this approach. On behalf of BMZ and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), GIZ is working to improve living conditions in eight Ukrainian towns and cities. —

Dialogue for peace

CONSENSUS BUILDING It is important to listen if you want to understand others. This is particularly true in a country that is as divided as Bolivia. 'Radio Viajera' is a radio programme that offers information and debate on issues such as conflicts over land and other resources. It reaches an audience of 800,000 listeners. It is supported by the Civil Peace Service, whose dialogue school teaches Bolivians how to resolve confrontation. —



5 million

PARTICIPATION About one third of the five million registered Palestinian refugees live in camps in the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza), Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. To date, they have not had a body that represents their specific interests. To help these uprooted people make greater use of democratic structures, GIZ is supporting them on behalf of BMZ. The voices of the young generation in particular should be heard. They should become networked and take a pro-active role in improving their lives. —

Breathing life into reforms

RULE OF LAW In the one-party state that is the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the government has set a course for political reform, with new legislation and constitutional changes. The Southeast Asian state is to be ruled on the basis of the rule of law and democratic principles. To support the people on this new path, GIZ is implementing a project financed by BMZ, the EU and Switzerland. Currently 25 per cent of all registered civil society organisations are receiving assistance, to ensure they can become involved in establishing good governance. —





Burgeoning hope

DISASTER For months, bushfires raged in south-eastern Australia – in some cases, isolated fires merged to form megafires. The consequences for the environment are disastrous: experts from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have calculated that 1.25 billion mammals, birds and reptiles are likely to have died as a direct or indirect result of the fires. They say that an area of 8.4 million hectares – equivalent to the size of Austria – has been burned. Yet there are also signs of new life in Australia, with young, bright green shoots growing out of charred branches and blackened earth.

Photo: imago images/AAP

DREAMS YOU CAN TOUCH

As they look for alternatives to migration, young people in El Salvador now receive support with vocational training, finding employment and personal development.

TEXT KLAUS EHRINGFELD PHOTOS INTI OCÓN

A

As he recounts major dramas in his young life, Carlos Beltrán speaks so softly that you have to move closer to hear what he is saying. And the more dramatic his story becomes, the more quietly this slightly built young man speaks. There was the time his stepfather chased him out of the house, for example, before he set off alone for the USA, aged just 19, but failed to even make it as far as Mexico. If you ask Beltrán for details, he evades the question, stares into the distance

and wrings his hands. He clearly finds it difficult to talk about this failed attempt to find a better life.

Beltrán is more forthcoming about his second attempt at securing a better future. He started by breeding rabbits, which he then sold, saving the money for an air ticket. That time, he made it to Italy, a hub for Salvadorian migrants to Europe. He had contacts in Milan, but these supposed friends gave him no help. With no valid documents, he lived on the streets, tried – and failed – to find work, and finally returned to El Salvador disillusioned.

At just 23, Carlos Beltrán has already been through more than other people experience in a lifetime. Hundreds of thousands of young people in Central America have similar stories to tell. And for many, these stories do not have a happy ending in the supposed promised land but bring never-ending difficulty and despair. These young people often have to return to their home country, where the search for a better future starts all over again. Beltrán, too, is now once again pinning his hopes on a fresh start. This time, though, that fresh start will not be miles away but on his doorstep, in Zacatecoluca, a small town 60 kilometres south-east of the country's capital, San Salvador. This time, Beltrán's thoughts are centred on how he can do something in his own home town. And he has clear ideas: 'I want to

Dreams you can touch



**FOCUS ON
THE FUTURE**

Verónica García (19) lists her dreams on a poster. She is one of a group of young people in El Salvador who are being given support in developing a better life in their home country.



Find out more about the ALTERNATIVAS programme in a video on the akzente website: akzente.giz.de/en

Right: After trying twice to emigrate, Carlos Beltrán is now building a future career in his home country.

Centre: Together, not alone: young people outside the youth training centre in Ahuachapán. **Below:** Clara Emilia Rodríguez offers jobs for young people in El Salvador.



The project contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



open a shoe shop – people always need shoes.’ To do this, Beltrán has calculated that he needs start-up capital of around USD 1,000.

