Selected Biographies of Graduates from the Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research (BIGS-DR)

Published on the occasion of ZEF’s 10 Year Anniversary 2007
Development Expertise Made at ZEF:

Biographies of Graduates from the
Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research
(BIGS-DR)

Published on the Occasion of ZEF’s 10 Year Anniversary (2007)
We want to express special thanks to our numerous donors who have made BIGS-DR possible:

German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), State of North Rhine-Westphalia via University of Bonn, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Robert Bosch Stiftung, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Volkswagen Foundation, Dreyer Foundation, SAP Company, European Union, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Konrad-Adenauer- Stiftung, Fulbright Foundation, Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst (KAAD), Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNUEHS), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and governments of several countries.
## Introduction

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Introduction

It has been 10 years since the Center for Development Research (ZEF) started its actual research activities at the University of Bonn. ZEF was founded in 1995 and started its actual academic research in 1997. Many people have been working at ZEF in the course of this period, contributing to finding solutions for problems in and of the developing world. ZEF not only looks back on a decade of successful research, but has also generated new generations of academic and practical development experts. The Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research (BIGS-DR, former International Doctoral Studies Program) proved to be a stepping-stone for many successful careers in the fields of development research, development policy, as well as development practice.

Through its Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research (BIGS-DR), ZEF intends to strengthen the development research community in Germany, Europe, and worldwide. The program offers training for doctoral degrees in social and natural sciences, economics, and agriculture at the University of Bonn and other universities. The program has become internationally renowned since its inception in 1999. In its size (around 140 PhD students per year), internationality (377 students from around 71 different countries since its interception) and inter-disciplinarity, the program is unique in Germany and Europe.

ZEF maintains an alumni network of development oriented academics and policymakers who have been affiliated with ZEF. This network provides ZEF with an increasing number of colleagues in key positions, both in research and government institutions in all major developing countries and Germany. Such a network enables ZEF to plan future cooperative research, to initiate further projects in the educational field, and to disseminate its research results among those responsible for implementing development policies. The ZEF alumni network has its own website with protected login and password. Here, the alumni can find information about previous colleagues and newsletters from other organizations as well as professional announcements and job openings worldwide. A publicly accessible data base of development experts (www.zef.de) has been developed as a tool to attract development organizations wishing to recruit experts, consultants, and policy-advisers to establish bilateral relationships, as well as to identify experts and lecturers for congresses.

Regular surveys among the alumni show that BIGS-DR is achieving its main goal: that of educating future decision makers from developing countries as well as German and European scientists for an international career. By March 2007, 158 doctoral students had graduated in the BIGS-DR since its interception in 1999. A survey of their career progression showed that 66% of the graduates from developing and transition countries returned to their home countries to take up positions in the fields of research, teaching, administration, and governments. Twelve percent of the alumni found jobs in international organizations like the World Bank, CGIAR Centers or the United Nations Organizations, whereas 13% found post-doc positions in Germany. Six percent found a job in another OECD country.
Careers of ZEF Alumni from Developing Countries (n=109)

Survey from March 2007

The monitoring of the careers of former German participants also confirms the success of the BIGSDR concept: immediately after completing their theses, most of them took up positions in national or international organizations in a development related context, in German ministries or in developing countries.

On the occasion of ZEF's 10th year anniversary celebration in October 2007 we invited former ZEF doctoral students from all over the world and various disciplines to ZEF.

We wanted to use this reunion for stocktaking and for demonstrating the long-term benefits of the education provided by ZEF. We also asked the invited alumni for writing up their biographies and share their personal stories with us. The outcome is this volume in which our alumni relate their personal background, their experiences made during their study period at ZEF and life in Germany, as well as their professional career, and the impact their education at ZEF had on this.
Dr. Mie Mie Aung

**Nationality:** Myanmar

**Age:** 49 years

**Batch:** 1998

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Research funds from BMZ/GTZ**

**Day of exam:** 16/05/2003

**Title of the PhD thesis:**

The Fate of Carbon in *Azolla-Anabaena* Symbiosis

**From:**

University of Göttingen, Faculty of Agriculture

**Institution:**

Yezin Agricultural University (YAU), Myanmar

**Current position:**

Lecturer, Department of Agricultural Biology
I was born in Myingyan, a trading center located nearly in the middle of Myanmar. I am the eldest of my siblings and have 2 sisters and 3 brothers. My father worked at the Agricultural Research Institute as a senior research officer for many years. Life during childhood was used to agricultural environment such as rice, cows and farm conditions.


After graduating from Institute of Agriculture, I worked as a junior researcher for the food legumes division at Agricultural Research Institute for 6 years. In 1989, I joined Institute of Agriculture to work as a demonstrator because I was interested in teaching and doing research at the same time. I was awarded a German Government Scholarship (DAAD) to study tropical and subtropical agricultural science at Göttingen University in 1995 and finished my MSc. degree in 1997. Prof. Paul Vlek and Prof. Ulrich Eberhardt supervised my thesis “The Role of Azolla in lowering the pH of Simulated Floodwater”. The result of my Azolla research attracted and lead me to continue studying and do my Ph. D degree. Returning home I was promoted to an assistant lecturer at my University in 1998.

Prof. Vlek handed me a seat as a Ph.D student in 2000 to continue studying Azolla: small plants but promising advantages to nature, at Göttingen. I left for Germany in January 2000 to pursue my dream. Although I enjoyed the field work, Azolla created interesting work in a controlled room environment. My research was conducted at an Isotopic Laboratory because it is necessary to use 14C to trace Azolla’s photosynthate.

My sincere gratitude to Prof. Vlek, my first supervisor, for providing me with the opportunity to make “my dream come true”. My study was made easier by unlimited support and advice I got from Prof. Eberhardt, my second supervisor. During the period of my Ph.D study, I frequently visited ZEF to discuss my thesis with Prof. Vlek, because he is the director of ZEF. I also went to ZEF to visit some Myanmar students doing their research there. From these relationships, I admired the international working environment at ZEF. I appreciated the educational facilities for students and the expertise of the researches.

My study on Azolla for my Ph.D was a great step in my professional journey of growth. I was promoted to the rank of Lecturer at my University in July 2003. I have since then continued my research work in the field of biofertilizer, trying my best to contribute to the sustaining of the natural balance.

Finally I want to express special thanks to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) for their valuable support.

Wishing ZEF to continue successfully its efforts to make a substantial contribution to development research and capacity building.

Our credit and heartfelt congratulation to ZEF for my graduate study in Germany.
Dr. Dougbedji Fatondji

**Nationality:** Niger / Benin

**Batch:** 1998

**Degree:** Dr. agr.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Current position:**
Scientific Officer

**Age:** 48 years

**Donors:** ICRISAT, BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 28/05/2002

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Organic fertilizer decomposition, nutrient release and nutrient uptake by millet crop (Pennisetum glaucum (L.) R.Br.) in a traditional land rehabilitation technique (Zai) in the Sahel

**Institution:**
ICRISAT Sahelian Center
This short note is about me, Mr. Dougbedji Fatondji born in 1959 in a village called Mondji in the department of the hills (Département des Collines) in the center of Benin from the marriage of my two beloved parents Mr. Codjo Fatondji (God bless his soul) and Mrs. Dohatin. I am the last of the 10 children my mother gave birth to. I spend my primary school years in my village under the precious care of my mother as I lost my father in the very first year of my birth. My parents were farmers and my mother had to work very hard to sustain our everyday life after my father passed away. After completing 6th grade in 1972, I joined the headquarters of our district – Savalou. Here was the only college we could attend. I attended the College of General Education that became later College of General Middle Education of Savalou (College d'enseignement Moyen General (CEMG) de Savalou) from October 1972 to December 1978, where I got the BEPC in 1977. I joined the CEMG of Dantokpa in Cotonou in 1979 to complete my last year before going to university. Here I got my Baccalaureat, which is the first degree required for entering University in the French education system.

