



Global commitment | local partnership

Strengthening democracy

Promoting dialogue
between the state and civil society

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Supporting democratisation processes in partner countries has become increasingly important in the last few years. The Millennium Declaration with its “commitment to good governance” and the German Federal Government’s Action Programme 2015 with its commitments to “implementing human rights” and “supporting responsible governance” reflect this trend. The same goals are also found in the 2005 Coalition Agreement and the German Federal Government’s Human Rights Action Plan (2004–2007).

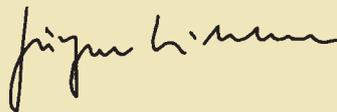
To strengthen democracies in partner countries, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has reached agreement with 29 governments on “Democracy, civil society and public administration” as a priority area for cooperation. The country-specific focus ranges from “Good governance, state and civil society” (Zambia) through “Decentralisation” (Indonesia) to “Administrative and judicial reform” (Bolivia). No other of the 12 BMZ priority areas has been adopted as often as “strengthening democracy, civil society and public administration”. The German

Development Service (DED) concentrates its democracy-promotion efforts on “strengthening civil society” and “local authority development”. Its partners are civil society organisations whose work affects political decisions at local level and government and local administrations willing to support participative policy making.

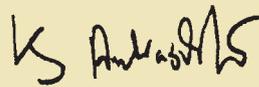
The task of DED is to build these partners’ management capacity and to support the dialogue between the state and society. DED is performing an important intermediary function here. DED development experts, trainee young professionals, local professionals and funding all serve the same purpose – making democracy a reality at the local level. Another important DED goal is involving civil society in implementing national poverty reduction strategies. DED works equally with civil

society and government and local authority partners, as we are aware of the importance of both poles for developing democracy in the partner countries. Currently, over 300 DED development workers are supporting democratisation processes in 31 partner countries. Almost all are working on the BMZ Governance Profile “Political design of decentralisation” and, in line with the multilevel approach of German development cooperation, are operating at local and regional levels.

The present booklet offers some examples of the work of DED in strengthening democracy. The introduction, explaining the most important issues for the future, is followed by examples of DED’s democracy strengthening activities. Finally, the future challenges facing DED in the field of democracy promotion are explored.



Dr. Jürgen Wilhelm,
Managing Director



Kay Andraschko

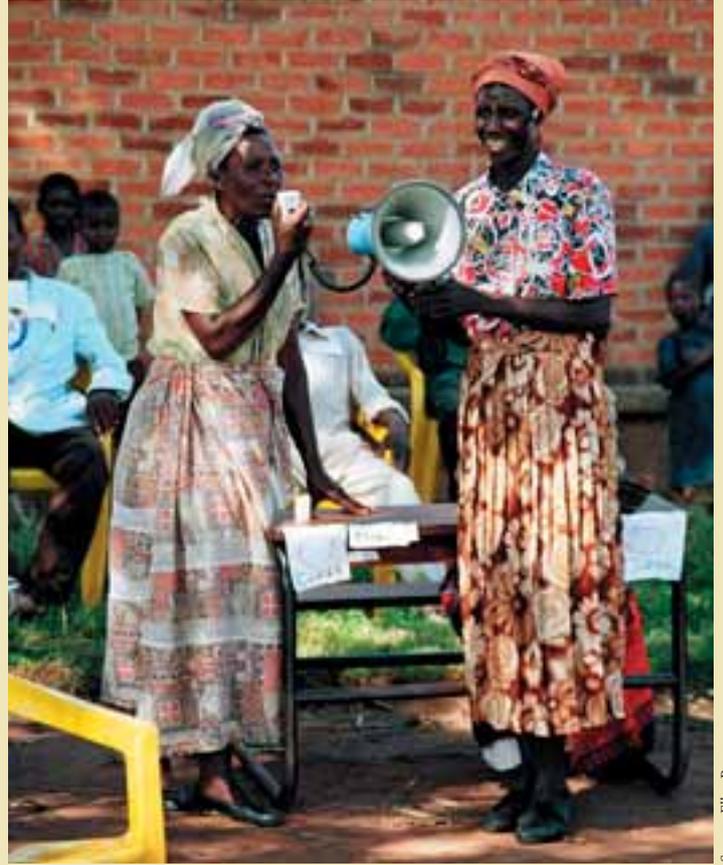
Preface



Source: Kai Laufen



Source: Florian Weigand



Source: Ellen Prowe

Global commitment | Local partnership

Since its creation in 1963, the German Development Service (DED) has pursued the goal of being a partner to people in developing countries, helping them to improve their living conditions. DED assigns experts – development workers – wherever they can be most helpful to the people in developing their country. In this way, DED offers competent experts from Germany a chance to make at least a two-year commitment to developing countries. Currently, around 1,000 development workers are active in 46 countries.

DED is a public benefit company. Shareholders are the Federal Republic of Germany, represented by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the working group “Learning and helping abroad” (AKLHÜ), a group of private organisations. The work of DED is funded from the German Federal budget. The involvement is managed from the Head Office in Bonn and some 40 DED offices in the partner countries.



Source: Erhard Brunn

Free elections – even in Germany only a matter of course for all citizens since 1990.

Democracy promotion by DED | A new approach

The significance of good governance and democratisation processes for the development of our partner countries has been extensively described at many international conferences and in many documents. The calls and commitments in the papers are appropriately directed primarily at the national governments. The Paris Declaration now explicitly calls for creating management capacity at local level, in order to strengthen governance there.

This is where DED is active in the field of promoting democracy. DED's partners are both *civil society organisations*, by building

their capacity to participate politically in decisions at the local level, and also *municipal and regional administrations*, whose self-administration and service capability is being strengthened.

DED generally works directly within the partner structures so that the development workers can build management capacity sustainably through training and coaching. In its work DED avoids creating project structures which parallel existing ones, because this entails the risk of further weakening state or local authority structures and absolving the public sector of its responsibility towards its population.

DED's guidelines for democracy promotion¹ set the framework for its work. These contain the key rules for work in partner countries. In its 2006 revision of the guidelines, DED took a number of fundamental decisions.

Upgrading the priority area "Strengthening civil society"

The separation in DED programme policy between strengthening civil society and local authority development has been abolished. The implication of this is that the state institutions on the one hand and the

1 | The guidelines "Fachleitlinie Demokratieförderung" can be downloaded from DED website (www.ded.de).

actors of civil society on the other hand are now regarded as actors of equal importance in the democratisation process. A state which seeks to match its services to the needs of the population right down to the local structures in a logical and transparent manner needs an organised and articulate civil society as a counterpart which not only demands compliance with these principles but also shows readiness to cooperate with the public institutions and is committed to doing this.

For DED, strengthening civil society structures in combination with local authority development is an essential component in all democracy promotion programmes. In future, DED will seek to give strengthening civil society a special role in all relevant joint programmes in German development cooperation (DC). Thanks to its years of experience in working with civil society groups and its community-based approach, DED is a natural candidate to take the lead in this area within German official Development Cooperation. In cooperation with civil

society, the focus now is on organisations whose objectives involve political participation, particularly by disadvantaged population groups, and implementing the rule of democracy. These are primarily human rights organisations, lobbies for indigenous peoples, women's rights organisations and local media.

Clear role in a multilevel approach

With its new guidelines, DED has clearly positioned itself within the context of Germany's "joined up Development Cooperation" approach. To support decentralisation processes in its partner countries, it operates particularly at the local and, where appropriate, regional level. The task of DED development workers in the multilevel approach of German Development Cooperation is to ensure that the experience from their project environment is reflected at national level, in order to broaden the effect and to make national political decision makers aware of the impact of reform processes at community level. These tasks require close coordination and frank communication between the various actors in Development Cooperation and the partners at the different levels. Good results have already been achieved in many partner countries, although there is certainly still scope for improvement.

Focusing the thematic profile

DED's profile in democracy promotion has been aligned with the priorities of German Development Cooperation and

nearly all DED projects work under the setting of the "Political design of decentralisation" component within the "governance" profile. Activities within this profile are focused in the 12 services which DED offers its national and international (cooperation) partners (see box). These services have been described in detail and illustrated with good examples from practice, so that they are accessible in DED's knowledge management system to all development workers and potential cooperation partners.

The present publication illustrates how these services are implemented in practice, and gives some project examples from DED's partner countries.

Kay Andraschko,
political scientist,
Director of DED division
"Democracy promotion, civil
society and local authority
development".
1993–2001, DED
development worker in Benin

Information: www.ded.de

Local radio helping to promote democracy.



Services of the “Democracy promotion, civil society and local development” division

→ **Strengthening local democracy**

DED’s contribution is aimed at improving management competence of the members of local and regional administrative units and the decision makers of organised civil society. This gives it an intermediary function between the state and society. Besides comprehensive advisory services, advanced training is also offered. To create transparency in political decision making, DED particularly promotes local media.

→ **Supporting poverty reduction processes (PRS processes)**

Supporting PRS processes aims both to reduce poverty and promote democracy. DED supports NGOs, municipalities and local associations of private-sector interest groups in formulating national poverty reduction strategies. It performs monitoring functions in implementing the PRS and promotes networking to pool experience between the various levels of the administration and coordination processes with donors.

→ **Capacity Building**

Capacity building is an overriding task to strengthen capabilities and enable state institutions and civil society organisations to exercise their democratic rights. DED assistance takes the form of advanced training services, and advisory services on quality management, organisational development, human resources management and financial administration.