He plans to save the money from his earnings. To this end, he has enrolled on a programme that GIZ is running in Zacatecoluca in cooperation with the town’s youth training centre. Twenty young women and men are learning how to apply for jobs and how to boost their self-confidence. They can also complete online training courses for work in retail or bookkeeping.

Ongoing support for returnees

Manuel Novoa is Director of the ALTERNATIVAS programme, which GIZ is running on behalf of the German Development Ministry in rural areas of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. ‘Young people are desperately looking for work and an opportunity to earn money,’ he says. The programme provides them with training geared specifically to the needs of employers, and companies are made aware of the scope for giving opportunities to young people at risk of displacement or to young returnees. In El Salvador, GIZ has a local strategic partner, the Fundación Calleja. This foundation forms part of the group of the same name that runs around 100 supermarkets. ‘Our foundation has always supported training for young people in El Salvador,’ says Fundación Calleja CEO Clara Emilia Rodríguez, ‘and ALTERNATIVAS is an excellent fit.’ The young people selected for the programme are given a permanent job and trained in the markets. ‘We try to show them how important a long-term contract with social benefits is,’ stresses Rodríguez.



ALTERNATIVAS works in two crucial areas of migration. First, it aims to make young people aware of the alternatives to travelling north. Second, it supports those who leave and then return with reintegrating back into their home country. The programme involves psychosocial support measures, including both play and art therapy. Experts help participants overcome trauma and provide families with advice around migration – the latter being the all-consuming issue in the northern triangle of Central America, where many people’s only goal is to emigrate. They are fleeing poverty and violence. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras all have high murder rates, placing them among the 10 most dangerous countries in the world. Gangs terrorise the population, blackmailing them for protection money or forcing them to join the gang.

In the first six months of 2019 alone, up to 500,000 people travelled through Mexico towards North America, twice as many as in 2018. According to information from the International Organization for Migration, the Mexico corridor is the busiest and most dangerous migration route in the world. People die of thirst in the desert or drown in the Río Bravo, on the border. Organised crime in Mexico also targets migrants along the 3,000-kilometre route. Only a small proportion of people actually make it to the USA.

Veronica García knows this only too well, which is why this young woman with the winning smile has other plans for her future. On a windy morning, she sits on the wooden benches in the stands of a small sports stadium in Ahuachapán, a town around 100 kilometres north-west of San Salvador. García is one of the students at the youth training centre. Her teacher asked her and her fellow students to draw a ‘mapa de sueños’ – Spanish for a dream-map. Their maps show that these young people dream of having a career as a footballer, improving their nutrition or building a decent house for their parents. Migration does not feature among their dreams for the future. Aged 19, García does not want to leave her country either: the map she draws on the coloured paper shows that her dream is ‘greater self-confidence’, and she is focusing on work and on saving money.

When Veronica García left school, she could not find employment and had a series of casual jobs, occasionally toying with the idea of ‘going north’. People without training have difficulty getting work in El Salvador. And if they do find a job, they earn the minimum wage of just USD 300 a month – too little to live on and to save for vocational training, which is usually expensive in El Salvador. She was dissuaded from emigrating by her mother. And when the young woman heard about the ALTERNATIVAS youth training centre, she immediately thought ‘I want to be involved.’ The programme is preparing her for employment and is filling the gaps in her skills. ‘I’ve become more self-confident, I know how to present myself and I’m confident about speaking in public,’ says García. She now feels nearer to fulfilling the dream

INTERVIEW



MANUEL NOVOA

GIZ migration expert and Director
of the ALTERNATIVAS regional programme

Why is it important to support migrants who return to their home country?

These individuals have often experienced violence and are disoriented, uprooted and have no money. In El Salvador alone, one or two flights a day now land with ‘retornados’ (returnees) on board, and many more arrive by bus. In the first six months of 2019, more than 18,000 people returned to the country. More than three quarters were men, and almost one in five were children. Over the same period, almost 55,000 people returned to Guatemala and nearly 60,000 to Honduras. The state processes returnees in the capital and pays for their travel home – but they are then left on their own. We are working to decentralise services so that individuals can also receive support in their communities of origin.

You also work with young people who are considering migrating north. What specific measures are involved?

