

A MARSHALL PLAN FOR AFRICA?!

AN INTERJECTION

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There are various methods available to determine the impact of development cooperation activities – in today's world, no project remains unevaluated. Universities have facilities for evaluation research. Donor and implementing organisations have their own evaluation units. The recently founded German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) coordinates and advises these organisations and also performs evaluations of its own.

Evaluation reports predominantly strike a positive note (there are virtually no projects that are useless or superfluous) and usually contain numerous constructive suggestions on how an ongoing project work may be improved. Assuming institutional education has been provided, the quality of development cooperation endeavours and their impacts will have improved steadily over the last few decades of development – and this may well be the case. If the impacts remain less than satisfactory (there is still too much hunger in the world), one asserts that this must be due to inadequate supplies. Consequently, the presumption is made that greater inputs would have produced better outcomes.

Of course, these introductory remarks are rather superficial, and the reality of development cooperation is complex. One must differentiate between individual regions and sectors, different institutions and their practices, etc. But that is not the objective of this article. Many projects have indeed been initiated, frequently with great dedication, and there have been some positive results. The only question is whether enough has been done.

Let us take a look at our neighbouring continent of Africa. Many African countries are still experiencing crisis levels of poverty, and in many cases hunger. Conflicts erupt locally and regionally, and some areas are no longer accessible for engaging in development

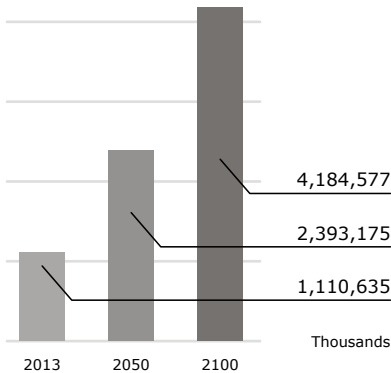
cooperation activities. The achievements of years of development cooperation on the continent are rather modest, and to many fleeing their dire circumstances now appears the last and only resort. And even in places where the situation is still relatively calm, there are hardly any prospects for young people, who no longer see a future for themselves there.

All this is part of current reality, and we see increasing numbers of people around the world contemplating migration as a viable option. This is resulting in streams of refugees from numerous countries (many of them from Africa), who are setting off for a variety of reasons with Europe as their destination.

Another aspect of this reality is that the African population currently stands at more than one billion. The UN predicts this number will rise to approximately 2.4 billion by 2050 and to over four billion by 2100 (which some of us may live long enough to see).¹

Fig. 1

African Population / Prognoses

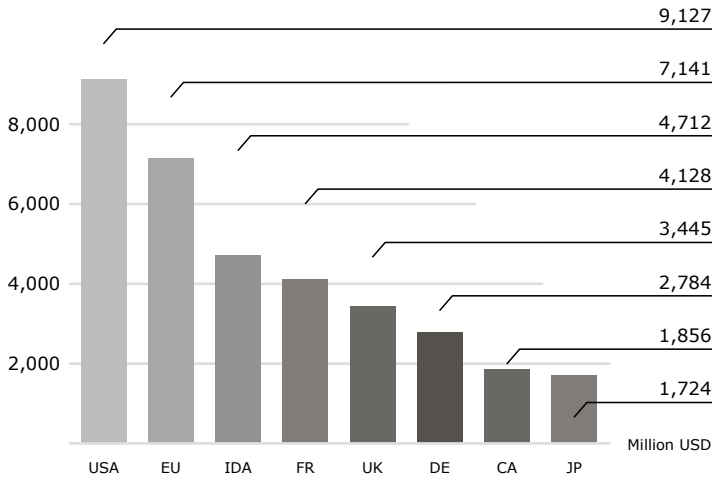


Source: UN, n. 1.

Seeing that we did not succeed in the past nor are succeeding now in managing the crises already identified, that the tools available to us are not adequate in terms of quality or quantity, what can those engaged in development cooperation even do in the face of these magnitudes, which can no longer be denied?

1 | United Nations, "World Population 2012", http://un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/trends/WPP2012_Wallchart.pdf (accessed 7 May 2015).

Fig. 2

Selected ODA Donor Countries to Africa 2012

Source: OECD, "Development Aid at a Glance. Statistics by Region. 2. Africa", 2014, p. 2, <http://oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/2.%20Africa%20-%20Development%20Aid%20at%20a%20Glance%202014.pdf> (accessed 13 May 2015).

