



akzente

The GIZ Magazine

3/2020

Solar power
system

Sustainable energy
for Benin

Cucumbers wait
for no one

New app for farmers
in Serbia

Forging a new path

Innovations in vocational training
in Ethiopia

Coronavirus

Living with COVID-19



FINDING
REFUGE
IN
EDUCATION

“Education is
the most important
thing in life.”

Leen Eshtewi (15),
student and youth sports leader in Amman

Leen tells her story here:
[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=iW6C6GC5Vil](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW6C6GC5Vil)



After Turkey and Lebanon, Jordan is the country with the most Syrian refugees. This places enormous pressure on the education system, making it particularly difficult for girls and women to go to school or attend vocational training to the same extent as their male counterparts. On behalf of BMZ, GIZ assists the Kingdom of Jordan in helping girls and women to obtain an education.

KEEPING A DISTANCE DOESN'T WORK FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Why, unlike people, states need to come together now more than ever.

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC is a crisis of historic proportions and far-reaching consequences. It has radically changed all of our lives in a short space of time. By 'our', I mean practically the world's entire population. People are battling this pandemic around the globe, from the USA to Brazil, Colombia to India, France to South Africa. It affects everyone's lives, with no country spared the direct or indirect consequences.

GIVEN THE SCALE OF THE PANDEMIC, it quickly became clear that we would dedicate this issue of *akzente* to COVID-19. But what more can be said about a topic that has been covered in great detail in recent months? We believe one angle that hasn't received much press so far is the perspective of developing countries. And we believe we have a role to play here. Our contribution is our ability to steer attention away from events in Germany, Europe and the USA and focus on other regions around the globe.

IN THIS ISSUE'S ESSAY, South African analysts Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Steven Gruzd describe how developing countries and emerging economies have dealt with the coronavirus crisis so far. They describe the challenges they need to overcome as well as the opportunities that the new world order presents. For example, it gives Africa the opportunity to establish its own value chains and finally shake off its image as a mere supplier of raw materials. In his guest article, Gabriel Quijandría Acosta, Peru's Vice Environment Minister, explains why he thinks now is the time to move towards a green and blue economic recovery.

AND THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, explains in an interview why Africa has – comparatively speaking – fared quite well so far in terms of infection rates. He is an ardent campaigner for the equitable and even distribution of a future vaccine, which he believes should be swiftly made available to those most at risk in all countries, and not just to everyone in a select few.

IT IS CLEAR from the different opinions and views expressed in this issue, including a report from Colombia, that keeping a distance will only help curb the virus. It is not a suitable basis to guide international policy. Contrary to widespread calls to stay apart, now more than ever countries need to come together if we are not just to control the pandemic and its consequences but also address other global challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity and food and nutrition security.

WE WOULD DO WELL to use this unexpected emergency as a long-overdue opportunity to overhaul our economic systems and societies. This is, I believe, a juncture where we need to not just 'build back better', but 'build back better TOGETHER'.

I hope that you remain safe during this crisis.



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



IN FOCUS: CORONAVIRUS

Outlook

The world is in the grip of the virus. People are having to restructure their daily routines in the face of the pandemic. But how is the virus affecting the way we live?

EDITORIAL

REPORT

Chain reaction in a crisis

A look at Colombia p.18

OVERVIEW

Working in 2020

GIZ colleagues on their experience of mobile working p.22

GUEST ARTICLE

Towards a green and blue recovery

By Gabriel Quijandria Acosta p.23

ESSAY

Lives or livelihoods

By Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Steven Gruzd p.24

INFOGRAPHIC

Coronavirus at a glance

The positives and the negatives p.30

INTERVIEW

‘Equitable distribution is vital’

With Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus p.32

BACKGROUND

Trigger for change

By Ulrich Höcker p.36

EXAMPLES OF GIZ'S WORK

Swift and sustainable

Rapid support in the fight against COVID-19 p.37

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26



NEWS

What's happening in the world

News, project overview and facts and figures from around the globe p.6



REPORT

Solar power system

Sustainable energy for farms in Benin p.10

PHOTOS: THOMAS LINKE/LAIF (P. 4, LEFT), KATRIN GÄNSLER (P. 4, RIGHT)



SNAPSHOT

Clear the stage!

What the coronavirus pandemic means for arts and culture in South Korea. p. 38



PERSPECTIVES

Forging a new path

Refugees and local people learn together in Ethiopia. p. 44

INFO

SUSTAINABILITY, AKZENTE

27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52



INTRODUCING

Greetings from Dhaka

Climate change expert Emilia Huss on living and working in Bangladesh p.50



REPORT

Cucumbers wait for no one

How a new app for seasonal workers in Serbia makes life easier for everyone. p.40



COVER PHOTO

Our cover shows a nurse and her son looking out on the streets of Bogotá. The photo was taken by Colombian photographer Andrés BO, who also provided the images for the 'In focus' report. You can view them online at akzente.giz.de/en

PHOTOS: CHUNG SUNG-JUN/BETTY IMAGES (P. 5, UPPER LEFT), MARIJA JANKOVIC (P. 5, BELOW LEFT), SIMON MARKS (P. 5, UPPER RIGHT)

IN FIGURES

68%

The number of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish decreased by more than two thirds between 1970 and 2016. This was the conclusion drawn in the Living Planet Report 2020, which was compiled by WWF and various research institutions.

Source: WWF

129 Mt

129 megatonnes of food – the equivalent of one fifth of Europe’s entire food production – ended up as waste in the EU in 2011. This was the finding of a recent European Commission study. Vegetables, fruit and cereal products are the most wasted items. Although food is also dumped during production, processing and packaging, most of the waste is generated by end users, for example because they misunderstand the ‘best before’ date or buy too much food in the first place.

Source: EU Commission

59%

The global under-five mortality rate has declined by 59 per cent, from 93 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 38 in 2019. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has seriously jeopardised this progress.

Source: World Bank



Model cities

UN AWARD A 25-kilometre cycle path in Bogotá, a fleet of electric buses in Mexico City and safe waterways in Durban – these are just some of the projects financed by the C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF), a collaboration between the C40 network and GIZ. CFF helps cities to fund and scale up climate-friendly infrastructure. In recognition of its innovative approach, CFF will receive the prestigious UN Global Climate Action Award in mid-December, marking the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

www.c40cff.org

‘Our long-term response to COVID-19 must be to fix our relationship with the planet.’

INGER ANDERSEN,
Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



A nose for cash

NORTH MACEDONIA Sniffer dogs are well known for their ability to track down drugs, but less so for their ability to detect large amounts of money. Two specially trained dogs have recently been deployed to help border police in North Macedonia clamp down on currency smuggling. This money often originates from illegal activities such as drug-dealing. Between 2010 and 2015 alone, EUR 5.5 million in cash was seized at the North Macedonian border. GIZ has assisted local police by providing two tracker dogs and vehicles and helping to train the dog handlers. More dogs are on their way, and these activities have attracted interest from other countries in the region. Corruption, tax evasion, money laundering and other forms of illicit financial flows have devastating impacts on developing countries and increasingly undermine international efforts to promote sustainable development. To counter these impacts, GIZ – on behalf of BMZ and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – also organised the Global Forum on Illicit Financial Flows and Sustainable Development.

PHOTOS: THOMAS LINKE/LAIF (P. 6), GIZ (P. 7), ILLUSTRATION: JULIAN RENTZSCH (P. 7)

THREE QUESTIONS FOR



HATEM ZITOUNI

The manager at Tunisian dairy products company Délice, is a strong supporter of training for dairy farmers. He also worked as a Master trainer at the Farmer Business School (FBS), one of the activities of the Green Innovation Centre set up by GIZ as part of BMZ's ONE WORLD – No Hunger initiative.

Has the longstanding partnership between your company and the Green Innovation Centre continued to pay off during the pandemic?

Absolutely. We were able to join forces immediately in a kind of COVID-19 crisis team. We produced posters and flyers to inform the milk suppliers about new hygiene rules. Our technical advisor team distributed these and provided gloves, aprons and disinfectant at the milk collection points to guarantee quality standards.

The goal of FBS is to give smallholders the training they need to make them more resilient in crises. Is that succeeding?

Yes. They learn to think like entrepreneurs and use new approaches and technologies to increase their incomes. For example, we are training 6,000 breeders in sustainable animal husbandry. Innovative equipment like automated drinking troughs, refrigerated mini-tanks and solar power systems helps the farmers to increase the value they are adding.

What are you particularly proud of?

The trainers we initially trained with FBS have already passed on their knowledge to more than 6,000 dairy farmers. By 2023, we hope this will be 10,000. The pandemic might have slowed us down, but we're determined to keep going. Now more than ever, we can see how important the supply of good-quality dairy products really is.

www.giz.de/en/worldwide/32209.html

Complete transparency: from field to road

INDONESIA Where does the rubber used in tyres come from? The tyre manufacturer Continental now has a fully traceable raw material supply chain thanks to a digital tracing system. The company established the system in a development partnership with GIZ, as part of BMZ's develoPPP.de programme. The German Government is currently working on a due diligence law to prevent human rights violations in supply chains. Around 450 smallholders on Borneo in Indonesia are already benefiting from the digital system to trace the origin of natural rubber. They have been trained in improved, sustainable cultivation practices and environmentally friendly harvesting techniques. The farmers have

been able to increase their yields and can use the trees for longer, which boosts their income. The project partners document every step, from cultivation to harvesting, further processing and tyre production. Production areas are mapped using GPS and rubber deliveries and fair sales prices are documented, ensuring that Continental is already fulfilling one of the criteria of the future law. Another advantage of the system is that it indicates if the quantity of rubber harvested from a specific production area is significantly higher than normal. This ensures that rubber from non-registered areas such as illegally deforested tracts of land is prevented from entering the supply chain.

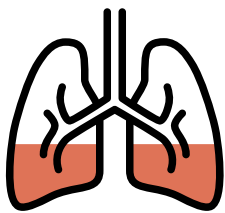


Successful together

KAZAKHSTAN GIZ has been supporting German minorities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Russian Federation) for over a quarter of a century. Up to 170 staff members have worked in as many as 11 different project locations in the region. After 27 years, BMZ's project has been successfully completed. The objective was to preserve German identity, culture and history, cultivate the German language, support youth associations and foster social engagement. GIZ has provided funding for language courses, history workshops, meeting places for senior citizens and children's language camps, with more than 300,000 people taking part in the various events every year. It has established umbrella organisations for local groups of German minorities, which still represent over half a million people. Activities in Russia haven't ended just yet. The German-Russian House in Moscow is being handed over to a Russian-German association. Once this process has drawn to a close, it will be time to say 'Auf Wiedersehen' here too.

Silent killer

IN COMPARISON Air pollution is a hidden threat. It lurks all around, posing a significant health risk. Tiny, invisible particles make their way into the body, permeating the lungs and bloodstream. They are responsible for a range of common causes of death.



