



Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung  
Center for Development Research  
University of Bonn



## Ten Years BiGS-DR

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR  
THE DEVELOPING WORLD

# CONTENTS

## PREFACES

Erich Stather, BMZ	3
Jürgen Fohrmann, University of Bonn	4
Hanns Sylvester, DAAD	5
Werner Wasmuth, GTZ	6

## REVIEW ON TEN YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE TRAINING AT ZEF

by Günther Manske, ZEF	7
------------------------	---

## APPARENT BRAIN DRAIN OR REAL GAIN IN DEVELOPMENT RESULTS? SOME EVIDENCE FROM THE ZEF ALUMNI DATABASE

by Adama Konseiga, ZEF alumnus	11
--------------------------------	----

## ALUMNI PORTRAITS

Tamer Afifi, Egypt	17
Akmal Akramkhanov, Uzbekistan	19
Ivan Velazquez, Bolivia	20
Gert-Jan Veldwisch, The Netherlands	22
Sultana Nayeem, Bangladesh	23
Wilson Agyare, Ghana	24
Joy Kiiru, Kenya	25
Feyera Senbeta Wakjira, Ethiopia	26

## EXTERIOR VIEWS: LECTURERS AND SUPERVISORS OF ZEF PHD STUDENTS

Ulrike Grote, Germany	27
Arnab K. Basu, USA	29
Nick van der Giesen, The Netherlands	32
Tobias Debiel, Germany	33

## COOPERATION PARTNERS

Ruzumboy Eshchanov, Uzbekistan	34
Anhar Ashabul, Indonesia	36
Ernest Aryeetey, Ghana	37

Extensive lists of all donors, cooperation partners, guest lecturers and alumni of BiGS-DR are included in the additional brochure "Ten Years BiGS-DR – Facts & Figures".

ZEF uses the term *PhD* equivalent to *doctoral*. However, students from the BiGS-DR receive a *doctoral degree* from their respective university faculty.



## PREFACES



**ERICH STATHER**  
State Secretary at the  
Federal Ministry for  
Economic Cooperation  
and Development (BMZ)

The "Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School" at the Center for Development Research (*Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung* (ZEF)) of Bonn University is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. It has come a long way since 1999: A total of 433 students from 77 countries have taken part in ZEF's study program. 206 of them have been awarded a doctorate by a German or foreign university.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) supports ZEF's interdisciplinary focus. Experience in the past has shown that research breakthroughs tend to take place at the interfaces between two or more disciplines. In particular, the BMZ supports measures to assist young researchers from developing countries because education provides the basis for development.

Over the last ten years, the BMZ has provided ZEF and its graduate program with funds totalling 2.5 million Euros. In addition, it also funds scholarships for doctoral candidates from developing countries. So far the BMZ has provided funding for 172 ZEF alumni and current students from developing countries. Among other things, this has enabled them to conduct field research in their native countries.

ZEF's special training concept serves to counteract the brain drain. Thanks to this concept, the share of researchers who return to their native countries is very high at over 80%. We hope that they will act as multipliers in these countries and thus have a positive influence on the latter's social and economic development.

The BMZ's work in the field of development policy calls for an extensive exchange with development research, enabling the Ministry to include the latest research findings in its development concepts. At the same time, this exchange is also important for researchers too as it helps to prevent "ivory tower research". These are good reasons for maintaining our excellent relations with ZEF.

We wish ZEF all the best in continuing its successful international and interdisciplinary work for the advancement of science and research.

Congratulations on the tenth anniversary of the "Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School"!

*Erich Stather*



**JÜRGEN FOHRMANN**

Rector of the University of Bonn

Ten years of graduate training for the developing world at the University of Bonn

It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate the Center for Development Research (ZEF) on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its "Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research" (BiGS-DR).

Over the last decade, Bonn has evolved into an important location for international development cooperation. The University has been a key actor in this development, in particular its Center for Development Research. One of the agencies set up by the United Nations in Bonn is the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) with which ZEF and Bonn University cooperate closely. Furthermore, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has its headquarters in Bonn, attracting a large number of German organizations and institutions dealing with international development policy and development cooperation. Thus, Bonn is the right place for a graduate school training future decision makers from developing countries as well as from industrial countries.

International cooperation is a driving factor behind top level science; and this is certainly true in the case of BiGS-DR. The program, which is highly renowned internationally, hosts around 140 PhD students per annum, coming from more than 40 countries worldwide. The interdisciplinary character of ZEF and its approach to development issues by empowering a future generation of well-trained scientists is without doubt a recipe for success. Its interdisciplinary research set-up and its international network of cooperation partners make ZEF a showpiece of the University of Bonn.

After a decade of hard work, I think we can safely say that ZEF's graduate school has successfully come of age. As Rector of the University, I am proud of this success and look forward to several more decades of top level research here in Bonn.

*Jürgen Fohrmann*



## HANNS SYLVESTER

Head of Development Co-operation Division  
& Alumni Programmes at the German Academic  
Exchange Service (DAAD)

It is with great pleasure that I join you in looking back on ten years of ZEF's successful graduate program. The DAAD has been involved in what is probably a unique German program to train young researchers from developing countries since 2000 and sponsors nine scholarships per year. The overwhelming majority of graduates from this program are now active in their home countries as scientists or executive staff. Nevertheless, outsiders occasionally ask whether this program to train young talent does not actually encourage the brain drain from developing countries. In the case of ZEF's graduate program one can definitely say that this is not the case. On the contrary, the program is an outstanding example of how to train highly qualified young researchers in Germany for the benefit of their home regions.

The key to success lies first of all in the selection of participants in the graduate program. When choosing candidates, ZEF in association with the DAAD makes sure that they have positive prospects for reintegration such as contracts of employment or assurances of reintegration.

Furthermore, at ZEF – as in other postgraduate programs – it is very helpful for the return of young scientists to their native countries if their research work deals with a topic relating to that country and is written in a language which is accepted there.

Finally, successful reintegration in the researchers' native regions also involves post-training support within the framework of an alumni program. The aim of this alumni work must be to enable the returnees to participate in the scientific dialogue in their native regions and to take part in possible research projects. ZEF's alumni concept within the framework

of its graduate program can be described as exemplary. Researchers who have completed postgraduate training at ZEF remain part of ZEF's global network even after their return to their countries of origin.

I wish everyone involved in the ZEF network all the best and hope that the graduate program will continue to be a success story for a long time to come.

*Hanns Sylvester*



### WERNER WASMUTH

Senior Higher Education Officer at the  
German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has been supporting ZEF's PhD program within the framework of the GTZ's Sector Project "University Cooperation in Postgraduate Education and Research" for about 10 years now. Support has focused particularly on research by participants from developing countries. Together with other activities, this support for the ZEF program signals a shift in the GTZ's Sector Project from mainly bilateral to regional cooperation and networks in higher education worldwide. This coincides with significant processes in international and German development cooperation: First and foremost, the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration and the international agreement on realizing its achievement in the form of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the BMZ has also concentrated on strategic priority areas that comply with German bilateral development cooperation policy.

ZEF has undeniably proved the relevance of its PhD program to German development cooperation by enhancing knowledge and expertise in and about developing countries in a number of sectors which are key for sustainable development such as renewable energies, water, and land use. It also applies the strategic approach towards "knowledge for development" which is on both the BMZ's and the international agenda.

Looking back on ten years of ZEF's PhD program means looking at achievements, opportunities, and challenges. We hope that ZEF's concept of practice- and solution-oriented research for development will go on to produce even better results over the decade to come.

GTZ congratulates ZEF's Graduate School on its anniversary and is delighted to offer further partnerships on the way towards our common goal of sustainable development. This can only be achieved by developing knowledge and capacity in our partner countries.

*Werner Wasmuth*



## REVIEW ON TEN YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE TRAINING AT ZEF



BY GÜNTHER MANSKE

Günther Manske has been the Academic Coordinator of the Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research (BiGS-DR) since its inauguration in 1999.

The Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research (BiGS-DR) at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) at Bonn University was founded in 1999 with the goal of strengthening the development research communities in Germany, Europe, and throughout the world. The program's aim is to train future decision-makers from developing as well as industrial countries for international careers in a development related setting. It is an initiative to provide high qualifications for upcoming young scientists, academic staff, advisers, and managers from both the private and the public sector. The program has become internationally renowned since its inception in 1999. It is unique in both Germany and Europe in its size, internationality and inter-disciplinary set up.

In August 1999, the first cohort of nine DAAD scholars came to ZEF and participated in the German language summer school of the University of Bonn. In August 2009, 433 young scientists from 77 countries had participated in the BiGS-DR (see additional brochure Facts & Figures, table 1). From this total number of participants, 206 have received their doctoral degree and 77 have attended courses only. 126 students are currently participating in the program. The average duration of training in the doctoral program is 3.5 years with 85% of all students finishing their studies within 3 or 4 years. The drop-out rate is very

low: only 23 participants (7%) have quit the program without receiving a doctoral degree since 1999. This is only possible because ZEF has an elaborate procedure for selecting candidates, and offers intensive study counselling and ongoing academic support by tutors and mentors. In addition, the BiGS-DR program offers broad administrative support, enabling the students to settle into everyday life in Bonn easily and begin their studies quickly.

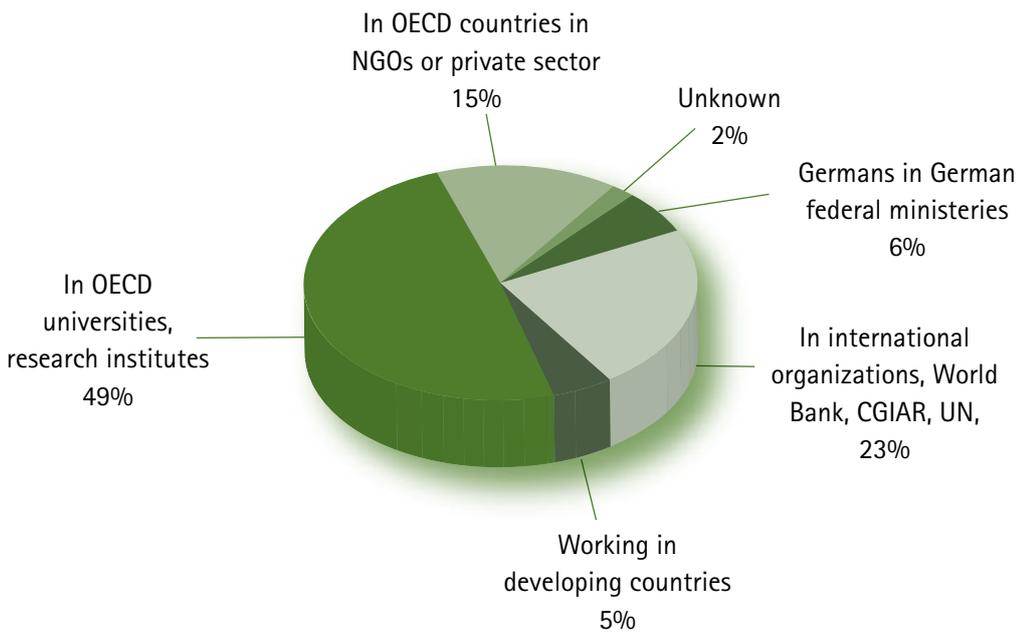
After ten years, we can safely say that BiGS-DR is achieving its main goal: educating future decision makers from developing countries as well as German and European scientists for an international career. Four out of every five students from developing countries trained at ZEF have returned to their region of origin, or have found jobs in international organizations such as the World Bank, the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) Centers or United Nations Organizations. In addition, most of the German and European alumni have found positions in national or international organizations in a development related context, in German ministries or in developing countries (see figure 1 and figure 2).

