

STUBE Hessen-Seminar

8th-10th October 2021, Wetzlar

“Extreme Poverty”

- Seminar facilitator:** Ms Eileen Paßlack, STUBE Hessen-Referentin
- Co-facilitator:** Mr Emmanuel Kipruto Ngetich (Kenya), biology & evolution, Goethe-University Frankfurt
- Target group:** Students from Africa, Asia and Latin America studying in English in Hessen
- Learning goals:** Defining extreme poverty; Agenda 2030, OECD; learning about SDG 1 (no poverty) and the connection to SDG 2 (no hunger); discussing basic needs of humans; learning about the historical background of extreme poverty; developing approaches to end poverty on different scales (local, regional, national and global); describing the relationship between poverty and sustainable development; discussing how the Agenda 2030 can contribute to end poverty; learning about the connection between poverty and economy; exploring different aspects to poverty; discussing how extreme poverty differentiates between countries; discussing the question, how every individual can help ending extreme poverty; discussing opportunities to support people, who are affected by extreme poverty; pointing out how the COVID-19 pandemic influences extreme poverty and the progress of the SDGs; analysing consequences of the pandemic
- Participants:** The number of registrations totalled 50 and a number of 25 students participated in this English speaking seminar (16 women, 9 men). Out of 25 participants, 4 participants attended a STUBE-seminar for the first time. All in all, the number of represented countries was 14. Divided by regions, 4 students from 3 African countries, 17 students from 8 Asian countries and 4 students from 3 states in the MENA-region participated in the seminar.

Process of the seminar

The seminar took place as planned. Childcare has been offered.

Friday, 8th October 2021

The seminar started with a welcome speech for the participating students by the facilitator Eileen Paßlack and co-facilitator Emmanuel Kipruto Ngetich. The program started at 7 pm, after dinner. Ms Paßlack and Mr Ngetich introduced themselves and presented the various offers of STUBE to the participants. With the students the co-facilitator developed different rules that need to be followed during the seminar, like respect, punctuality, no side-talking. The co-facilitator then assigned duties like taking pictures to some participants who volunteered. Ms Paßlack introduced the participants to the topic and Mr Ngetich introduced the participants to some games to get to know each other.

Saturday, 9th October 2021

The first workshop was presented by Emmanuel Kipruto Ngetich from Kenya and Tanvir Morshed from Bangladesh. They are both studying at Goethe University Frankfurt. Mr Morshed studies Economics and Business Administration and Mr Ngetich studies Biology and Evolution. The workshop's topic was **“End poverty in all its forms everywhere!”**. Beginning with a World Bank's definition of extreme poverty, which has been revised to living on less than \$1.90 per day from \$1.25 per day, Mr Ngetich explained the difference between absolute and relative poverty. Most countries in the world measure their poverty using an absolute threshold, or in other words, a fixed standard

of what households should be able to count on in order to meet their basic needs. A few countries, however, have chosen to measure their poverty using a relative threshold, that is, a cutoff point in relation to the overall distribution of income or consumption in a country. In a first group work on the question „What causes poverty”, the participants shared their points of view on the causes and they mentioned corruption, biography, less infrastructure, no job perspectives, no vocational training, instable political situation etc. Mr Ngetich clustered the mentioned aspects into the following dimensions of poverty: Economic (e.g. unemployment), Ecological (e.g. earthquakes, droughts, floods), Historical, Infrastructure, Political (corruption, inflation, debt) and Social.

In the second part of the workshop Mr Morshed presented a possible solution on how the common people can use services of banks without using a bank. An example is the idea of M-Pesa and bKash that are based on the fact that many people have now access to a phone, also in rural areas. In Nepal the number is quite impressive. Nepal’s population is estimated to be 28.6 million but there are more than 38.21 million mobile phone users in Nepal as of mid-January 2021. By 2012 about 17 Million of M-Pesa accounts have registered in Kenya. Mr Morshed continued his talk by answering the question on how a mobile financial service works. There is an easy registration with a phone number and ID cards. Identity is verified via sms. Withdrawal and deposit is possible via local merchant. A very low service fee is required (only 1.4% flat rate for bKash, for M-Pesa 0.6-26%). Mr Morshed explained that the access is easy, works as a saving account (up to 4% interest rate p.a.), access to remittance money. Mr Morshed invited the participants to criticize these projects. Some criticism was the threat of cyber hacks and security issues. Mr Morshed added that at the beginning, gaining trust of the customers was hard.