Prior to beginning my university education I had one year of civic service coupled with military training like all my mates in 1980. After this, I joined the university in 1981. At the same time I applied and got a scholarship to study agriculture in Bulgaria.

After one year of preparatory courses in the High Institute of Chemistry in Bourgas, where we learned the Bulgarian language, I joined the High Institute of Agriculture (HIA) 'Vassil Kolarov' in Plovdiv in 1983, where I completed five years of study to get my BSc and MSc degrees in 1987. I did my Master’s degree in plant breeding. Being in a foreign country for the first time was a very challenging situation not only in terms of social life but also in relation to my training. Having lectures in a language you have learnt only for one year was not easy, but we managed. The strong community of foreign students was also a big help.

After the university years I went back to my home country in November 1987, and married my wife in Niger in February 1988. So I am married and have 7 children, which means I have a handball team with one substitute. I wish god blesses everyone, who desires to have as many children as I have or even more because they are the joy of us parents on earth.

I joined the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropic (ICRISAT) Sahelian Center in Niamey in May 1988 as a research assistant of the Groundnut Agronomy Program from 1988 to 1992. I also worked as a research associate in the Legume Physiology section (Agronomy Division) from 1992 to 1997. From 1997 to 1998 I was a scientific officer in the Natural Resource Management Program (NRMP) when I applied for scholarship to do my PhD in Germany. Initially, my candidature was accepted by the University of Goettingen before my supervisor, Prof. Paul Vlek, got the position of Director of Natural Resource management at ZEF. I happen to be transferred to the University of Bonn afterwards, where I got my PhD in 2002 after a successful completion of my study.

Due to my advanced age I could only get a sandwich scholarship for two periods of 6 months in Germany. Compared to other situations this is a short period but still enough to learn a lot. My stay in Bonn was very educative. It was an opportunity to complete my knowledge in different fields of science, such as soil, economy and hydrology, particularly during the first batch course in October 1999. My stay in Bonn from June
2001 to February 2002 was the most fruitful one and I am grateful to the ZEF doctoral program, to my professor and my co-supervisor Dr. Christopher Martius. From the social point of view my stay in Bonn was an opportunity to make friends with whom I maintain contact until today even though the occupations hampered the rhythm of communication a little bit.

As my contract as Scientific Officer at ICRISAT was running, I had to join the Institute to complete the agreement I signed to be allowed to do the PhD. I regret to say that the major condition for the institute to liberate me was that after completing my PhD, I had to keep my initial position with no change until there is an open position for which I would have to apply for. So since 2002 I am a scientific officer but doing the work of a PhD holder. I am conducting research on several themes, including

- Effect of organic amendment and mineral fertilizer, delayed planting on millet yield – Organic amendment applied with corralling and mineral fertilizer as microdose.
- Study the potential loss of nutrients due to water erosion following termites' activities on organic amendment applied on soil surface.
- Data collection to calibration of the crop growth DSSAT for sahelian crops and cropping systems.
- Long-term experiment to study the process of rehabilitation of degraded land using different types of mulch and study the effect of termites' activities on the process.
- Long-term experiment on combined use of live hedges of *Acacia colei*, earth bunds or 'demi-Lunes', high value trees such as the domesticated *Ziziphus Mauritanica* (planted inside the 'demi-Lunes') and annual crops (in rotation each year) to address the problems of soil fertility, soil erosion and rural livelihood in the harsh agricultural production conditions of semi-arid West Africa – this experiment is being conducted at ICRISAT Sadore.
- Participatory validation trial on the strategic fertilizer placement technology (micro-dose) as part of a decision support system project at ICRISAT – Niamey

I am also acting for the coordination of the project ‘Improved livelihoods in the Sahel through the development and implementation of household level bio-economic decision support systems’ funded by the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, DGCD Belgium.

Since our study and departure from Bonn I heard that the institute has undergone slight changes and the doctoral program also. My best wish is that the doctoral program as well as the Institute will develop further into an even bigger thing. The center really gave us students the opportunity to meet and work together. The network of alumni that ZEF's former students form is a fantastic tool for exchange.
Dr. Felix Ankohma Asante

**Nationality:** Ghana

**Batch:** 1999

**Degree:**
Dr. agr.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Current position:**
Senior Research Fellow, Coordinator of the program “Master in Development Studies” at the University of Ghana

**Age:** 41 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 24/04/2003

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Poverty Reduction, Decentralisation and Access to Public Goods and Services in Ghana

**Institution:**
Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), Accra, Ghana
Interview:

When did do you your PhD study at ZEF?

I came to ZEF in August 1999 and therewith belonged to the first batch of ZEF doctoral students. I did a two-month summer course in German language with DAAD and started the ZEF doctoral program in October. I finished my PhD in three years: my PhD defense was in July 2002 and I returned to Ghana in September 2002.

On which topic did you do your PhD research? From which university and faculty did you get your doctoral degree?

My PhD research was on “The economics of decentralization in rural Ghana”. I got my degree from the Agricultural Faculty of Bonn University under the supervision of Professor von Braun.

Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?

I was working as a researcher at the ISSER (Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research) of the University of Ghana in Legon, where I completed my Bachelor and Masters studies in Agricultural Economics. Our director, Professor Asenso-Okyere, brought me in contact with Professor von Braun, director at ZEF at that time, who encouraged me to join the newly founded PhD program at ZEF in Bonn. He took my application with him and submitted it on the day of the deadline. I received a DAAD stipend and was accepted in the ZEF doctoral program. My employer, ISSER, gave me a research leave for completing my PhD. The program sounded attractive to me because it would offer me the opportunity to broaden my academic scope in the field of development related research.

What do you consider to be the main benefits of having done your PhD study in the framework of ZEF’s doctoral program?

The program offered me the opportunity to extend my academic scope to topics such as health, poverty, and development. In addition, the international context provided me with a lot of contacts and experiences. ZEF gave me the opportunity to exchange opinions, views and my research results with other students as well as with senior staff. The set-up of the doctoral program gives the students a lot of responsibility – particularly during the field research. We had to take care of organizing our research, getting support staff and keeping our time and financial budgets within the set limits.

What do you consider to have been a disadvantage of your stay at ZEF?

The only disadvantage I can think of is the fact that by being part of a program being completely English structured, my command of German is still weak after a three year stay in the country.
Where did you do your field research and on which topic?

I did my field research in four districts in Ghana, my home country. It took me around nine months to collect the necessary data. For me, it was an interesting experience, since it was my first time to visit the north of Ghana, where I did field research in Tamale.

What happened professionally to you after graduating at ZEF? What kind of position / work do you have now?

I returned to my research institute, ISSER, at the University of Ghana in Legon in October 2002. Since I came back with a lot of ideas, I was assigned as the coordinator of the program “Master in Development Studies” at our University. I am responsible for 20-25 students doing a Master or MPhil study. In April 2005 I became a Senior Research Fellow at our institute. My experience in building networks also led to setting up an energy center in Ghana in cooperation with the “Resource Center for Energy, Economics and Regulation” in Texas, USA.