The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has been the main funder of

ZEF's graduate program right from the start, offering nine scholarships per year via the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for students from developing countries. In addition, it also provides financial support via the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) for field research conducted by students from developing countries as well as for funding their course program. The State of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) began contributing funds for the management and administration of the program at a later date.

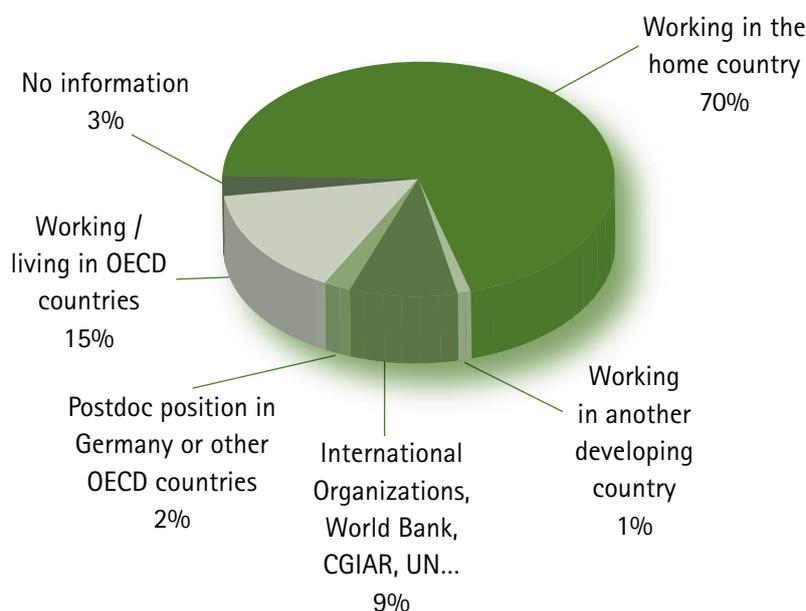
Further major donors and sponsors are the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Robert Bosch Foundation, and the Volkswagen Foundation. In particular, the BMBF supports PhD students in ZEF's large inter-disciplinary research projects in West Africa, Ethiopia, Uzbekistan, Brazil, and South Africa. The Robert Bosch Foundation has been supporting PhD studies by German and other European nationals in the academic fields of agriculture and forestry. More and more donors have followed over the last ten years, as the program has become more famous in Germany and worldwide: 13 German public, church and political foundations, 14 foreign governments, 8 international organisations and 13 other donors have provided funds and scholarships

Figure 1: Careers of ZEF alumni from OECD countries (n=62)



Status: July 2009

Figure 2: Careers of ZEF alumni from Developing Countries (n=141)



Status: July 2009

(see Facts & Figures, table 2). The current budget of the program amounts to around 1.6 million Euro per year including all stipends (1.2 million Euro), the cost of field research (300,000 Euro), courses (25,000 Euro) and personnel (90,000 Euro).

BiGS-DR was one of the first graduate programs for development research in Germany. The time frame is three years. The students start the program with preparatory course modules lasting 6–8 months. After passing an initial exam, the students continue by conducting their field research in developing countries, lasting another 1–2 years. After returning to Germany, they have a period of 6 to 12 months to complete the program by writing their thesis. The graduates obtain a doctoral degree in sociology, political science, social anthropology, economics, agricultural economics, agriculture, forestry, mathematics or natural science, granted by the respective university faculty. The majority of the students (64%) receive their doctoral degree from the University of Bonn, 31% from other German universities and 5% from

universities abroad. Around 25 international organizations and 170 national institutions and universities have been involved in the research work of the doctoral students so far (see Facts & Figures, table 5), thus creating a broad international network. This has been widened even further by the teaching activities at ZEF. BiGS-DR offers an annual course program of around 700 teaching hours, to which more than 160 guest lecturers have been invited since 1999. A third of them came from abroad or overseas.

The scientific output of the program is tremendous and shows how capacity is being built for developing countries. Apart from 205 PhD theses, around 800 publications have resulted from PhD research at ZEF: 442 peer-reviewed articles, 250 book articles, 21 books and 84 discussion papers (see Facts & Figures, table 3).

The alumni network of former BiGS-DR students is of increasing importance for ZEF's work. As the lead article by alumnus Adama Konseiga in this brochure shows, this network offers ZEF contacts with a growing number of colleagues in key positions both in research and government institutions in a large



Günther Manske and Rosemarie Zabel of the BiGS-DR office with ZEF graduates

number of key developing countries. The alumni network supports ZEF in planning future cooperative research, initiating further projects in the educational field, and disseminating its research results among those responsible for implementing development policies. The ZEF alumni network has its own website where the alumni can find information about their former colleagues as well as news, professional announcements and job vacancies worldwide. The ZEF alumni have the opportunity to join a publicly accessible data base of development experts which is also a recruitment tool for development organizations looking for experts, consultants, and policy-advisers.

The BiGS-DR at ZEF has become an important partner in Bonn's network of international centers of science and research as well as development policy institutions. Through its graduate program the Center for Development Research now hosts one of

the largest groups of international students in Bonn. It was the first program at the University of Bonn to use English exclusively as the language for instruction as well as thesis writing, thus inducing reforms to the study regulations. The needs of BiGS-DR's foreign students have also brought about changes in the services provided by the City's municipal foreigners' office, improving Bonn's hospitality and image as an international city.

BiGS-DR can be proud of its achievements during the last decade. The funds of our donors have been well invested. ZEF looks towards the next decade with optimism. We are counting on our donors not to reduce their support but to strengthen it even further, thus investing in a better future by building qualified capacities for the developing world.



*ZEF PhD students in front of the Castle Poppelsdorf in Bonn*



## APPARENT BRAIN DRAIN OR REAL GAIN IN DEVELOPMENT RESULTS? SOME EVIDENCE FROM THE ZEF ALUMNI DATABASE



BY ADAMA KONSEIGA

Adama Konseiga from Burkina Faso joined BiGS-DR in 2000 and received his doctoral degree in Economics in a collaboration between ZEF / BiGS-DR and the University of Auvergne in France from the Université d'Auvergne, Clermont Ferrand, France in 2004. In 2005, he won the Global Development Medal for Outstanding Research on Development awarded by the World Bank for his doctoral thesis on "Regional Integration Beyond the Traditional Trade Benefits: Labor Mobility Contribution. The Case of Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire". From 2005 to 2007, he had a postdoc position at the African Population and Health Research Center in Nairobi. In 2007, Adama Konseiga joined the Institute for Development in Economics and Administration (IDEA International Institute) in Quebec, Canada. His areas of research include urban poverty, migration, education, health and economic convergence.

### Introduction

The last decades have witnessed a striking growth in international migration flows. In particular, the international movement of the highly educated has experienced an impressive surge. According to Beine et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup>, from 1990 to 2000, there was a 63.7% increase in the number of highly skilled immigrants residing in OECD countries (to a stock of 20 million), whereas the number of unskilled immigrants had only increased by 14.4% in the same ten years. This extraordinary trend towards skilled migration is going to last because Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Research & Development (R&D) and skilled professionals are complementary factors and their location is therefore jointly determined: success in attracting one resource draws more of each. This explains the renewed interest in the old 'brain drain' debate.

In general, the consequences of migration in the departing and arriving countries have aroused a lot of interest in the research community. However, there is very little science-based evidence to support policy-making. This article aims to examine the brain drain phenomenon both on the basis of recent developments in literature and using the alumni database developed

<sup>1</sup> See Batista, Lacuesta and Vicente (2009)

at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) at the University of Bonn following 10 years of capacity building for the developing world.

Together with mortality and fertility, the migration of persons is an important mechanism for change in an economy's population and labor supply<sup>2</sup>. It is well established that migration brings benefits to the source country in the form of remittances, creation of business and trade networks ("Diaspora externality effects") and migrants return home with amplified skills acquired abroad. The argument is that emigration creates trade and business networks, and promotes technology diffusion (Gould 1994, Rauch and Trindade 2002). Immigration-induced business networks favor FDI and technology diffusion.

However, these benefits may be counter-balanced by the negative effects of the brain drain. Unlike natural population growth, gains in population for the destination economy may also represent corresponding losses for the source economy (labor force and possibly human capital). The brain drain is understood as the estimated number of immigrants in the host country by educational attainment as a fraction of the individuals in the labor-exporting country with the same level of educational attainment. The conventional brain drain view on highly skilled emigration from developing to developed countries is thus extremely negative and tends to present the emigration of skilled labor as a curse for source countries (Bhagwati and Hamada 1974). Until the 1990s, brain drain was a general label for the depressing effects resulting from the loss of the most skilled national citizens in a country. Scott and Gruber (1966) and Bhagwati and Hamada (1974)<sup>3</sup> were the main proponents of the brain drain theories. The effects of brain drain presumably include the disappearance of a critical mass in production, research, public services (notably health and education) and political institutions, which could potentially be magnified by positive human capital externalities, or complementarities with factors of production or total factor productivity. In addition, massive emigration of the most educated could entail fiscal losses due to foregone revenues from the public education of those who emigrate.

2 The overall growth rate of the domestic population and labor force includes both the fertility net of mortality effect and the migration effect

3 See Batista, Lacuesta and Vicente (2009).

The more recent development in migration literature favors the brain gain arguments, whereby the possibility is that own future emigration impacts positively on educational attainment in the origin country. According to the brain gain theory, it is possible that the outflow of educated migrants (and the possibility of own future migration in particular) can lead to a net increase in the origin country's stock of human capital. Therefore, the net benefits rely on the total extent of emigration and how extensive the brain drain is.



ZEF alumni at a meeting in Bonn 2007

When productivity is fostered by both the individual's human capital and by the average level of human capital in the economy, *individuals underinvest in human capital* (Lucas, 1988). In the presence of such externalities, Stark (2003) showed that a strictly positive probability or prospect of migration can enhance welfare and nudge the economy toward the social optimum by raising both the level of human capital formed by optimizing individuals in the home country and the average level of human capital of non-migrants in the country. Therefore the welfare of all workers is higher under a well-controlled restrictive migration policy that matches the optimal level of the signaling than under any alternative policy. Migration is a powerful policy tool to achieve such goals despite the apparent loss of human capital through migration leakage commonly known as brain drain. So far, researchers tackling the brain drain problem have been favorable to a repressive policy. The alternative argument of the brain gain theory is based on economic incentives.

The paper proposes to assess the potential impact of non-returnee ZEF doctors on their origin countries. It is important to keep in mind that we can only suggest a probable contribution to the brain drain phenomenon using the specific information in the alumni database. Do highly educated professionals from Africa, Asia and Latin America trained at ZEF and now living in OECD countries significantly fuel the brain drain? Do they represent a sizable proportion of the pool of skilled workers in their countries of origin or too small a figure to worry about?<sup>4</sup>

### Analysis of the existing ZEF alumni database

The ZEF alumni database records information on the employment experiences of students who completed training at the Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research (BiGS-DR). After years of doctoral research at ZEF, the database contains a total of 202 alumni. It distinguishes 61 alumni from OECD countries and 141 from developing countries.

The paper looks at the data of the 141 doctors from developing countries who left ZEF after completing the doctoral program. The following information is available:

TABLE 1: Information in the ZEF alumni database

A unique identifier of each alumnus
A code for each country of origin
The start year of doctoral studies at ZEF
The code for each destination country after leaving ZEF
The exit year of the alumni (for the job market)
The classification code of the current job position of the alumni
The classification code of the previous or first job position of the alumni
The ZEF research department of the alumni
The title of research proposal/dissertation
The type of scholarship

4 Making the concept operational, Adams Jr (2003) is the first to give a clear statistical content to the Brain Drain: "Brain Drain means the migration of more than 10 percent of the tertiary-educated population of a particular labor-exporting country."