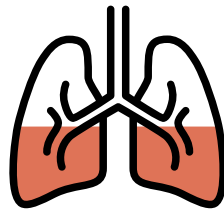
29%
Lung cancer



25%
Heart disease



24%
Strokes



43%
Respiratory disease

Source: breathe.life2030.org

Green gaming for farmers

MADAGASCAR 80 per cent of the Madagascan population work in agriculture and rely on natural resources. The island nation in the Indian Ocean is one of the countries most affected by climate change in the world. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. A fun hotline has been set up to drive home the need to adapt to climate change. A mobile phone game raises awareness of the issue and explains the logic behind climate risk insurance. Launched two years ago, it has been opened by more than 700,000 people, around one third of whom have played through to the end. The game simulates five phases of a harvest, displaying information that players use to decide how to proceed. Success is rewarded with payment in the form of virtual zebus, Madagascan cattle. The game is designed to explain the concept of microinsurance against climate risks and increase interest in taking out an insurance policy. The results are impressive: 100,000 people have already expressed an interest and submitted their contact details.

MADAGASCAR WIKI

Official languages: Malagasy and French / **Capital:** Antananarivo / **Form of government:** Semi-presidential system of government / **Head of state, government:** Andry Rajoelina / **Size:** 587,295 km² / **Population:** 27 million / **Population density:** 46.4 inhabitants per km²



Source: UNdata

NEW PROJECTS



Renewable energy

ETHIOPIA Wind, water, sun: Ethiopia has a lot of potential for harnessing renewable energy. A partnership with Germany is designed to promote the expansion of a decentralised renewable energy supply. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), GIZ is assisting Ethiopia in rehabilitating hydropower plants, opening information centres on photovoltaics and conducting a tender for innovative energy supply in rural areas.



Training for nursing staff

MEXICO International nursing staff are to be recruited to plug Germany's gap in personnel. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), GIZ is therefore launching measures to train health care staff in Mexico, teaming up with University Hospital Bonn to offer technical training and German language courses. Activities also include a placement programme. The first nursing staff are expected to arrive in 2022. The programme is also being implemented in the Philippines and Brazil.



Water treatment

TURKEY With support from sequa gGmbH, German and Turkish companies have formed a development partnership to construct a new wastewater treatment plant for the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa, which has a population of three million. The treatment facility will serve as a model for other cities and regions. The project includes courses for administrative staff and other personnel and will introduce training for wastewater treatment operators in Turkey.



**WATER - A PRECIOUS
COMMODITY**

The solar-powered pump makes life easier for Odette Kpadonou. She now sees the value of using new agricultural methods.

Solar power system

SOLAR POWER SYSTEM

A solar pump at an agricultural training centre in Benin has made the donkey work of irrigating fields a thing of the past.

TEXT AND PHOTOS KATRIN GÄNSLER





Swapping the classroom for the field: the Monseigneur Isidore de Souza agricultural training centre teaches future women farmers a wide range of practical skills.

Right: Farm administrator Eddy Guehou explains how the new solar technology works.

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



T

Two kilometres. That's the distance Odette Kpadonou had to trek in high humidity to fetch a litre of water from the nearest well. In the blazing heat, with the mercury hitting over 30 degrees Celsius. A huge effort to secure water for the vegetables she had planted. Today, the 19-year-old only has to walk a few metres with her green watering can to get from the tap to the young bitter leaf plants that she and her two colleagues are

tending. The young women work on the Monseigneur Isidore de Souza training farm (named after a former Catholic Archbishop of the area) located in Tangnigbadji, just 60 kilometres outside Cotonou, the economic capital of Benin in West Africa.

Life in rural Benin couldn't be more different than that in the bustling metropole. The farm in the small village of Tangnigbadji, with a population of just 1,200, is located in the southern part of the country, and has no electricity, which is common enough in Benin. In 2018, only 30 per cent of the population were connected to the grid. Just two years ago, the training centre still needed a generator to supply light. This was not only loud, it also created an unpleasant smell and, more importantly, was costly to run. The monthly diesel bill came to at least 40,000 CFA francs, the equivalent of EUR 61. 'Because the generator was expensive to operate, we could only run it in the evenings,' explains Wilfried Godjo, the priest managing the centre for the past two years. The exorbitant cost meant that installing a water pump to pipe water from the nearest well was out of the question. 'Securing water was a constant concern,' recalls Godjo. But this all changed in 2018. Godjo points to the solar collectors at the



heart of the farm. They were installed by the Cotonou-based company Jesuton, which works in partnership with Energising Development (EnDev), a GIZ-led programme implemented in Benin and in 24 other countries. EnDev is funded by the governments of Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and (until 2019) Sweden. It helps supply sustainable energy to more households, social institutions and small companies in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Light for reading and writing

With EnDev's support, Jesuton is installing solar collectors on the farm in Tangnigbadji. Thanks to the solar-powered water pump, fetching water is no longer the difficult, time-consuming chore it used to be. 'It has simplified our day no end,' says Wilfried Godjo. Solar energy has also given the farm a new lease of life, powering a wider range of activities for the 37 young women who live and train there. They can now take a literacy course, for example. 'This enables us to raise the level of training,' adds farm administrator Eddy Guehou.

THE PROJECT'S SOLAR COMPONENT IN FIGURES

93,000 people
in Benin had received access to
sustainable energy by 2019.

270
solar-driven water pumps have been installed.

59,000
household solar kits have been funded.

Contact: endeve@giz.de



'I feel stronger and better able to fend for myself.'

ODETTE KPADONOU, trainee at the Monseigneur Isidore de Souza farm

Director Wilfried Godjo is impressed by the solar power system. It makes it easier to irrigate fields and provides the villages with an example of how new farming techniques – such as cultivating vegetables under oil palm canopies – can bring about positive change.



Better education for small farmers and a sustainable energy supply are crucial for agriculture, one of Benin's key economic sectors. 80 per cent of exports originate in the fields, the most important products being cotton and fruit. Around two thirds of Benin's 12 million or so inhabitants work in this sector. It isn't easy work, however – the massive effort involved frequently generates low yields. According to the World Bank, more than 40 per cent of Benin's population lived below the poverty line in 2015.

Paving the way for sustainable agriculture

Agricultural training centres like the one in Tangnigbadji are designed to boost productivity and support sustainability in the agricultural sector. The farm has set new standards in the region. From solar energy to cultivating vegetables under oil palm canopies – despite some initial scepticism, people in the surrounding villages are now being inspired by the new ideas.

Odette Kpadonou believes the training she is receiving on the farm in Tangnigbadji is a stepping stone to a brighter future. She has learned to plant seedlings and grow crops effectively and now understands how solar energy makes life easier. All positive experiences for someone who left school at 14. 'I didn't always understand what I was being taught at school,' she admits. One of the difficulties she had was that lessons were taught in French. Although this is Benin's official language, it is rarely used in day-to-day life, with the language Fon being more common in southern Benin, for example. As a result, a lot of children and young people find it difficult to follow lessons in French. This is not the only reason Kpadonou found school frustrating, however. 'I also prefer practical work,' she says, looking out over the bitter leaf fields.

The 19-year-old wants to be a vegetable farmer. She has the practical skills required to produce good yields. 'I want to earn a good income.' Kpadonou knows just how important this is for women in villages. 'Many marry very young and receive no support from their parents. Or they have unplanned pregnancies.' She is certain that the five year course will provide her with the skills she needs to secure a better future. 'I feel stronger and better able to fend for myself.' —



KATRIN GÄNSLER lives in Benin and works as a freelance journalist in West Africa. She enjoyed her research on Tangnigbadji farm, carried out in the open air and observing the recommended social distancing guidelines.

INTERVIEW



'A kit solaire can change a family's life forever.'

Interview with entrepreneur **CHRISTIAN GBOGBO**, partner of Energising Development (EnDev) in Benin

Why did you decide to use solar modules to support rural development?

Energy supply in Benin is very weak in rural areas. The situation isn't satisfactory in urban regions either. Rather than waiting around for the state to fix things, we decided to take action.

How many systems have you installed since 2015?

Our company Jesuton has already installed over 2,000 small-scale solar power systems known as 'kit solaire' as well as 100 solar collectors. This gives people quick and easy access to electricity. A kit solaire can change a family's life forever. It powers household lighting and enables children to do their homework every evening. Mobile phones can be charged at home. Different phone providers run popular money transfer apps. The phone is also important in medical emergencies.

Is interest in solar energy growing in Benin?

Definitely. But the money isn't always there to fund it. A kit solaire costs around 21,000 CFA francs, or EUR 32, at the very least. Water pump systems cost between EUR 2,300 and 7,600. Many people simply don't have this kind of money, which is why we offer an instalment plan. Programmes such as EnDev are also important because they help people buy equipment.

The full interview is available online at:
akzente.giz.de/en

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing blue-rimmed glasses and a light blue surgical face mask, is shown in profile. She is holding a young child with dark hair, who is also looking out a window. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a window with natural light. The overall mood is contemplative and focused.

IN FOCUS

CORONA- VIRUS

The world is in the grip of the virus. People are having to restructure their daily routines in the face of the pandemic. But how is the virus affecting the way we live?



REPORT

Chain reaction in a crisis

We take a look at Colombia, where the coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating social and environmental conflict. **p.18**

OVERVIEW

Working in 2020

GIZ colleagues report on their experience with mobile working. **p.22**

GUEST ARTICLE

Towards a green and blue recovery

A commentary by Peru's Vice Environment Minister Gabriel Quijandría Acosta **p.23**

ESSAY

Lives or livelihoods

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Steven Gruzd report on the situation brought about by COVID-19 in developing countries. **p.24**

INFOGRAPHIC

Coronavirus at a glance

The positives and the negatives **p.30**

INTERVIEW

'Equitable distribution is vital'

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus takes stock of the current situation. **p.32**

BACKGROUND

Trigger for change

An analysis by Ulrich Höcker, Director of Division at GIZ **p.36**

EXAMPLES OF GIZ'S WORK

Swift and sustainable

Rapid support in the fight against COVID-19 **p.37**

In focus: Coronavirus



Dealing with the consequences of coronavirus in Colombia: John Castiblanco plants new trees in the devastated nature conservation area. Food is distributed to people in extreme poverty, including many refugees from Venezuela. Some of them have had to live in tent camps.

Chain reaction in a crisis

After a decade of gradual progress in Colombia, the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated social and environmental conflict. A report on how people are living in this time of crisis – and on green shoots of hope.

Text: KATHARINA WOJCZENKO Photos: ANDRÉS BO

They arrived in the conservation area by the busload, in broad daylight. More than 400 people. Everything they could, they chopped down with machetes; everything else they burnt. ‘They ran round here like the torch bearers at the Olympic Games,’ says John Castiblanco, from Red del Agua (water network), an environmental foundation. They used mattocks, shovels and pickaxes to divide the plots and level the ground. Men with firearms allocated parcels of land. They also collected the money, and handed it over to the head of the land mafia, reports Castiblanco. By the time the environment authority arrived a few days later at the end of June, bringing the police and army with them, it was too late. They had nine people arrested and tore down the shacks that had been built, made of tree trunks, plastic sheets and corrugated metal. But more than 80,000 trees in Parque Entrenubes had been felled.