The greatest honor I received so far was my appointment as the first member of the “African Good Governance Network” by the German Bundespräsident, Mr. Horst Köhler, personally on his visit to Africa in January 2007. He is also the patron of the Network. This DAAD-funded German-African partnership effort will bring me back to Germany on a regular basis. I will be trained and prepared for a future leading role in the process of democratization, economic growth, and the rule of law in my home country.

In what way do you profit in your current position from your education at ZEF?

Well, I came back with a broadened scientific scope, which I acquired through ZEF’s interdisciplinary training program. I gained knowledge and insight on several development-related issues. This certainly is an advantage compared to most other graduates, who are academically more focused on single issues. I also got more self-confidence because I learned to take on much responsibility during my research activities. I built up a whole network of contacts, enabling me to contribute to boosting science and academic infrastructure in Africa.

Anything you want to say or add and has not been asked!

It certainly makes a difference, having done my PhD at ZEF. Last year I was asked to review a proposal for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Would they have ever asked me or even heard from me if I had stayed in Legon only so far?
Dr. Abay Asfaw

**Nationality:** Ethiopia

**Age:** 36 years

**Batch:** 1999

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Degree:** Dr. agr., agricultural economics

**Day of exam:** 15/04/2002

**From:** University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Title of the PhD thesis:** Costs of Illness, the Demand for Medical Care, and the Prospect of Community Health Insurance Schemes in the Rural Areas of Ethiopia

**Institution:** The World Bank, Washington D.C.

**Current position:** Young Professional

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Dr. Abay Asfaw received the 2002 Josef G. Knoll Science Award in Witzenhausen (see picture below) and the Theodor Brinkmann Prize for the best dissertation in the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Bonn in 2003.
Interview:

*When did you do your PhD study at ZEF?*

January 1999 – April 2002

*On which topic did you do your PhD research? And from which university and faculty did you get your doctoral degree?*

My PhD was in the area of health care. My particular focus was on the role of community health insurance schemes in poverty reduction and human resources development. I got my PhD degree from the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Bonn.

*Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?*

ZEF was and of course is one of the best development oriented research and teaching institutes in Europe. Its reputation and its focus on developing countries and poverty reduction attracted me. The use of English as the language of instruction attracted me as well, even though I have realised that more should be done to help students to speak basic German at least.

*What do you consider as the benefits of having done your PhD study in the framework of ZEF's doctoral program?*

ZEF's research area focusing on poverty reduction gave me the chance to deepen my knowledge on this issue. Besides, the interdisciplinary and disciplinary courses were very targeted and important. The program is also framed in such a way that students can finish their PhD within a period of three years time. The chances given to students to collect their own data and to work within an umbrella of big research projects were also beneficial for students. Working under the umbrella of a big project helped me to share different methodologies among many students and researchers and to compare results across different countries.

*What do you consider to have been a disadvantage of your stay at ZEF?*

Though not spending more time on German language classes seems attractive in the short run, ZEF didn't have a good environment to learn German. After spending nearly four and half years at ZEF, not speaking German is heart breaking.

*Where did you do your field research and on which topic?*

The filed work was done in Ethiopia and the topic was the one mentioned above.

*What do you consider to be your most remarkable experiences(s) during that period?*

Being part of the first batch of the program, I enjoyed almost everything. I enjoyed the get-together and all the field trip programs and the doctoral seminars. The two-month German language course prior to the doctoral program was very interesting. The ceremonies when I received the 2002 Josef G. Knoll Science Award...
in Witzenhausen in 2002 and the Theodor Brinkmann Prize for the best dissertation in the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Bonn in 2003 were extremely remarkable.

*What happened professionally to you after graduating at ZEF? What kind of position / work do you have now?*

The PhD I got from ZEF has opened me a door for high-level professional jobs worldwide. Immediately after graduation, I have taken a senior researcher position at ZEF and then a postdoctoral position at International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington, DC, USA. Currently, I am working for the World Bank. For my past and current work I won two prestigious prizes in Germany and now I have been selected to be included in the 62nd edition of Marques *WHO's WHO in AMERICA* for my research on health insurance, poverty, obesity, and gender related issues in developing countries.

*In what way do you profit in your current position from your education at ZEF?*

The process of thesis writing at ZEF is unique. Under the umbrella of big projects, students are free to choose their own topic and to develop their methodology without day-to-day interference of professors or tutors. This helped me to develop confidence in doing research independently, starting from writing a project proposal, designing a questionnaire, administrating field survey, analysing the data and writing up the paper. The interdisciplinary nature of ZEF also helped me to work easily with other disciplines.

*Anything you want to say or add and has not been asked!*

My experience at ZEF was marvellous. I met talented, cooperative and friendly people from different countries all over the world and I have kept in contact with this network. Now, I have friends almost all over the world. My stay at ZEF was very fruitful due to the very professional guidance and tutoring of Prof. Joachim von Braun, Dr. Assefa Admassie and Dr. Johannes Jütting. I would like to thank them. I also thank my friends of the first batch students and the Ethiopian group at ZEF.
Dr. Crammer Kayuki Kaizzi

Nationality: Uganda

Batch: 1999

Degree: Dr. agr.

From:

University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

Age: 43 years

Donors: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

Day of exam: 19/11/2002

Title of the PhD thesis:

The potential Benefit of Green Manures and Inorganic Fertilizers in Cereal Production on Contrasting Soils in Eastern Uganda

Institution:

Senior Research Officer, soil science and agronomy

Kawanda Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), Uganda.

This picture shows the first batch of the ZEF doctoral program. I am the one on the left side.
I was born in Kangulumira, a small trading centre located 80 km east of Kampala, the capital of Uganda. I am the eleventh child of my mother and therefore used to crowd right from childhood. My father the late George William Kayizzi Ssalongo passed away on 24th December 2001 and my mother the late Gladys Nalweyiso Nalongo Kayizzi passed away on 6th February 2007. May God rest their souls in eternal peace. My father never attended school, but my mother was a midwife by training. So she valued education and convinced our father to educate us. Therefore the saying “when you educate a girl child, you are educating a nation” became true in our case. My parents paid for my education until I joined university. I thank them for the vision.

Life during childhood was typical of most African settings. We used to wake up before 6.00 am to fetch water from the protected spring before going to school. We had to leave for school early enough so that we arrive before 7.45 a.m., otherwise you would either be caned or receive some other punishment for coming late, such as digging-up an anthill, or weeding teachers gardens. The primary school was located 8 km from my parents' home. Therefore we had to walk that distance every day. Saturdays and school holidays were days for digging in our parents' gardens, returning with firewood or banana leaves, which we carried on our heads. Picking coffee was the order of the day during the 3rd term school holidays. I enjoyed swimming in the river Nile every Sunday after church service. Despite all the challenges, life was interesting.

After graduating from Makerere University, Kampala, with a BSc (Chemistry) degree, I worked as a quality controller and chemist for the Edible Oil and Soap Industries for two years. In 1990, I joined the Research Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Industry as a research officer (soil chemist). I was awarded a Belgium government scholarship to study Soil Science at the University of Ghent in 1992, returning home in October 1994. I was promoted in January 1995 to the rank of research officer II. In 1999 Dr. Henry Ssali – former Head of Soils and Soil Fertility Management Program, Kawanda Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) of the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) selected me out of three scientists with MSc degrees in the program to apply for a sandwich PhD scholarship for a joint project of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), ZEF, Makerere University, and NARO on “Policies for Improved Land Management”.