→ **Advice to decentralised regional administrations**

DED assists regional administrations – the representatives of the central government at a lower administrative level – through appropriate advanced training modules for their staff and in developing the services they offer to municipalities and in the context of municipality supervision.

→ **Promotion of women by civil society organisations**

DED assists in particular organisations whose goal is to improve the living conditions of women and girls. DED advises on promoting women’s representation and participation in political decision-making, on strengthening the rights of women and girls, on training and upgrading for women as managers and on developing their capability to negotiate with the state and other social groups.

→ **Protecting human rights**

In the field of promoting human rights DED particularly supports organisations working for the political human rights of other societal groups, and lobbies representing the rights of disadvantaged groups (e.g. children, women, handicapped people, homosexuals and ethnic minorities). An area of growing importance is combating female genital mutilation, which is a violation of the right to physical integrity.

→ **Supporting the concerns of indigenous peoples**

Promoting the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples and their political codetermination is a key issue for DED, particularly in

Latin America. Besides capacity building, DED assists in strengthening the representation of indigenous groups and their participation in policy decisions, improving their negotiating capability and implementing cultural projects to strengthen their rights and identity and the recognition and sustainable use of indigenous territories.

→ **Networking NGOs and strengthening inter-municipal cooperation and North-South cooperation between local authorities**

Networking aims on the one hand at promoting the sharing of specialist information and the lobbying capability of civil society and on the other hand at bringing municipalities together in local authority associations or special purpose associations. DED offers advice on coordinating inter-municipal services and strengthening the organisational and financial autonomy of local authority associations. It supports NGO umbrella associations and networks and Local Agenda 21 processes, and promotes local development cooperation.

→ **Improving local services**

Promotion work particularly addresses services to achieve a sustainable improvement in the living conditions of women, young people and disadvantaged population groups. DED services range from technical and organisational advice on providing local services through promoting cooperation between municipalities and the private sector on the lines of PPP, to strengthening private sector providers wishing to offer local services.

→ **Improving local economic and employment promotion**

DED assistance is aimed particularly at preserving and improving local employment opportunities. Consequently, the advisory services focus on assistance in formulating and implementing a joint strategy by the municipality and the private sector in consultation with representatives of civil society organisations.

→ **Strengthening planning capacity in public administrations**

DED promotes participative and decentralised planning processes by local administrations together with the population. Municipalities and NGOs are assisted with data collection and analysis, creating and developing participative planning procedures, and formulating and implementing zoning and technical planning. DED promotes coordination of local and regional development planning, and advises on local legislation.

→ **Improving local financial management**

The primary goal is to promote the autonomy of local administrations in mobilising local resources and using them properly. DED advises municipalities on improving their local tax system and assists them in (participative) budget planning, implementation and accounting and auditing.



Source: Birgit Schindhelm

Training in land use planning for the Siem Reap Urban Development Planning working group in April 2005.

In small steps to new horizons | Popular participation in town planning: the examples of Siem Reap and Battambang in Cambodia

The first Indians came to Cambodia over a thousand years ago. They brought their culture, their knowledge and their beliefs to Cambodia, together with their architects. Indian “development aid” created Angkor, the symbol of Cambodia and its power.

In the mid-19th century, the French arrived. As a colonial power, they also provided generous development aid. They too brought their architects, who gave a new face to Cambodia’s cities.

Cambodia’s independence in 1953 was followed by a brief period of autonomy, which produced a rich culture and flourishing economy. Young Cambodian architects developed their own modern style. The state invested in urban development measures, and Cambodia was one of the best developed countries in south-east Asia.

After little more than 20 years, this era was ended abruptly by the Pol-Pot regime. All that had been achieved was overwhelmed by the rule of terror. Pol-Pot de-

populated the cities and massacred artists, engineers, teachers, administrators and architects. The latest stage in development cooperation with Cambodia began some ten years ago. French, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Thais, Indians, Australians, Germans, Canadians, Italians, Danes are all supporting Cambodia’s development. They are investing, designing, planning and implementing ambitious projects. Cambodians have become accustomed over the centuries to foreign experts coming to their country and drawing up

plans for their cities. But there is another way.

Under a project promoted by the EU (Asia-Urbs programme), two DED project positions were set up in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation. Development workers Birgit Schindhelm and Britta Uhlig are trying to develop practical alternatives at Siem Reap and Battambang.

Advanced training and decentralisation – urban development plans drafted by local experts at the local level

In 2004, the two development workers broke new ground for Cambodia with training for interdisciplinary working groups on urban planning at the local level. With technical input from the development workers and weekly training sessions, Cambodian engineers, architects and technicians learned the basics of mapping and integrated urban planning and are using these skills practically in the urban development plan. In the medium to long term, this will – or so it is hoped – promote independence from foreign experts.

The planning workshops organised by the development workers are exemplary, with local experts from various government agencies and levels of administration debating with foreign advisers, considering and jointly drafting plans (e.g. land use plans). Participants have an opportunity to contribute their specific knowledge – whether this involves excellent local knowledge, technical expertise, experience or empirical data. In this way, the planning that emerges from the

working group meetings and workshops is much stronger in its own right than planning drawn up by foreign experts or even by expert nationals at central government level. Not least, the important effect is that enhancing the qualifications of experts and autonomous planning strengthen the district level, and so promote the decentralisation process in a practical way.

Participation – various stakeholders are involved in urban planning

Cambodian decision makers and experts are extremely open to the idea of participation by the local population. In addition, the government has declared its commitment to decentralisation and democratisation. Popular participation is accordingly seen as a good thing.

But how is “participation” understood? Frequently, simply informing the public is – wrongly – seen as participation. A plan is drawn up and explained to the citizens, with the goal of being able to implement the planned measures as easily as possible. The only problem is that information alone does not give the local population any opportunity to contribute their own interests and ideas to the planning. This weakness is the starting point for the activities of the development workers in Siem Reap and Battambang. Besides technical work with the newly formed working groups on urban planning, they are spending much of their energy on popular participation. In this process, they are contributing the knowledge of participative procedures which they acquired during preparation for the development

assignment. Semi-public fora (“Public Master Plan Forum”) have been initiated which integrate local community representatives, NGOs, religious associations and private sector associations and important government agencies and institutions. This urban planning forum is seen as an important participative tool, as it is a platform to carry out public education and information work and at the same time, by involving a very wide range of stakeholders, facilitates the discussion of conflicting interests, making consensus building possible.

At first, however, they had to do a great deal of persuading and create mutual trust. For most administrative staff, such a forum is something completely new – they had never before presented planning to the public and lead vigorous debates. The participants in the forum first had to get used to the idea that they were not there just to listen and accept everything, but they were actually supposed to join the discussion and contribute their own opinions and proposals for change. The strong positive response and very high level of motivation and participation in the fora that have emerged give grounds for hope for future events. Participants in these interdisciplinary groups on urban planning value the fact that they learn a great deal in this learning-by-doing process, going far beyond purely specialised information.

Urban planning is as complex as an aircraft

To explain the relationship between all the components of urban planning more clearly in the



Training and introduction to town development planning for representatives of various political commissions and agencies in the pilot districts of Battambang and Siem Reap, August 2003.

Source: Birgit Schindhelm

discussions, development worker Birgit Schindhelm uses an aircraft as a symbol. The technical planning is the fuselage, the participative processes are the wings, the decision makers are the pilots, the service crew are the local experts, the economy is the engine, investment funds are the fuel and the citizens are the passengers. All the parts depend on each other. The aircraft only works if all its parts work well together, carrying its passengers to new horizons.

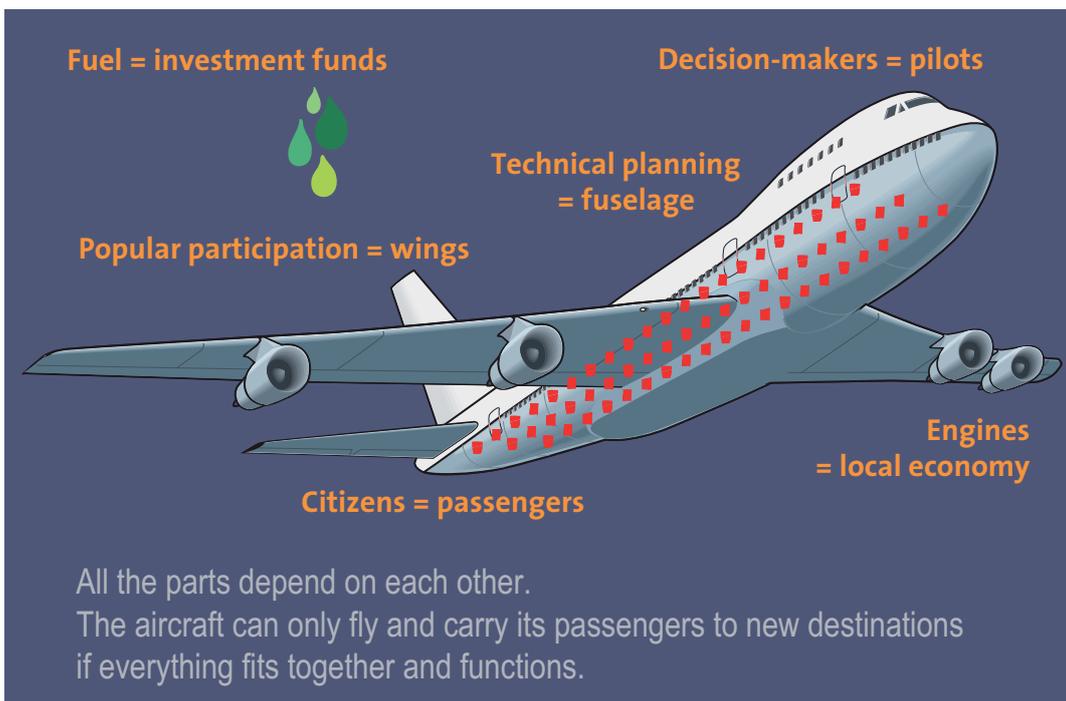
The path is the destination

In Cambodia there are many problems in urban development and planning. The list runs from a desperate shortage of experts, through nonexistent legislation and regulation on urban planning, the completely devastated land register and mapping systems and the wild and completely unregulated growth of the