The assertion being made here is that we are no longer dealing with a development policy issue – not now, and even less in the future. A development policy purporting to be capable of overcoming such challenges is overrating its own powers. It is akin to someone attempting to cure a burst appendix with a barbiturate, an addictive sleeping pill.

The same naturally applies to the attempts to manage the humanitarian catastrophe in the Mediterranean with a fleet of sea rescue vessels, as heart-warming as these may appear. Constructing large reception camps in North Africa would not provide a solution either and be more likely to exacerbate the problem. Is that truly to be Europe's answer?

The real challenge is of a totally different nature. It is one that concerns ourselves, albeit not exclusively. We will need to deal with the realisation that a small stable Europe will not be able to withstand a large chaotic and dynamic Africa at its gates for long. This realisation also means that we must accept that we will need to make changes to ourselves: changes to our lives and the way we live together, to our cultures. Many of us will find this

difficult, and it will produce rifts in our societies and in our political systems.



On the way to Europe: In view of increasing numbers of refugees a rethinking in politics and society is needed. | Source: © Jason Florio, Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS).

The streams of refugees, which have periodically spilt across the Mediterranean in recent decades, are therefore only a precursor of what Europe will have to deal with in the future. Against this backdrop, which some describe as a threatening scenario and others as a scenario of opportunities, many other political issues pale in significance. One thing is certain: Europe will not be able to evade its responsibilities much longer by sending a few extra rescue vessels out into the Mediterranean.

However, one also wonders about the lack of response from those with political responsibility for the refugees in their respective countries of origin. There is obviously currently no political discourse on this issue being conducted in the various regions affected by civil war. But what about the numerous African countries where many contemplate migration although there is no current crisis? Should the debate not be conducted far beyond Europe's borders? Which countries are losing people, often precisely people with better qualifications, whom they then sorely miss? Remember that education and knowledge used to be considered important development resources. In the current situation, offering these people in particular, who could make an important contribution to

the economic development of their home countries, a safe haven in Europe is a downright cynical act.

Particularly in view of the drama of the catastrophic events in the Mediterranean played out in the media, proposing lasting solutions is not easy. Especially when these would inevitably entail drastic consequences.

And yet – the search for such solutions must begin now; there is no time to lose.



In a camp of the British Ministry of Development: Europe's fight against the many problems in Africa seems almost hopeless. | Source: Marisol Grandon, UK Department for International Development, flickr ©¹.

How about, for instance, a Marshall Plan for establishing large-scale reception zones, or more appropriately economic zones in the African countries bordering the Mediterranean (and their neighbouring countries to the south), where decent economic and living conditions would be created for many? Obviously, these countries would need massive support. The hope would be that this would produce entirely new economic dynamics involving circular flows of income that would develop a stimulating effect on both North and South and thereby help to mitigate the causes of economic migration.² No doubt, this requires vision and courage.

2 | Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Gerd Müller also promotes a new approach in development policy, demanding a "European development concept for Africa". Cf. Claudia Ehrenstein/Karsten Kammholz, "Europa hat Afrika viel zu lange ausgebeutet", interview, *Die Welt*, 26 Apr 2015, <http://welt.de/140084006> (accessed 13 May 2015).

Funding should not be an issue; after all, virtually limitless funds were found to bail out all types of banks.

There is one further convincing argument: If the growth of the African population matches all the demographic forecasts, markets of unprecedented proportions will develop on the continent. Even if the sustainable reduction in poverty were not to make significant progress, these markets will grow rapidly purely in quantitative terms – while European markets will stagnate, at least demographically. A dynamically growing economic zone on Europe's doorstep would therefore in principle represent an opportunity for everybody. The Norwegian Government Pension Fund Global, the largest fund of this type worldwide, has realised this and is already investing a sizable proportion of its funds in Africa.³

Of course, this is a far cry from conventional development policy, be it in terms of content or magnitude. What is needed here is a European-African initiative to establish a large-scale development zone, which would initially focus on economic activities, involve public-private partnerships and give due regard to socio-political minimum standards.

Admittedly an ambitious endeavour. However: what alternative is there?

3 | Cf. Bloomberg, "Weltgrößter Staatsfonds setzt auf Afrika", *Wirtschaftswoche*, 21 Apr 2015, <http://wiwo.de/11669874.html> (accessed 7 May 2015).