I left for Bonn in August 1999 to start my PhD program. I was looking forward to the program I was going to follow. It consisted of a two months language course and the succeeding course work for the PhD. I was received at Bonn railway station by my colleague Mr. Gerd Ruecker together with Dr. Günther Manske. It was a warm welcome indeed.

The course work at ZEF was really interesting, because natural scientists were interacting with economists in one class. I had never dreamt of this happening in my lifetime. I liked the interaction because lack of basic economics had been one of the bottlenecks in my research work. I returned to Uganda around April 2000 to embark on my fieldwork under the guidance of Dr. Henry Ssali – one of the best soil scientists in the region. We should remember that in African tradition, the elders are the one who mentor or guide the young generation.
I enjoyed the field work because I conducted my research on a topic which is relevant for the farming situation in most sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries. The issue of the use of organic versus inorganic inputs and the socio-economic conditions in the region are quite challenging to most development workers. The idea of the "Green revolution" which worked in Asia has failed to gain momentum in SSA because of the socio-economic conditions, poor government policies and the nature of the farming systems.

I returned to ZEF in January 2002 to write my thesis. The period January – November 2002 was quite hectic because collecting data is one thing but getting a scientific story out of it is really another challenge. I am very grateful to Professor Dr. Paul Vlek for his excellent guidance during the data analysis and thesis writing phase. It was during this time that I appreciated the parental nature of Professors, and their patience. The door of Professor Vlek's office was always open to students. Even when you met him in the corridor, he was ready to listen and advise accordingly. He always encouraged me to squeeze the data further.

I enjoyed my stay at ZEF. Life was made easier by the support I got from Dr. Günther Manske, Ms. Hanna Peters, my colleagues Dr. Felix Asante, Dr. Pooja, other colleagues within the program and the entire ZEFc staff. I have mentioned Dr. Felix Asante and Ms. Hanna Peters for a special reason. Felix was my best friend throughout our stay at ZEF, but he and Ms. Hanna Peters assisted me during the difficult time when my father was terribly sick and the medicines they had prescribed for him were not available in Uganda. Ms. Hanna Peters and Felix assisted me and bought the medicine in Germany because I was in Uganda conducting my field research at that time. May the Gracious Lord bless them. This shows that at ZEF we were a family. I hope this spirit will survive the test of time.

My studies at ZEF were a great step in my professional journey of growth. I was promoted to the rank of research officer I in December 2002 and to senior research officer in January 2006. I have since then continued my research work in the field of Soil Science and Agronomy, trying my best to contribute to the alleviation of poverty, hunger and suffering in sub Saharan Africa. I have published papers in refereed journals, contributed to book chapters, and coordinated research projects. I am a consultant on environmental issues with multi-national petroleum exploring companies in Uganda and I also collaborate with national universities and international organizations working for improving the livelihoods of the people in SSA. It's challenging indeed, but we have to keep the candle burning, because our ancestors did the same.

I owe my success to my parents, Professor Paul Vlek, Professor Van Cleemput of Gent University, Dr. Henry Ssali, Dr. Charles Wortmann of the University of Nebraska, USA, and my wife - Maureen.

My personal vision of development and future goals is contributing to reducing malnutrition, hunger, poverty and suffering in SSA. I grew up in a rural area and still work with rural communities. Therefore I know what's going on in these areas, and I appeal to the policy makers and those in positions of responsibility to do what is possible within their means to change the unfavorable policies to the poor in developing countries. I also appeal to donors to more directly support scientists in developing countries.
Dr. Puja Sawhney

**Nationality:** Indian

**Batch:** 1999

**Degree:** Dr. rer. nat.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science

**Current position:**
Senior Project Manager

**Age:** 34 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 16/12/2002

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
People-Park Interaction. A case of Banhavgarh National Park, India.

**Institution:**
Adelphi Research, Berlin, Germany
I come from a small family from Delhi. My father did many interesting things in his life, while my mother is the home maker. I have a younger brother who's got a degree in Business studies. Studying and doing well in life was always emphasized by my parents and has been my motto in life. My interest in natural resource management and conservation has been long standing. I followed this interest by pursuing my bachelors and masters degree in Geography in India. After completing my masters degree, I decided I would only study further if it was in a different country and then too if I got a full scholarship. My hard work paid off and I got to do a second master at the University of London on a full scholarship and then again for the PhD in Germany by the DAAD. Since having completed my master in London I have worked in different countries (India, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, Korea, Japan). I have gained extensive experience on varied topics related to forestry, forest management, forest policy, wildlife conservation, protected area management, recycling, biofuels, waste management, rural sanitation, tsunami recovery, rural livelihoods, gender, and industrial pollution.

After completing my studies in Germany, I worked for three years as a Policy research on topics related to use of indigenous knowledge for natural resource management, impact of trade liberalization on agriculture and eco labeling amongst others at the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies in Japan.

I am now back in Germany working as senior project manager with Adelphi Research, an organization which carries out a broad range of applied research, analysis, and public policy consulting. I am working of a variety of issues which is not only challenging but a good learning experience. Currently the topics I'm involved in include those on tsunami recovery in India, rural sanitation in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India, e-waste management in Delhi, application of best available techniques in the textile and leather sectors in India and ecolabelling.

At ZEF I developed the research on a topic which has always been close to me although from a different perspective. I was always interested in wildlife conservation but didn't pay much heed to the perspective of the people living in and around conservation areas when I was volunteering with an NGO while at school, thus my research “People-Park Interaction. A case of Banhdavgarh National Park, India” was aimed at understanding the people perspective and to get a more holistic view on the situation on the ground. ZEF provided my the opportunity to research what was really important for me and at the same time provided me with the opportunity to interact with people who shared common knowledge of the subject and similar vision. I also got the opportunity to meet and make friends from many parts of the world. I'm still in touch with most of them and will continue to do so.

PhD at ZEF also provided me with the opportunity to get to know another country and culture. It also provided me with the opportunity to travel and explore other places in Europe.

Development to me means development for all. Progress of a nation as a whole and the world as a whole will only take place if people from every section of society progress. We can all make a difference in our own small way but that effort will go a long way in improving the global society. I guess in my own way, I'm trying to make a difference in the world.
Dr. Arief Sabdo Yuwono

Nationality: Indonesia
Batch: 1999
Degree: Dr. agr.
From:
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

Current position:
Head of Laboratory of Farm Structures and Environment

Age: 41 years
Donors: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ
Day of exam: 29/07/2003
Title of the PhD thesis:
Odour Pollution in the Environment: Detection of Biogenic Odour Emissions using a QCM Sensor Array - Based Instrument
Institution:
Dept. of Agric. Engineering, Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Indonesia
I was a doctoral student at the Department of Ecology and Resource Management at ZEF from 1999 until 2003. I did my PhD research on the Odour Pollution in the Environment under the supervision of Prof. Schulze-Lammers at the Institut für Landtechnik in Bonn.