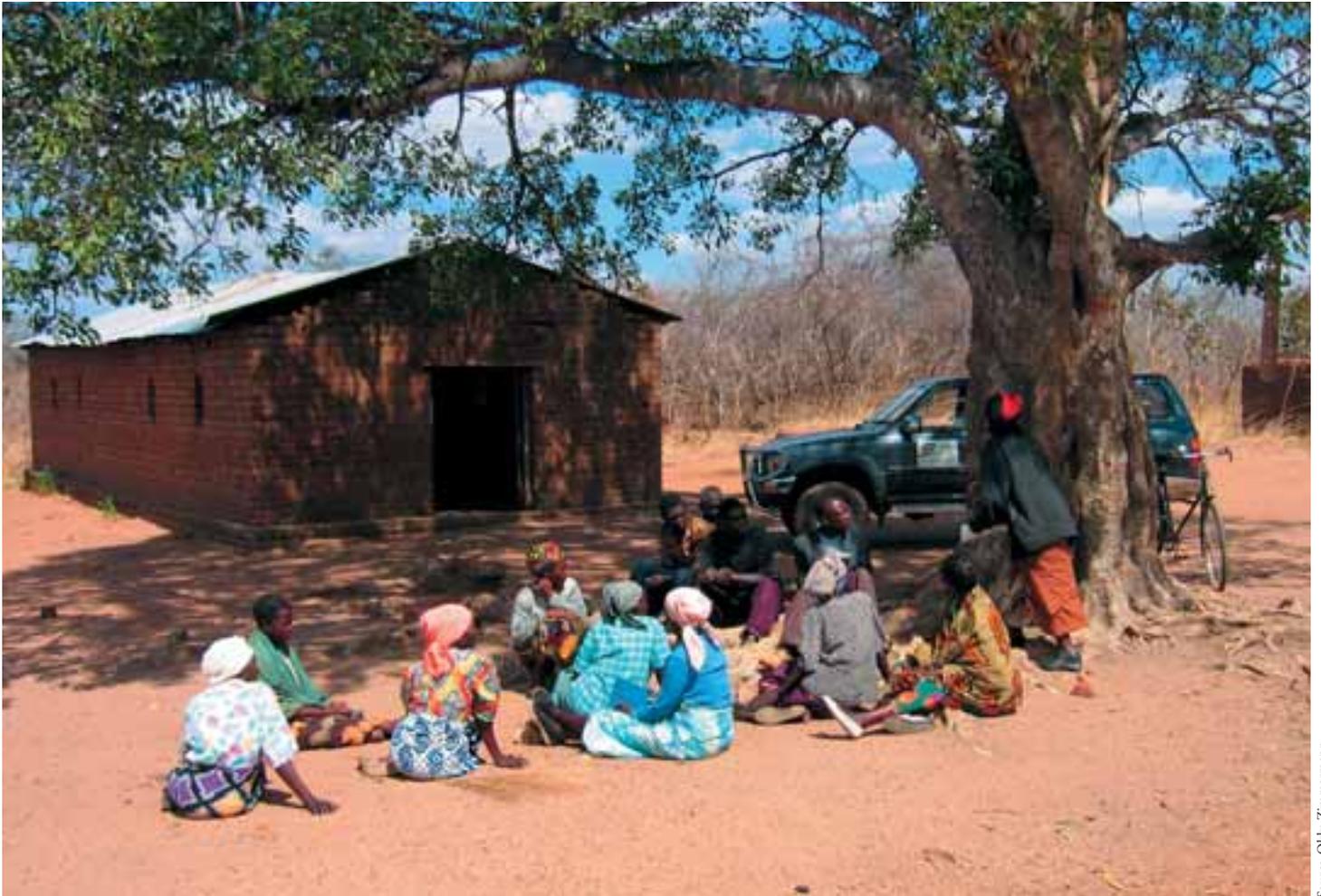
cities, to the drastic underpayment of administrative staff.

In such an environment, many town planners would like to give absolute priority to producing plans as quickly as possible. They regard small-scale qualification measures that soak up time and effort and popular participation as luxuries. In addition, as critics note, the idea of popular participation in urban planning is an alien idea without any tradition in Cambodia. This is true: Cambodia is very hierarchic and patriarchal. There is no experience with popular participation in urban planning. The development of cities is a task which has always been reserved to the ruling dynasty – and the foreign experts. However, the Cambodian government sees the urban development plans for Siem Reap and Battambang as an experiment. Experience gained in the technical planning process, in qualifying local ex-

perts and in the participative procedures is seen as a contribution towards developing a sustainable Cambodian urban planning system and adequate legislative framework. In addition, experience from the pilot cities of Siem Reap and Battambang gives reason to hope that popular participation – a tool from western cultures – can have a valuable and sustainable influence on Cambodian urban planning. This alien instrument can help shift from the current alien domination to more self-determination by Cambodian cities. Popular participation can help involve representatives of various interest groups in discussions about the future of their cities. It can give them the courage to involve themselves actively in designing their cities for future generations. And it can be a small module of modern Cambodian democracy and urban culture.



Birgit Schindhelm,
M Eng urban planning.
Since 2003 development worker attached to the district administration of Siem Reap, Cambodia.
From 1998–2001 development worker in Nepal.



Source: Okka Zimmermann

Group work in front of the meeting house in Chikwa.

Legal reform: the key to social change? | Experience from rural Zambia¹

Property grabbing | When Alifonsina Mwale married, she moved to her husband's village in the District of Lundazi, a remote village in the eastern province of Zambia. Mr and Mrs Mwale were happy, had seven children, a large house and a cotton field covering two hectares. After 18 years of marriage, Mr Mwale died. His relatives threw Alifonsina and her children out of the house, seized all her belongings except for her pots and pans and sent her back to her family.

Alifonsina's fate is shared by thousands of women throughout Zambia, and this practice is widespread in rural regions in particular. The overwhelming majority of people in Zambia die without making a will. The division of the deceased's property is left to the surviving rela-

tives. If the husband dies, property grabbing is a widespread phenomenon. The family of the dead man simply seize all the possessions, and the widow is left penniless.

The Intestate Succession Act In 1989, an act to control and

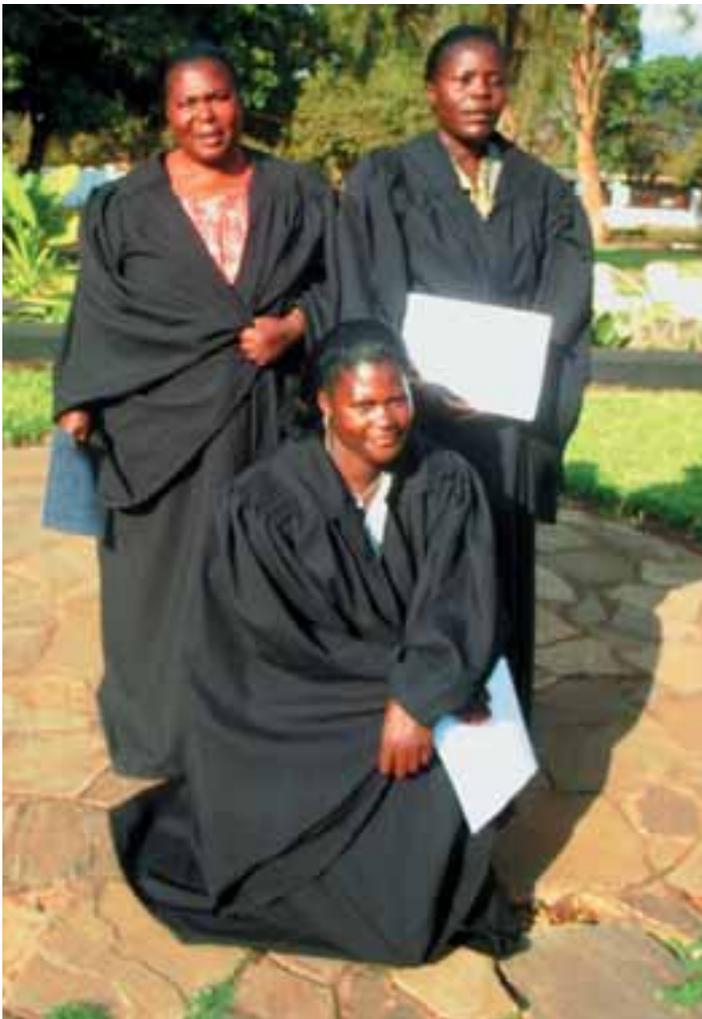
restrain property grabbing was passed in Zambia, which was supposed to protect the widow's rights. The Intestate Succession Act regulates exactly how the possessions of a deceased person are to be divided up between the surviving relatives if there is no will. Under the Act, the spouse

¹ | This Article was written with the help of Helen Banda.

receives 20 % of the property, half the estate is divided between the children, and the two parents get 10 % each. The rest is divided up between the other relatives. Another important provision is concerned with the appointment of an executor. Their job is to ensure that the property is actually divided up in accordance with the Act.