We cannot stop migration but we can change it. We want to show young people that there are opportunities for a good future at home. We work with private sector partners to get young people into work rapidly and aim to find them decent jobs. The individuals we place in work serve as role models. And we are planning a campaign to make people aware of the risks of migration. If they still want to migrate, that is at least a well-thought-out decision. We want to tell them that they have the right to leave – but also the right to stay.

she entered on her dream-map: ‘I would like to be a nurse, but first, I need a job so that I can save for the training. I now know that I can achieve a great deal but also that I have a future here in my home country.’ —



THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Economically, Georgia is aligning more closely with the European Union (EU). To ensure that small businesses can benefit too, beekeepers in this South Caucasus republic are taking steps to make their honey fit for the export trade. Three individuals tell akzente about successful cooperation focused on 'liquid gold'.

TEXT CHRISTINA IGLHAUT





‘We exported our first batch of honey to Berlin in 2019. I’m really proud of that.’

GIORGI IASHVILI (46) is a beekeeper and founder and director of Geo Naturali, a honey business.



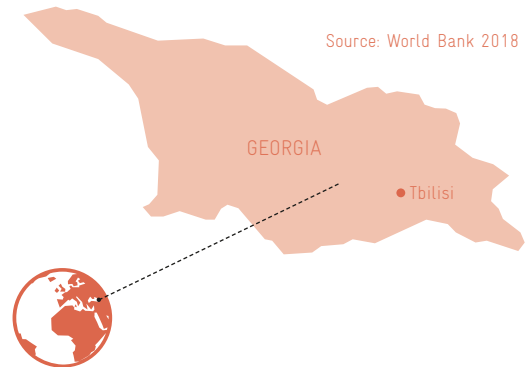
‘When I was 16, a good friend gave me a book about bees and beekeeping. Since then, I’ve been fascinated. In 2009, I decided to make a career out of my hobby. Along with the friend who first got me interested in bees, I set up Geo Naturali, and now work as a honey producer. I’m interested in how we can modernise beekeeping in Georgia, replacing outdated methods with new ones, how bees can be moved around, what treatments are available for sick bees, and how honey is processed. All of these aspects are crucial, particularly if you want to export to the EU! And that has been our goal for the past three years. The biggest challenge has been to comply with all the European standards. For example, the EU stipulates that honey must be pure and not contain anything extraneous, such as pollen or other constituents particular to honey. It also prescribes what information has to be included on labels. Fortunately, we had help. Our German advisors went through our entire production chain with us and gave us some really important support. They showed us how to avoid contamination from things like mites and pesticides. We had all our honeycombs tested to see if any of them were already contaminated. Another issue that we had to tackle together was that we work with wild bees and produce multi-flower honey from the nectar of a variety of plants in the Racha region in north-central Georgia. That meant that we did not know the exact composition of the honey we were producing, so we sent samples to Germany, where the University of Bayreuth analysed them. This specialist expertise and the invaluable European perspective has saved us a lot of time and money and enabled us to export the first batch of our TAPLI honey to Berlin in 2019. I’m really proud of that.’ —

PHOTOS: 612/SEBASTIEN CANAUD (P. 42 TO 44), PAUL HAHN (P. 45)

GEORGIA

Capital: Tbilisi / Population: 3.7 million /
GDP per capita: USD 4,068 / Economic growth:
4.7 per cent / Human Development
Index ranking: 70 (out of 189)

Source: World Bank 2018



The project contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):





‘Bees are crucially important to the entire human race.’

NINO GLONTI (26), Managing Director of the Georgian Beekeepers Association

PROMOTING FREE TRADE OPPORTUNITIES

A Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and Georgia has been in place since 2014. This arrangement has intensified trade relations. To ensure that **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) in Georgia are also able to benefit from the free trade area and improve their competitiveness, the EU has launched the SME Development and DCFTA in Georgia project. On behalf of the German Development Ministry, GIZ has taken on responsibility for supporting the project and its implementation. The project is financed by the **EU4Business initiative**. Partners from the fields of politics, the private sector and research support the project with a scientifically based quality and authenticity guarantee and a marketing strategy tailored to EU consumers. Honey production is one example. Georgian honey producers made initial contact with **German importers** at the 2019 **International Green Week in Berlin**. Following that event, the first German importer placed an order – for 3,000 jars of honey. GIZ assisted producers with regard to the import regulations and customs clearance formalities.