I started my education at an elementary school (SD) in Magetan, Indonesia, where I also completed my 6 years of secondary education (SMP and SMA). My first higher education was at the Department of Agricultural Engineering at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB). Afterwards, I got a one year scholarship from Japan (JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency) where I studied Environmental Control Engineering in Agriculture at Tokyo University under the supervision of Prof. Tadashi Takakura. During that period I also studied Japanese in the Tokyo International Centre Hatagaya for three months. In 1994-1996 I was granted a two year MSc-course scholarship by the Belgian Government organized by ABOS (Algemeen Bestuur voor Ontwikkelings-samenwerking, "a Belgian DAAD") at Gent University.

After my PhD degree at the University of Bonn, I returned to my home country Indonesia, where I now work as a lecturer and researcher at the Bogor Agricultural University (IPB). Today, I am the Head of Laboratory of Farm Structures and Environment, Dept. of Agric. Engineering, IPB. Besides, I am also a consultant for several multinational companies operating in Indonesia dealing with environmental problems.

My wife Darwati is a medical doctor at the IPB Campus in Bogor. We have two kids, Jennie and Bob. Living in Bonn was a very interesting period in our family life. Between 1996-1998, we were living separately, because my wife was still a student at the Faculty of Medicine in Indonesia and I was a Master's student in Belgium. A dream came true, when I received a scholarship from DAAD in 1998 for a PhD study at ZEF. When I came to Germany, I had to learn German for six months at the Goethe Institute in Göttingen. During that time, our second child, Bob, was born. Then my family joined me in Germany. Living in Bonn and Germany was very important for us.

I was lucky because Prof. Vlek accepted me as PhD student at ZEF. Today, from the distance, I realize how unique the education system at ZEF is. The integration between economical, political and ecological knowledge is very strategic to develop a certain way of thinking. I am using this education during my professional career, on campus and as head of an environmental consultant team. This kind of education is really helpful and fundamental. Bravo ZEF!
Dr. Li Zhaohua

Nationality: China
Batch: 1999
Degree: Dr. rer. nat.

From:
University of Bonn, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science

Current position:
Professor in Ecology and Dean of the Faculty

Age: 38 years
Donors: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ
Day of exam: 25/02/2003

Title of the PhD thesis:
Diversity and ecology of mountain bamboos in the Shennongjia National Nature Reserve: Implications for natural conservation and resource management

Institution:
Faculty on Resources and Environmental Science, Hubei University in Wuhan, China

Agricultural investigation in North Korea, 2006
Fieldwork with my students in Zhangdu Lake, 2005
Interview:

Facts: From when to when did you your PhD study at ZEF?

I started my PhD study at ZEF on August 2, 1998 and I finished my doctoral studies at ZEF on February 30, 2002.

On which topic did you do your PhD research? From which university and faculty did you get your doctoral degree?

I did my PhD research on the topic of plant ecology. The title of my dissertation was: “Diversity and ecology of mountain bamboos in the Shennongjia National Nature Reserve of Central China: Implications for resource management and biodiversity conservation”.

I received my Doctoral Degree from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science of the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-University of Bonn.

Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?

There are several reasons why I went to ZEF to do my doctoral research: I was very interested in the concept of interdisciplinary course trainings, because they are very useful for further research. The English speaking environments and international students were also very interesting for me, because studying in such an international environment is very helpful for understanding global development. I also think that the fieldwork in the home countries of the students makes the research results more meaningful.

What do you consider as the benefits of doing your PhD study in the framework of ZEF's doctoral program?

When we joined ZEF in 1998, Prof. Paul Vlek told us “ZEF's doctoral program is not for training ordinary scientists, but for educating leaders of development.” And this is what we, former doctoral students, are trying to realize.

Where did you do your field research and on which topic?

I conducted my field work in West Hubei, my home province in China, on the topic of bamboo ecology. One of my foci was the extinction of the Giant Panda in Central China. I found out that this was due to the dying of bamboo species in some key regions in China (my research area was the Shennognjia National Nature Reserve), so the Panda ran out of food supplies. In addition, Pandas were cut off from other traditional regions with bamboo plants by expanding settlements.

What do you consider to be your most remarkable experiences(s) during that period?

I lived in the mountainous region for almost one year, which gave me a deep understanding of the poor people in China. That was a very rewarding experience. Also, Dr. Manfred Denich came to my field place for designing and supervising the field work.
What happened professionally to you after graduating at ZEF? What kind of position / work do you have now?

After my graduation, I returned to China, to Hubei University in Wuhan. The University asked me to “make a Chinese copy of ZEF”, so I founded a new Faculty on “Resources and Environmental Science”. At the beginning, we had 11 staff members and seven rooms only. Now, three years later, we have 37 academic staff members, 15 laboratories, and 467 undergraduates participating in four programs: Geographical science, Geoinformation science, Urban and rural planning, and Environmental engineering, as well as 63 postgraduates. Currently, I am the Professor in Ecology and Dean of the Faculty.

In what way do you profit in your current position from your education at ZEF?

ZEF taught us not only how to do our personal research, but also how to cooperate with other people (i.e. independent fieldwork) and how to organize your group (i.e. open seminar). By the way, German Degrees are highly recognized in China.
Dr. Ayodele E. Ajayi

Nationality: Nigeria

Age: 36 years

Batch: 2000

Degree: Dr. ing.

From:

University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

Donors: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

Day of exam: 20/04/2004

Title of the PhD thesis:

Surface Runoff and Infiltration Processes in the Volta Basin, West Africa: Observation and Modeling

Institution:

Department of Soil Science, Universidade Federal de Lavras, Brazil

Current position:

Researcher, visiting scientist in Brazil

With my family at the doctoral ceremony in Bonn

With younger friends at Três Pontas, Brasil
I was recently invited to a dinner meeting with Brazilian students who were studying English for the TOEFL examination. Their teacher invited me to share my experience of having to learn another language. The students also had the opportunity to ask me a variety of questions and to practice their language skills. I recall one of them asking me what I would regard as the first cultural shock at my arrival in Bonn. Thinking back, I shared my experience of the first summer evening in Bonn. Soon after my arrival at the airport I was dropped at the Tannenbusch hostel by Dr. Günther Manske. I went to sleep apparently because of the jet lag, and woke up at about 9 pm. The day looked very bright. In great shock, I went out looking for an opportunity to validate that my wrist watch was giving me the correct time considering the sky outside. Soon I was at the U-Bahn station and confirmed that it was actually 'night time' but not dark. I couldn't help but exclaim what a wonderful world. That was the beginning of about four years at ZEF. Years, which were going to change my life and focus in entirety and put me on the better reach of the wonderful world.

By the time our lectures at ZEF started, I actually began to feel different and saw the limitation of single discipline studies. I had studied Agricultural Engineering for my Bachelor's Degree and got a Master's Degree in Soil and Water Resources Engineering of the Federal University of Technology in Akure, Nigeria, my place of birth. After graduation, I joined the university as an assistant lecturer teaching students on the importance of soil and water for living. However, at the interdisciplinary course in ZEF, I began to see that the world is more than that. The need to understand the economics and sociological cost of all decisions dawned on me. The ZEF training offered us the privilege of interacting with the best players in different fields and world class professionals. More than anything, I gained confidence. The opportunity of sitting in the same class with citizens of about twenty different countries taught me the lesson of diversity in culture and differences in value systems. I remember Prof. Hillel, who I have read as citation in many publications drawing the web of knowledge in my class, and I could not help but feel happy.