Mr Morshed introduced the participants to Dr. Muhammad Yunus and his idea of a microcredit system, which was initially an experimental project conducted on rural area near Chittagong University in 1976. The speaker criticized that Microcredit system could be a debt trap for the poor household. It might not always increase your income as there is a higher interest (12-13 %) rate than a traditional banking system (8-12%), there is no supervision what you are doing with the loan, the banks are happy as long as you are paying them back. In a final group work, the task was to find solutions to the discussed problems and reasons of poverty. The participants presented the idea to make the supply chain more transparent especially to prevent child labour and poor working conditions. Part of this solution is to put pressure on the politicians but also to improve the conscience of consumers and raise the awareness.

For the second workshop the co-facilitator welcomed the speaker Alejandra Garcia and introduced the participants to her topic of **social inequality in times of pandemics**. After presenting herself, Ms Garcia, together with the participants developed a mind-map on “When I think about the COVID-19 Pandemic, I think about...”. The participants shared aspects like vaccination, mental health, new ways of life, online, restrictions, isolation, jobs, new skills, panic buying, uncertainty, or health sector. The speaker then shared some facts like, U.S. Billionaires gained 1 trillion since the start of the pandemic. Since March 2020 Jeff Bezos Wealth has increased by 66 %. 56 % of the population live on between 2 and 10 dollars a day. The majority forced into poverty are informal workers. Ms Garcia then presented the definition of social inequality from a sociological perspective “Social inequality results from a society organized by hierarchies of class, race, and gender that unequally distributes access to resources and rights”. She added that the term intersectionality also plays a role in the context, which means the interconnected nature of social categorization such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Ms Garcia talked about the case of different latinamerican countries during the covid-19 pandemic. In Mexico 21 % of women working in the informal sector were pushed out of employment, compared

with 15 % of men in informal employment as of May 2020. In Brazil, people of Afro-descent have been 40 % more likely to die of COVID-19 than White people. If their death rate had been the same as White Brazilians', then as of June 2020, over 9.200 Afro-descendants would have still been alive. In the US, Latinx and Black people are more likely to die of COVID-19 than White people. If their death rate had been the same as White people's, then as of December 2020 close to 22.000 Latinx people would have still been alive.

After a break Ms Garcia presented a case study about the Zone for Employment and Economic Development (Spanish: Zonas de empleo y desarrollo económico, or ZEDE), which is the name of a new type of administrative division in Honduras (colloquially called a model city) that is subject under the national government and provides a high level of autonomy with its own political system, at a judicial, economic and administrative level. An example is the project Roatán Próspera, which is breaking ground in 2020 on the north bay of the island. This Economic Development Hub aims at enabling Honduran and global businesses to create and grow ventures in education, healthcare, tourism, aquaculture, and other industries — diversifying Roatán's economy, developing job skills, increasing foreign direct investment, and creating opportunities for personal and professional growth. Próspera partners with governments like Honduras to promote and operate Economic Development Hubs - similar to Special Economic Zones (SEZ). These hubs are integrated with local communities and have semi-autonomous governance and regulation. Ms Gacia explained that there are also negative effects, which should be taken into consideration. The different perspectives on projects like these were developed in a role play, that led to a talkshow and the participants were divided into the following groups: moderators, Garifuna and Indigenous Groups, The Honduran Government, Prospera Project and the Honduran population. The participants prepared their roles and developed statements for the talkshow. During the talkshow the controversies were revealed. According to the Centre of Study for Democracy, these models will be characterized by cheap labour, generous concessions of natural resources, tax exemptions and the transfer of the national sovereignty. It can also be a fiscal sanctuary for national crimes such as money laundering or impeding extradition. Police and Hospitals will be privatized, and they can create their own taxing system. The United Nations has already warned the ZEDES as a place where Human Rights will be violated and the TUM International GmbH from the TU Munich has already retreated from the project due to indications of human rights violations. Especially the indigenous groups presented their concerns. Most of the territories are populated by indigenous groups or afro-honduran descendants. The territory in which Prospera wants to build, is mostly populated by an afro-indigenous group (Garifunas). This territory is protected by the International Organization of Work, where they protect indigenous territories. At the end the participants shared their personal opinions and reflected on the different roles they played.