These 18 hectares of devastated Andean high forest are situated in the largest protected area in the hills south-east of Bogotá, and are particularly important for the city’s

air quality and its drinking water. The land-grabbers buried at least four springs. ‘They destroyed 20 years of reforestation work,’ says Castiblanco. This is an alarming event in a country that has a major role to play in global climate action and environmental protection thanks to its forested areas and biodiversity.

‘We have always had the problem of people creating illegal settlements in protected areas, especially on the outskirts of the city,’ says Carolina Urrutia, head of the environment authority for the District of Bogotá, ‘but the coronavirus pandemic has made this problem worse throughout Bogotá.’ The environment authority did hear what was happening in Parque Entrenubes, Urrutia relates, but it was not able to take action straight away. Firstly because it was too dangerous without police protection, and secondly because the land mafia, as they are known, had driven large numbers of families with children into the protected area, lured by false promises. ‘We can’t simply evict these people, we have to offer them a solution,’ says Urrutia. ‘We have to involve the housing office and social services. That takes time.’

SEEG MISSIONS

Colombia is one of the countries supported by the German Epidemic Preparedness Team (known by its German acronym SEEG) in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. By the end of 2020, there will have been **38 SEEG assignments around the world**. When a country requests German assistance, the core team at GIZ assembles a group of experts to be deployed. GIZ is supported by the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine and the Robert Koch Institute. Since the start of the pandemic, the team headed by Professor Jan Felix Drexler from the **Institute of Virology at Berlin’s Charité** hospital has also been involved. In Colombia, SEEG has established dialogue between public health care institutions and Charité. It has also strengthened diagnostic capabilities in the north-east of the country, where many refugees from Venezuela live, and has supplied 80,000 test kits. Altogether, SEEG has provided **coronavirus tests for around 1.2 million people** so far, along with laboratory equipment. SEEG was set up by the German Development Ministry (BMZ) and the German Health Ministry (BMG) in response to the Ebola crisis.

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

GIZ IN COLOMBIA

On behalf of the German Government and the EU, GIZ supports Colombia in **peacebuilding, environmental protection and climate action**, and in sustainable economic development. Germany is named as a supporting partner in the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the largest **guerrilla group, FARC**. GIZ promotes **social dialogue** through programmes aimed at coming to terms with the past. Job creation in rural regions also helps foster peaceful coexistence, especially in areas with large numbers of internally displaced people or refugees from Venezuela. Generating income while at the same time enhancing environmental protection – this **green recovery** approach has long been part of GIZ's work in Colombia. Owing to its forests and biodiversity, the country is a key partner in the efforts to achieve the UN climate goals.

Contact: giz-kolumbien@giz.de

No income, no roof over their heads

The people illegally resettled by the land mafia were mainly internally displaced Colombians, as well as refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The former had fled the armed conflict that has been raging for decades in certain regions of Colombia and is far from over, even after the peace agreement between the FARC guerrillas and the state. The latter had fled the economic crisis and President Nicolás Maduro's administration in Venezuela. All of them came to the Colombian capital in the hope of starting a better life there.

Even before the pandemic many of them had lived from hand to mouth, doing casual work or selling sweets, coffee or other small items on the street or in buses. When Colombia started one of the longest periods of lockdown in the world in March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, their income disappeared. For more than five months. Those working in the

informal sector were neither able to work from home nor did they have any form of social security. Many were thrown out of their homes because they could no longer pay their rent. The Government of President Iván Duque had actually prohibited this to begin with, but many landlords in Bogotá did not keep to the rule, and when the decree expired at the end of June this protection was lost, too.

Refugees with no social safety net

'The situation is particularly tough for the migrants from Venezuela because they don't have a family network in Bogotá,' explains Ana Karina García. From Venezuela herself, she is a lawyer and one of the founders of the Juntos Se Puede (together we can) foundation. Many would not be able to rent a house or flat because that requires a Colombian guarantor or proof of property ownership as collateral. Often their only option was the costly 'pagadarios', mass accommo-



Queuing for a free meal in Bogotá: people in precarious employment now rarely earn anything at all, so are reliant on donations.

dation that has to be paid for by the day. Another major problem is the lack of health insurance, says García: ‘Migrants are only treated free of charge in emergencies.’ Fear of COVID-19 is widespread, she adds. This is a difficult situation, with growing levels of general psychosocial stress for refugees, who see themselves exposed to increasing xenophobia in the course of the crisis. Prior to the pandemic, Juntos Se Puede focused its efforts on helping Venezuelan citizens to help themselves, to enable them to get to know their new homeland better and find their feet in the labour market. The world of work changed with the onset of coronavirus, however. The foundation distributed food parcels to 15,000 Venezuelan families with children in Bogotá on behalf of the Colombian Government. To ensure their survival.

Colombia has taken in more refugees from Venezuela than any other country in the world. According to Colombia’s migration authority, there were roughly 1.8 million in the country at the start of the coronavirus crisis, around a fifth of them in Bogotá. To begin with, the number dropped during the pandemic. Despite the general border closure between March and mid-August, some 100,000 Venezuelans left Colombia. The Venezuelan Government allowed small groups to cross the border every week.

In their desperation, those who didn’t find space on one of the few special humanitarian buses to the border chose to go on foot, without permission – the same dangerous route in reverse that many of them had taken to Colombia in the first place. All of them were driven by the desire to be with their families in Venezuela during the crisis and live at home rent-free. At times a backlog of 2,300 migrants crowded into the Colombian border city of Cúcuta, in a tent camp of plastic tarpaulins, where the hygienic conditions were disastrous.

In the third quarter of 2020, many Venezuelans started to head back to Colombia again – in the vague hope of finding work there. This was because the Government in Bogotá lifted the lockdown on 1 September, although restrictions had been increasingly relieved anyway thanks to numerous exceptions. That said, life in



Signs of destruction in Colombia’s nature conservation area Parque Entrenubes, which is important for the water supply to the metropolis of Bogotá.

Colombia is still far from the state of normality known before the virus struck.

Green hope through youth

In the Parque Entrenubes protected area, John Castiblanco is kneeling next to a seedling the height of his hand. He is visibly delighted with every little plant struggling to emerge from the parched soil. ‘Nature is unbelievably resilient,’ says Castiblanco. Working with volunteer helpers from the surrounding districts, Castiblanco has already planted 700 trees. He says 44,000 are needed to restore the forest destroyed in June. He and his fellow campaigners are therefore leading groups across the devastated terrain at weekends. Almost all of them are young people from adjoining areas of the city, and almost without exception they put their names down for the next planting session. Many of them have been engaged in nature conservation in their home region since they were at primary school. Now they are ‘líderes’, role models for environmental protection in the municipalities, motivating children, young people and their parents

to join in and do their bit. Even though it is dangerous, because of the illegal gangs. Castiblanco sees it as only part of his job to impart a love of and respect for nature at an early age. You have to take a holistic approach to saving the forest for the long term, he says. ‘The state must guarantee the right to decent accommodation and a secure job, otherwise this will never end.’ Especially during the coronavirus crisis and beyond. —

GIZ in Colombia contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



Working in 2020

How GIZ colleagues are experiencing working from home.



HELLEN GOMEZ CAMBRONERO
Procurement and contracting officer in San José, Costa Rica

The pandemic brought huge changes to our routine. **All of a sudden** my husband and I were **also teachers**, and had to juggle our jobs with housework and helping with **virtual learning**. In the early days, there were two challenges I particularly struggled with: **concentrating** on work at my new workplace, where my daughters were playing and giggling or just doing their homework, and trying to get my priorities right in my work. Gradually I learned to manage my time better, be more productive and set boundaries

so as to establish a decent **work-life balance**. The in-house advice and coaching services provided by COPE* helped me a lot in this. Although the circumstances surrounding this **'new normal'** are difficult, it has also been a very fulfilling time for our family.



MIHAJLO LAHTOV
Communication officer in Skopje, North Macedonia

The coronavirus pandemic **caught us all unawares**. However, it is human nature to adapt quickly to new situations and make the best of them. I had chosen to work for GIZ because I share its corporate values and principles. Since the start of the pandemic, GIZ has been putting these into practice even more energetically than before. It pays attention to employees' **mental and physical health** and allows us a lot of **space for creativity**. This helped me find a good way of working from home, surrounded by my family. These are testing times for us all. Living without seeing friends, not going to restaurants or cafés, and without sport, concerts or cinemas is not what I would choose for myself. But the

pandemic also gives us an **opportunity to pause**, take stock and think about where we are and which way we are heading.



SANDRA FLICKE
Topic manager in the Sector and Global Programmes Department in Bonn, Germany

Clear segregation between a work area and a living area didn't work for us – we were more likely to have **organised chaos**. My three-year-old daughter's definition of mobile working is: 'When Mummy wants to do stuff on her computer rather than play with me.' Before an important meeting I tell the children: 'Let's get through this together and then we'll have some special time for ourselves afterwards!' They need to know that they are **just as important to me**. I get the impression that we are working more efficiently together in our team. **Questions now come in batches**, whereas before if people needed advice they would ask at any time. What I miss is **personal contact**. One thing I'm pleased about is the success of mobile working. In the past, people often said that it wasn't really possible for certain roles. Now it turns out that it is, after all, and that's great. We're all getting **plenty of practice in digital ways of working together** and are getting better at it all the time.

Read an interview with COPE* psychologist Franz Kernjak at akzente.giz.de/en

*COPE is a GIZ team made up of psychologists and expert advisors with various supplementary qualifications as well as experience of working for GIZ in Germany and abroad.



Towards a green and blue recovery

By GABRIEL QUIJANDRÍA ACOSTA,
Vice Environment Minister of Peru



Ten months after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that at the base of it there is a dysfunctional relationship with nature. One expressed in several problems such as ecosystem loss and degradation, illegal wildlife trafficking, increased invasive species, or overexploitation and pollution.

This was stated in several (scientific) studies and reports, such as the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in May 2019. It revealed that the extinction of species has reached a dramatic level and needs to be stopped urgently. This alarming news was recently confirmed by WWF's Living Planet Report 2020. It illustrates once again that humankind is using more resources than planet Earth can provide.

Precisely due to these environmental determinants, the enormous financial efforts that countries are making to revive their productive activity, recover lost jobs and ensure people's economic wellbeing must necessarily and explicitly include an approach to environmental sustainability. Because even greater challenges than the pandemic, such as climate change, lie ahead and must be addressed with the utmost attention.