Attending the classes on integrated development and learning the way the other first and second world countries did it, reinforced my hope that my country will develop. The enthusiasm with which Prof Vlek taught us to go out as problem solvers ignited the research gene in me. Prof. Oded Stark's lecture on migration economics showed me that I am not a foreigner as long as I can make a positive economic and social contribution. I understood that I had to go around helping to develop the economy of the whole world. The care provided by Dr. Manske and Hanna Peters can not be described, attending to us as newborn babies. I recalled one day mentioning in the class that Dr. Manske should be nominated to be the United Nation secretary general because of his experience and conduct. I sometimes wondered if he ever gets tired. I am sure, when it is Europe's turn to produce the secretary general, many alumni of ZEF will be nominating him.

Staying in Bonn was not all about book; we had the regular summer party and barbecue on the ground floor at ZEF. There was also time to serve God in the Redeem Christian Church of God at Stadthalle in Bad Godesberg. While in Bonn, my wife joined me and we had our first child there. It was a wonderful experience to be a father. Dr. Manske and my supervisor Prof. Nick van de Giesen were the first to send in a congratulation note. I had a wonderful host parent, Dr. and Frau Heyde, organized by Hanna, Dr. Manske and the International club at Poppelsdorf. They were wonderful parents indeed. I was there weekly to try out my
German language. The family was so wonderful, bought a lot of my baby items and took my daughter as their first grandchild. We are still in touch till today.

After graduation at the University of Bonn, I returned to Nigeria as a different person. Now I know development decisions need some element of economic and sociological explanation. I went to lecture in my university. Currently I am a visiting researcher at one of the best research institute on Soil Physics in Brazil. I am working on compaction in tropical soils looking at the influence of mineralogy. I will return to Nigeria by August 2007 to take a political post where I will be working on scholarship and skill promotion in my state; Ekiti State, Nigeria. The basis of the appointment was my display of the elements of skill and scholarship as we were trained at ZEF. Thus, my story would never be complete without a ZEF column:

Thank you ZEF! (English), Vielen Dank ZEF!! (German), A dupe ZEF!!! (Yoruba), Muito Obrigado ZEF!!!! (Portuguese), Me dawasi ZEF!!!! (Twi-Ghana), Nagode ZEF (Hausa), In sere ZEF!!!!! (Ekiti).
Dr. Khalid Yousif Khalafalla

**Nationality:** Sudan

**Batch:** 2000

**Degree:** Dr. phil.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Philosophy

**Current position:**
Young Professional

**Age:** 37 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 4/02/2004

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Political Islam in Sudan: Political Opportunities and Mobilizing Structures

**Institution:**
Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Interview:

Facts: From when to when did you do your PhD study at ZEF?


On which topic did you do your PhD research? From which university and faculty did you get your doctoral degree?

The topic was political Islam in Sudan. I got my degree from the University of Bonn, Faculty of Arts.

Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?

I found the advert about ZEF that it is an international program, study will be in English, and there is funding for research, then I decided to apply.

What do you consider as the benefits of doing your PhD study in the framework of ZEF’s doctoral program?

The connection of study/research to the practical issues/problems of development, and the multidisciplinary approach.

What do you consider to have been a disadvantage of your stay at ZEF?

The inability to master the German language.

Where did you do your field research and on which topic?

In Sudan. The topic was about a survey of farmers' participation in credits by Islamic banks, and also a survey of students' participation in Islamic movement.

What do you consider to be your most remarkable experiences(s) during that period?

There are many things you learn from survey other than data you get from your questionnaire. The human interaction and indigenous knowledge I learn from farmers was informative.

What happened professionally to you after graduating at ZEF? What kind of position / work do you have now?

I started working in a Multilateral Development Bank.

In what way do you profit in your current position from your education at ZEF?

The multidisciplinary training I got in ZEF and the multicultural atmosphere in ZEF were helpful for my work in a development bank.
Dr. Adama Konseiga

**Nationality:** Burkina Faso

**Age:** 38 years

**Batch:** 2000

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Degree:** Dr. oec.

**Day of exam:** 15/03/2004

**From:**
CERDI, Université d’Auvergne, Clermont Ferrand, France

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Regional Integration Beyond the Traditional Trade Benefits: Labor Mobility Contribution. The Case of Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivore

**Current position:**
Researcher

**Affiliation:** African Population & Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya (www.aphrc.org)


**Institution:**
Département d'Economique et Groupe de recherche en économie et développement international (GREDI)

Faculté d'Administration, Université de Sherbrooke, Canada

Dr. Adama Konseiga received in 2005 for his PhD study the Global Development Medal for Outstanding Research on Development, the largest international contest for research on development.
Interview:

From when to when did you do your PhD study at ZEF?

I have been at ZEF from August 1st, 2000 to March 2004.

On which topic did you do your PhD research? From which university and faculty did you get your doctoral degree?

I did my PhD study in Development Economics in the framework of a unique cooperation between the Center for Development Research in Bonn, Germany (ZEF) and the Center for International Development Studies and Research (CERDI) in Clermont Ferrand (France). I specialized in migration issues, and my thesis was on “Regional integration beyond the traditional trade benefits: Labor mobility contribution. The case of Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.”

Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?

Since I had already practical experience in managing development projects in Burkina Faso for three years, I was not interested in a literature-review type of research. I decided to do a PhD only if it offered the possibility of conducting field research. ZEF seemed to be the right place to do such practice oriented research. So when my application for a DAAD stipend was accepted, I was happy to start my PhD studies at ZEF.

What do you consider as the benefits of having done your PhD study in the framework of ZEF's doctoral program?

On benefits, I can talk of both academic and personal ones. The years I spent at ZEF were very rich in terms of networking and getting to know new cultures. My Master's study in international development in France was very much restricted to the scope of francophone Africa and France. At ZEF it was really a great chance for me to broaden my contacts with people from all over the world. I also appreciated the opportunity to strengthen my English while getting started in German.

From the academic point of view, the doctoral program prepared me quite well for the interdisciplinary research I have conducted after graduation within a diversified team in Nairobi. I would not have achieved this level of professionalism in research as well as expertise in data handling without the fieldwork that is an integral part of each doctoral thesis conducted at ZEF.

What do you consider to have been a disadvantage of your stay at ZEF?

When you are not coming with a pretty ready research project, the time allocated for completing your thesis seems too short. In my case it was difficult to convince the French institute that from the time I got my data I could defend a dissertation in less than a year time. But, actually, I did.
Where did you do your field research and on which topic?

I did empirical research on households' livelihood strategies, management of natural resources and income diversification in Burkina Faso with a particular focus on the role of migration. The main migration destination is Côte d'Ivoire and I was interested to see what happened to the lives of the people staying behind and to those who left.

The unique feature of this survey was that it examined both sides of the coin: we collected information from the people in the "sending" area, the dry-lands of Northern Burkina Faso, as well as from those in the "receiving" area, the cocoa belt in Côte d'Ivoire.

Another key aspect of my research pointed out the complexity of the migration phenomenon and the implications it has on the regional level (West Africa Economic and Monetary Union). When you look at the interrelations with the main migratory destination areas (France and Côte d'Ivoire), it appears that the so called "brain drain" can be a "brain gain" for both sending and receiving countries. But this is only possible when country policies are being coordinated in a better way. Thus, an optimal skilled migration level favorable to human capital formation could be achieved, especially in the poorer sending regions.