Since its start in 1999, the average duration of training under the doctoral program is estimated at 3.57 years with 85% of all students finishing their studies within 3 or 4 years. This probably represents one of the most efficient doctoral programs in OECD countries. In France, the official normal duration of doctoral work is three years, but the average is currently more than four years and varies between 4 and 6.2 years in the social sciences (see [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctorat\\_\(France\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctorat_(France))).

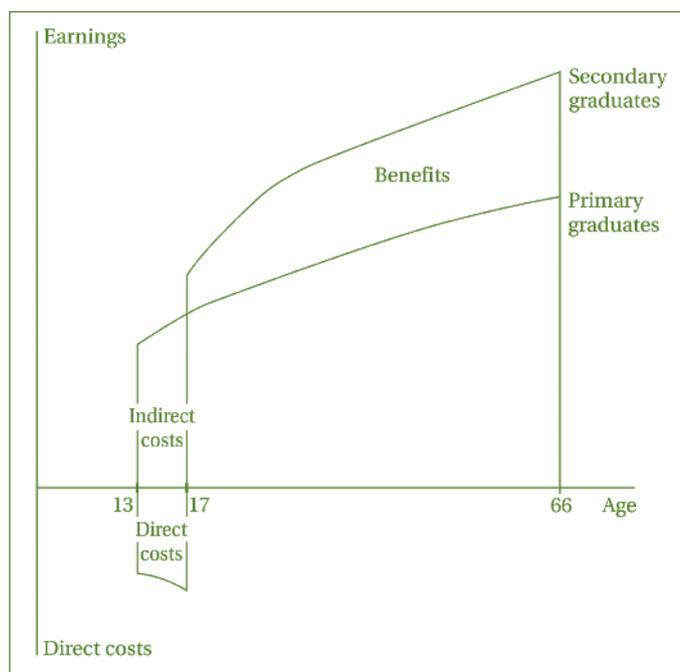
According to a human capital theory, following an initial investment of 3.57 years, ZEF students can expect a stream of higher future income from the expansion of their education (Todaro and Smith, 2006). In addition, education also contributes directly to personal well-being.

Todaro and Smith (2006) demonstrate that the impact of human capital investments in developing countries can be quite substantial. Taking the example of primary and secondary education: Even though people with a higher level of education start full-time work at a later age (17), their incomes quickly outpace those of people who complete primary education and who start working earlier at the age of 13 (see figure 1). After taking into account the total additional costs

incurred by those who choose to undergo secondary education (direct tuition, books and housing expenditures, indirect costs in terms of income foregone), it is easy to show that the private return on investment in human capital at higher school levels is very high.

Note that figure 1 provides a schematic representation of the trade-offs involved in the decision to continue in school. It is assumed that the individual works from the time he or she finishes school until he or she is unable to work or dies (age 66, reflecting the current world life expectancy). Two earnings profiles are presented, that is, for those with primary school but no secondary education and for those with a full secondary education (but no

FIGURE 1: Financial trade-offs in the decision to continue in school



Source: Figure 8.2, page 371, Todaro and Smith, 2006

higher education). Primary graduates are assumed to begin work immediately at the age of 13, secondary graduates at the age of 17. Therefore, four years of income are foregone as the indirect cost of an individual in a developing country deciding to go on from primary to secondary education.

TABLE 2: Destination country of ZEF alumni from development countries

	Number	Per cent
Country of origin	104	73.8
Continent of origin	5	3.5
Non OECD & continent of non-origin	2	1.4
OECD	30	21.3
Total	141	100.0

After 10 years of doctoral studies, ZEF has trained students from 40 different developing countries. Of the total of 141 alumni from developing countries, 73.8% were back in their country as of June 2009, to which one should add an additional 3.5% who are working

in their continent of origin (but not in their home country). 21.3%, i.e. 30 alumni remained in an OECD country, especially in Germany (14), USA (6) and three alumni in Canada as well as Australia.

It is nearly impossible to infer the consequences of brain drain from the above figures. The brain drain for each of the 40 developing countries is defined as the ratio of the number of immigrants with a doctorate degree or equivalent living in the destination OECD country divided by the number of individuals with the same level of educational attainment who remain at home. To estimate the size of the brain drain, one needs to know the denominator, that is the stock of comparable human capital in the 40 home countries, and make some national or continental imputation of the numerator given the proportion of people from ZEF who have not returned home. Furthermore, it is important to assess the content of the development-related work of the positions occupied by the 21.3% of alumni working in OECD countries.

In short, the lessons learnt from the alumni data are that a considerable number of alumni simply return home (four out of every five students trained at ZEF).

Now let us evaluate the development content of the jobs occupied by the ZEF alumni "lost" in an OECD country. With the exception of the 10 alumni where information is lacking<sup>5</sup>, we have 98% who are currently working in a position related to ZEF's core development research fields (see table 3). The latter's jobs are sometimes in international development institutions such as the World Bank. These results show the high quality content and development relevance of the jobs occupied by the non-returnees, which suggest that one should consider job content when trying to estimate the brain drain in

the doctoral program. The apparent loss of 21.3% of ZEF-trained doctors from developing countries is over-

<sup>5</sup> This may be a sign of a negative selection bias, given that the less successful alumni may also be the ones who did not disclose their experience after ZEF.

estimated and does not account for the quality of development-related jobs occupied by the emigrants living in OECD countries. The lessons from the data are that the apparent brain drain conceals a real gain in the appropriation of development policy design and development results by professionals from developing countries trained at ZEF. The latter now living in an OECD country mostly work in a development-related institution.

TABLE 3: Current job position of ZEF alumni (available data only)

	Number	Per cent
ZEFa relevant job	17	13.0
ZEFb relevant job	45	34.4
ZEFc relevant job	66	50.4
Unemployed, active job search	3	2.3
Total	131	100.0

The remaining 2% of table 3 (i.e. three alumni) are actively searching for jobs and are new alumni (two left ZEF in 2008 and one in 2009 after a first job experience in Europe). If we had information on the date when each alumnus found his first job after leaving ZEF, we could estimate the average time it takes a ZEF doctor to find a job after accounting for right censoring.

In terms of job market dynamics, 18% (i.e. 24 alumni) experienced more than one spell on the job market after leaving ZEF.

Finally let us assess the relative size of the possible brain loss (which is different from the concept of brain drain defined earlier) by country among graduates from ZEF (table 4). However, this assessment has strong limitations and cannot be generalized given

TABLE 4: Preliminary results on brain losses per country

Country of origin	Number of alumni residing in OECD countries	Total number of alumni	Physical apparent brain loss (%)
Ethiopia	1	16	6.3
Ghana	2	17	11.8
Uzbekistan	3	9	33.3

that the size of the sample per country is too small. Given this, we only show results for the few countries that had at least nine alumni at ZEF.

Table 4 indicates that Ethiopia is the champion in terms of attracting the quasi-totality of its alumni to return home (only one alumnus out of 16 trained at ZEF currently resides in an OECD country). If the target of the ZEF doctoral program was to encourage the return of all alumni in their home country, it is worth studying the Ethiopian policy environment and the set of incentives that motivates the return of alumni to Ethiopia.

In the same way, if traditional receiving countries (OECD countries and Arab Gulf countries) are interested in raising the level of welfare of workers from the source developing country through development cooperation for instance, they can participate in designing a migration policy that will keep the country-level brain drain under the critical level of 10%. This can be achieved by defining how many of the home country's skilled workers to admit and raising the welfare of workers from the sending country. Over the last decade, traditional migration policies have actually taken a new turn and in response to the growing shortages of skilled labor, immigration policies have increasingly been "quality-selective" and geared to favoring the entry of skilled workers, while penalizing unskilled flows (Borjas 1999, Harris and Schmidt 2003).

## Conclusion

The 10 years of data from the ZEF alumni database are too short and too limited to allow one to draw robust conclusions as regards the brain drain phenomenon. The data may be enriched by recording the exact date at

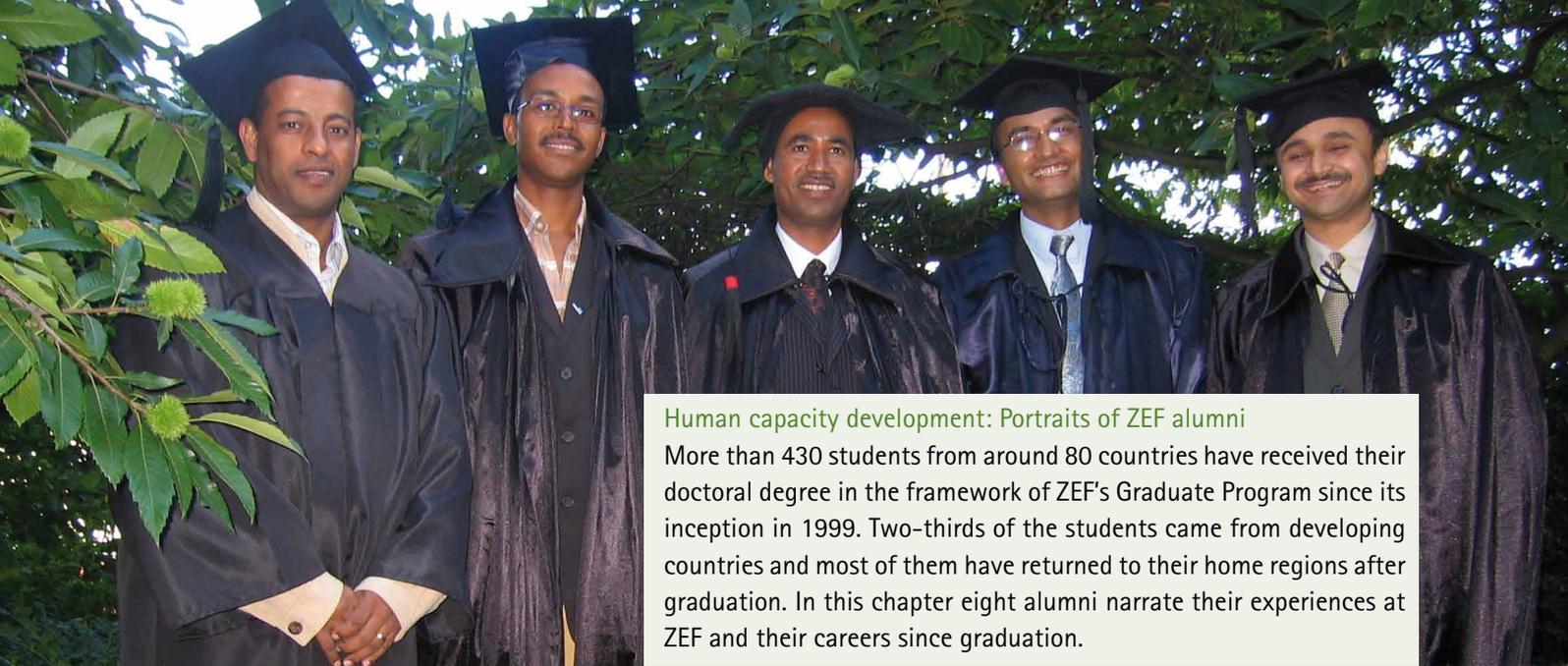
which each major event occurred, that is, for each alumnus the date of arrival at ZEF, the date of leaving ZEF and the date he or she started a new employment. A more detailed

study of ZEF alumni in Africa is currently being conducted at ZEF. The results will be available in autumn 2009.