Options for mainstreaming the environmental perspective in economic recovery are not new. Fundamental transitions, such as the inclusion of renewable sources in the energy matrix, the development of electromobility, the promotion of deforestation-free agricultural and forestry production chains, the reduction of water and carbon footprints, the increase of investments in natural infrastructure, or the revolution of materials and recycling are examples of processes

'The potential benefits are worth the effort, since our survival as a species is on the line.'

that were already well underway. That holds true both for industrialised countries and developing countries. But now all that has to move faster and go deeper.

The economic rationale behind not only a green but also a blue or marine-based recovery is being rapidly built by institutions of the most widely differing nature and mandates such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank and Greenpeace. This analytical work shows, for instance, that investments in nature conservation can produce a return of five dollars per dollar invested or that a path to decarbonisation in Latin America and the Caribbean can generate 15 million new jobs.

These findings provide hard evidence to sustain what a big part of societies around the world intuitively have been asking their decision-makers for, for at least the last twenty years: ambition and boldness to transform the economic system and tackle structural problems such as fairness, equity and sustainability.

The size and complexity of the task of ensuring the cross-cutting incorporation of the environment into the planning and decision-making processes of the public and private sectors are monumental. Therefore, it will require innovative partnerships to be built between government, companies and civil society organisations in each country. In the same vein, international cooperation must provide fresh impetus to strengthen implementation capacity, especially in the least developed countries.

A real recovery, one capable of establishing the basis for a new boost in growth and wellbeing, must be multicoloured. Or it will not be a recovery at all. The potential benefits are worth the effort, since our survival as a species is on the line. —



Lives or livelihoods

The coronavirus crisis poses new and unprecedented challenges for every country, in particular developing nations. South African analysts **Elizabeth Sidiropoulos** and **Steven Gruz** describe how they have coped so far.

Illustrations: Florian Bayer

COVID-19 hit developing countries at a time when they were on the move – in the fight against poverty and hunger, in the education of children, in the modernisation of agriculture and in the development of economies. Many poor nations around the globe advanced steadily over the past decade. Then, the pandemic struck, and forced societies into lockdowns and endangered livelihoods.

In Kibera for example, Nairobi's biggest slum, there was a stampede to get flour and cooking oil that was being distributed during the lockdown. Scores of people were injured, two died. Over 70 per cent of workers in sub-Saharan Africa are self-employed and active mostly in the informal sector, so they earn little and have no social security cover. Lower weekly incomes therefore mean no food. Many people in developing countries then feared – and still do – the pandemic would lead to more deaths from hunger.

IN THIS ARTICLE

1. THE CRISIS

Why the impacts of COVID-19 hit emerging economies and developing countries particularly badly.

2. THE DANGERS

Beyond the virus, the pandemic is threatening people with economic collapse and restrictions on democratic rights.

3. THE OPPORTUNITIES

What positive changes can emerge from the crisis in the long term.

Poorer countries face challenges similar to those of advanced economies, but more acutely because of greater inequality, large informal sectors and difficulties with sanitation and social distancing in cramped informal settlements. That goes along with fragile health systems which have, once again, revealed structural weaknesses during the crisis.

These include a lack of accountability and transparency; shortages of medicines, respirators and hospital beds, especially in intensive care units; low staff numbers – the World Bank estimates just one doctor for every 80,000 people in Africa; insufficient personal protective equipment; and limited ability to test, trace and track those infected and their direct contacts.

When the pandemic began in Africa for instance, there was an average of less than one intensive care bed and one venti-



lator per 100,000 people. Nigeria, Ethiopia and Egypt, the most populous countries on the continent, had 1,920 such beds between them for a population of 400 million people.

Struggling with the crisis

Developing countries have all adopted measures to mitigate the pandemic's effects on businesses, workers and the vulnerable. Colombia, for example, provided disbursements of about 40 dollars to three million low-income families. In Peru, where 70 per cent of all people work in the informal sector, cash transfers were boosted. But because many informal workers are unbanked, cash had to be handed out in person. That meant long queues at banks where social distancing was not observed.

‘Governments all over the world battled with the imperative to save both lives and livelihoods.’

In South Africa some three million people lost their jobs or their livelihoods, particularly in the informal sector, during a strict five-week total lockdown. For those who were not on welfare, 21 dollars a month was provided, although the roll-out proved to be difficult. Thousands of businesses have been forced to downsize or cease operating.

Bangladesh also experienced job losses, especially among women, 92 per cent of whom were in more precarious informal employment. The pandemic may lead to girl children being withdrawn from schools, a rise in child marriages and lower female participation in the labour force in the future. Governments all over the world battled with the imperative to save both lives and livelihoods, and did not always get the balance right.

Revival of the state

The pandemic has re-emphasised the importance of capable states and coordination across government. Argentina's capital Buenos Aires had excellent coordination among the three spheres of government, including on economic and social protection,

with the national Government also striving to strengthen the public health system. Working groups were established and reported daily, to boost evidence-based planning, monitoring and policy-making. The city issued over 100 decrees and measures to assist citizens, including schoolchildren and the elderly, in advance of their national lockdown.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also played a role in both Latin America and Africa, especially in helping vulnerable communities, where often the state has been unable to provide. Volunteers, many of them women, have driven these initiatives. Examples include the Seamos Uno campaign in Argentina where many civil society organisations, the church and business joined forces to

deliver food to vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Many NGOs have cut their teeth on HIV/AIDS-related responses, which they applied to COVID-19. In Senegal, the NGO Enda Santé distributed prevention material and food parcels to those communities they knew were the most vulnerable because of HIV/AIDS.

Excuse for eroding democracy

Yet, the states of emergency, imposed in many countries around the globe, have also been abused in some cases. Overzealous policing of restrictions has led to human rights violations. In Zambia, already sliding away from democracy, COVID-19 was used as an excuse to suspend parliament, where the Government did not have the support to amend the constitution that would weaken democratic institutions.

**‘Overzealous
policing of corona-
virus restrictions
has led to human
rights violations.’**

In South Africa, where the army was deployed to assist the police enforcing lockdown provisions, there were 230,000 arrests by the end of May, several serious injuries and at least 11 deaths in five of the country's nine provinces, due to heavy-handed actions by security forces. The most publicised case was that of Collins Khoza, a resident of a township in Johannesburg, who died in army detention. In Nairobi, a 13-year-old was killed by police while he was standing on his balcony during the curfew.

Zimbabwe saw a similar violent crackdown on protestors in July. President Emmerson Mnangagwa called the aborted demonstrations ‘an insurrection to overthrow our democratically elected government.’ And in India, for example, emergency powers were used to arrest or harass more than 50 journalists who were critical of the Government's COVID response, including Om Sharma who works for a





Hindi newspaper in Himachal Pradesh state in the north.

Many elections took place nonetheless

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), over 80 elections, by-elections, primaries or referendums were held around the world between February and August 2020. Over 60 others were postponed. In Bolivia, for example, special general elections were postponed twice.

International election observation has also dried up due to quarantine requirements. This can affect the legitimacy of elections, but also empower local observers. For example, in Mongolia, an observer group called the Coalition for Fair Elections made up of local young people protested at being only allowed to observe for two to four hours of a 14-hour voting process in 30 polling stations. Their efforts were successful at 23 polling stations,

‘COVID-19 is threatening human rights and good governance. Civil society needs to be especially vigilant in these times.’

where observers were eventually permitted for the whole time.

COVID-19 and emergency powers invoked by governments are threatening human rights and good governance. Civil society needs to be especially vigilant in these times. Will some of the emergency powers linger after the pandemic is over? Only time will tell.

New forms of manufacturing

The global economic effects are profound. In mid-2020, the World Bank forecast a 5.2 to 8 per cent contraction in global GDP for 2020. It said emerging markets and developing economies would post their lowest growth in 60 years, with losses to trade and tourism, reduced remittances and capital flows, and rising debt.

COVID-19 has caused major disruptions in trade and revealed for instance Africa’s reliance on imports of essential food and medical products, such as ventilators. In fact, some 96 per cent of Africa’s medicinal



and pharmaceutical products are imported.

In addition, Kenya's and Ethiopia's tea, coffee and cut flower value chains were severely disrupted. By April, the Kenyan horticulture industry was losing around 3.5 million dollars a day. Eighty per cent of its flower exports go to Europe; they were grounded.

Export volumes dropped by half even when flights resumed.

COVID-19 has also forced the repurposing of manufacturing companies in Africa to produce critical supplies and drugs. For example, Hela Clothing in Kenya shifted from producing underwear to making masks. It produced 10 million face masks in April and May alone. CIEL Limited from Mauritius is using its textile factory in Madagascar to produce medical protective gear. Ethiopian Airlines repurposed its airplanes for cargo.

Another aspect on the positive side: the crisis could galvanise greater political commitment to implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. It aims to build supply chains within Africa, not least in the pharmaceutical and medical equipment sectors.

What will happen to the SDGs?

Sadly, the trillions mobilised for the pandemic in the Global North have not been replicated in their aid budgets. Even before COVID-19, there was a trend away from grants to loans and developed countries were still falling short of their commitment to 0.7 per cent of gross national income for

development assistance. If this trend continues – because countries are focused internally – achieving the SDGs will become harder and the development gains of the last 20 years will be eroded.

In the wake of COVID-19, aid should focus on both social and productive sectors, while also building up health governance systems. South–South cooperation has featured, but

much more can be done. Cuba, for example, has deployed medical brigades to over 20 countries to support local efforts, among them Italy, Mexico and South Africa. China has won kudos with its 'mask diplomacy', delivering millions of masks all over the world.

Global power shifts

COVID-19 will accelerate power shifts from the USA to China, which is positioning itself as a champion of multilateralism and global institutions. The accelerating geopolitical rivalries may draw in developing countries, making neutrality difficult. But developing middle powers could seize the opportunity to play a bigger role in institutions to tackle global challenges.

For example, a number of developing country leaders insisted early on that vaccines are a global public good and should be free, patent-free, mass-produced, and distributed fairly to all. Among them were the President of South Africa and Chair of the African Union, Cyril Ramaphosa, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, and the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo.

Great catastrophes herald great change

There have been wide variations among developing countries in COVID-19 responses and impact. But all have shared the challenges of millions of jobs lost, economic

sectors decimated, and the poorest disproportionately affected. With limited fiscal space and major economic partners in the North also affected, the post-COVID environment will be difficult.

But there are also positive stories such as the opportunity to close the digital divide and increase e-commerce. Another one is the repurposing of manufacturing sectors to diversify products or to shift from raw material economies to building up regional value chains.

States and societies should not give up on the SDGs, but redouble their efforts to reach these targets by exploring such opportunities innovatively. The world should celebrate pockets of success and emulate what has worked, adapted to the local context. Great catastrophes herald great change, as after the two world wars. We have now reached another moment of momentous shift. —



ELIZABETH SIDIROPOULOS is the Chief Executive of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) in Johannesburg.

STEVEN GRUZD is Head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at the Institute.

Coronavirus at a glance

COVID-19 has dominated the media in 2020. akzente presents a selection of facts and figures that illustrate the positives and negatives of the pandemic.