The results of this research were published in a book as well as in several journal articles.

What do you consider to be your most remarkable experiences(s) during that period?

The field work was quite challenging and we really needed and appreciated the support and collaboration of our partner institutions. Only with their support I was able to conduct the survey. My research cooperation with these institutions continues until today.

In Burkina, we conducted the survey under the umbrella of CAPRi (Collective Action and Property Rights), a System-Wide Program and one of several inter-center initiatives of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Without their logistics, it would have been impossible to collect the data during the heavy rainy season.

The Unité d'Enseignement et de Recherche en Démographie (UERD, Burkina Faso) and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée (ENSEA, Côte d'Ivoire) were the research partners who supported with their long experience the field work in Côte d'Ivoire.

We still remember the challenges of conducting the interviews with only a subgroup of foreigners at a very sensitive period with community frictions in the latter country. Indeed, just a week after our return to Burkina, the ongoing conflict escalated in Côte d'Ivoire (19 September 2002).

What happened professionally to you after graduating at ZEF?

After ZEF I was happy to see the value of my academic assets and that I was able to freely choose what to do. So I worked two years as a post-doctoral fellow at the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya. The centre has a surveillance system that monitors poverty, health and migration
issues in the slums of Nairobi. I could not expect a better environment to sharpen my research interests in migration and broaden my research topics to related demographic phenomena such as urbanization, poverty, child and maternal health, HIV and orphan plight as well as human well-being at large in sub-Saharan Africa.

In what way do you profit in your current position from your education at ZEF?

At ZEF I developed my skills in data collection and data management which turns out to be highly helpful for conducting a surveillance system where we interview households every four months. I believe the analytical skills and research capacity I brought to APHRC were very much appreciated.

Anything you want to say or add and has not been asked!

Soon after ZEF, I was invited to compete for several prizes and as a speaker at very well known places such as Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London. I received the medal for outstanding Research in Development of the World Bank initiated Global Development Network (GDN). The latter convinced me I have a place to take in research, which I am happy to continue. I am in a transition right now where I finished my post doc fellowship and started teaching Development Economics at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada. Another academic experience I am enjoying.

I still take this opportunity to thank the Doctoral Program and its staff for their important support to students. I was lucky to have a very good supervisor who helped me to shape my topic to work on. He was seconded by excellent tutors and the macro-economic group at ZEF.

I wish ZEF many more happy decades to come!
Dr. Philip Oguntunde

**Nationality:** Nigeria

**Batch:** 2000

**Degree:** Dr. ing.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Current position:**
Lecturer

**Age:** 38 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 12/08/2004

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Evapotranspiration and complimentarity relations in the water balance of the Volta Basin: Field measurements and GIS-based regional estimates

**Institution:**
Institution: Federal University of Technology, Akure, in Nigeria
I was born in Oyo, which is about 30 Km from Ibadan (the largest city in West Africa). I studied at the Federal University of Technology, Akure in Nigeria, where I received a Bachelor of Engineering in Agricultural Engineering with First Class Honours in 1994 and M.Sc in soil and water engineering in 1998 at the same university. In 2004, I received a doctoral degree in Engineering from the Faculty of Agriculture in Bonn for my thesis on “Evapotranspiration and complimentarity relations in the water balance of the Volta Basin: Field measurements and GIS-based regional estimates.”

I am married to Victoria and we have two children, a son, David, and a daughter, Mercy. My daughter was born in Bonn during my stay at ZEF.

The training at ZEF, with a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), has opened to me a new horizon of research orientation with a view to solving development problems in an interdisciplinary manner. My PhD research in the GLOWA-Volta project has given me the opportunity to use cutting-edge instruments and state-of-the-art techniques. But my studies at ZEF were beneficial not only from a scientific point of view, but also for myself on a personal level: The multi-national setting of ZEF and the city of Bonn has helped me building team spirit and intercultural competence in working with different categories of people. Apart from academic stuff, I have enjoyed good social live making friends with a wide variety of future development players around the world. The role of German mid-wives and nurses during the birth of our daughter was highly commendable. The administrative staff and consultants at both DAAD and ZEF were so fantastic in responding to issues that bothered me, making my family's stay in Bonn a memorable one.

Currently, I hold a lectureship position at the Federal University of Technology, Akure, in Nigeria and I am responsible for teaching and research related to the Land and Water Engineering Programs in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs of the Department of Agricultural Engineering. My recent activities include teaching courses at undergraduate levels in Fluid mechanics, Hydraulics, Hydrology, Soil Mechanics, Modelling, and Computer Applications, and graduate courses in Advance Drainage Engineering, Soil Physics, Engineering Instrumentation, and Control and Water Resources Engineering. Currently, I am supervising 4 undergraduates, 2 Postgraduate Diplomas, 3 M.Sc students and co-supervising 3 PhDs. My other administrative positions include: Member, Board of Studies (BOS) and Board of Examiners (BOE), School of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Business Editor, FUTAJEET-An International Journal of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Examination Officer, School of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Member, committee on quality assurance, School of Engineering and Engineering Technology, and Coordinator, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate studies of Agricultural Engineering Department.

Largely based on my training in ZEF, I am currently pioneering a relatively new study area - especially of West Africa - *Ecohydrology*. Furthermore, my research interests generally include: water management, hydrological impacts of land use/cover and climate change, modelling of hydrological processes, agro-meteorology and eco-hydrological studies.

During my academic career, I have gained several prizes, awards and grants, for example the best graduating student of the Department of Agricultural Engineering and the best graduating student of the School of
Engineering. After I could complete my PhD study with distinction, I received a Post-Doc Grant from the Water Research Center at TU Delft, the Netherlands, a Partnership Grant from WOTRO, the Netherlands, and a CERAD Research Grant to study cassava response water application under different agro-ecosystems in Nigeria. So far, I have published well over 30 peer-reviewed articles in reputable journals.

Professionally, I am a registered engineer at the Council for the Registration of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN), a member of Nigerian Institution of Agricultural Engineers (NIAE), Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS).

I am grateful to the DAAD and the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for providing me with a scholarship and research grant, which made it possible for me to study at ZEF. I also want to thank the staff at ZEF and the friends I made while living in Bonn for making my time in Germany the great experience it turned out to be.
Dr. Junoo K. Tuladhar

**Nationality:** Nepali

**Batch:** 2000

**Degree:** Dr. agr.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Current position:**
Senior Soil Scientist

**Age:** 41 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 21/09/2005

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
The effect of Azolla on Nitrogen Use Efficiency in Rice-Wheat Rotations of Nepal

**Institution:**
Soil Science Division, Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC)
I joined the Center for Development Research in Bonn as a doctoral student in 2000. I started my study with starting a German language course for two months. ZEF provided me a homely environment for learning and living; and I am very thankful for the support and help by Dr. Günther Manske and his team. I have a Master degree from England in agricultural science with a major in soil science major. Before I came to ZEF, I was working in Soil Science Division of Nepal Agricultural Research Center.

I started at ZEF with the interdisciplinary course where we got familiarized with economics, social and political science and natural science in a global aspect. The next course was on Ecology, Land Use and Development and was more a preparation for my field of research. The regular seminars and workshops at ZEF given by visiting scientists and professors from all over the world during our course work were another attraction of the study period. At the same time, I developed a research plan for my dissertation and fieldwork. I was fortunate to have Professor Dr. Paul Vlek as my supervisor, whose guidance and suggestions were remarkable.