Contact: Philipp Steinheim, philipp.steinheim@giz.de

‘My whole life revolves around bees. I was born into a family of beekeepers: my father and brother both keep bees, and our yard at home is full of beehives. But bees are crucially important to the entire human race, not just to my family. Without bees, we would have no plants and no food. As a little girl, I used to help my father with his bees. Now I’m studying for a doctorate at the Agricultural University of Georgia in Tbilisi and am Managing Director of the Georgian Beekeepers Association. The Association was established in 2018 and brings together nine Georgian beekeeping associations with a total membership of around 4,000. We are researching the problems beekeepers in different regions face so that we can put these on the government’s policy agenda. We also want to boost the popularity of Georgian honey both here at home and around the world. The project has been an enormous help to our beekeepers and to our honey industry. The German experts helped us gain recognition from international importers and make contacts. Our honey has a very distinctive taste and is of a high quality, so it needs a very specific niche on the European market. We are not able to export vast quantities of honey – the most recent statistics show that Georgia produces around 2,500 tonnes a year – but we can offer a premium product for honey enthusiasts. Georgian wine is already very popular around the world, and our honey has the potential to be equally successful.’ —

‘Honey profiling has enabled us to pinpoint where the problems lie.’

*PROFESSOR STEPHAN SCHWARZINGER (49),
food and health sciences expert at the
University of Bayreuth*

‘When I first visited Georgia in 2016 and travelled through the country, I was struck by the huge number of roadside stalls selling honey. It is immediately obvious how important this product is to everyday life in the country. Georgia really is the land of honey: the oldest honey in human history was found here. Unfortunately, though, the country does not have a similarly long tradition of detailed analysis, so the University of Bayreuth was an invaluable project partner. Years ago, we began developing an approach to enable us to establish the origin-specific properties of foodstuffs – in this case, honey – and to document them reliably on an individual basis, with the help of nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy. Using this approach, which is now called NMR honey profiling, we are able to ascertain rapidly the quality, authenticity and origin of a particular honey by recording all of its many different components in quantitative terms. I was deployed as a honey analysis expert and consultant in Georgia. We investigated local structures, trained and audited beekeeping associations and honey-filling companies, and supported the laboratory analysis of honey on a scientific basis. Laboratory analysis is an important step towards discovering where the problems lie and what mistakes beekeepers may currently be making. We looked at the veterinary medicines being used, how bees were fed in their hives, and how honey processing facilities were equipped. Many Georgian beekeepers are still using veterinary medicines in their hives, and the highly sensitive analysis methods that are applied nowadays have unfortunately found these substances in many of the samples of honey we looked at. The Institute of Apiculture and Beekeeping in Bavaria was an important partner. Talks with Georgian beekeepers on the ground and the samples we have analysed in the laboratory have now showed what changes we need to make in order to meet international standards. Together, we have developed guidelines and tried to establish TAPLI as a premium Georgian honey brand: the TAPLI Premium Georgian Honey label will in future be a kind of hallmark for all Georgian honey with a distinctive quality, free of residues and produced in line with species-appropriate methods.’ —



THE BEES’ SECRET WEAPON – A LONG PROBOSCIS

The **Caucasian honey bee** (*Apis mellifera caucasia*) is known for its ability to extract nectar very effectively even under difficult conditions, such as rain. But the most distinctive characteristic of this species of bee is its particularly long tongue, or proboscis, which can be up to **7.2 mm long**. The bees use their proboscis to extract nectar from nearly all flowers, even those with the deepest calyxes. In Georgia, bees are able to collect nectar and honeydew in areas with no human intervention and away from the chemicals used in modern agriculture. This pristine ecosystem, the particular characteristics of the Caucasian honey bee and Georgia’s enormous biodiversity give Georgian honey a **unique aroma**.

EDITOR'S *Digital Picks*

Doing a good deed every day

APP How can I make my daily routine more sustainable? The NachhaltICH app developed on behalf of the German Development Ministry (BMZ) provides information on the 17 SDGs under the 2030 Agenda. It encourages users to adopt a more responsible lifestyle. Network with friends to make changes – and create a better future. –

www.nachhaltich-app.de



Let's talk!