Upsurge in violence against women

Before COVID-19 it was estimated that one in three women worldwide experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of relatives or acquaintances. In some countries and cities, that figure has risen by 20 to 30 per cent during the pandemic.

Sources: WHO, UN, www.cgdev.org

4.9

Historic collapse in the global economy

The pandemic has triggered a recession of historic proportions. The International Monetary Fund has predicted an average decline of 4.9 per cent in global economic output over 2020 compared with growth of 2.9 per cent in 2019. Worst hit have been Latin America and the Caribbean (down 9.4 per cent), the Middle East and Central Asia (down 4.7 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (down 3.2 per cent).

Climate change unchanged

Despite a temporary fall in CO₂ emissions as a result of the pandemic, we are still not on course to keep global warming below the internationally agreed target of 1.5 to 2 degrees. 2016-2020 is expected to be the warmest five-year period on record. Source: WMO

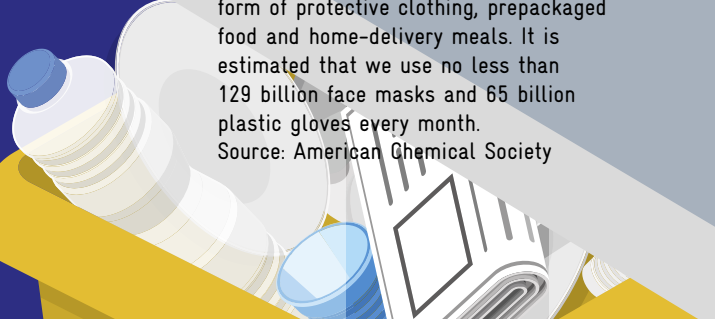
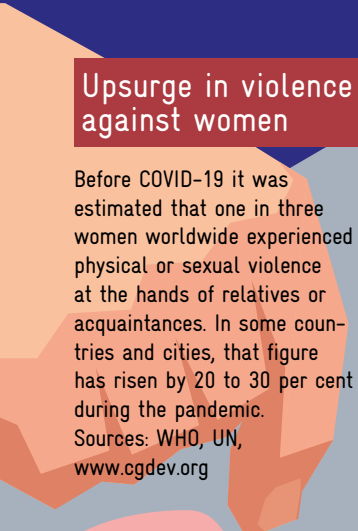
More waste

As a result of the pandemic, we are producing more plastic waste in the form of protective clothing, prepackaged food and home-delivery meals. It is estimated that we use no less than 129 billion face masks and 65 billion plastic gloves every month.

Source: American Chemical Society

Gaps in education

Almost 1.5 billion – nearly 90 per cent – of the world's children have been unable to attend school for at least some time during the pandemic. Around a third had no access to online teaching. Source: UN



More access to the internet

The pandemic has given a further boost to internet expansion. In July 2020, almost two-thirds (4.8 billion) of the entire global population were online. Just two years before, the figure was a little over half (3.9 billion). Source: International IDEA

More journeys by bike

Cycling has become more popular as people look for ways to avoid public transport. In Philadelphia, for example, the number of cyclists has risen by 150 per cent, and in New York by 67 per cent. In the UK, bike sales have risen by 60 per cent.

Sources: WRI, The Guardian

Taking a creative stand

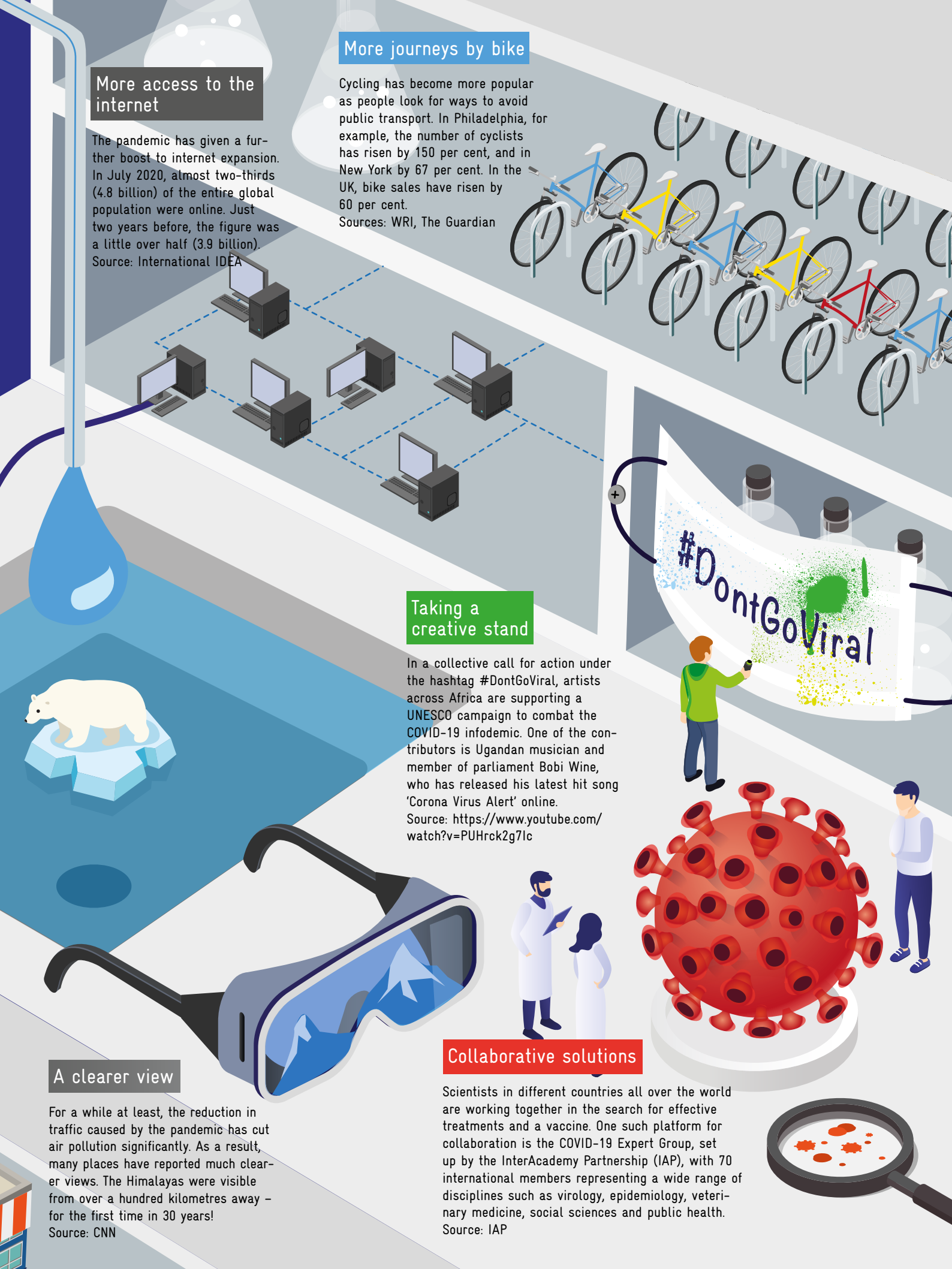
In a collective call for action under the hashtag #DontGoViral, artists across Africa are supporting a UNESCO campaign to combat the COVID-19 infodemic. One of the contributors is Ugandan musician and member of parliament Bobi Wine, who has released his latest hit song 'Corona Virus Alert' online. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUHrck2g7lc>

A clearer view

For a while at least, the reduction in traffic caused by the pandemic has cut air pollution significantly. As a result, many places have reported much clearer views. The Himalayas were visible from over a hundred kilometres away – for the first time in 30 years! Source: CNN

Collaborative solutions

Scientists in different countries all over the world are working together in the search for effective treatments and a vaccine. One such platform for collaboration is the COVID-19 Expert Group, set up by the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), with 70 international members representing a wide range of disciplines such as virology, epidemiology, veterinary medicine, social sciences and public health. Source: IAP





**TEDROS ADHANOM
GHEBREYESUS**

The Ethiopian biologist became Director-General of the World Health Organization in 2017. Before taking up this role, he served his country as both health minister and foreign minister, gaining international recognition for the massive expansion in Ethiopia's health system during his period of office.

‘Equitable distribution is vital’

As Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), which has been working relentlessly to fight COVID-19 in the past months, **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** suddenly found himself very much in demand. In this interview, he takes stock of the pandemic.

Interview: Friederike Bauer

The pandemic has hit the whole world. Yet, it seems industrialised countries are somehow affected worse than the developing world. Is that impression correct?

No matter the income group, we have seen that some countries have managed their national responses well, and some have not. Some did well because of their ‘muscle memory’ – relying on experiences of the past. It is not by chance that countries in the Mekong Delta, neighbouring China, demonstrated strong responses to COVID-19, built on lessons learned and systems developed due to outbreaks like SARS.

What about Africa? Where is the continent in terms of dealing with the pandemic?

Since July, we have seen promising trends from some countries in Africa, where cases have been declining. These are fragile wins, however, and we must work unrelentingly to maintain them. During the week of 18

September, Africa was the only region to report a decline in deaths. But we must also remember that Africa is a continent of 55 countries, and it is possible to see variations across borders. But in the main, we have observed that many countries took special measures early and benefited from experience from other diseases like wild poliovirus, yellow fever, cholera and the Ebola outbreak. The challenge is not to take the response lightly and become complacent. We are still in the middle of the pandemic.

Due to lockdowns, challenges such as fighting hunger or poverty are suddenly in competition with health issues. What is the best way of dealing with this trade-off?

We do not see this as a trade-off: we do not need to choose between health, hunger and poverty. We need to work across all fronts. We continue to urge countries to focus on four essential priorities so that they are able

to safely resume activities while keeping people’s health at the front of their minds. First, we must prevent amplifying events, like sports events and religious gatherings that bring large numbers of people together. Second, we need to protect the vulnerable in all countries, including the elderly, people with underlying conditions and health workers. Third, we need to educate, empower and enable communities to protect themselves and others, using every tool at their disposal. And fourth, we must get the basics right: find, isolate, test and care for those who are infected, and trace and quarantine their contacts. This is what works.

What is more challenging for developing countries – the medical, social or economic impacts?

COVID-19 has shown us how interconnected our world is and how a health crisis can cause major upheavals across all aspects

‘To safeguard communities from future shocks, we must increase investment in our health systems and emergency preparedness.’



of our lives. It has underscored more clearly than ever the critical importance of public health when it comes to protecting and advancing peace and development. To safeguard communities from future shocks, we must increase investment in our health systems and emergency preparedness.

What long-term consequences do you expect for developing countries?

The potential long-term consequences of the pandemic exist for all nations. But the impact could be higher in developing countries. The terrible prospect exists of half a million more people in Africa dying of AIDS-related illnesses, and an estimated 10,000 children and other vulnerable people could die from hunger every month. On the financial front, the International Monetary Fund predicts a 4.9 per cent contraction in the global economy this year. But these impacts can be prevented through continued global solidarity and national unity.