However the analysis of the data indicated that most of the alumni simply return to work in their origin country after ZEF (four out of every five students trained at ZEF). More importantly the lessons from the data are that the apparent brain loss conceals a real gain because those alumni who remain in an OECD country are generally working in an institution which is relevant for development policy.

### Suggested reading

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**Human capacity development: Portraits of ZEF alumni**

More than 430 students from around 80 countries have received their doctoral degree in the framework of ZEF's Graduate Program since its inception in 1999. Two-thirds of the students came from developing countries and most of them have returned to their home regions after graduation. In this chapter eight alumni narrate their experiences at ZEF and their careers since graduation.

## ALUMNI PORTRAITS



**TAMER AFIFI**

**Country of origin:** Egypt

**Academic training:** Economist

**Studies at ZEF from:** 2003 until 2007

**Thesis topic:** The challenge of implementing the overlapping regional trade agreements in Egypt

**Doctoral degree from:** Faculty of Economics of Erlangen Nürnberg University, Germany

**Supervisors:** Prof. Dr. Sefik Alp Bahadir and Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kähler

**Research funding by:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**How do you look back at your time at ZEF from a professional point of view?**

**W**hat I liked about doing my PhD studies at ZEF was the possibility of working in a multicultural but at the same time German environment. ZEF is not a typically international institution which is completely isolated from German society. It is attracting and gathering many people from different cultural and scientific backgrounds. This German-international mixture is very interesting and beneficial to those working and studying there.

ZEF's concept of close and regular tutoring by a senior researcher is very successful and useful to the students. In addition, the regular research seminars help the junior researcher to get oriented and receive scientific feedback from tutors and colleagues.

Due to ZEF's interdisciplinary research approach, students do not only focus on their own subjects but also benefit from getting some knowledge and insights into other research areas.

ZEF gives its junior researchers the unique opportunity to actively participate in international academic events. For example, ZEF fully supported my participation and presentation of two papers at two international conferences in Brussels and Hong Kong, respectively, and also supported my participation in other scientific workshops in Germany.



*Tamer Afifi did his PhD research on trade in Egypt. Here a market scene in ElQuseir, Egypt*

© Michael Hubka/PIXELLO

#### How has your career proceeded since your graduation in 2007?

After obtaining my PhD, I joined a project as an Associate Academic Officer at the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn. The project was financed by the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the European Commission and dealt with environmental factors contributing to migration decisions in different countries. Moreover, I got promoted to the position of Assistant Professor of Economics at the Faculty of Commerce at Sohag University in Egypt.

#### In what way have you benefited from your training at ZEF in your positions so far?

Having been a junior researcher at ZEF was no doubt a very fruitful experience as a researcher. The method of discussing science and its implications at round tables has certainly improved and broadened my way of academic thinking. My studies at ZEF and the ISS (Institute of Social Studies) in The Hague, The Netherlands, where I was before I came to ZEF, have particularly helped me deal with different cultures. In the end, this has made me a better researcher, especially when the research includes different case studies at various locations all over the world.

#### How about a personal review of your time at ZEF?

There were very hard times at ZEF, mainly due to the stress of doing a PhD study. But this is something that all PhD students usually have to go through at certain stages of their doctoral work (regardless of being at ZEF or not). However, I will always have nice memories associated with ZEF. I benefited scientifically and made unforgettable friendships. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank Günther Manske (Co-ordinator of BIGS-DR) and Ms. Zabel at BIGS-DR. They not only supported me during my studies at ZEF, but they have also supported me since.



AKMAL AKRAMKHANOV

Country of origin: Uzbekistan

Academic training: Engineer

Studies at ZEF from: October 2002 until December 2004

Thesis topic: Spatial distribution of soil salinity: Detection and prediction

Doctoral degree from: Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Bonn

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Paul Vlek, ZEF

Research funding by: German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) via the ZEF/ UNESCO project in Uzbekistan

What was your motivation to come to ZEF?

I came to ZEF because I wanted to pursue my studies in a subject dealing with development issues. When I heard about ZEF and its academic atmosphere it sounded like a perfect place for me! Besides, the project that ZEF initiated in Uzbekistan offered a PhD position on a challenging topic to study.

What were the main benefits of doing your PhD study at ZEF?

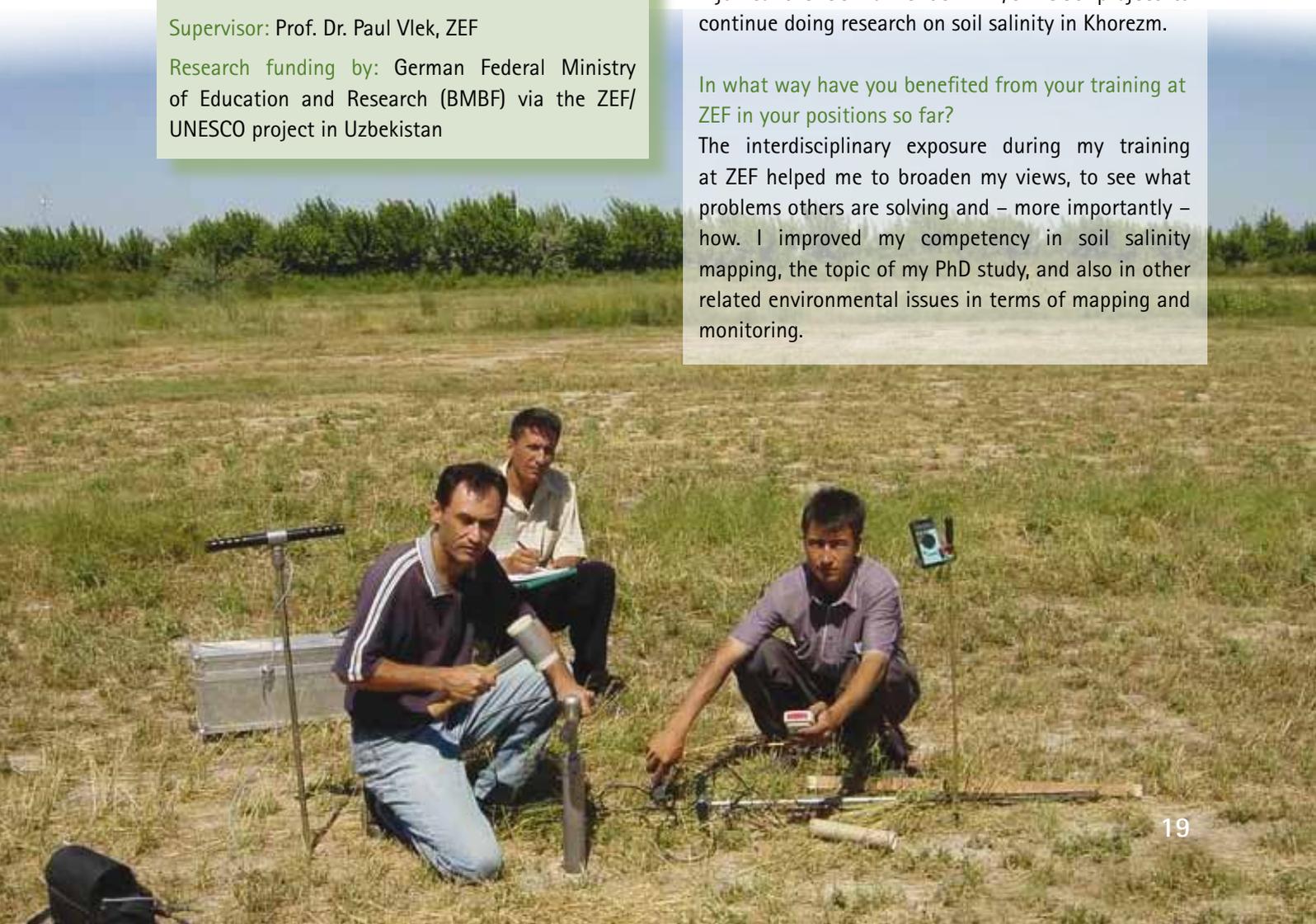
There were many benefits, such as exposure to interdisciplinarity which I think is lacking if you work within a university department on a specific subject only. Another advantage is ZEF's scope for international doctoral studies and all its efforts to make research work more enriching.

How has your career proceeded since you left ZEF?

I had a postdoc position with CIMMYT (International Wheat and Maize Improvement Center) for two years, working on conservation agriculture in Northern Kazakhstan. After completing this postdoc fellowship I joined the German-Uzbek ZEF/UNESCO project to continue doing research on soil salinity in Khorezm.

In what way have you benefited from your training at ZEF in your positions so far?

The interdisciplinary exposure during my training at ZEF helped me to broaden my views, to see what problems others are solving and – more importantly – how. I improved my competency in soil salinity mapping, the topic of my PhD study, and also in other related environmental issues in terms of mapping and monitoring.





IVAN VELAZQUEZ

What made ZEF so attractive that you wanted to do your PhD research there?

Today's competitive job market requires applicants to distinguish themselves and international education experience is the perfect way to do so. So I came to ZEF because its BiGS-DR program at Bonn University offers a wide range of stimulating and relevant courses, covering the most important academic issues from development economics to social sciences and ecology and economic analysis. Besides, it gives researchers the opportunity to interact with a multi-cultural and diverse human environment. With professors, colleagues and students from all over the world, the ZEF academic program combines components of the German and the Anglo-Saxon graduate systems.

Country of origin: Bolivia

Academic training: Economist

Studies at ZEF from: October 2002 until October 2006

Thesis topic: Extreme poverty: Vulnerability and coping strategies among indigenous people in rural areas of Bolivia

Doctoral degree from: Faculty of Economic Sciences at Georg-August-University in Göttingen, Germany

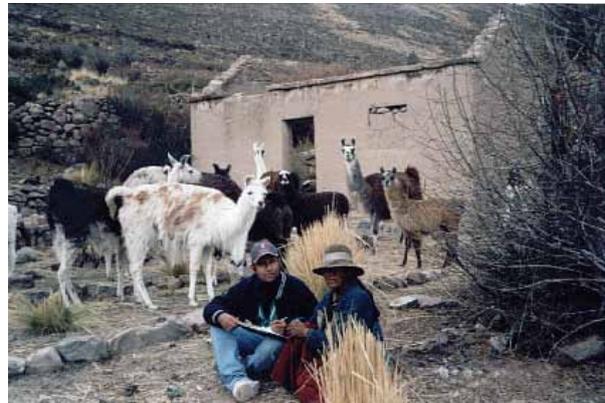
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Stephan Klasen

Research funding by: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) e.V., BMZ (GTZ)

So what were your main impressions of your time at ZEF?

The Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research (BiGS-DR) program provided me with fascinating immersion and academic opportunities in the field of development. Its academic program is a powerful combination of faculty-directed learning, group discussions and a strong academic research environment.

Moreover, studying at ZEF was a mind-opening experience for me. At this international and interdisciplinary academic research institute, I met people from various backgrounds and walks of life. The highlight of the program were the interdisciplinary and disciplinary courses. Due to the interdisciplinary and international study program, I saw the way in which economics can help our understanding of some of the major challenges of the 21st century, including: poverty, inequality, climate change, and land degradation. Part of ZEF's institutional policy is collaboration among its three departments, and I personally believe that



*Ivan Velazquez doing field research for his PhD thesis in his home country Bolivia*

curricular innovations often occur at the intersections or boundaries between disciplines.

More than anything else, I valued the opportunity to interact with an academic community of professors, senior and junior researchers. Tutors were very supportive and took the time to discuss any issues with students from almost every continent of the world. I feel that I had the opportunity to learn greater academic and non-academic lessons – through innumerable perspectives – than would have been the case in a study environment in Latin America.