In theory, the Intestate Succession Act represents an important step towards more equitable distribution of property and is an attempt to ensure the wellbeing of the widow and children. But how is the Act being implemented in everyday life? What influ-

These three lay judges, trained by EPWDA, were appointed to official courts.



Source: Helen Banda

ence is it having on the lives of the rural population, specifically women and children? How are the everyday customs of the people affecting application of the Act? What happens if written legislation clashes with people's beliefs?

Zambia's dual legal system

Zambia has a dual legal system. Written, formally recognised acts coexist with traditional customary law. While the constitutional legal system follows the tradition of the English legal system, customary law is based on customs and traditions which existed in Zambia long before colonialisation. The traditional rules take priority, particularly in rural regions, and vary between the individual ethnic groups. This legal tradition has a strong influence on marriage and family, inheritance and ownership. It is also the basis for rulings by the local courts, which are the nearest and most accessible to the village population.

It is not unusual for official and traditional law to conflict, the official courts lacking acceptance among the population because they frequently contradict the traditional and widespread customs of the people. Before a case reaches the courts at all, numerous obstacles must be overcome. In rural areas, there is a lack of understanding of the procedures and binding nature of the government legal system. Many women do not know that they can file charges against their husband for sexual abuse, nor are they aware that the husband's relatives can be taken to court for property grabbing. Those who are aware of this are fre-

quently too poor to bring the case to court, not to speak of paying for their own transport to the court.

For many, going to court is a terrifying thought, and without moral support they would bow to their fate. Many also think about their social networks, and ask whether a possible success in a lawsuit is worth risking these. In addition, witchcraft – however irrational this may seem outside the African context – is still an effective deterrent to obtaining a summons.

Even when a lawsuit has been started, there are other peculiarities to be considered. The officers of the local courts generally have no formal education, frequently they rely in their rulings on their commonsense and their knowledge of legal traditions. Often the courts are very one-sided, composed almost entirely of men: for example, of the 900 lawyers at the local courts, just 35 are women, although the majority of cases are concerned with issues of discrimination against women. In addition, the judges themselves often grew up in a traditional environment and have values which frequently conflict with the principles of law imposed by the government. Naturally, these judges are often part of the community where they hold office, so that they also have to face the social consequences of their sometimes unpopular decisions.

As far as the inheritance problem described above is concerned, the percentages prescribed by the Intestate Succession Act are not only difficult to understand but in many cases difficult to implement. Property often can-

not be simply divided, and many judges lack the education and training to put an appropriate value on individual items. The deceased's parents in particular have invested a great deal of time and trouble in raising their son, and are frequently dissatisfied with only 10% of the estate which the law allocates to them. More problems arise if the dead man was polygamous. In this case, the 20% provided by law for the widow has to be shared among what in Zambia may be a considerable number of women. An additional consideration is that rulings are regularly influenced by the judges' family ties.

This takes us to the crux of the matter: convictions, beliefs and values are difficult to influence, and this makes legal reform a long process. It is not enough simply to pass a law in parliament. People have to be made aware of the new law, which has to be accepted by the population before it can be applied. But how can rural regions that are frequently cut off from national communications channels be reached and the widespread traditional customs there be changed?

The role of civil society

The answer may lie in civil society, in NGOs which specialise in legal education and advice and focus on rural areas. The leaders in this field are the *Eastern Province Women Development Association* (EPWDA) and the *Law and Development Association* (LADA). Both NGOs are involved – the first in the eastern province and the second in the western province – in spreading awareness of the law in rural

areas, and train paralegals who offer legal advice and hold workshops in the village in order to raise the awareness of the village populations. These paralegals often address very sensitive issues, from child abuse and domestic abuse to property grabbing, and offer moral support to women who want to take their case to court. To reach all the affected and interested people and institutions, the two organisations broadcast programmes on the regional radio stations explaining the law and providing information in the local languages. While LADA focuses on training schoolchildren to become paralegals, EPWDA has two projects concentrating on the special situation of handicapped people and the consequences of rites of initiation.

Capacity building by DED in the Legal Education Programme (LEP)

Ms Helen Banda has been the coordinator since 2001 of the EPWDA's Legal Education Programme (LEP), which focuses on educating people about the Intestate Succession Act. She remembers how she heard about it for the first time at a workshop in 1992 and had difficulty understanding this complicated act at all. Today, she is an established expert in this field of law, and you often hear her talking about the rights of women and children on the various radio stations.

DED has been supporting LEP since 2001. In its cooperation with the EPWDA as implementing organisation DED follows the approach that it is impossible to impose a change in legal awareness from the top down.

The initiative "Improvement of the legal status of women and girls in Zambia"

The two NGOs – EPWDA (Eastern Province Women Development Association) and LADA (Law and Development Association) – are the main actors in the legal advice programme of the national initiative "Improvement of the legal status of women and girls in Zambia". In cooperation with GTZ, a DED expert is assisting the qualitative further development of the programme with the aim of reducing unequal treatment of women and children by the courts so that court rulings are actually based on Zambia's written laws. The evaluation of the programme in 2005 showed that the work of the paralegals is not only nationally known and accepted by the population but is also recognised and respected by other legal institutions (police, courts). For example, in 2002 Ms Martha Mvula was the first woman paralegal to be appointed as judge at a local court.

Instead, the target groups need to develop their own potential for implementation. In this way, legal education is seen as a means of social change, where a key is the empowerment of the affected rural women. To date, well over 80 paralegals have been trained by LEP.

DED's support involves a number of instruments for promoting civil society organisations. Besides financial help with equipment, DED offers particularly the advisory services of development worker Emmi Hypponen. Along with improving LEP's networking and public relations work and setting up an easily used monitoring system, her main emphasis is on capacity building. Focused support and advanced training in programme planning, reporting and IT will provide the coordinator Helen Banda with the capability to manage LEP autonomously by the end of the assignment of the DED development worker.

DED also recently assigned a short-term expert to carry out a one-year study on the success of the paralegals' work. According to this study, the deployment of the paralegals – particularly in rural areas – has resulted in a demonstrable decrease in human rights violations related to marriage and the family. The willingness of the affected women to assert their rights has also increased significantly.

There is still much to be done

Ms Banda welcomes the fact that people today can speak openly about the problems of inheritance and that more and more women are taking their cases to court. Even so, she notes that enhanced efforts are needed in rural areas to educate the population about legal reforms and human rights, and that women in particular need even more support in standing up for their rights.

Despite the immense importance of the work of NGOs like EPWDA and LADA for improving popular understanding of law, particularly in rural areas, far-reaching changes are still needed in the decision-making of the state institutions. The interests of women and children must be given greater weight in court rulings, and the quality of training of the judges is still inadequate. In the same way, the executive agencies (particularly the police) must be more consistent in pursuing violations of the law, while at the same time being more accommodating to parties wishing to reach an amicable solution, particularly in inheritance and marital disputes. Above all, it is necessary to com-

bat corruption at all levels of society as this is one of the main reasons for unjust rulings and sentences.

Legal reforms are an important step towards a fairer society, and offer greater protection to women and children in particular. Nevertheless, they can only be effective if people are aware of them, accept them and are willing to extend their application to areas currently mainly regulated by custom and tradition.

Emmi Hypponen,
anthropologist specialising in human rights and working for DED since 2003 in Zambia as an adviser on strengthening democracy.

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Interview with Ms. Helen Banda, Legal Education Programme Coordinator, EPWDA, Chipata, December 2004.



Source: Ilonka Boltze



Source: Ilonka Boltze

The Women's Union magazine appeals through traditional ideals of beauty.

Pham Hai Giang of the Women's Union studied in Vietnam, England and the Philippines, and embodies the new self-confident Vietnamese womanhood.

More grassroots democracy in reducing poverty | Interview with Pham Hoai Giang, director of the international cooperation division of the Women's Union in Vietnam

In the growing economy of Vietnam, innovation and tradition live side by side. Many of the population are members of civil society organisations. 11 million women (some 55 per cent of the female population over 18) are members of the Women's Union, formed in 1930. This popular organisation advises the government on gender equality issues, has its own network reaching into every local community, and plays a central role in the country's development. Among other services, the Women's Union offers an extensive microcredit programme which helps two million poor women throughout the country in creating a livelihood. The political dimension of women's poverty is another important issue for the Women's Union.

Did the Women's Union, as one of Vietnam's most important popular organisations, collaborate on the formulation of the Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010?

Yes, indirectly. We submitted suggestions relating to gender issues. We were then given a draft of the chapter on gender for comment. Naturally, we are

involved in implementation through our services, for example helping women create a livelihood for themselves.

The Five-Year Plan was also recognised by the international donors as a PRSP. There are requirements for the PRSP in terms of transparency and participation by civil society. Some critics claim that such participation has been*

very limited. Is this because Vietnam still lacks an adequate legal framework for non-government organisations (NGOs)?