Once vaccines are available to treat COVID-19, how long will it take until all people around the world have access and can be vaccinated?

Work is underway across the globe to find effective vaccines. WHO is working with companies and sponsors, as well as vaccine alliances like Gavi and CEPI, to speed up this process. We are also trying to scale up manufacturing capacity. However, there are many unknowns. It is hoped that if a successful vaccine is found by the end of the year, there will be enough doses available for countries by the end of 2021.

How should the vaccine be distributed across the globe?

The first priority must be to vaccinate those most at risk, including the elderly, people with underlying conditions and health workers, in all countries, rather than all



people in some countries. Global equity is critical for the distribution of a safe and effective vaccine.

What could be the role of WHO in this?

WHO is working with partners to speed up the development and manufacturing of a vaccine. In dialogue with the Member States, we are also developing a global allocation framework for vaccines and other tools, including treatments and diagnostics, based on the principle of fair and equitable access. The proposal is to allocate the vaccine doses to all participating countries simultaneously, in the proportion needed to cover 20 per cent of the population. This is expected to reduce overall risk and protect most-at-risk groups from the virus everywhere and at the same time.

Can you assure the public that a vaccine will be 'safe'?

We take vaccine safety very seriously. Accelerating the timeline for vaccine development does not mean we are compromising safety. We are engaging with vaccine developers and others to ensure that we have standard end-points and data-collection mechanisms to regularly

'The first priority must be to vaccinate those most at risk.'

monitor both the efficacy and safety of vaccine candidates.

WHO has been accused of not reacting quickly enough at the beginning of the outbreak. How do you react to this kind of criticism?

I think the criticism is not justified. We reacted rapidly to the first reports of cases of 'pneumonia of unknown cause' in Wuhan on 31 December. On 1 January, we activated our three-level emergency incident management team. We provided a detailed summary of the situation on 5 January. We issued a comprehensive package of guidance, covering key topics related to the

management of an outbreak of a new disease, starting on 10 January, and we briefed the public and media in mid-January. Furthermore, we convened an Emergency Committee on 22 to 23 January, and again on 30 January I myself and my senior management team visited China. On 30 January, we declared a public health emergency of international concern, our highest level of alert, when there were less than 100 cases and no deaths outside China.

How has this pandemic strained your organisation?

The response to COVID-19 has been an immense undertaking, involving all staff at WHO. I am so proud of how my colleagues have responded. We had already undertaken an extensive transformation of WHO's emergency programme after I became Director-General in 2017. The changes we instituted primed WHO to be able to implement a robust and rapid response to COVID-19 from 31 December 2019 onwards. During the many months of fighting COVID-19, WHO staff have worked around the clock, driven by the need to learn about this virus, provide life-saving guidance, build partnerships and communicate what we know to the world.

What does your working week as Director-General of WHO look like these days?

The increased demands caused by COVID-19 have posed major challenges for each and every person working for WHO. But, at the same time, it has brought us closer together. One colleague was recently asked by friends how he was doing. He responded: 'We work in good faith and have faith in each other, and this faith has now been tested under very trying circumstances.' The determination shown by my colleagues inspires me to keep striving day in and day out in my work. —

Trigger for change

GIZ supports the efforts of its partner countries to tackle the pandemic in sustainable ways that offer both social and environmental benefits.

By ULRICH HÖCKER

The coronavirus pandemic affects all of us, though not in equal measure. The same is true of its economic and social impacts. In 2020, developing countries and emerging economies will experience their first recession in years, jeopardising much of the progress achieved in the field of international development. According to the United Nations, global poverty is set to rise for the first time in 20 years, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Experts fear that hundreds of millions of jobs could be lost following the global slump in demand – 100 million in the tourism sector alone, according to the UN. Economically, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women, many of whom earn a living and support their family from jobs in those labour-intensive sectors worst hit by lockdown restrictions, such as services, textiles, retail, electrical and automotive supplies. Workers who are laid off in countries without a social security net often have no other means of support. The coronavirus has brought home to us how important it is to establish sustainable infrastructure such as a solid health care and welfare system. Indeed, that is precisely the focus of GIZ's work on behalf of the German Government. Our goal is to strengthen individuals and institutions and therefore make countries and their populations more resilient.

One example of this is the digital health monitoring system SORMAS. Developed over the last six years with GIZ support, it is already improving health care in the countries that make up the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). SORMAS can now be used to rapidly identify and record cases of 20 infectious diseases – including COVID-19 – in a region with a population of around 130 million. This demonstrates two things.



ULRICH HÖCKER

Director of GIZ's Economic and Social Development, Employment Division.
ulrich.hoecker@giz.de

First of all, when you are dealing with an acute crisis, it pays to have tried-and-tested tools and networks in place that you can fall back on. This approach is efficient and avoids overloading those whose job is to deliver the services. The SORMAS app also highlights the enormous potential of digital solutions.

In Cambodia, we have spent 10 years developing and rolling out an ID Poor database together with various partners. Two million poor people are now registered. During the pandemic, the database was used to organise a system of emergency 'mobile money' payments for those in need – people, for example, who had lost their former jobs and meagre earnings in the informal sector. Looking further ahead, we hope to integrate the database into the country's social security system.

All this harnessing of existing tools and structures shows that the crisis has also stimulated creativity and innovation.

Wherever you look, individuals and organisations are improvising, digitalising, networking and reusing the available resources. In the Republic of Moldova, with support from GIZ, three automotive suppliers and a textiles firm have switched their production lines from car covers to protective clothing for medical use, saving over a thousand jobs at very short notice.

In our teaching and training work, we have embraced new forms of communication such as distance learning, for example in Timor-Leste. When travel restrictions due to the crisis made it impossible to deliver courses on the ground, GIZ's agriculture team offered live video sessions using mobile devices, allowing course participants to try out new techniques immediately in their fields. The feedback was so positive that we now intend to expand our use of video courses. At the same time, this will allow us to reduce the number of flights needed.

We should view the pandemic as a trigger for change, an opportunity to seek out new ways in which we can meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The political, economic and social agenda is currently dominated by talk of a green recovery. The goal here, as we deal with the social and economic fallout of the pandemic, is to put our economies on a path towards lower emissions, greater social justice and increased resilience.

We can help our partner countries make this transition in many ways, for example by advising on effective economic policies, strategies and programmes designed to achieve these objectives. We are also helping local businesses in our partner countries to harness 'greener' market opportunities as a way of tackling the crisis. Thanks to its expertise, GIZ is well placed to offer ideas and examples of good practice. Turning hopes into reality. —

Swift and sustainable

When you're confronted with a crisis, you have a better chance of responding quickly and effectively if you already have systems in place.

Three-pronged approach

The pandemic has had a dramatic impact on communities all over the world. GIZ has been working with its clients and partners on flexible solutions to the most immediate challenges. That response was made easier by our long-established networks. The next part of our strategy involves supporting partner countries over the medium and long term in order to safeguard earlier development gains. Finally, we aim to build up the resilience needed to deal with future crises. —

500,000

MALAWI The Malawi German Health Programme responded to the outbreak of coronavirus with impressive speed. On behalf of BMZ and in collaboration with its partners, GIZ refurbished the treatment and isolation centres at two hospitals and trained over 1,500 health care workers and hospital employees. We are also providing support for local health authorities and working with a local NGO to inform people about the virus. Altogether, our COVID-19 prevention message has reached over 500,000 people through a combination of theatre performances and home visits. —



TUNISIA With over nine million tourists, Tunisia was one of Africa's most popular holiday destinations in 2019. Then came the pandemic. GIZ has been helping Tunisia's Ministry of Tourism to introduce hygiene regulations for hotels, restaurants and tour operators so that they can reopen safely. On behalf of BMZ and with cofinancing from the EU, we have also produced training videos for workers in the tourism sector. —



Rapid action

INDIA Many people in India have lost their jobs and livelihoods since the lockdown back in March. In Uttar Pradesh, GIZ's develoPPP.de/COVID-19 Response programme has teamed up with Dr. Bronner's Europe, Pavitramenthe Fair Organic and BMZ to provide valuable support for 6,000 agricultural workers and their families in the form of food, health care, seeds – and learning resources for children affected by school closures to ensure that they don't fall behind. —

32 per cent

PERU Indigenous peoples living in the Peruvian Amazon are practically defenceless against the coronavirus. Fewer than a third of villages (32 per cent) have a health centre, and most of these are poorly equipped. It can take days to reach the nearest hospital. On behalf of BMZ and in collaboration with Berlin's Charité hospital, GIZ is supporting Peru's efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact among indigenous communities, with the broader goal of improving public health care provision. —

Training for frontline staff

KOSOVO Good hygiene standards and measures to protect hospital patients and staff are crucial in any strategy to prevent the further spread of disease during a pandemic. To improve the quality of training for care and health sector workers, GIZ has established a development partnership with the company Kolegji Heimerer, which operates a number of vocational training schools. The hospital-based sessions also involve training up local staff to act as multipliers, thereby ensuring quality at the hospitals in the long term. This project is funded as part of the develoPPP.de special COVID-19 Response programme. —





CLEAR THE STAGE!

CULTURE The sense of an ending. A staff member at the Sejong Center in Seoul fumigates the theatre before a public performance. South Korea was one of the first countries to be hit by coronavirus. Strict measures and rigid digital contact tracing of chains of infection helped curb the first wave of the pandemic without a total lockdown. The South Korean Government nevertheless estimates that the arts and culture industry suffered a loss of around KRW 504.9 billion (or EUR 379 million) in the first nine months of the year.

Photo: Chung Sung-Jun/Getty Images

CUCUMBERS WAIT FOR NO ONE

Every day counts when it's harvest time. There's now a quick and easy way to register seasonal workers at the Ostić farm in Serbia using an app. Everybody benefits from this electronic registration system.

TEXT ANDREJ IVANJI | PHOTOS MARIJA JANKOVIC



ADVANTAGE

Farmer Branko Ostić has his hands full. He manages a family-run farm in northern Serbia and is a big fan of quick and unbureaucratic ways to register his seasonal workers.

B

Branko Ostić always seems to be pressed for time. The 31-year-old constantly checks his watch and mobile phone, as if he needs to be somewhere soon. Like a rally driver, he steers his car along bumpy country roads surrounded by farmland in the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina.

A conversation at his house in the village of Mandelos, around 75 kilometres north-west of the Serbian capital of Belgrade, reveals just why he is so restless. 'Cucumbers wait for no one,' Ostić remarks. He says this sentence over and over again like a mantra, as if it were the philosophy behind the way he runs his business. Cucumbers are by far the Ostić farm's main product. Ostić sells his entire harvest to a partner in Germany, the Hamburg-based company Kühne, which delivers gherkins all over the world.