*How has your career proceeded since you left ZEF?*

An entire range of professional opportunities has opened up for me in the last years, partly due to the skills and academic experiences I gained at ZEF. At the beginning of 2007, I was invited to apply for a scholarship and was short-listed by the Norbert Lammert Foundation, which eventually brought me to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Bolivia. The scholarship was exclusively for continuing my research on poverty issues and public policies. After that, I was successful in job hunting and within 3 months I started to work as a coordinator of the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the regional office of Bolivia.

*In what way have you benefited from your training at ZEF in your positions so far?*

The training at ZEF provided a wide range of relevant courses, covering the most important academic issues in the field of development. At ZEF, my view of the world and its economic problems changed fundamentally. I developed the ability to view the world, and its issues, from several different perspectives.

*Do you still have contacts with ZEF and other alumni? In what way?*

At ZEF I met many interesting people and made lifelong friends. I am still in contact with some and especially with Dr. Dil Bahadur Rahut from Buthan. We are currently working together on development issues and in the coming months we are going to publish a research paper on poverty in the Himalayas.

*And what was your most remarkable field research experience?*

ZEF provided financial support for my doctoral research via the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). I had a great experience doing my field work in rural areas of Bolivia. For almost one and a half years, I conducted a household survey (Living Standards Measurement Study 2004 and 2005, LSMS). After two months in the field, I came to recognize that the acute



*Ivan Velasquez with ZEF Director Ulrich Hiemenz at his doctoral defence celebration in 2007*

problems with extreme poverty in rural areas are much larger than I first assumed. This forced me to make different and continuous considerations and adjust my timetable and my methodology. This made me feel like a true researcher. The process of preparation, field work and writing the PhD thesis after returning to Germany was the great achievement of my studies at the Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research (BiGS-DR).



GERT-JAN VELDWISCH

**Country of origin:** The Netherlands.

**Academic training:** Socio-Technical Irrigation Engineer

**Studies at ZEF from:** September 2004 until December 2007

**Thesis topic:** Irrigation water management in Khorezm, Uzbekistan, with a strong focus on its socio-political aspects

**Doctoral degree from:** Faculty of Arts of the University of Bonn

**Supervisors:** Prof. Dr. Solvay Gerke, ZEF and Dr. Max Spoor, Associate Professor of Transition Economics at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands

**Research funding by:** The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) via the ZEF/UNESCO Khorezm project

**What were the highlights of doing your PhD research at ZEF?**

ZEF has a broad perspective on development research and provides room for a wide variety of PhD research on the interfaces between various fields. ZEF's interdisciplinary PhD research is exceptional and a great opportunity for a PhD student. The courses taught in the ZEF Graduate Program function as a melting pot for PhD students from different scientific fields. For many of us this was a great experience!

**How did your career proceed after graduation?**

Shortly after finishing my PhD I started working as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Mozambique. At this 'outpost' I have been setting up a new country office for the organisation. Meanwhile I have also participated as a social scientist in a variety of interdisciplinary

research projects on soil fertility management, technology adoption and adaptation processes, and farmer-market linkages. These projects have been spread over Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Due to sudden staff changes I quickly became principle investigator for two of these projects.

Recently I started working as an Assistant Professor at the Irrigation and Water Engineering Group of Wageningen University, The Netherlands. We are setting up a research and capacity-building program on irrigation and development in Southern Africa. My research assignment is on market-led smallholder irrigation development, for which I am currently developing new research initiatives. Besides the work in Southern Africa I hope to build upon my PhD research and continue some of my cooperation projects in Central Asia and possibly also in China.

**In what way have you benefited from your training at ZEF?**

During my study period at ZEF I learned a lot from working together with scientists from very different disciplines. It still helps me to understand the issues and concerns of colleagues who work on the same issues as I do, but from different perspectives. I believe that working at ZEF has made me a better communicator, team-worker, and problem-solver.



*Gert-Jan Veldwisch during his field research in Uzbekistan*



SULTANA NAYEEM

Do you consider your education at an international research institute in Germany a matter of brain gain or brain drain for your home country?

I came to ZEF to complete my higher studies and because of the reputation of this institute in my home country, Bangladesh. My country receives about eleven percent of her economic remittance from 'trans-migrants'. At ZEF I received different kinds of opportunities to become an inter-disciplinary expert on migration and human capital formation. Thus, my education represents a social remittance to my home country Bangladesh, which is presently the sixth largest exporter of migrants in the world. The ideas on migration that I gained from my education at ZEF enable me to contribute to making my home country not only a gainer of economic remittances but also a receiver of brainpower.

What is your contribution to brain gain?

After completing my PhD studies at ZEF, I came back to my home country Bangladesh and became an Assistant Professor in the Department of Development Studies at the University of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. In this function, I am also planning to do some research work on migration in Bangladesh. In addition to this, I am supervising two research

Country of origin: Bangladesh

Academic training: Anthropologist

Studies at ZEF from: August 2004 until June 2008

Thesis topic: Bangladeshi diaspora in Peninsular Malaysia: Organizational structure, survival strategies and networks

Doctoral degree from: Faculty of Arts of the University of Bonn

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Solvay Gerke and Prof. Dr. Hans-Dieter Evers (both ZEF)

Research funding by: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

students in my current department and improving the syllabus with some updated topics from development studies. I still have contacts with ZEF and other alumni: Through e-mail we share and exchange research ideas.



*Sultana Nayeem doing field research in Peninsular Malaysia*



WILSON AGYARE

### What were the benefits of doing your PhD study within the framework of ZEF's doctoral program?

I learned a lot from interacting and working with people from different cultural backgrounds. Besides, ZEF is an excellent place that offers many possibilities and a fruitful environment for knowledge sharing among students and staff. In addition, working in an interdisciplinary environment bringing experts of various disciplines together has given me a lot of insight into their areas of speciality.



Wilson Agyare in the field in Ghana

### How has your career proceeded since you left ZEF?

After my graduation at ZEF, with improved knowledge skills and a number of publications on my list, I was promoted to the position of a Senior

Research Scientist at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) belonging to the Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) in Tamale, Ghana.

In addition, I am working as a Senior Lecturer and doing research at the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana.

### In what way have you benefited from your training at ZEF in your positions so far?

By being part of the GLOWA Volta project, I considerably improved my skills to work in a team – as a member as well as a team leader. In addition, I

broadened my professional network and increased collaborative research, for example with the CGIAR Challenge Program.

### Do you still have contacts with ZEF and other alumni?

I still have strong contacts with ZEF as I am still working for the GLOWA Volta Project. I also have contact with some of my colleagues all over the world and most of the Ghanaians and Burkinabés.

### What made the ZEF experience so unique for you?

What is very unique about ZEF is the opportunity to work with a project and in a group or department, in my case the department of Ecology and Natural Resources. Students come from diverse scientific backgrounds, such as plant breeding, water resources, irrigation, soil science, GIS, agronomy and many others. This interaction offers students the opportunity to learn and assist each another. Especially when writing your thesis you need to move into areas different from your background.

Also the opportunity to seek support or supervision from the University of Bonn or other universities gave us students the opportunity to work with the best possible experts in our area of specialization.

The doctoral staff support the foreign students to make sure they are not stranded or not welcome, for example meeting students for the first time at the airport, making sure they have suitable accommodation and are properly registered. In addition, the availability of office space, computing facilities and access to the library makes ZEF an excellent and fruitful academic environment.

**Country of origin:** Ghana

**Academic training:** Agricultural Engineer

**Studies at ZEF from:** October 2000 until May 2004

**Thesis topic:** Soil characterization and modeling of spatial distribution of saturated hydraulic conductivity at two sites in the Volta Basin of Ghana

**Doctoral degree from:** Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Bonn

**Supervisors:** Prof. Dr. Paul Vlek (ZEF) and Prof. Dr. Richard Dikau (University of Bonn)

**Research funding by:** German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) via GLOWA Volta Project



JOY KIIRU

#### Why did you choose ZEF as the place to graduate?

I came to ZEF because I was looking for a top-notch university with high academic standards and an excellent faculty where I could do my PhD in the shortest time possible. For hardworking students it is possible to finish your PhD in three years, which is a very good time.

ZEF has good resources to support PhD students with their studies: e.g. journals (both electronic and non-electronic), a well-equipped library, available and competent tutors and supervisors, etc.

ZEF also has a good system for caring for students' welfare: Its staff helps students to find accommodation, helps non-German speaking students to settle down in Germany and do all the paperwork correctly, etc.

#### How did ZEF advance your career?

After finishing my PhD I managed to be promoted as a lecturer at the School of Economics at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and also as a research associate at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA). In addition, I do some consultancy work.

A precondition for becoming a lecturer at the University of Nairobi is that you must have a good PhD and some publications on your list. I got these at ZEF!

And to become a research associate at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis you must also have a good PhD as well as good research and com-

Country of origin: Kenya

Academic training: Economist

Studies at ZEF from: September 2004 until September 2007

Thesis topic: The impact of microfinance on rural poor households' income and vulnerability to poverty: Case study of Makueni District, Kenya

Doctoral degree from: Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Bonn

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Klaus Froberg (ZEF) and Prof. Dr. Karin Holm-Müller (University of Bonn)

Research funding by: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

munication skills. At ZEF I had the opportunity to advance these skills.

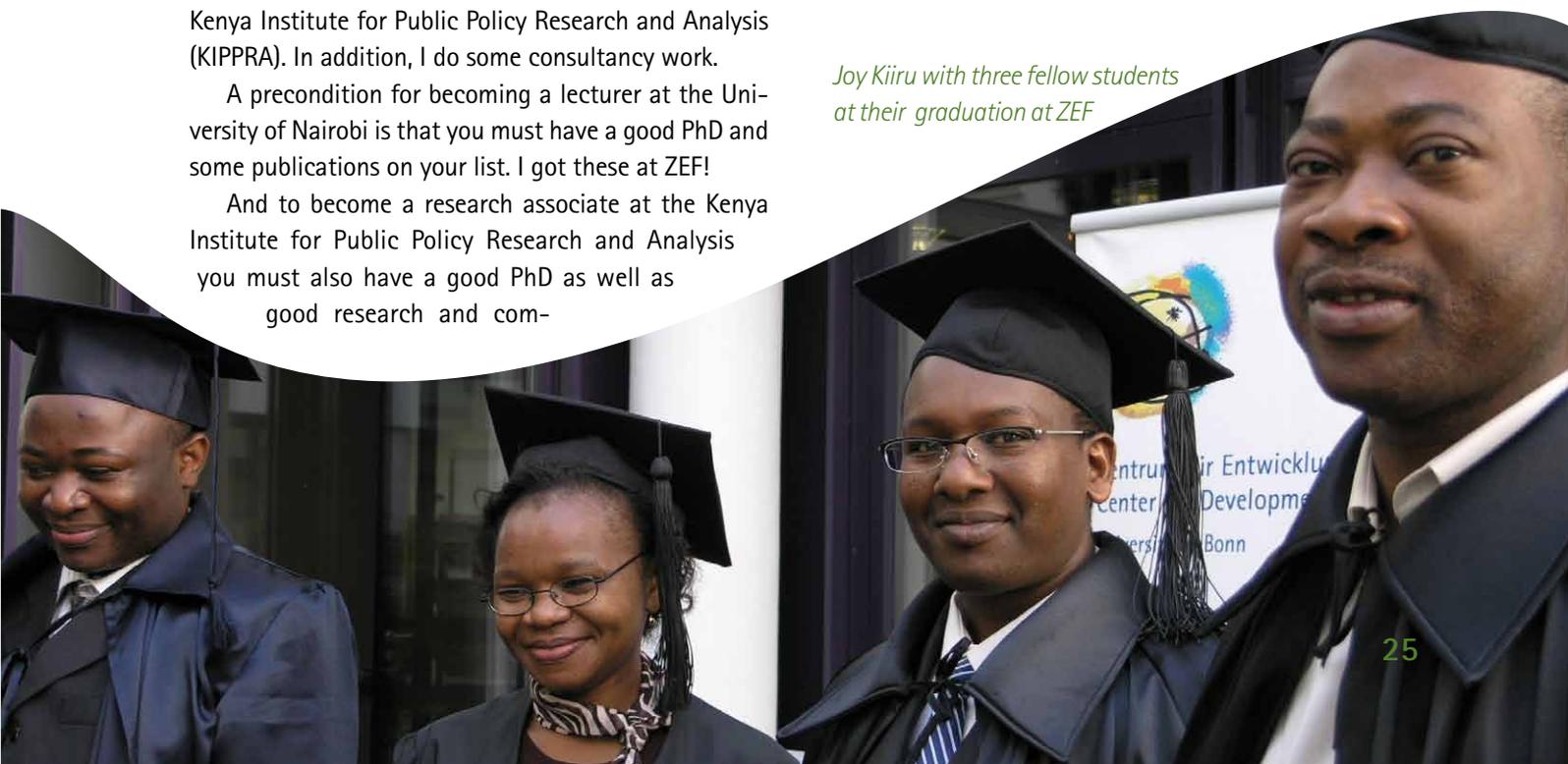
#### How do you keep in contact with former colleagues?