Sunday, 10th October 2021

The third workshop was held by Dr. Max Stille and Biljana Mikić from the organisation NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice, which is based in Wetzlar. Their workshop had the title "**Structural Poverty and Hunger**". together with the NETZ speakers Ms Mikić and Mr Dr. Stille, the students talked about their previous knowledge and personal experiences. A participant presented that his country India is connected to poverty and hunger and gave the example of India's farmers who have suffered in recent decades from climate change-fuelled drought and flooding, and even locusts destroying thousands of acres of crops. The circumstances have pushed thousands of debt-ridden farmers to suicide. More than 10,000 Indian farmers died by suicide in 2019 alone, according to government data. Mr Dr. Stille gave an overview on poverty trends in Bangladesh and the civil society engagement for the poor. There is a huge disparity of how extreme poverty is distributed within the country and its different districts. Mr Dr. Stille presented the work of the organisation NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice, in short NETZ. NETZ is a charitable and independent

organisation registered in Germany and Bangladesh. Since 1979, full time staff members, volunteers, individuals, supporter groups and enterprises have engaged in actions to end poverty. Together with local partner organisations NETZ supports self-help for nutrition, education and human rights. Self-help capacities are strengthened, nutrition and health status improved, income generating activities and schools supported, women's rights and access to the legal system demanded. Through all these actions, NETZ aims to enable long lasting and far reaching structural changes. At the beginning of the work of NETZ, there were almost no development projects for the extreme poor. In development cooperation/development aid in general was no belief that the extreme poor can be agents of their own fate. Currently the challenges are mainly that there is structural dimension to poverty which is unemployment (seasonal and regular basis), multidimensional discrimination and deprivation, lack of accountability and corruption, problematic access to social safety nets. But also natural challenges, for example floods, water scarcity & droughts, river bank erosion, cyclones/storms, exacerbate the situation of people living in poverty.

The speakers and the participants discussed the peculiarities of civil society initiatives, the question of the international causes of poverty and regional conflicts of interest, such as in the fight for water. At the end of the workshop, Ms Paßlack thanked the students for their participation and Ms Mikić and Mr Dr. Stille for conducting the workshop and Mr Ngetich for his work as a co-facilitator. She closed the seminar and asked the participants to fill in a short evaluation form. The participants had the chance to share their impressions of the seminar

Used methods and evaluation of the seminar:

The speakers used Power-Point-Presentations and applied methods such as mind-maps, brainstorming, film sequences, opinion barometer, roleplay and a quiz.

Impressions from the evaluation of the seminar:

- The insight into the current situation of various countries and the opportunity to share interesting ideas with others.
- I loved the fact that I met new people and loved the new experiences. I learned more about other countries first hand and their own perspective about the subject matter. That we all have a part to play in fighting against poverty in the world.
- I like the management of this seminar and as a member of developing country Bangladesh the topic is very conclusive to learn and know more about it.
- The poverty is not seen from single factors but interlinked with and consequence of all factors. We need to consider and strengthen the political factor which plays a major role to eradicate poverty.
- I get many insights of what it looks like on the other side of the world in terms of poverty. Also it is really interesting to be engaged with many people from different countries and even make friends with them. Thank you, STUBE!
- It is every good opportunity to add information which I didn't before especially country context
- A little suggestion: maybe the next time, you can introduce specific targets and / or indicator of the SDGs being discussed in the weekend.
- Better accommodation, facilities on board, hostel, more variety of food.

08.12.2021

Eileen Paßlack

STUBE Hessen-Referentin