CAMPAIGN To mark its 75th anniversary in 2020, the United Nations has launched the biggest-ever global conversation on the role of global cooperation in building the future we want. Everyone needs to get involved – and everyone's voice will be heard. –

www.un.org/en/un75

Other pages

MULTIMEDIA More than half of the world's population is now online. The internet has a huge influence on the way we see the world. And our global view varies widely according to where we live. State censorship, technical constraints and reading habits all shape our access to the internet. The Guardian newspaper vividly illustrates this diversity with examples from China, Cuba, India and Russia. –

<https://gu.com/p/a2438>

Smart women

PODCAST The 'Smart Women, Smart Power' podcast series features powerful, in-depth conversations with women leaders from around the globe who are experts in foreign policy, national security, international business, and international development. The series selects a very diverse – and sometimes surprising – range of topics, from the future of NATO to the part kung fu plays in promoting gender equality in the Himalayas. –

www.csis.org/podcasts

Increasing diversity

CONGRESS The IUCN World Conservation Congress in June 2020 will bring together more than 10,000 delegates from over 160 countries. Its urgent message is that our future is inextricably linked with the conservation of biodiversity – and that biodiversity underpins our achievement of the vision of a more prosperous, healthier and fairer world by 2030. –

www.iucncongress2020.org



PHOTOS: BMZ (P. 48, TOP), APA/AFP/MLADEN ANTONOV (P. 48, BOTTOM)

GOOD READS

from around the world



MOURNING

Few people travel between worlds like Eduardo Halfon. He is on the search for the gaps in his family that will lead him, and others, back to his country of origin where, he believes, his uncle drowned in a lake while still a child. This is a tale woven around questions of truth and lies, memory, guilt and belonging. Masterful! — *Anita Djafari, Managing Director, Litprom*

Eduardo Halfon, Guatemala.
Translated from Spanish by Lisa Dillman and Daniel Hahn.
Bellevue Literary Press, 160 pages

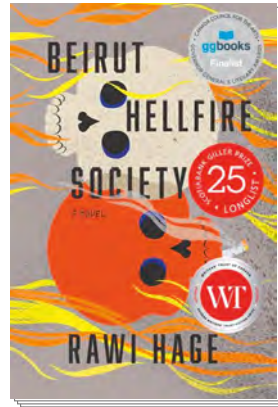
LITPROM RECOMMENDS
 Litprom – the Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin American Literature – provided these reviews for akzente. The titles were selected from Litprom's list of the best new releases.
www.litprom.de/en



COLLECTIVE AMNESIA

Putuma's poems give a voice to an entire generation. With clinical precision but also far-seeing vision, this young, black spoken-word lyricist probes the beating heart of a nation that has still not come to terms with the trauma of apartheid – and uses her own body to demand a place in her country. — *Claudia Kramatschek, literary critic*

Koleka Putuma, South Africa
uHlanga, 114 pages



BEIRUT HELLFIRE SOCIETY

This tragi-comic novel takes place during Lebanon's civil war. Protagonist Pavlov wants to provide funerals for individuals denied a traditional burial. Pacy, and macabre in places, but also a sensitive portrayal of the marginalised inhabitants of a war-torn city. — *Litprom Jury*

Rawi Hage, Lebanon/Canada
Knopf Canada, 288 pages



THE TEMPLE OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION

In 1950, a young monk burned down Kyoto's Golden Pavilion temple. Yukio Mishima's novel about the incident creates a stammering pyromaniac in an intensely heightened emotional state. A meditation on splendour, obsession and destruction – and too beautiful to be true! — *Katharina Borchardt, literary critic and editor*

Yukio Mishima, Japan
Translated from Japanese by Ivan Morris
Vintage Classics, 256 pages

GIZ is always looking for experts for its projects. Why not visit our 'Jobs and careers' page: www.giz.de/careers



iPad 12:07 53%
From: **Beate Dippmar**
To: **all akzente readers**
Introducing TVET expert Beate Dippmar
Today, 12:07 pm

Hello from Ulan Bator!