Most of us joined the DAAD Alumni Network where we meet at conferences and seminars and sometimes we join up for collaborative research.

#### Your studies in Germany – a case of brain drain or brain gain?

My travelling to Germany and my studies at Bonn University have never been a case of brain drain. I have benefited a lot as an individual and my country has benefited as well since I am now a well-trained professional working for my own country.

#### Joy Kiiru with three fellow students at their graduation at ZEF





**FEYERA SENBETA  
WAKJIRA**

#### Why did you choose ZEF to do your PhD studies?

I came to ZEF because I was looking for a very good university institute where I could pursue my PhD studies. I was also motivated by the multidisciplinary nature of the program that is offered at ZEF. In addition to this, I had a chance to join the project on "Conservation and Use of Wild Coffee in the Montane Rainforests in Ethiopia" (CoCE), which was also a factor which encouraged me to come to ZEF.

#### What was the main benefit of doing your PhD at ZEF?

The interdisciplinary courses at ZEF focus on key global issues with a local relevancy such as food security, urbanization, habitat conservation, deforestation, sustainable agriculture and water conservation. These critical issues and the multidisciplinary nature of the program provide students with a broader perspective on sustainable development in both the developed and developing worlds. This enables students to see sustainable development as a complex of environmental, economic and social dimensions interacting on local, national and global scales. To better understand and initiate sustainable development interventions, it is essential that genuinely interdisciplinary analysts are able to set new agendas and steer these integrated approaches into thinking, policies and action. In this regard, the ZEF program offered me a wide range of interdisciplinary training options that enabled me to develop my academic thinking and practical experience, thus putting me at the forefront of any future careers challenges.

#### How did ZEF advance your career?

Since I returned to my home country, Ethiopia, I have been involved in various issues in different positions. Immediately upon coming home, I was promoted to As-

stant Professor at Wondo Genet College of Forestry and later on moved to the Ethiopian Coffee Forest Forum as a Senior Researcher. Currently, I am working as an Assistant Professor at Addis Ababa University and as a Senior Researcher in the Ethiopian Coffee Forest Forum. By assuming these different positions, I have accomplished a number of important things. Among those worth mentioning is the ongoing conservation initiative to save the last remaining wild *Coffea arabica* populations in the montane rainforests of Ethiopia.

To save these wild coffee populations and their habitat, the montane forests, my colleagues and I have initiated a UNESCO-MAB (Man and Biosphere) Biosphere Reserve. It is based on a conservation strategy that balances use and conservation. An enabling environment needs to be created to realize this initiative. Biodiversity conservation needs to include all stakeholders, from local forest dweller communities to policy makers. This requires a variety of measures including education, communication, and public awareness – all fields where I have been active for the last three years. All these achievements are a result of the opportunities and skills I had and gained at ZEF.

#### Do you still have contacts with ZEF and its alumni?

Yes! I am still a member of ZEF's CoCE project team and hence I have contact with many colleagues at ZEF. My contact with the Alumni Network focuses on colleagues from Ethiopia.

#### Your studies in Germany – were they a case of brain drain or brain gain?

As I mentioned before, it is clearly a case of brain gain not brain drain for me and for my home country of Ethiopia.

**Country of origin:** Ethiopia

**Academic training:** Ecologist

**Studies at ZEF from:** October 2002 until February 2006

**Thesis topic:** Biodiversity and Ecology of Afromontane rainforests with wild *Coffea arabica* populations in Ethiopia

**Doctoral degree from:** The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the University of Bonn

**Supervisors:** Prof. Dr. Paul Vlek, Dr. Manfred Denich (both ZEF) and PD Dr. Jürgen Böhmer (University of Bonn)

**Research funding by:** Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) via CoCE project



#### Exterior views from ZEF lecturers

Over the past decade, more than 160 lecturers from over 20 countries have contributed to ZEF's Graduate Program by giving lectures and courses as well as by supervising PhD students. Four of our lecturers share their memories and views with us.

## EXTERIOR VIEWS: LECTURERS AND SUPERVISORS OF ZEF PhD STUDENTS



ULRIKE GROTE

#### Current position:

Professor at the Institute for Environmental Economics and World Trade, Leibniz University in Hanover, Germany, since October 2006.

#### Affiliation with ZEF:

Ulrike Grote worked at ZEF from 1998 until 2006 as a Senior Researcher in ZEF's Department for Technological and Economic Change.

#### My experiences with doctoral students at ZEF

I worked at ZEF from 1998 until 2006. During all these years, I experienced many talented doctoral students coming from diverse developing countries and socio-economic backgrounds, and leaving ZEF proudly with a German PhD certificate in their pockets. In my function as one of the three group coordinators in the Economics Department, I took over the responsibility and tutorship for many doctoral students over the years. They came from Ghana, from Bangladesh or from Tanzania, the Philippines, Egypt, or Brazil, but also sometimes from Germany or the UK. Many countries were represented so that I still benefit today from a big academic network with contacts in all parts of the world. The doctoral students I met at

ZEF had in common the fact that they were very eager to learn. And it was great to see how they supported each other in developing their research questions, frameworks and approaches. ZEF managed to create this enabling environment. We had regular meetings presenting each others' proposals and progress reports. The diversity of topics ranging from child labour in Nepal and India to vulnerability to floods in Bangladesh or to the certification of exported fruits from Brazil ensured that the academic seminars always touched on interesting and very relevant issues. We all learned from each other in a very positive and friendly atmosphere with lots of discussions and exchanges of new ideas.

What is unique about the ZEF graduate program is that all doctoral students do their primary field work in

one or sometimes even two developing countries. They mostly organize the household surveys themselves, selecting the study sites which are located in remote villages with poor infrastructure, and training students from local universities who assist them in conducting



*Ulrike Grote with ZEF PhD student Donald Makoka after his defense*

the surveys over several weeks or even months – and all that in tropical hot and humid temperatures of more than 30 or even 35 degrees. But not enough, often they have to face serious additional challenges like political strikes, floods or power cuts which prevail for days. Despite all these problems, they always return from their trips highly motivated and very happy, with lots of adventurous stories, carrying a heavy box of sometimes up to 500 questionnaires.

I also had the pleasure to lecture on trade and environmental issues in ZEF's Graduate Program. It was fun since the doctoral students participated in a lively manner, enriching the lectures with excellent questions. What struck me most were the partnerships and friendships which developed across cultures and across disciplines, and the mutual support when it came to research. All the students I met had a real interest in development research and its impact on the ground. Many of them enjoy the advantage of having a deep understanding of the country-specific

problems and are highly motivated in changing the situations in their countries to the better. I am still in contact with many former PhD students; many of whom have become professors and directors at their home universities; some have ended up at the World Bank or in other international organizations.

I would like to congratulate the ZEF Graduate Program's team, headed and developed with lots of devotion by Günther Manske and the directors. They have really managed to develop a reputable international Graduate Program which has received attention from all over the world, attracting excellent young researchers. The numbers speak for themselves.

It is also a pleasure to stay in touch with ZEF colleagues and students. Four ZEF students have received their doctoral degree from the Economic Faculty of our University in Hanover!



*Ulrike Grote did research at ZEF on social labeling against child labor*



ARNAB K. BASU

### Experiences as a teacher and fellow

ZEF doctoral students' body is truly diverse not just in terms of the countries represented, but also in terms of their background and training. It is quite impressive that in every batch, students adapt quickly to the standards set by the senior staff, acquire the required quantitative and technical skills and execute challenging research projects within a very short period of time. One of the most fulfilling things about visiting ZEF over the years has to do with the interesting research questions that students have posed. More often than not, looking at a research proposal or raw data has forced me to think about an issue in a creative way and pay special attention to peculiar institutional features of the country in question – a pleasant problem that one is not exposed to unless working with data from primary field surveys. Parts of my own research agenda over the last 10 years – particularly in the area of Eco-labeling and Environmental Standards, Social Labeling and Child Labor and Genetically Modified Crops – were executed as a result of my exposure to ZEF research agendas and my interactions with students and senior researchers here.

### Impressions of the students

The doctoral students are integral to ZEF's research agenda. Students at ZEF are either selected based on their interest in different issues within the bigger projects already underway or are selected because of their unique research proposals that fall under the broader research categories of ZEF's Departments. For ZEF's Department of Technological and Economic Change these are topics such as: Trade and Governance, Poverty and New Technologies/Resource Economics

### Current position:

Professor at the Department of Economics and Public Policy, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, USA; Senior Fellow at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany and Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Bonn, Germany.

### Affiliation with ZEF:

Arnab Basu has been associated with ZEF's Department of Technological and Economic Change since May 1998. His primary work has been with projects on Social and Eco-labeling Schemes (1999–2005) and he spent the year 2007 as an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow at ZEF. He taught International Trade Theory and Policy to the batch of 2007 ZEF students.

such as Genetically Modified Crops, Water Resources, and Information and Communication Technology. Over the years, research papers by doctoral students have won awards at prestigious international competitions (as an example, the Global Development Network Awards and Medals Competition) and their research has been rewarded with scholarships and fellowships at international organizations (the Carlo Schmidt Award at the International Labour Organization, for example). Further, doctoral students closely collaborate with the senior staff members at ZEF to publish research and policy papers in leading academic journals on a frequent basis. All of this is a testament to the ability of the doctoral students to design and implement primary surveys, and then execute quantitative analysis that leads to meaningful policy implications. I have been particularly impressed by the ability of the doctoral students over the years to execute field research in complicated environments within a fixed time horizon, particularly in countries that they are unfamiliar with, and effectively tackling a whole range of issues – from institutional and bureaucratic rigidities to political unrest and adverse climatic conditions. This is a remarkable achievement in itself!