In the peak season, he employs more than 150 seasonal workers. On a good day, they harvest up to 40 tonnes of cucumbers from 14 hectares of farmland. One of the workers is Martin Bošković from Vranje in southern Serbia. He has been coming to work for Ostić for the past four years. A member of the Roma community, the 50-year-old chooses to work at the farm because the conditions there are so good and there were no jobs at home. Harvesting cucumbers is hard work, but at least the Ostić farm offers decent housing, he says. And the food is 'something special' and, he stresses, free. 'These kinds of conditions are unusual,' Bošković notes. On average, seasonal workers in Serbia earn a net daily wage of between EUR 21 and EUR 30. This year, Bošković's wife and son have joined him in working for Ostić. Once the season is over by the end of September, the family will have a good amount of money in their pockets by Serbian standards.



Harvesting cucumbers is hard work: harvesters are pulled across the fields on a platform and pick the green vegetable lying on their stomachs.

Bottom left: Martin Bošković is one of 150 harvesters who work at the Ostić farm in the peak season. He has been going there for many years because of the good conditions offered at the farm.



The Ostić family-run farm is a popular employer. Seasonal workers travel there from all over the country, from neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina and even from Albania. Ostić has built brand-new container housing with air-conditioning. Three times a day, a local restaurant serves meals to the harvesters. During the coronavirus pandemic, all employees undergo COVID-19 testing, sometimes several times. Precautionary and hygiene measures are painstakingly performed. Any new arrivals are housed in separate containers until they have been tested for COVID-19.

Serbian IT companies developed the app

Ostić is the frontman for the family-run farm. Along with cucumbers, the farm also grows tomatoes, tobacco, horseradish, corn and grain. 'It keeps us busy all year long,' he says. As he sips on a glass of homemade tomato juice, he explains how his parents lost their jobs at a paper factory and returned to farming, the losers of an economic upheaval that happened in Serbia at the start of the new millennium. He tells the story of how he gave up studying agriculture seven semesters into his university course in Belgrade and joined the family business. He describes how his cautious father tried in vain to squash his son's ambitions. The farm now has four state-of-the-art tractors with platforms that can fit up to 25 harvest workers at a time, along with a GPS-guided tractor with a sprayer. The farm still has to pay off loans for these purchases. For Ostić, time literally is money.

That's why the young farmer was glad when the website and Android app to register seasonal workers online were unveiled last year at the town hall in Sremska Mitrovica, the next largest town. GIZ and the National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED) in Serbia initiated the project on behalf of BMZ in 2017.

Serbian IT firms developed special software for the project, which was then handed over to the Serbian tax authorities.

Quick registration via smartphone

Ostić started using the app straight away. The process of registering workers with the tax authorities is not cumbersome and time-consuming anymore. The app's launch had huge ramifications for the legal registration of workers. Up until January 2019, around 95 per cent of Serbia's more than 80,000 seasonal employees worked off the books. Registration numbers soared virtually overnight once there was an easy way to register them online. More than 42,000 seasonal workers employed for a total of 1.2 million working days had been registered by September 2020. Over 440 agricultural enterprises have so far used the website and app, which are connected to the tax office. Serbia now has 97 centres for electrical registration of workers. Farmers can receive advisory services there too. Since the system's inception, agricultural enterprises have added the equivalent of more than EUR 4 million in taxes and social security contributions to the Serbian budget.

Workers also benefit from being registered. By working legally, they are entitled to a guaranteed minimum wage and local health insurance. The employer pays their social security contributions. 'Making employees happy benefits everyone. I learned that in Germany. Instead of going on holiday, I visited German farming companies,' adds Ostić.

The farmer is already on the go again. 'Cucumbers grow three or four times faster in Serbia than in Germany, and are some of the best in the world,' Ostić explains. He would lose a lot of money if the harvest were delayed because of a technical glitch, a shortage of workers or other delays because 'it's the small things that matter most.' Why did he choose to grow cucumbers? Because it's the only legal way for a Serbian farmer to make good money, he says with a smile. —



A MODEL FOR THE REGION

Serbia is pursuing reforms that should make it easier for the country to join the European Union in the future. A **transparent, legal labour market** with social standards is one such element. It strengthens **workers' rights** while also generating tax revenue for the state which can then be invested in better services for citizens. The electronic registration system for seasonal workers is one example of how this can succeed. Funded by BMZ, the GIZ Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services supported the development of this digital tool. This simple method of registering workers creates an employment contract that makes sure employers are on the right side of the law. Employees are automatically entitled to social security for each day that they are registered, as well as a minimum wage and other legal standards. The platform can also be used to share **job offers and requests**.

Following a successful roll-out in Serbia, other South-East European countries are interested in the system too, especially **Montenegro, North Macedonia and Albania**. At the same time, its use in other sectors is also being explored. Facilitating access to work while also safeguarding tax revenue is especially vital in tough economic times, like those connected with the coronavirus pandemic.

Contact for the Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe:

Peter Wolf, peter.wolf@giz.de

Contact for the Serbian e-system:

Amira Omanovic, amira.omanovic@giz.de

HAPPY WORKERS

A systematic survey of harvesters was performed after the electronic system for seasonal farm workers was launched in Serbia. Two thirds of respondents were pleased with working conditions compared with previous years. Almost half of those surveyed even said that they were very pleased. **Better working conditions** were mentioned most often as the reason, followed by the fact that they were **paid on time** and their income had improved. The most frequently mentioned benefit of the new employment system was **health insurance** in the event of an injury on the job. This benefit was also rated the most important.

The project contributes to the following

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



FORGING A NEW PATH

Ethiopia is breaking new ground in vocational training for refugees and Ethiopians. They learn together and put what they have learned into practice. Four people share their story, showing how the training reform supported by GIZ is bearing fruit.

TEXT AND PHOTOS SIMON MARKS

‘The unique thing about this training is that classes are mixed.’

MELESSE YIGZAW (45),
Dean of the Nefas Silk Polytechnic College in Addis Ababa

We make sure that refugees have opportunities on Ethiopia’s labour market by offering them vocational training. The unique thing about our training is that we don’t have a separate curriculum for refugees but have mixed classes. We encourage students with different backgrounds to help one another. Some of the refugees have experienced dramatic events in their lives. We provide our teachers with the psychological support and conflict management skills that they need to offer refugees comprehensive assistance. We work with private companies to make sure that our trainees have the best-possible preparation for the labour market. We prepare people who do not join a company to set up their own business. Each year, we organise a competition where participants draw up a business plan. The winner receives assistance for his or her start-up from our college and GIZ. We have been very successful in integrating refugees so far and have trained more than 200 people altogether. Training people together also enhances our teaching methods. People come here with very different life experiences and social backgrounds. The unique thing about our school is that people help one another, sometimes even though they don’t speak the same language. We overcome language barriers by having multilingual students help others as language coaches. I’m really excited about our success and our partnership with GIZ, which is supporting us in this training mission. We’re now offering training and expertise in many different areas, from food preparation to vehicle construction. We had to suspend classes during the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic, but we’ve managed to arrange employment for our graduates despite this crisis. That’s a huge success.’ —





‘I would have been lost during the pandemic had it not been for my job.’

YONAS HAILEMARIAM (33), an Eritrean refugee, graduate of the Nefas Silk Polytechnic College and employee of Tom E-Bike, an electric vehicle company

‘After leaving Eritrea, I lived in a refugee camp in northern Ethiopia for a long time. Last year, I joined the integrated training programme at Nefas Silk Polytechnic College in Addis Ababa and specialised in welding. I don’t feel like a stranger or an outsider anymore because I trained with people from different countries and Ethiopians and now work alongside them. I’m now friends with my colleagues. We eat and learn together. To find a job as a refugee, it’s essential to have a positive attitude towards your environment. I experienced extremely challenging situations in the past and have previously received support from non-governmental organisations. But the experience that I had during this training was completely different – because I found a job thanks to the programme. Things have become even more difficult for us refugees on the whole during the coronavirus pandemic. So I’m even more grateful that I’ve been able to keep working during this period. I would have been lost had it not been for my job. I’m very pleased with the training I received because it was really practical. Working at Tom E-Bike gives me the chance to contribute to the country’s green economy. Working with electric engines is something new in Ethiopia, and demand is growing. That offers us solid job prospects.’ —

‘I want to set up my own company and encourage other women.’

EMAMEY WENDUANTE (20), Ethiopian, graduate of the Nefas Silk Polytechnic College and Tom E-Bike employee

‘After finishing school, I went to Nefas Silk Polytechnic College to complete a three-year training programme to become a mechatronics engineer. I’ve been working at Tom E-Bike since graduating in January 2020. I gained a lot of technical knowledge during my course. I’m putting what I learned into practice at Tom E-Bike. Now I assemble electric vehicles. I know the entire process from the engine to the electrical systems to the chassis. It’s really great that I found a job after graduating from the college. Many young people in Ethiopia go to school or university but then have a hard time finding a job. I managed to overcome this hurdle thanks to the direct link between the training centre and the business. It’s a huge advantage. In the future, my goal is to set up my own company and work as a self-employed entrepreneur. I’m proud to be one of the few women working in automotive mechanics. I want to encourage other women to follow in my footsteps. At first, I thought working in this sector and this environment would be really hard. But now I realise that it’s not that challenging. Any woman can do it.’ —





'Our project has reached 1,200 people so far, with this number set to rise to 6,500 by mid-2023.'

'I know what it's like to be a refugee.'

THOMAS MESKEL (50),
Managing Director of Tom E-Bike in Addis Ababa

'I was a refugee myself and a migrant worker in 11 African countries before emigrating to the US. I ultimately decided to return home. I want to do something to battle poverty in Ethiopia. Working and helping refugees is something I would never have dared dream of. I can only hire a few refugees at the moment, but I want to give more of them jobs in the future. I know what it's like to be a refugee. We're already making excellent progress with electric vehicle assembly. We're a small company and don't have a lot of room in our workshop, but we still work together with Nefas Silk Polytechnic College and GIZ. And I can train and hire refugees by doing so. Fifteen of my 55 employees are refugees. I am proof that it can work. We respect one another. It doesn't matter where you come from. Fifteen or twenty years ago, Ethiopians and Eritreans were enemies. Today, we're a team and speak each other's language in my workshop. Sometimes we get together and celebrate together. I'm optimistic about the future for my company. Electric vehicles will be a massive market in the future so there are bright prospects for my employees. I have to say that refugees are excellent learners and ambitious. When I started this business five years ago, I realised that I had to help to raise the level of the workforce in Ethiopia. Until now, there have been lots of workers, but not enough importance has been attached to vocational training. But things are changing. In the future, I want to expand and promote teamwork. The partnership with Nefas Silk Polytechnic College is an excellent way to make that happen. Students there are young and energetic – their training is directly geared towards the labour market.' —

Tobias Erbert, GIZ project manager. Read the full interview exclusively at akzente.giz.de/en

Contact: tobias.erbert@giz.de

A MODEL FOR INTEGRATION

Home to approximately 800,000 refugees, Ethiopia is one of Africa's largest host countries. It faces major challenges connected to finding **jobs and opportunities** for refugees. At the same time, thousands of young Ethiopians are looking for employment each year. Working on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ is supporting Ethiopian efforts to integrate refugees into the vocational training system and train them for the job market together with Ethiopians. Cofinanced by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the project contributes towards the BMZ Special Initiative **Tackling the Root Causes of Displacement, Reintegrating Refugees**. Working in partnership with the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the project has overhauled curriculums and stepped up the involvement of companies. The Nefas Silk Polytechnic College in Addis Ababa is a pioneer. More than 200 refugees and Ethiopians have already completed the reformed training programme there. Similar programmes are under way in **four other regions of Ethiopia** and will benefit 6,500 people in the medium term.