The popular organisations have a duty to represent the interests of the people. And we do this. What the various NGOs lack is a forum where they can join their voices. They should not wait for the government. Lobby-

* | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

Poverty reduction in Vietnam

Vietnam is regarded as an example of success in reducing poverty. The country is proud that it has halved the poverty rate within only a few years. With economic growth of 8 per cent a year, the socialist nation hopes to shed its designation of a developing country by 2010. Vietnam joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2006. The national PRSP was integrated into the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006–2010. Civil society participation in formulating the Five-Year Plan is concentrated primarily in five popular organisations. The political leadership is giving the people greater scope for codetermination in local authority policy. One constraint to rural development is seen as the rigid administrative system in the districts and municipalities. The so-called Grassroots Democracy Decree gives citizens a right of consultation, for example on infrastructural measures. The decree is intended to reduce corruption, protect against abuse of office, and make poverty reduction more effective. In the field of democracy promotion DED is supporting training on the Grassroots Democracy Decree and women's rights. The Women's Union is the central partner in this.

ing is still undeveloped in Vietnam. It still frequently has negative associations. There is still a great need for networking in Vietnam.

What is the most urgent political step towards improving the situation of women in Vietnam?

Passing a Gender Equality Act. We've spent a lot of lobbying effort on this. The National Assembly will decide in September. If we get this, it would be a major step forward. A key element of the new law is requiring a quota of at least 30 per cent of women in politics.

Another issue is the retirement age for women. In Vietnam, women retire at 55. For many this is anything but a benefit. The early retirement age, five years earlier than men, means that they receive no additional

promotion even years before retirement. Meanwhile, they're already facing disadvantages. Although we have equal pay for equal work, women have an income level which is only 75 per cent of the equivalent for men. There are many reasons for this – less training, early marriage, and the pressure to take a job quickly.

In rural areas, the Women's Union has a different programme. Besides income-creating measures, the Women's Union also offers training on the Grassroots Democracy Decree. Why does the Women's Union specifically do this?

The Grassroots Democracy Decree is the legal framework for greater political participation by women. The training sessions create awareness that women, just like men, not only have rights but are being called on to exercise them.

The Vietnamese Centre for the Advancement of Women is working to achieve more say in the budgets of local authorities. For villagers training sessions are held on understanding the budget process and interpreting budgets. What do you think about this progress towards popular budgets?¹

We find this very interesting, it makes the work on the Grassroots Democracy Decree more concrete and makes efforts to increase transparency and combat corruption more effective. However, I'm not aware as yet of any concept for it. We could also usefully develop pilot models through the Women's Union. We would, however, need international assistance with some-

thing like this. Vietnam is a living example of the international discourse, as you see for example in the case of the gender debate.

How would you like future cooperation with DED in the field of democracy promotion to continue?

We think it is important for DED to concentrate training sessions on women's rights and grassroots democracy on rural areas, where people are significantly poorer. We would also like closer contact with the Women's Union at a higher level, where there are people that are suitable multipliers for good concepts – DED is also a source of information on the successes and failures in working with women in villages. As an international development organisation you view things from a different angle. This is important for us too.

Ilonka Boltze, cultural anthropologist, working for DED since 2006 in Vietnam as an adviser on strengthening democracy.

Information:
www.hoillhpn.org.vn

1 | See also the article on "Popular participation in local financial administration" in this booklet.



Source: Kati Laufen

Juanita, bring the donkey to the filling station | Community radio in Ecuador

Six in the morning; in Galapagos it's an hour earlier ...
Myriam Carreño's black mane swishes down the narrow hallway between the editorial room and studio at CORAPE. The long-standing editor-in-chief is holding a couple of loose pages which are fresh from the matrix printer. It is time for the first half-hour edition of the popular news magazine "Ecuador en contacto". The programme, transmitted by satellite to

22 community radio stations throughout the country is very popular – and particularly with the destitute inhabitants of the high Andes valley which runs through the tiny country, and the areas around the towns and villages of the Amazonas region, where CORAPE has eight member radio stations. CORAPE – which stands for "Coordinadora de Radios Populares y Educativas del Ecuador" ("Coordination Office for Ecuadorian Commu-

nity and Educational Radio Stations") – is a DED partner organisation in Ecuador.

Myriam's news items this morning are a summary of the anti-government demonstrations, comments from the indigenous lobby CONAI (Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador) on the negotiations over a free trade treaty with the USA, and a report on a strike by office staff in the national health

Riobamba: at a seminar on environmental journalism, many radio staff learn for the first time about the relationship between climate and desertification in the upper Andes.

service, who have been unpaid for months. Shortly after the start of the broadcast, during a commercial for the UN environmental programme, engineer Guillerimo Mazapanta gets a call from Sucumbios, in the north of the Ecuadorian Amazonas region, close to the Colombian border. The reporter, who wants to broadcast live, says that there had been border violations on the previous day by small aircraft spraying the soft poison herbicide Glifosat on coca fields in Colombian territory, that villagers had blocked the only access road to Sucumbios in protest and also set fire to a pipeline of the government petroleum company Petroecuador after petrol thieves had tried to tap into the pipeline. This is no problem for Guillermo, who casually patches the call through to the control board, finds an appropriate jingle in the studio archive software and gestures to warn Myriam through the control room soundproof window. The anchorwoman of the news programme, which has been pulling together reports of this kind from the widely differing parts of Ecuador, introduces the report from the disputed border region with words which will also rouse the interest of simple Kichwa women farmers in the uplands or an Afro-Ecuadorian shrimp fisher on the Pacific coast.

Traditional and modern

The casual mastery of the radio journalists throughout the country, who often use the simplest equipment to ensure that their audience is kept informed of national and local events, is impressive, undoubtedly reflecting the South American talent for

improvisation and oral culture. The reporter from Sucumbios, for example, follows his live and unscripted telephone report with a sign-off on the CORAPE programme by moving seamlessly to a particularly important service element of his own morning show, reading listeners' greetings and messages: "Juanita, please come to the filling station this afternoon and bring the donkey, I did the shopping, your Camilo", or "The San Pedro Co-operative invites all its members this Friday to a minga (a traditional collective working brigade) to clean the sewer – brothers and sisters, we need every hand!" News reports of this kind replace the telephone in many rural communities and are very popular, as they combine a bit of gossip with important information – and everybody knows everybody else in the remote regions anyway, whether in the Amazonia or the Sierra. This is why almost every one of the 55 CORAPE member stations broadcast this segment at least on their medium wave transmitters, which have specialised in regional music and often broadcast to their rural target groups in the local indigenous languages. The VHF frequencies are aimed at the urban audiences, and here particularly the vast numbers of young people, who are suffering heavily from the permanent economic crisis and social consequences of the huge emigration of around one sixth of the population to Spain, the USA and the rest of the world. Not least because radio is by far the most utilised information medium in Ecuador, DED felt that supporting community radio was the best approach for achieving a strong multiplier effect.

Popular education and political information by radio

Besides news magazines with special focus on the disadvantaged population groups, messages with lots of information and the local regional music, the "educational" programmes are the ones which distinguish community radio stations in Ecuador and the rest of Latin America from their commercial competitors. Doctors give simple advice on nutrition, representatives of rural cooperatives explain how farmers can get small loans to buy seed and fertiliser, and a Salsian station in Macas, on the edge of the hard-to-reach Amazonas basin, puts a dozen government teachers in touch with some 2,600 elementary students through three shortwave frequencies which are received in the mud huts of the Shuar Indians. Following a state-recognised radio curriculum, the young generations of the Amazonian tribes, with their still very traditional lifestyles, are brought into contact with a world they have never seen, but whose development affects their future too. This is because the trees, the diversity of species and the freshwater of the Amazonas region are attracting many interested parties, just as Ecuador's oil has done since the 70s.

Although the crude oil accounts for much of the state revenues, the social and ecological consequences of its production and transport seldom make the headlines in Ecuador's major media. The interests of the corporations who own the media and many of the industrial companies are too closely connected with this lucrative industry and its political

control, at least according to CORAPE's reporters. Journalists who fail to live by the unwritten laws of corruption and nepotism risk their lives, as politically motivated assassination attempts have again shown recently. In such an environment, a supportive network like CORAPE's alternative community radio stations also provides protection to its members, and ultimately to independent reporting.

The journalists' own self-conception demonstrates that democratisation is taking place

The functions of Latin America's "community radio stations", which will soon celebrate their fiftieth anniversary, are correspondingly wide – although it is not possible to define the label exactly. The stations range from providing services which substitute for the nonexistent telephone to agitation in political disputes, from acting as a medium linking population groups with common interests to substituting for schools. All this takes place in a commercial media environment which is often affected by not only deliberate manipulation but also and even more by sheer negligence and lack of professionalism among journalists. In the days of the mass media, assertions are too rarely checked, extreme positions are reported without comment, and journalistic ethics are sacrificed for higher ratings. Disregarding the presumption of innocence, the five private TV companies show newly arrested alleged criminals every day with their full name, even if they are minors, and also close-ups of the victims in the morgue. There is

a broad field for CORAPE's professional training services, which DED has been supporting for some three years through its development workers. The aim is to counter the extreme positions of radical environmentalists and the obscure information policies of many industries with balanced and objective information for productive environmental journalism. A German journalist can make interesting contributions to such a debate, ranging from technical to ethical issues, including the "different perspective" which is so often helpful and inputs from the existing network of German implementing organisations working locally. GTZ provides expert speakers on many issues. Workshops teach the principles of municipal budgeting and research methods for countering a general rejection of "politics" as a network of corruption. Long discussions develop on ethical issues, as balanced and respectful reporting is not always a matter of course even for the community radio activists, given the host of poor examples they are trying to counter. But this is exactly the point – good journalism in European terms is first and foremost balanced and concerned with the welfare of the greatest possible number of people, which means making one more phone call, getting one more opinion, constantly educating yourself, and not taking sides, even in a good cause, to quote the well-known German journalist Hans-Joachim Friedrichs. This is the position that a DED development worker has to represent and justify, even if local colleagues inspired by class struggle motivations criticise attempts at objectivity as a "strategy of the powerful".