My family and I have been living in Mongolia for 18 months. It's a fascinating country. I'm a programme manager responsible for improving the quality of technical and vocational training and education (TVET). We have a great team of around 50 colleagues from Mongolia and Germany. We support line ministries in turning seven selected vocational schools into competence centres in areas including mechatronic engineering, structural engineering and welding. Together, we're designing a training system for vocational school teachers and advising the schools on improving their financial position.

When you work with schools, you see your success in small details, such as when a teacher completes a course and then passes on their enthusiasm for the subject to their trainees. My day-to-day work is made up of consultations with partners in ministries and with cofinancing donors from Australia and Korea. I also spend a lot of time initiating partnerships with the private sector. I really like this innovative environment. The German development workers in local schools are very hands-on and find clear ways of saying and doing things – and that is something I appreciate enormously.

I've previously worked for GIZ in Rwanda and Viet Nam, also in the area of TVET. It's important to me to help improve young people's career prospects. And working in this area means I can also indulge my other passion – environmental protection. After all, responsibility for the environment is part of any training programme.

As well as visiting schools, I also travel a lot with my family so that I can get to know the country and its people. From the capital Ulan Bator, it is just a short journey into the countryside. The landscape is hugely varied. On summer weekends, we go camping with our two children, and in the winter, we visit a nearby ski resort. And Ulan Bator also has a rich cultural life.

Winters are cold here in Mongolia, but not as bad as I had imagined. It's a dry cold, so minus 20 doesn't feel too bad. And we get a lot of sun, which raises everyone's spirits.

Best regards,
Beate Dippmar

SUSTAINABILITY

A look back at a project and its results



Project: Social Health Protection /
Commissioned by: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and
Development / **Term:** 2009 to 2018

THEN

The civil war and the Khmer Rouge's rule of terror were still having an impact in Cambodia in 2009. With a per capita income of USD 730, this South-East Asian country is one of the **poorest in Asia**. This also has consequences for the **population's health**. Maternal mortality levels are very high, for example. People in rural areas find it hard to get medical assistance and drugs. Per capita spending on health is more than **10 per cent of gross national product (GNP)**, which is higher than in most other developing countries, but patients pay more than two thirds of all medical costs themselves. The country has no health insurance, and there is no other help available with medical costs. **Eighty per cent of the population** have to resort to their savings, borrow or sell belongings to pay medical bills. Some go to untrained practitioners, who are cheaper. And when they are ill, the very poorest often receive no treatment at all.

NOW

The situation in Cambodia has improved enormously. The poverty rate has fallen **from 47.8 per cent in 2007 to 13.5 per cent**. On behalf of BMZ, GIZ has supported the Cambodian Government in improving the health system on the basis of a **national strategy**. Among other measures, this involved developing quality instruments: a Health Equity Fund, health vouchers for poor people, and a national mandatory health insurance scheme for employers and employees are all reducing the risk of poverty as a result of medical bills. Initial and continuing training has been another focal point. Medical staff have received training aimed in particular at **improving care for mothers and children**. To integrate and provide care for older people and **those with disabilities** more effectively, self-representative organisations have been involved in planning. 2,500 people from these organisations have received training, almost half of them women.

<https://mia.giz.de/qlink/ID=246061000>

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Registered offices:
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32 + 36, 53113 Bonn, Germany
T +49 228 44 60-0, F +49 228 44 60-17 66

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5, 65760 Eschborn, Germany
T +49 61 96 79-0, F +49 61 96 79-11 15

E: akzente@giz.de
I: akzente.giz.de/en

Sabine Tonscheidt,
Director of Corporate Communications (GIZ)

Responsible: Ute Schaeffer, Head of Media
and Public Relations and Press Spokesperson (GIZ)

Content concept and editing:

GIZ: Nicole Annette Mueller (editor)
FAZIT Communication GmbH: Sabrina Pfost (project
management), Friederike Bauer, Dr Charlotte Schmitz,
Brigitte Spitz, Oliver Hick-Schulz (artistic direction,
photo editing), Martin Gorka (infographics), Corinna
Potthoff (photo editing)

English translation: Janet Fraser, Sue Harrison,
Lynne Jagau, David Tonge, Leighton Twigger;
Gillian Lester (GIZ Language Services)

Proofreading: textschriftmacher

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