When I first came to ZEF in 1998, the Graduate Program was at a planning stage and my first exposure to research done at ZEF was through the work of Arnab

Kuhn (Inter-regional trade in agricultural commodities in Russia), Matin Qaim (GM adoption in developing countries), Katinka Weinberger (Women's participation in economic activities in Chad and Pakistan) and Torsten Feldbrügge (Civil conflict in Angola). They had just moved to ZEF from the University of Kiel and were already quite advanced in their PhD studies. Yet, while interacting with them and / or reading their work it was evident that ZEF's research focus was on unique and emerging global topics using strong quantitative foundations and, perhaps most importantly, research that yielded robust policy implications. This latter focus on either emerging or complex existing issues in economic development that combines quantitative academic research with policy solutions became the backbone of the BiGS-DR research starting with the first 2 students to be admitted at ZEF's Department of Economic and Technological Change, Romeo Bertolini (ICT in Ghana) and Maria Iskandrani (Water security in Jordan). I have had the opportunity to listen to seminars and research group meetings, comment on project proposals, and referee papers by a number of ZEF students across a wide range of topics. I would specially like to mention some of the research projects that have been a pleasure to read and / or comment on. In addition to Arnim Kuhn, Matin Qaim and Romeo Bertolini's work that I mention above, research executed by Shyamal Chowdhury (ICT in Bangladesh), Abay Asfaw (Community health insurance schemes in Ethiopia), Puja Sawhney (Forest conservation and rural livelihoods in India), Dina Mandour (Environmental standards in agro-food exports in Egypt), Dil Bahadur Rahut (Rural non-farm employment in the Northeastern Himalayas, India), Sayan Chakrabarty (Child labor, schooling and social labeling in Nepal, India and Bangladesh), Cristina Carambas (Organic farming in Thailand), Tamer Afifi (Regional trade agreements and impact on trade in Egypt), Holger Seebens (Expenditure patterns across female headed households in Tanzania), Seid Nuru Ali (Migration and investment in agriculture in Ethiopia), Israt Rayhan (Vulnerability to floods in Bangladesh), Joy Kiiru (Microfinance in Kenya) and Andrea Dörr (Organic farming and eco-labeling regimes in Brazil) deserves special mention .

#### Take home messages for the students

The global diversity of ZEF students allows for a constant exchange of ideas and forces even the most experienced of researchers to think hard about unique issues in developing countries that one would otherwise never be exposed to. BiGS-DR's balance between students from Germany and from abroad ensures that during and after their graduate studies German (and Western European / US) students have a very good handle on problems faced by developing countries, while students from developing countries are exposed to renowned researchers and state of the art quantitative and scientific tools that are more



*The first batch of ZEF PhD students in 1999*

difficult to access in their home countries. I will talk about an important message that BiGS-DR imparts to the students in terms of its unique focus on interdisciplinary research below, and I will provide two concrete examples as to how graduate studies at ZEF can be a transformative experience:

- Consider the case of students engaged in PhD research on various aspects of a bigger project (for example the current Uzbekistan or GLOWA-Volta project). Although students from the three ZEF departments are looking at different issues and using different methodologies in their research, the research group meetings and presentations allow every student, irrespective of their discipline, to learn from each other's research findings, provide key suggestions and get a comprehensive idea of the bigger issues involved in finding a coherent set of policy solutions.

- Outside of working within bigger project guidelines there are two other forms of research that allow students to gain valuable insight into a particular topic. The first is the case where students use broadly similar research methodologies to study an issue across a range of countries. As recent examples, the impact of eco-labeling initiatives and environmental standards on production decisions and aggregate commodity exports (albeit for different commodities) has been studied by Cristina Carambas for Thailand and the Philippines and Andrea Dörr for Brazil. Second, the case where students have returned to the same country to follow up on research that was done earlier on a similar issue. Marcus Koll's work on ICT use in Ghana in 2007, for instance, maps the institutional changes that have taken place since Romeo Bertolini's study in 1999.
- As ZEF students graduate and pursue their careers as researchers and policy makers across the globe, the lasting effect of the inter-disciplinary nature of the training received at BiGS-DR with the attendant focus on pursuing research that culminates in effective policy recommendations, is evidenced from the research papers, policy briefs and evaluation reports that BiGS-DR alumni publish regularly.

#### ZEF's Graduate Program in general

ZEF's Graduate Program is unique. As opposed to traditional PhD programs in Economics or Applied Economics in the United States or elsewhere in the world, the BiGS-DR program strongly emphasizes inter-disciplinary research, and this latter component is built into the first year coursework for incoming students. While this focus on inter-disciplinary coursework might be a new concept for incoming PhD students (and even for Guest Researchers who visit ZEF and are trained within the boundaries of a specific discipline – myself included), it soon becomes evident that inter-disciplinary coursework serves two very important purposes beyond just opening one's mind to different methodological ways of approaching and analyzing an issue. First, given that ZEF doctoral students engage in primary research on the ground, exposure to inter-disciplinary research allows a better design of surveys that encompass political, institutional and cultural

aspects of an issue as opposed to a narrow focus on purely economic variables (as would have been the case for students with an economic training otherwise). Second, exposure to inter-disciplinary research allows for much better policy implications that students are able to draw from their quantitative research, and sometimes highlights how different institutional and political economy features in different countries yield remarkably different country-specific suggestions for policy interventions, even though to a casual observer the economic problems might be very similar across these countries.

An additional – but by no means trivial – issue is the ability of ZEF to retain some of the students after graduation as senior researchers. Apart from contributing to research, such a strategy is important in terms of building institutional capital as these former students are in a unique position to impart valuable knowledge to the current ones through teaching courses and tutoring. In recent years, former PhD students such as Daniel Tsegai, Holger Seebens, Tobias Wünsch, and Seid Nuru Ali have done a commendable job of not just mentoring current students but also in some cases, supervising projects.

#### Acknowledgements

The smooth functioning and growth of BiGS-DR would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Günter Manske, and I am sure all of us associated with ZEF appreciate his dedication and contribution to the program. It has also been a distinct pleasure to have been a part of the dynamic research agenda at ZEF and the directors, Joachim von Braun, Klaus Froberg and Ulrich Hiemenz have ensured that senior staff and students alike continue to pursue research that adheres to the highest standards. Last but not least, some of the senior researchers that I have intersected with at ZEF deserve substantial credit for the mentoring of a generation of students. In this regard, Ulrike Grote, Peter Wehrheim, Johannes Jütting, Susanna Wolf, Stefanie Engel, Detlef Virchow, Klaus Riede, Assefa Admassie, Arjun Bedi, Maximo Torero, Peter Wobst, Matin Qaim, Sudip Mitra, Indra de Soysa, Noha El-Mikawy, Maja Micevska, Daniel Tsegai, Nicolas Gerber and Fabian Scholtes deserve special mention.

A very Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to BiGS-DR and many, many more returns!!



NICK VAN DER GIESEN

### General impression of the students

Given the different backgrounds of the PhD students, the skills levels with which they enter ZEF are quite diverse. Cultural differences add to the broadness of this palette. In general, one can say that motivation is always high as people really see the course of study as a unique chance.



*Van der Giesen coordinated ZEF's GLOWA Volta project in Ghana and Burkina Faso*

### Most remarkable experience

My most remarkable experience was probably when Prof. Vlek and I went to visit two Nigerian students (Ayo Ayodele and Philip Oguntunde) in the relatively remote village of Ejura in Ghana. Upon arrival in Ejura, the students were not at the place where they were supposed to be and we were becoming a bit annoyed: Why were they not there? After asking around, we ended up with the chairperson of the District Assembly. She told us that our students had been arrested by the BNI, the Ghanaian equivalent of the American FBI.

The BNI had heard that two Nigerians were studying water resources and that those resources would affect Lake Volta, the source of 90% of electric power in Ghana. Despite African unity and ECOWAS, they had interpreted this not as something positive but as a threat. They had to be spies. They had been taken to the regional capital Kumasi, where we went as well. Our driver had previously worked for the BNI and not only helped us to find the office but also convinced the guards to let us in. Once inside, we explained that our students were really what they claimed to be. After a shouting match between BNI personnel and Ayo and Philip, they were eventually released and we were still able to visit their field site on the same day.

### Most impressive student

Although it is always difficult to single out one student, I particularly remember my first student, Mohsin Hafeez. He impressed me because he managed to get an incredible amount of field work done in the Philippines under quite adverse circumstances and with minimal resources. He has done very well since leaving ZEF and is now Director of the International Centre of Water for Food Security at Charles Sturt University, Australia.

### ZEF's Graduate Program in general

There are, of course, other international graduate programs but the dimensions at ZEF are such as to foster a really good sense of community, whereas the scale at larger institutes makes things less personal. At ZEF, the students get a sense of belonging to a global community of scientists.

The second unique quality is interdisciplinarity. Although not every student does interdisciplinary research, economists, anthropologists and ecologists mingle and exchange ideas and visions.

#### Current position:

Professor of Water Resources Management, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands.

#### Affiliation with ZEF:

From 1998 until 2004, Nick van der Giesen (co-) supervised 11 PhD students from ZEF. During most of this period, he was also the coordinator of the GLOWA Volta project at ZEF.



TOBIAS DEBIEL

### Impressions of students

**M**y general impression of the students was that they were all highly motivated. They were eager to get in touch with other PhD students from different regions and different disciplinary backgrounds. At the same time, they had to work hard in order to follow the program, prepare their research proposals and their field research.

One of the most remarkable experiences I had when I was involved in the graduate program was during a trip to Ethiopia. I met some of ZEF's PhD students who were doing their one-year field research there. They were, of course, working in a completely different setting than at ZEF in Bonn, since they were partly in their home countries. This gave me important additional insights into their personalities and professional expertise.

I was most impressed by the students who tried to become acquainted with theories they had not known

before and tried to apply them to the empirical settings where they were doing their research. Furthermore, I very much appreciated the fact that some PhD students passed their knowledge and experience on to other doctoral students as soon as they finalized their theses. This kicked off a mutual learning process. My general impression was that ZEF is an exciting and challenging environment for students to do their PhD theses.

### Views on ZEF's graduate program

ZEF's graduate program is notable for its wide range of international participants as well as its interdisciplinarity. Students have the opportunity to develop and strengthen their interdisciplinary and intercultural skills during their studies at ZEF. Intercultural seminars take place and the first term paper has to be written by a team of doctoral students from different academic fields, for example.

To touch upon a critical point: When I was at ZEF (until 2004), I felt that the program in the first year could have been a bit more geared towards the actual PhD thesis. Another point I want to make is my perception that even after three or four years in Germany, some of the PhD students did not seem to feel completely at ease living in the country. This was partly due to the fact that the program is (and should be) carried out in English and prepares the students for international careers, and not specifically for a career in Germany. Also, the time frame for doing a PhD thesis at ZEF is limited to three years, which does not leave much time

to learn an additional language. But even with all these clear priorities, students should have some basic knowledge of the local language and be able to link up with 'natives' after a couple of years.

**Current position:** Chair in International Relations and Development Policy, Institute of Political Science, Director of the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF), University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

**Affiliation with ZEF:** Tobias Debiel was Acting Director of ZEF's Department for Political and Cultural Change and in charge of the graduate program from February 2003 to June 2004.

**Contributions to the graduate program:** Tobias Debiel facilitated most of the department's research meetings and contributed to the graduate program with a lecture on "Development policy, disaster relief, and conflict resolution: NGOs between new challenges and the difficult search for a new profile". Furthermore, he gave inputs on the topic "Governance and conflict transformation under conditions of fragile statehood".



**Institutional capacity development: ZEF cooperation partners in the developing world**

ZEF has received support for its PhD students from more than 50 German and international donor institutions. In addition, doctoral field research carried out in 45 countries was supported by more than 25 international partner institutions and by 170 national ones. Three of our cooperation partners report on their experiences.

## COOPERATION PARTNERS



**RUZUMBOY  
ESHCHANOV**

Former Dean and current Rector of Urgench State University in Urgench (UrSU)

### Building capacities for the disaster-struck Aral Sea Region: The ZEF/UNESCO project on improved natural resource management in Uzbekistan

The ZEF/UNESCO project in Uzbekistan addresses the environmental, social and economic problems in Khorezm, one of three provinces located within the so-called Aral Sea Zone in Uzbekistan. The project aims to provide sustainable solutions for the Aral Sea region by adopting a holistic approach, combining technology, policy and institutional options developed in cooperation with local and international stakeholders.