Source: Kai Laufen

A small mixing board, a standard PC and a broadcasting amplifier – radio technology today costs only a few thousand Euro.

This is another way of promoting democracy.

Kai Laufen, journalist and public relations consultant. From 2003–2005 a DED development worker in the training department of a community radio coordination office in Quito, Ecuador.



Source: Juddith Tiemann

Top: “Youth peer education training” by PPFA-International and Plan Sudan on “female genital mutilation”, April 2006.

Right: Awareness raising event with young women in Sudan.



Source: Inga Neigel

Female circumcision is a human rights violation | DED is assisting local organisations in Sudan in the struggle against female genital mutilation

Although female genital mutilation (see box) has long been regarded as a human rights violation by the international community, this practice is still firmly established in Sudanese tradition. However, there are considerable regional differences in both the spread and the nature of the circumcision. While the prevalence in the south of the country is below 20 per cent, in the north nine out of ten married women between 15–49 are affected.¹ Most frequently, the most radical form – so-called pharaonic circumcision – is still practised, particularly in the north.

There are many reasons for female genital mutilation. First, there are psychosexual reasons reflecting male interests. The aim is to reduce the female libido and enhance male sexual satisfaction. Second, female genital cutting/mutilation (FGC/M) is supposed to promote female chastity or preserve her virginity and fidelity to her husband after marriage. Another widespread false belief is that FGM increases female fertility. Then there are sociological reasons. The practice has been handed down over centuries, making it a fixed element in the cultural heritage. Young women are initiated into the community

of adult women through this rite, and only then are they accepted as full members. Hygienic and aesthetic reasons are also cited. However, the widespread claim that female genital mutilation is legitimated by Islam and Islamic law, or shari’a is wrong. In fact there is no relation between FGC/M and any religion, and it is not supported by the Qu’ran. Quite the reverse is true: there is no evidence in the Qu’ran that Mohammed had one of his wives or daughters circumcised. On the contrary, it is written in the Qu’ran that no man should destroy what Allah has created. In addition, women are acknowledged as having the

1 | CBS/FMOH/UNFPA 1999:
in the northwest 60–80,
in the east 40–50 per cent.

same rights as men, including the right to sexual satisfaction.

The legal situation in Sudan

The current Sudanese constitution does not explicitly prohibit female genital mutilation. However, there are several laws directly concerned with FGC/M which are intended to protect girls and women against this practice. This would mean a clear obligation on the government to seek to end the practice. One example is Article 14 of the constitution which is intended to protect children and young people from physiological and mental neglect and exploitation, another is article 15 which gives every woman the right to inviolability in every aspect of her life.

Ultimately, however, the legislative situation has little effect on the circumstances of girls and women as long as:

- no clear laws are ratified and familiar, even in remote regions,
- no general structural plan for combating FGC/M is formulated and implemented,
- projects and programmes of a few organisations are implemented as pioneering work without mutual cooperation, wasting existing resources,
- campaigns are not integrated into comprehensive project and programme planning, including general aspects of reproductive health and the general social situation,
- educational campaigns do not include influential religious and traditional leaders,
- projects and initiatives focus too one-sidedly on the health

hazards of FGM and neglect the human rights aspect,
→ female genital mutilation continues to have alleged religious legitimisation.

Initiatives by indigenous organisations against female genital mutilation

Despite the vehemence in preserving female genital mutilation as a traditional practice in Sudan, organisations and networks are continuously working to put an end to it. In particular, they are increasingly taking into account the above criteria for successful educational and lobbying activities.

DED has been providing massive and effective support to these local organisations in Sudan for several years. In part, it involves using the various instruments of the programme for promoting civil society. Further, the DED 2004 General Meeting in Sudan chose female genital mutilation as a cross-cutting theme, and a working group on FGC/M was formed. This group organises information events on female genital mutilation in Sudan, and held a workshop with DED development workers for them to raise this issue at their workplaces and develop suitable action plans.

From 2003–2005 a DED expert assisted the organisation Plan Sudan in developing an innovative programme for implementation in 72 rural communities. This programme aimed to place the elimination of female genital mutilation more strongly in a context of strengthening women's and children's rights. The development worker also advised the SUNAF network

Female genital mutilation – a worldwide human rights violation

Female genital cutting/female genital mutilation (FGC/M) is defined by the WHO/UNFPA (World Health organisation, United Nation Population Fund) as all forms of partial or entire removal or injury to the female external genitalia for cultural or other nonmedical reasons. It is recommended to avoid use of the term “female circumcision” to avoid any association with male circumcision. Worldwide, 130 million girls and women – Christian, Jewish, pantheists and Muslims – are affected by FGC/M, with around 6,000 new cases every day.¹ It is estimated that migration has brought c. 30,000 affected women to Germany to date.² Female genital mutilation probably arose in what is now southern Egypt, well before the Qu'ran. The WHO distinguishes between three main forms of genital mutilation:

Type 1: excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or all of the clitoris

Type 2: excision of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora (wrongly called “sunna” in Sudan, which is Arabic for “tradition, model to follow”)

Type 3: excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation or pharaonic circumcision).

Any form of this practice violates the right to life and physical inviolability, health and self-determination. It violates the rights of children and the sexual rights of women, and is seen internationally as a violation of fundamental human rights. Since the first WHO international conference on female genital mutilation in Khartoum in 1979, the international community has condemned this practice and committed to supporting efforts to combat it. Most recently, the Special Session on Children of the UN General Assembly condemned any form of female genital mutilation.

on various aspects of ongoing organisational development. With DED assistance, workshops were carried out to improve understanding of the network concept and provide advanced training to members on planning and evaluation methods. At the end of 2004 DED made it possible to establish an office, providing assistance to cover rent and office costs. DED

1 | Source: www.amnesty-frauen.de

2 | Source: www.intact-ev.de

Information:

www.terre-des-femmes.de

www.Amnesty-frauen.de

www.Intact-ev.de

www.unicef.de

www.unifem.org

www.who.org

is also funding a local expert as full-time coordinator.

From 2005–2006 DED supported the organisation Entishar by sending a young professional from DED's young professionals trainee programme¹ to advise Entishar primarily on concepts for its programmes and projects. Entishar is working with the concept of a "Community Empowerment Programme" developed in Senegal, a two-year programme which sets combating FGC/M and promoting women's rights in the general framework of local authority development, which ultimately benefits all the local community's stakeholders economically, socially and politically. Financed by the GTZ Good Governance Fund, Entishar started a pilot project with DED advisory support in north Kordofan.

Since March 2005 a DED expert has been assisting the Gender Centre for Research and Training (GCRT). The men and women at the GCRT are doing pioneering public relations work in southern Sudan to promote awareness of gender equality. The Gender Centre is a member of various networks and carries out educational, training and lobbying work in the fight against female genital mutilation. The topic is also integrated into other activities as a project module, e.g. in its partnership project MOTIVE, which is concerned with violence against women and gender mainstreaming. In future the GCRT will pay more attention to the legal situation of women and try to promote general awareness of women's rights as human rights. The target group of this initiative are decision makers in poli-

tics, education and civil society organisations.

PPFA International® (Planned Parenthood Federation of America International) has been supported by DED since 2004, at first by assigning a young professional trainee, and since 2005 by a development worker. With her advice, PPFA International® started a programme on the reproductive health rights of young people. This programme includes developing training manuals and materials and establishing active "Youth Peer Education" programmes in 11 different regions of the Sudan through training, workshops, educational campaigns and capacity building for young people in voluntary work in NGOs. The field of reproductive health includes aspects like sex education, family planning, STIs, drug abuse and sexual violence, and also female genital mutilation. Young people are also motivated and enabled to assert their rights. Since April 2006 PPFA International®, in cooperation with Plan Sudan, has been operating a pilot project on youth peer education and FGC/M. The organisation has also set up a forum for girls on FGC/M.

Sudan is certainly far from abolishing female genital mutilation. Other African countries are leading the way, like Benin where government representatives in the presence of German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, officially declared FGC/M abolished in 2005.²

In Sudan, DED has had some encouraging successes, and will

continue to emphasise the issue of female genital mutilation. The successes include the growing professionalisation and networking of the partner organisations, increasing public awareness of the issue as a human rights violation, and a slight decline in the practice. Currently, further opportunities for intervention are being identified, such as an educational programme approved by religious and traditional opinion leaders and teachers in El Obeid (north Kordofan), which is being implemented by the Sarag organisation.

Judith Thiemann, educator and ethnologist. From 2004–2005 a DED young professional trainee, since 2005 a development worker in Sudan.

Kristina Spaar, specialist in Scandinavian studies. Since 2005 a DED development worker in Sudan.

1 | Information: www.ded.de

2 | Source: www.bmz.de



Source: Rodica Meyers

A lively discussion at the town meetings.