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



EDITOR'S

Digital Picks

Living a more sustainable life

APP A new app supporting the UN ActNow campaign offers incentives to embrace sustainable practices day in, day out. In the course of our lives, we take hundreds of thousands of decisions that have an impact on our planet. It's about time we made positive changes! —

site.aworld.org



Digital future

REPORT COVID-19 has accelerated digital change in the media and entertainment landscape. The white paper 'The Future of Media' outlines the pandemic's long-term implications for the global media ecosystem. —

www.weforum.org, search: Future of Media

Combating fake news

NEWSLETTER There is a tremendous need for accurate, verified information about COVID-19. At the same time, misinformation is spreading around the globe just as quickly as the virus itself. Verified, a United Nations initiative, is helping to counteract this. Working in cooperation with the media, companies and civil society, Verified makes verified content, fact-based advice and stories available. Sharing is definitely encouraged! —

www.shareverified.com



100 voices for peace

BLOG The Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) has launched a new blog, TECHPOPS. National and international experts from the public and private arena share their views on technology and peace operations. These short and concise contributions aim to encourage discussion. —

tech-blog.zif-berlin.org

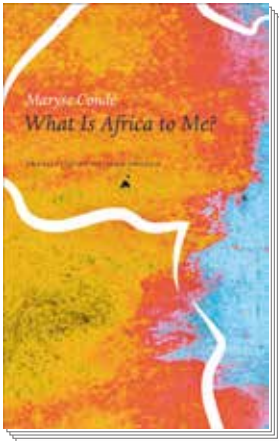
Building blocks 2.0

PLATFORM Gamification – enabling learning through play – is successfully deployed in international cooperation projects too. The LearningApps platform provides online learning building blocks available free of charge for both teachers and learners. They can create and manage their own content with very little effort. Developers are continually expanding this multilingual offering. —

learningapps.org

GOOD READS

from around the world



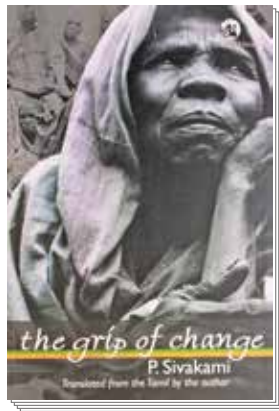
WHAT IS AFRICA TO ME?

Maryse Condé started her university studies in Paris in 1953. A young woman from the Caribbean, she is passionate about the anti-colonial movement. Men are a real disappointment to her. But still, she finds her way. This impressively unsentimental and self-critical piece delves into the post-colonial world. —

Andreas Fanizadeh

Maryse Condé, Guadeloupe.
Translated from French by
Richard Philcox, Seagull Books,
298 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

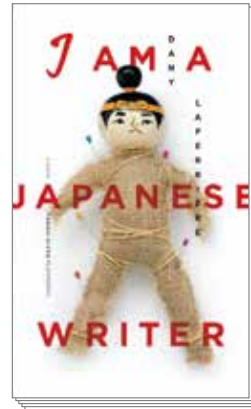


THE GRIP OF CHANGE

Kathamuthu, a respected 'untouchable', does not recognise his own village: the lowest castes are rebelling against the higher castes – all because of a woman. This bold novel delves into the complex set of rules governing Indian castes – published in Tamil in 1989 and translated into English by the author, herself an untouchable, in 2006. —

Claudia Kramatschek

Palanimuthu Sivakami, India.
Orient BlackSwan, 208 pages

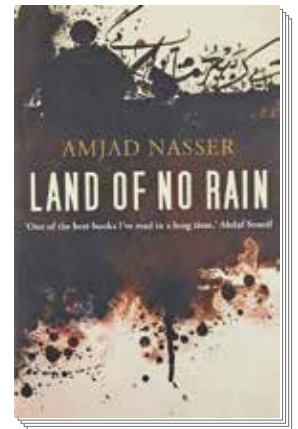


I AM A JAPANESE WRITER

Laferrière tears apart the ridiculous notions that are associated with the words 'authenticity' and 'identity'. It's funny and very clever. After all, why shouldn't a black Caribbean author living in Canada be a Japanese writer? A grandiose statement in novel form. —

Thomas Wörtche

Dany Laferrière, Haiti/Canada.
Translated from French by
David Homel, Douglas & McIntyre,
182 pages



LAND OF NO RAIN

When he puts his hand on the boy's shoulder, he observes that the hand reflected in the mirror doesn't move. 20 years have passed. The opposition member is back in his hometown and everything has changed: the regime, the religious people, the opposition, his childhood love. Even his doppelgänger. —
Jörg Plath

Amjad Nasser, Jordan/UK.
Translated from Arabic by
Jonathan Wright, Bloomsbury
Qatar Foundation Publishing,
264 pages

Introducing

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



11:09 53%
1.715

From: Emilia Huss >
To: ★all akzente readers

Climate change adaptation in Bangladesh

Today, 11:09 AM

Greetings from Dhaka,

Bangladesh is severely affected by climate change; its impacts are already being clearly felt. It's no coincidence that climate change is at the very top of our partners' agenda. Over the past 18 months, I've been helping selected ministries to use climate data in national planning processes. The goal is to improve our partners' access to the latest data that has been customised to their needs, for instance on rising sea levels or soil erosion. We're working together to make sure that the responsible authorities can interpret and use this information properly, for instance when planning coastal management measures. This is the only way to turn climate policy targets into real improvements for the population.

GIZ is active in other areas in Bangladesh, too, for example driving forward improvements in the textile sector or the expansion of renewables. My colleagues and I are facing many challenges. We can take responsibility and shape issues. It's very exciting professionally.

I decided to go to Dhaka because I had heard a lot of good things about our team here. We get on really well. Before the coronavirus, we regularly staged potluck lunches that brought together people from different projects. That meant that sometimes we had curry with pasta salad.

If you talk about Bangladesh in Germany, most of the time all you hear is news of disasters. These reports are often one-sided. There are a lot of things that make this place exciting. Dhaka is home to millions of people with everything that entails. Cultural events and religious celebrations are a frequent occurrence.

The country is also remarkably diverse. While sipping on a delicious chai, I can travel by train to long sandy beaches, tea plantations or green hiking areas. It's also just a boat ride away to the world's largest mangrove forests. If I'm lucky, river dolphins or a rare tiger might even show their face.

Best regards,

Emilia Huss

SUSTAINABILITY

A look back at a project and its results



Project: Regional Economic Cooperation in Asia / **Countries:** China, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Viet Nam / **Commissioned by:** German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) / **Term:** April 2015 to March 2022 (Evaluation period: April 2015 to March 2019)

THEN

Agricultural trade with China offers endless opportunities for Laos, Cambodia, Viet Nam and Mongolia. The neighbouring country is a big market for animal products and for fruit such as lychees, bananas and mangos. The **ASEAN-China Free Trade Area** was established in 2010. It allows Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam to import duty-free agricultural products. **Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)** do not make full use of these advantages, however. They are not aware of all of the conditions that need to be fulfilled to export goods to the Chinese market. Mongolia could also make greater use of its location in North-East Asia to benefit from regional cooperation to a greater degree. The political will for **regional, cross-border cooperation** is there, but know-how is lacking. The project provides information to small and medium-sized producers and retailers to explain the requirements for exporting goods to China. It also translates standards and regulations, ensuring that **knowledge is easily accessible**. As a knowledge bearer, China is actively involved in activities in order to **eliminate barriers to trade**.

NOW

To support trade facilitation for MSMEs, **export guidelines** have been prepared for agricultural products in South-East Asia and for animal products in Mongolia, in cooperation with ministries, associations and customs authorities. More than **750 representatives** of Cambodian, Lao, Mongolian and Vietnamese MSMEs, export associations and chambers have so far received support in exporting agricultural products to the Chinese market. Another component is **train-the-trainer courses**. These trainers then act as multipliers, passing on the knowledge they have gained. China and Germany are also working together as **equal development partners** to support third countries, for instance in the area of continuing training. In addition, Mongolia has been able to set up a new web platform to expand cross-border tourism. The project also curates lists of trade statistics, free trade agreements and trade facilitation indicators in order to improve **access to information portals and databases** for the public and private sectors.

<https://mia.giz.de/qlink/ID=246062000>

AKZENTE

Publisher: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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, Brigitte Spitz, Dr Charlotte Schmitz, Oliver Hick-Schulz (artistic direction, photo editing)

English translation:
Abigail Dahlberg, Richard Holland, Mitzi Morgan, Teresa O'Connor, David Tonge, Gillian Lester (GIZ Language Services)

Proofreading: textschriftmacher
Graphic design/lithography: FAZIT Communication GmbH

URL links:
Where links are included to external sites, responsibility for the content of these sites lies solely with the provider. GIZ explicitly disassociates itself from all such content.

Maps:
GIZ/Ira Olaleye
The maps are for information purposes only and do not constitute recognition under international law of boundaries and territories. GIZ provides no assurance that these maps are up-to-date, correct or complete and accepts no responsibility for loss or damage arising directly or indirectly from their use.

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication. Articles by individual authors do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher.

Cover photo and pages 4 and 16: Andrés B0
All images: GIZ unless otherwise stated

Copy deadline: November 2020
Published: three times a year
Current issue: December 2020

Printed by: Kern GmbH, Bexbach, Germany
Printed on: BalancePure, certified to FSC standards

ISSN: 0945-4497

You can subscribe to akzente free of charge as a printed magazine or as a pdf by sending your email or postal address to: akzente-vertrieb@giz.de. You can unsubscribe using the same address.

akzente has received several awards for its high-quality journalism and design. In 2018, it won the Best of Content Marketing Award in silver in the crossmedia and website categories.



Coronavirus [kə'ɹɒʊnəˌvaɪrəs] (derived from the Latin corōna for 'garland' or 'crown') is any of a family of RNA viruses. The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 causes the disease COVID-19. The first case was recorded in late 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan. COVID-19 developed into an epidemic in China in January 2020, quickly unleashing a global pandemic.

As a service provider with worldwide operations in the fields of international cooperation for sustainable development and international education, GIZ works with its partners to develop effective solutions that offer people better prospects and sustainably improve their living conditions. GIZ is a public-benefit federal enterprise and supports the German Government and a host of public and private sector clients in a wide variety of areas, including economic development and employment promotion, energy and the environment, and peace and security.