**Regional setting**

The research project set up by UNESCO, ZEF and the University of Urgench aims at developing ways for the sound and sustainable use of natural resources. The goal is to develop options that are equally acceptable to farmers trying to make their living, decision-makers and to those concerned about the environment. The key to developing such options lies in the interdisciplinary, integrative approach that is being developed and implemented within the framework of this project. This includes sound science, field research by social scientists as well as mathematical modeling. Measures to build human capacity will put local scientists in the position to take over the lead of the project after its expected lifetime of 10 years.

**Project set-up**

The project became operative in 2002 with the establishment of a basic project infrastructure. New office facilities were built at the University so that its research staff and students would be able to work efficiently and professionally during the project's lifetime. This modern office building has a GIS laboratory, computers, offices and meeting space on the inside and a traditional oriental façade on the outside. It has become the professional base for dozens of senior and junior researchers working in and for the region of Khorezm.

### Cooperation partners

The project has generated a lot of activities in the region, also inter-activities between local partners. The number of auxiliary and technical staff increased steadily totaling up to 50 people in 2008. The project re-enforced its institutional links with national, regional and local policy and decision-makers and stakeholders such as farmers and Water User Association (WUA) managers. Intensive collaboration takes place with local partners such as the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Melioration (TIIM), the Central Asia Scientific Research Institute of Irrigation (SANIIRI) and with international organizations such as the International Center for Agriculture in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), International Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT), German Agro Action (GAA), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the German Aerospace Center (DLR).

### Regional impact and capacity development

The project's impact on the agricultural research and administrative community of Uzbekistan has been enormous. The local community is regularly updated with news and research results. Articles are published annually in local and international journals. These articles are also available on the website of the ZEF/UNESCO project: [www.khorezm.uni-bonn.de](http://www.khorezm.uni-bonn.de)

Human capacity building, integrated into all levels of project activities, has been the project's most

important achievement so far. 18 out of the 44 PhD students graduated between 2002 and 2008, among them six women. More than 50 MSc and numerous BSc theses have been completed. The project has facilitated the establishment of two Uzbek professorships. Six post-docs and other staff members on the project teach at the State University of Urgench in Khorezm.

The project's training program has been particularly successful. PhD students take part in the three-year Graduate Program at the Bonn Interdisciplinary Graduate School for Development Research (BiGS-DR) at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) of Bonn University. Part of this three-year program is a one-year field research phase carried out in Uzbekistan. During this phase, students are supervised by local and foreign experts and, in turn, supervise MSc and BSc students themselves. The project also offers special training courses in Uzbekistan and Bonn in e.g. GIS and remote sensing, statistics, linear programming, and gas chromatography. In addition, the ZEF project provides laboratories, updated databases and maps.

### Outlook

ZEF has now conducted seven years of research in the irrigated areas of the Aral Sea Basin under conditions that are representative for vast areas across Central Asia and the Caucasus. Agriculture within the Aral Sea Basin has great potential for becoming critical to development due to the available infrastructure, well-trained human resources, vast areas of arable land and rangelands and other natural resources. In conclusion, the project is very useful from an educational, scientific and ecological point of view for both the Khorezm region and its University in Urgench.



*Ruzumboy Eshchanov on a ZEF research site in Uzbekistan*



*The project's impact on agricultural research in Uzbekistan has been enormous*



### ANHAR ASHABUL

Lecturer at Syiah Kuala University in Indonesia

## From alumnus to cooperation partner

### Doctoral student at ZEF

During my PhD studies at ZEF, I gained unique experience and had the chance to not just concentrate on my own scientific field, but also to interact with students and professors from other disciplines. This resulted in a deeper understanding of problems, especially in developing countries where I have always seen my future career. The interdisciplinary approach of ZEF has therefore contributed to improving my skills for my professional career.

### Career after ZEF

I was able to see how much I had learned at ZEF when I worked as a consultant for development agencies and organizations such as UN-FAO and GTZ since multidisciplinary approaches are at the core of project work in these organizations.

Since I started working as a lecturer at the Syiah Kuala University in Indonesia, I have been intensifying cooperation with ZEF. The Agriculture Department of the University of Syiah Kuala has incorporated ZEF's system for building a new generation of academics: Students have to actively interact with other disciplines outside their own. This experience will give students a new perspective of knowledge and understanding. The approach is also closely linked with the Indonesian government's policy of promoting interdisciplinary research in Indonesia's agricultural sector.

### About ZEF's Graduate Program

What I liked especially about ZEF and its Graduate Program is the environment created by ZEF, where

Country of origin: Indonesia

Current position: Since June 2005, lecturer for Sustainable Agriculture and Agroforestry at the Agriculture Faculty, Syiah Kuala University in Indonesia.

Additional assignments:

1. After graduating from ZEF, Anhar Ashabul was Syiah Kuala University's coordinator in the Triangle Partnership between the Georg-August University in Göttingen (Germany), the University of Agriculture at Bogor in Indonesia and the Syiah Kuala University in Indonesia. The partnership was set up to re-establish and improve academic work and staff at Syiah Kuala University following the Tsunami.
2. From November 2005 until October 2006, Ashabul was a national consultant for the UN-FAO program for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of coastal areas in the Tsunami-affected countries of Indonesia, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.
3. From November 2006 until June 2009, Ashabul was a national consultant for the GTZ project on economic recovery and microfinance in Nanggroe, Aceh and Darussalam specializing in the development of organic cacao and fair-trade.

Affiliation with ZEF: PhD student at ZEF from 2001–2005 (Graduation: June 2005).

professors, lecturers and the supporting administrative staff are like a big family helping the students to finish their studies on time. In addition, the facilities were great.



*Anhar Ashabul worked in many places in South East Asia after his graduation*



### ERNEST ARYEETAY

Director of the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra

In which context have you and the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) cooperated with ZEF and its graduate program?

ISSER has cooperated with ZEF for many years. Two of ISSER's researchers (Felix Asante and Isaac Osei-Akoto) did their PhD work at ZEF within the context of the GLOWA Volta research project. They have all had very positive experiences and have encouraged the collaboration between the two institutions.

The current doctoral program in Development Studies at ISSER was jointly developed by the staff of ISSER and ZEF at the University of Ghana, Legon. The program is part of the Centres of Excellence in Development Studies in Africa, which were initiated by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in 2008.

An important aspect of the doctoral program is that it is situated within a Ghanaian context, while at the same time allowing students to explore the 'external' environment through study visits to Germany. In addition, the PhD students benefit from tuition from both Ghanaian and German experts and lecturers, thus providing them with multi-cultural education.

What have ZEF and its Graduate Program contributed to developing institutional capacities and human capital at ISSER?

The Graduate Program and the collaboration with ZEF over the years have provided several opportunities for strengthening and enhancing the personal and professional capacities of ISSER staff. Felix Asante is currently Head of the Economics Division and this is on account of his strong capacity to lead the effective conduct of good research. He has shown significant capacity in networking. Isaac Osei-Akoto has turned

out to be a pillar of the Institute's program in survey work. He leads most of the large household surveys undertaken by ISSER, applying skills that he gathered from ZEF as a PhD student.

The new doctoral program in Development Studies, besides producing PhDs, allows individual research staff of ISSER to develop joint research projects and proposals with their ZEF counterparts. Also available under the arrangement are such activities as specialised training sessions and lectures, research visits, the organization of scientific workshops and conference participation, both in Ghana and in Germany. All these offer opportunities for strengthening the personal and professional capacities of ISSER staff.

The gains to the individuals participating in the PhD program so far have been immense. ISSER had struggled, prior to this, to find suitable places for research assistants to do graduate work. This is what led to the development of a PhD program at the Institute. With support from ZEF it has been possible to give greater exposure to the first three candidates. The new opportunities and the benefits they derived



*The first batch of students participating in the doctoral program in Development Studies at ISSER in Ghana, together with Wolfram Laube, ZEF Senior Researcher*

from it are shown by the improved quality of the thesis proposals. The candidates have had access to literature that was hitherto unavailable to them and it is expected that this will significantly enhance

the quality of their work. They show greater interest and commitment to their work than other graduate students at the University.

#### And what is the regional impact of the cooperation between ZEF and ISSER?

In order to enhance the conditions for advanced education and research, the scientific infrastructure of ISSER is being improved as part of the joint collaboration between ISSER and ZEF. In particular, the upgrading of ISSER's library and computer laboratory facilities as well as the provision of essential and current literature (including subscription to e-archives) has facilitated students' and other researchers' access to a number of different international journals. The upgrading of facilities has helped to enhance and strengthen ISSER's institutional and academic capacities within Ghana and Africa. ISSER is currently viewed as one of the best endowed institutions in Africa and the contribution of ZEF to this has been significant.

#### Has the cooperation had any impact on training students and building up a new generation of academics?

The Graduate Program offers an opportunity to train a new generation of high-level and high quality academics not far removed from their own studied environment. Most 'development studies' programs have been designed in external environments which have been far removed from the societies under discussion. This implies that those who benefit from such programs have been few in view of the cost, and have constantly had to do with simulations of observed problems; simulations that have not always been abreast with the rapid changes in the dimensions of the problems to be tackled. In many such simulations of development problems and their possible solutions, perceptions of the socio-economic and political environments have been distorted as a result of cultural differences.

The current program with ZEF helps to address these challenges in a very significant way. The students will not lose touch with the realities of the development issues and challenges being discussed.

#### What do you think have been the most important messages the students took home after their graduation at ZEF?

As indicated earlier, ISSER's collaboration with ZEF pre-dates the current Graduate Program. Those who did a PhD at ZEF came back with largely positive experiences. Since I also studied in Germany, it was easy for me to relate to that. Visits by ISSER's students to ZEF have continued to the present time. Three of the first batch of PhD students in the Development Studies program returned from ZEF, University of Bonn, in June 2009. The message from the students is that they have had great exposure and they have been refreshed in terms of access to relevant literature and advice – making them poised to continue with their thesis work in earnest.

The students also came back with the message that they needed to be more competitive as the world was changing and the requirements for effective capacity-building were also changing. They all see themselves as future researchers into development policy who will be called upon to provide policy advice on a regular basis. Their visit to ZEF showed them how policy makers and researchers interact for their mutual benefit.

#### What is your impression of ZEF in general and its Graduate Program?

The contribution of the ZEF team to the Graduate Program based at ISSER has demonstrated to me the quality, significant experience and maturity of the graduate programs at ZEF. The team contributed in no small way to the development and teaching of our PhD in Development Studies course in Ghana. There is every indication that ZEF is very committed to developing regions and is adequately structured to provide the necessary support to institutions in those regions.

The ZEF graduate program is very much a practice-oriented program. It allows our students to develop the attitude of problem-solvers and hence a need to find the best ways of solving those problems. This is quite different from most academic programs that pay far less attention to practical solutions to problems.

**What can you say about the partnership between ISSER and ZEF in general?**

Both ISSER and ZEF share similar aspirations and visions. They are both research and teaching institutions. In addition, both are very much interested in addressing development challenges within a developing country setting. ISSER's partnership with ZEF basically reinforces its overall objectives and goals as a research institute, with the goal of undertaking social science research for the purposes of poverty reduction. The partnership has afforded ISSER increased contact with other researchers and introduced a significant dimension of German culture into this multi-cultural research institution.

ISSER appreciates the relationship it has enjoyed with ZEF over the years. It is hoped that the two institutions will see greater collaboration in the development of joint research projects similar to the GLOWA Volta project.



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