Popular participation in local financial administration | A participative citizen budget in Cotacachi, Ecuador

The modernisation of state and society is one of the priority areas for German Development Cooperation in Latin America. While Latin American societies have become increasingly democratic, the development of democracy is still being constrained by an often weak separation of powers, fragility in the rule of law and continuing widespread corruption. In addition, governments have little success to show in reducing unemployment and poverty.

Not the least affected are the indigenous peoples, whose rights are now formally recognised

but not adequately protected in practice. Ecuador, for example, has been a democratic constitutional state since 1979, but the 1998 constitution is the first to include important democratic principles like recognising ethnic diversity, protecting minorities and territorial and administrative decentralisation. Implementation of these principles is being blocked by existing power relationships, cultural behavioural models and inconsistent legislation.

While Ecuador's indigenous population has achieved structural shifts in power in recent

years, political participation in the existing and partly discredited formal democratic institutions within the indigenous organisations continues to be controversial, revealing the tensions between supporters and opponents of integration into the political system. On the one hand the indigenous population feels it is more strongly included in the political discussion, on the other hand there is concern that ultimately nothing will change in the existing power structures, and it will serve more as a figleaf for the continuing unjust power structures of the largely white dominant elite.

Nevertheless, the trend is clearly towards integration into the political system. Since 1989 the indigenous people have had established rights of consultation in the education sector. At local level the indigenous organisations are providing a number of mayors and councillors, with a rising trend; since 1997 the indigenous people have been represented in the national parliament¹ and are combating for cultural self-determination and ethnic identity.

While participation in Ecuador's democratisation process by the indigenous member organisations of CONAIE (Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador) can be regarded as an innovative stimulus, these organisations frequently have two shortcomings. First, they are heavily fragmented, with individual indigenous organisations defining themselves more in terms of territorial or religious membership, while others focus on their political affinity with modern social models or their ethnic self-definition. Second, they themselves vary in their degree of democratisation, with differences in participation by the membership base. The autocratic leadership models of society have affected the indigenous organisations, and particularly at local level are firmly established as part of the colonial heritage.

Cotacachi as a laboratory of living democracy

In this context, decentralisation and municipal promotion, with special attention to supporting indigenous population groups, are an important area for action for German Development Co-

operation. A special and successful example of promoting participation is the cooperation between DED and GTZ and the municipality of Cotacachi under the sectoral project "Coordination office for indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean".

The core of the democratic popular participation is the annual town meeting in March. This was convened for the first time in 1996 by the newly-elected mayor. All the local organisations took part, with some 700 municipal members. The meeting is a direct democratic institution for balancing interests between the local administration and the population composed of indigenous people, mestizos and an Afro-Ecuadorian minority, between men and women, between local territorial and sectoral interests, and between the private sector and civil society. This is where the priorities for the future development of the municipality are discussed and agreed. The city council is not formally bound by the resolutions of the town meeting, but it follows them on the basis of the high degree of legitimacy of this body.

A key role in the democratic popular participation in Cotacachi is played by the democratically negotiated participative budget. This follows the principles of socially inclusive development adopted by the town meeting, including:

- territorial balance in the local area,
- promotion of disadvantaged households headed by single mothers,
- access to basic services,
- improving literacy,

- supporting autonomous initiatives.

The local administration coordinates the broadly-based consultative process for the participative budget. The quality of participation is based on information and transparent accountability, which is ensured over the participative budget cycle.

The role of German executing organisations

The drive for the town meeting and resulting broadly based consultative processes which lead to participative budget planning came from the local authority itself. DED and GTZ were asked by the local authority for advice on certain aspects.

→ GTZ

Under the PFM project (Proyecto de Fortalecimiento Municipal) GTZ has been advising the AME municipal association and individual local authorities on improving their services and introducing participative procedures. The programme PRO-MODE (Programa de Modernización del Estado) for example, supported the municipality of Cotacachi as the first in the country to qualify under the Health and Finance Ministry for transfer of responsibility for local health services. This transfer of responsibility to the level closest to those involved is now the basis for sectoral decentralisation for other municipalities.

→ DED

The goal of the DED country programme in the priority area "State modernisation" is to strengthen the capacity of selected local administrations and civil society organisations and

¹ | Since 1997 Ecuador's indigenous movement has participated in elections for the National Assembly, and gained over 20% of votes immediately, corresponding to 10 out of 82 parliamentary seats.

implement sustainable local development which is close to the population and offers equal opportunity. Cooperation in the municipalities helps both implement decentralisation of state structures and strengthen civil society organisations. Improving the ability to engage in dialogue, the representation of the interests of the local population and its access to local services are considered important features in this context.

DED makes important contributions through advisory services. For example a DED development worker filled a management advisory position in the Cotacachi municipal administration in order to enable implementation of participative budgeting in selected local authorities and support the reproducibility and systematisation of this innovative local management model.

DED's advisory strategy involves the following approaches:

→ *Organisational development of municipal administration*

As a result of the introduction of the participative budget, the staff of the municipal administration needed greater internal coordination and networking. A DED development expert assisted this process with advice and the creation of a monitoring system for individual departments.

→ *Capacity building for the pilot group for the participative budget*

The pilot group was responsible for the policy lines for the participative budget. A DED development expert assisted the pilot group with advanced training on participative planning and

moderation and presentation techniques.

→ *Strengthening the dialogue between local administration and civil society*

A DED development expert supported the formation of a permanent expert team on participative budgeting, which is responsible for cyclical development, systematisation and process backstopping. This team is made up of staff from the municipal administration departments and the Asamblea de Unidad Cantonal (a civil society association). With the help of the DED development worker, an innovative methodology was developed for participative budgeting involving a specific learning process for disadvantaged social groups (indigenous people, women, young people and children).

→ *Enhancing the effective reach of experience in Cotacachi*

With the assistance of the DED expert, various instruments and processes were developed to make the experience in Cotacachi transferable. A manual and a teaching video were produced and a series of information events on participative budgeting were held for other municipalities in Ecuador. In addition, the Cotacachi model was presented in Peru and Bolivia.

Results and impacts

→ *The new forms of participation are socially and institutionally consolidated*

The growing degree of organisation and participation among the population and the mayor's re-election are seen as proof of the model status of Cotacachi for good local governance. To-



Source: Markus Stier

Tradition and modern features are combined in this work of art on the way into Cotacachi – the angles describe the course of the sun between the tropics.

day, Cotacachi's population expects that municipal affairs will be conducted in a democratic and transparent way. After successful testing, the procedures were consolidated institutionally through municipal regulations. However, there is still the challenge of actually involving all the citizens in these processes. In addition, it is not easy to convince the opposition political parties about the process.

→ *An understanding of democracy is emerging*

Participants have learned that they cannot reach their goals without support from other actors. This insight into mutual dependence, based on practical experience at the town meetings, and the resulting need to negotiate municipal projects with the other actors have created a new democratic culture among the participants.

→ *The population has organised*

At the time of the first town meeting, some 30 per cent of the population belonged to a local organisation, today the level of organisation membership has risen to 80 per cent. A large number of territorial lobbies, women's organisations, youth

groups and committees for the important local development issues, such as economic development, environment, tourism, health and education have formed. The local administration and its technical services (Consejos municipales) advise these groups on formulating and implementing municipal projects.¹

→ *Organised women's groups play a leading role*

Assisted by the local authority commission for women and families (Comision de la Mujer y la Familia) the local administration has been working since 1998 on encouraging organisation by women and their active participation in town meetings, and increasing the number of women hired in the local administration. This has led to gender-specific topics being addressed since 2000, such as inner-family violence and healthcare for women. The municipality of Cotacachi has now adopted a town resolution for offering basic health services to women free of charge. In 2002, the coordination office drew up a family equality plan which gave special attention to improving the economic lot of poorer women and households. Based on this plan, the municipality funds various projects from its budget, such as the sale of locally made food to the district hospital, the manufacture of products from local plant fibres for export to Europe, and the improvement of small livestock breeding for the local market.

→ *Poverty reduction is having a visible effect*

Participative budgeting and public control (veedura social) are having an impact with clear

redistributive effects. Today, some 70 per cent of local investment is in the poorer rural area. This has resulted in an obvious improvement in the living conditions of particularly disadvantaged population groups such as women and indigenous people through their involvement in the participative procedures. Examples are water and electricity supply, which have risen from 40 to 90 per cent in the rural area, and literacy drives through which over 1,000 people a year (mostly indigenous women) will learn to read and write. Poverty reduction has also benefited from the promotion of local productive trades.

→ *Setting a good example*

Cotacachi is acting as a signal and multiplier for other local authorities in the country and beyond Ecuador's borders. First, Cotacachi has set a precedent in decentralising health services, which opens up an innovative route to practical solutions for other local authorities. As Cotacachi's mayor also plays an important role in the national local authority association AME, the municipality's experience is flowing into the national debate on decentralisation. A group of nine local authorities with a high proportion of indigenous population has formed, which is serving as a platform for horizontal sharing of experience and positioning vis-à-vis the central government. Second, Cotacachi's participative model has already set standards beyond Ecuador's frontiers.

The municipality of Cotacachi has been recognised for its democratic popular participation, including a participative budget, in 2000 winning the Dubai

award of the UN HABITAT (United Nations Human Settlements Programme) and the UNESCO Cities for Peace Prize in 2002.

Source: GTZ, BMZ, 2006: Ecuador – redistribution of power and inclusiveness beyond cultural boundaries. GTZ, Eschborn.

1 | For example the Health Committee has carried out a project funded by the World Bank for integrating traditional indigenous medicine into the local health services.



Source: Friedrich-Carl Jacobsen



Source: Friedrich-Carl Jacobsen

Top: closing event in a catering training course for women.

Left: Niger ferry, manufactured by INAC in Koulikoro

Local economic development¹ in western Africa

Local self-administration – West Africa breaks new ground

In West Africa, the idea of local self-administration is still new. There are old cities, some world famous like Ségou and Timbuktu, but they were administered by the central government up to the end of the 1990s. Until the arrival of decentralisation, they had no local autonomy, and this was even more true for the many villages. Administration was handled from the distant capital. The decision whether to build a new school or health centre was not taken locally, leaving people merely an object of administration action. The capital also supplied the necessary funds. Naturally, at that time taxes and fees had to be paid, but these all went into the coffers of the central government. Whether people

got anything in return was doubtful, and would have been impossible to verify anyway. Under these circumstances, there were virtually no publicly organised institutions to represent the interests of local communities.

Decentralisation was supposed to change all that. A local or municipal council elected by the citizens whose members had to live in the community in question and a mayor elected by the members of the local council were supposed to deal with the concerns of the community and its inhabitants. This was the theory. In practice, much remains to be done before this principle is recognised and

implemented. The tendency is still to look to the central government and administration, rather than taking control of local affairs.

Local economic development takes patience

Local economic development is particularly demanding when it comes to patience. In contrast to building a school or health centre, the benefits from promoting the local economy are relatively indirect, and only appear after some time. First, it is a matter of investment to offer better opportunities to the local economy. In West Africa, this often means in concrete terms ensuring that

¹ | *Local economic development in this article refers to promotion of the local economy by the local authorities.*

artisans, merchants and other businesses have electricity, water and phones in their workshops or stores, or that access roads are built or widened. It may also involve implementing a training centre for local business people to teach them bookkeeping or how to manage a business. All this helps strengthen the economy. However, as these few examples show, the first step involves investment.

The local authority only benefits from a prospering economy later. Jobs are created, the infrastructure is developed, which benefits not only the businesses but also the citizens of a community. More businesses in turn means more tax revenue, money which can be spent on the community's needs for the benefit of its inhabitants. This lag before the benefits appear is the reason for the problems that hold back local economic promotion. In the new local authorities that have been formed or are about to be formed in various countries in West Africa, the people responsible locally are under tremendous pressure to show successes. To meet these expectations, they start with projects which yield immediately obvious benefits to the population. In recent years, this has resulted in increased construction of schools and health centres. There have also been many new town halls which were previously not there. While markets and bus terminals have also been built, this has been on a much smaller scale. State support for investment has primarily gone into educational or health projects.

Local economy as the driver of local development

While these projects are very necessary, many local authorities cannot afford them. They were built with grants. But who is funding the operating costs? In the long term, these can only be met from the local authority's own budget. This necessarily requires higher revenues from taxes and fees. How can this be done, other than by strengthening the local economy?

Awareness of this link will take time to grow. Until it does, it will continue to be difficult to convince local decision makers working with very tight funds of the need to invest time and money in the local economy. It is easiest to do with the business people themselves, as they have a direct interest in the local authority promoting the local economy. Consequently, DED is trying to encourage conditions which make possible joint action by the local authority and the local business people.

This is done by creating autonomous organisations working to promote the local economy. A responsibility which properly belongs with the local authority itself is transferred away from the town hall to a legally independent organisation. The key feature of this type of organisation is the partnership between the local authority and the private sector. The most important – indeed, essential – partner is the local authority itself, as without its involvement there is no local economic promotion. However, the town or local authority will only be willing to cooperate if it is aware of the

benefits of a strong economy and the associated benefits for the town and its inhabitants. Various partners from the private sector are possible. Depending on what private sector organisations already exist in a local community and how their interests lie, different actors will be involved. These are generally organisations of craft trades, but can also include organisations in the fields of commerce, services and even agriculture.

The formation of a legally independent organisation outside the framework of the actual municipal administration is chosen to ensure that the local authorities and private sector actors are brought together as equal partners in terms of status and rights. Local economic promotion is a basic function of a local authority. The private sector is its direct target group. This is why decisions should be made jointly with the target group. Cooperation with private sector actors is also intended to put the local authority under pressure to act. Once it has agreed on economic promotion to be organised jointly with the private sector actors, it is engaged in an ongoing formalised dialogue with them which it cannot simply break off or suspend. This pressure to act cannot be created to the same extent if economic promotion is organised as part of municipal administration. In that situation, it is up to the municipality – be it the mayor or the majority on council – to implement the tasks agreed with the private sector actors.

The example of Koulikoro in Mali

A more recent example of the institutionalisation of local economic promotion is the municipality of Koulikoro in southwest Mali, with 30,000 inhabitants. In November 2005 the Agence pour la Promotion de L'Economie à Koulikoro (APEK) was created with the goal of improving local conditions for economic development. The APEK is an independent small enterprise entered in the commercial register which was formed jointly by the municipality and local business people. The company president is a councillor, and the other management functions are filled from among the partners and shareholders of the private sector representatives. A local expert funded by DED has been hired as the office manager, who also is advised by a DED expert.

APEK's initial activities concentrated on public relations work. The first step was to publicise the new local service among the population. A number of events were used for this, like the annual trade fair *Semaine Commerciale*, and a local forum was set up. The APEK now has its own web site, which regularly lists current activities. Concrete project work began by developing advanced training services that were offered to specific target groups, for example in the local catering industry. Currently, two central projects are in preparation. One is the formation of an Internet café, a service which is not yet available in Koulikoro. This is intended in future to help cover APEK's current costs. The other is the construction of the Centre de Développement

des Affaires (CDA) on a site provided to APEK by the municipality. The aim here is to create an infrastructure which enables young entrepreneurs to start a business with limited funds, which offers legal and management advisory services and also offers extensive commercial training. Although Koulikoro has three technical colleges, it has no commercial college as yet. APEK has submitted this project to a World Bank innovation competition.

The establishment of APEK as an autonomous organisation for promoting the economy has created a firm framework for communication between the private sector, the administration and politics as an instrument for growth in the municipality of Koulikoro. As a result, this approach to local economic promotion follows the goal of the decentralisation process in terms of shifting responsibility for development to the local authority level. However, a model like this will only be successfully applicable in larger local authorities, because a certain minimum economic potential is required. It also cannot hope to succeed in the long term on a purely honorary basis. This is particularly the case where the issue of economic promotion is involved. Since every commitment by artisans, merchants and other business people takes time which is then unavailable for their business, full-time paid economic promotion staff are essential.

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Information: www.apek.biz

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Democracy promotion by DED | The challenges

The project examples have provided a lively view of the work of DED experts in promoting democracy. In the process it has become clear that no matter whether the individual project placement is in local development or civil society, advisory services are almost always the focus of DED experts' work. The aim is to enable partners to strengthen their decentralised structures, initiate and improve democratic processes, and better network the actors involved. Ultimately, their function is to establish a bridge between civil society and public administration and expand the joint possibilities for shaping democratic development.

This is making the work of DED more political, and the demands on DED experts are changing, so that it is increasingly difficult to link them with a specific professional training and background. Instead, core competences like practical experience in providing advisory services and a knowledge of political processes and structures are becoming increas-

ingly important in selecting development workers. Finding experts with these key qualifications will be a particular challenge in future.

Which levels and structures DED development workers are assigned to depends very strongly on the framework conditions in the individual countries, and specifically the degree of democracy in the country, the legal framework for the work of NGOs and human rights organisations, and the status of decentralisation.

While many experts act as advisers to individual local authorities, in order to broaden the scale of effectiveness the trend is increasingly towards advisory services addressing several local authorities, the next level up in the administrative hierarchy at regional level, or local authority associations. For this, even better coordination with the KfW and GTZ is necessary under the multilevel Development Cooperation approach. A good starting point for working in the local authorities has often proved to be pinpointed advisory services in one technical area, in order to strengthen mutual trust in cooperation (including trust by the population) and then use this as a basis for cooperation on a broader scale. Positive experience increases the readiness of partners to cooperate with DED experts even in sensitive areas, such as assistance with local authority financial management.

The trend in cooperation with civil society organisations is also towards advising a number of

NGOs or networks and umbrella associations, in order to achieve a wider impact. The re-orientation in DED democracy promotion demands a clear focus here on organisations which are working to improve political participation by disadvantaged groups in particular. One implication is that DED has to part from established partners of many years' standing if they lack this focus. While this necessity is often difficult to explain, it is essential for the consistent implementation of the new concept. In this context the development experts can still make use of the established instrument for promoting local organisations.

The deployment of DED experts at the local level offers good opportunities for networking the actors involved. Here, it is often much easier to bring the administration, NGOs and target groups along with representatives of the local private sector together in a joint and constructive dialogue. However, in deciding to link up with a partner, another decisive consideration is the division of roles between the German executing organisations under the multilevel approach. A standard model is not enough here, and only precisely tailored solutions aligned with local conditions and the demand in the countries will do. In this process DED is already well positioned, but improving the dialogue and interaction between the individual actors in German Development Cooperation will continue to be a priority for all involved.

Another aspect of importance for the immediate future is to

Women actively representing their interests.



study the impacts and results achieved by the work on promoting democracy, while bearing in mind that this is extremely difficult to do because of the long-term nature of the processes. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that DED has taken the right step in reorienting its own organisational focus and bundling its forces for strengthening civil society and promoting local development in promoting democracy.

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