I conducted my fieldwork for one and half year in Nepal. My work was on rice–wheat cropping pattern which is the most important cropping rotation in the Terrai region in Nepal. I was working on the nitrogen use efficiency in this cropping system and analyzed the effect of *Azolla* on the reduction of ammonia volatilization from applied nitrogen fertilizer Urea. During my field work, I received a visit by my tutor, Dr. Eric Craswell, a scientist from ZEF. After my return to ZEF, I analyzed the collected data and wrote up my thesis. On January 28, 2004, I was awarded the academic degree of a Doctor in Agricultural Science from the Agricultural Faculty of the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. My supervisor was Professor Dr. Paul Vlek and my co-supervisor Prof. Dr. Mathias Becker.

After completion of my PhD study at ZEF, I returned to my country and continued working as research scientist at the Agricultural Research Center in Nepal. I work in a project on resource conservation technology in the rice–wheat system, where I have the chance to use the knowledge which I gained during my doctoral study at ZEF.

I am very grateful to German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for funding my study. Congratulations on ZEF’s 10th anniversary, and many thanks for ZEF and its entire staff for the support they provided me with.
Dr. Talia Vela-Eiden

Nationality: Peru

Age: 37 years

Batch: 2000

Donors: BMZ via GTZ

Degree: Dr. phil.

Day of exam: 08/11/2005

From:

University of Bonn, Faculty of Philosophy

Title of the PhD thesis:

Environmental Policy under Political Transition: The Peruvian Mining Sector and the Yanacocha Gold Mine

Institution:

UNOCHA Horn of Africa Pastoralist Communication Initiative

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Left picture: Qaarsa Dembii, near Yabello, Oromia Region, Ethiopia, July 2006, at the Regional Pastoralist Gathering organised by UNOCHA-PCI. Meeting with the Mursi of South Omo
I was born in 1970 in Lima, as the eldest daughter of Romulo and Josefa, civil engineer and teacher respectively, who came both from the city of Iquitos at the junction where the rivers Marañon and Ucayali unite to become the mighty Amazonas in the Peruvian jungle. I have two younger sisters, Paola, an artist and filmmaker, and Yazmin, an economist. My grandparents were traders making their mark in those humid and hot parts of the country and who themselves came from everywhere in that scarcely inhabited region of Peru. I have Spanish, Amazonian indigenous and Chinese ancestry. Coming from such a background, my culture at home was a representative mix. I grew up loving fish and seafood, as any Peruvian from the coast, but also knowing the delicious Amazonian fruits. I grew up in the district of Jesus Maria in Lima, and went to school just a few blocks away from my parents' house, at Colegio "San Antonio de Padua."

After finishing secondary school, I applied for admission to the General Studies Faculty of the Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru. I was one of the 450 admitted after an admission test in March 1987, for which I prepared for 6 months at Academia Trener. I met most of my best friends at “la Trener” and at PUCP. The General Studies Faculty is a pre-requisite for admission to the faculties of the areas of humanities, social sciences, law and business administration of PUCP. Therefore, those two compulsory years were tough years of endless study hours, but also of fully immersing into university life. Outside the university walls, the Shining Path guerrilla war went rampant. I remember those years as full of energy. On one side, my friends and I could study without worries, enjoying the cultural activities and social functions of the university, going to French and European cinema outings, Greek theatre, parties, and we were having a good time in general. On the other, car bombs, curfews, police and military checks, razzias, blackouts, armed strikes, were all part of our daily life. In 1989, I started law studies. The Law Faculty was intensive and very competitive and we passed also an intensive drilling on being excellent lawyers with a strong sense of responsibility for our country.

I was on my path to become a lawyer specialising in business and tax law. This changed drastically upon entering, in 1991, Taller de Derecho, a voluntary student organisation of the Faculty of Law, carrying on social work in Lima’s poorest areas in collaboration with local parishes. Taller de Derecho provided me with a strong sense of how law could be used for social justice in tune with the humanistic values encouraged among us students during the years at the General Studies Faculty. A group of members of Taller de Derecho decided to found a circle of environmental law studies. That was the first time I became interested in development issues. My quest then was to find a place where I could practice on environmental law and also would have access to development work. We are talking of 1992. Not very much was going on the sustainable development field in Peru. I was taken at the Program of Environmental Law and Policy of PROTERA, an NGO doing pioneer work in the field, taking up environmental cases, standing to sue, and in general, opening this new field of expertise in the country.

I left PUCP obtaining the degree of Bachelor in Law and the professional title of Lawyer. Upon finishing my law studies, I was promoted to researcher at PROTERA and stayed there until 1996. The experience was most valuable, as I had the opportunity to work, as a researcher and practitioner, in a range of issues related to environment and development, and I was part of interdisciplinary working groups. PROTERA also supported me, in 1994, for applying to an internship at the World Conservation Union (IUCN), where I had the
opportunity to work at the Regional Office for South America, in Quito (Ecuador), a fantastic experience for a young professional, and which was also my first encounter with the international environmental scene. After four years at PROTERRA, I was called to be part of the team of advisers of the Chairman of the Committee of Environment, Ecology and Amazonia of the Parliament of Peru. During my time at the Committee, we worked on a variety of issues related to drafting and enacting the most important environmental laws of Peru. Work was intensive and I learned a lot from some of the most experienced professionals at Parliament.

I was very interested in enhancing development topics in my academic studies with further courses at the postgraduate level. In 1997, I was admitted to the master’s studies program in development studies at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (The Netherlands), with a full scholarship of the Netherlands Fellowship Program (NFP). Such a great chance left an indelible mark on my life both at the professional and personal level. I had the opportunity to combine my academic and professional interests and to learn from classmates from all over the world. The students of my academic year came from 55 countries, mainly developing countries. It was the first time I could meet people from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America, all in the same room and sharing ideas, discussing concepts and, in general, learning first-hand what cultural diversity and multidisciplinary backgrounds are, all in the same place. I specialised in environment and sustainable development and politics of structural reform, with a research paper on citizen participation in environmental policy making in Peru, a topic that interested me especially after my experience at the NGO and the government sectors, and which criss-crosses both. In The Hague, at the ISS, I also met my husband, Albert, from Germany, who is a development specialist with experience in Southern and East Africa.

Upon completion of my master’s degree, in 1999, I worked as a law clerk at the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in The Hague, with a partial fellowship of the Centre for Civil and Human Rights of the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, USA). I was assigned to work with the Legal Adviser at the Cabinet of the Prosecutor. The time at the OTP of the ICTY-ICTR was intensive and rewarding. The work was often harrowing and distressing, especially when prosecuting crimes against humanity and thus learning about the atrocities committed in war-torn areas. This was also an encounter with another face of Africa, not the one of the books or of my nice classmates at the ISS, but the one of war and poverty.

In 2000, I joined the International Doctoral Studies Program at the Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung of the University of Bonn in Germany as a doctoral candidate. I was awarded BMZ/GTZ funding to carry on with my fieldwork. I wrote a dissertation on the environmental policy and law issues related to conflict between communities and the Yanacocha goldmine in Northern Peru (Cajamarca). Self-discipline was imperative to carry on the studies and to motivate ourselves to continue and finish. The intellectual environment at ZEF was challenging and varied, offering also a good inter-disciplinary program and the opportunity to attend many interesting conferences and seminars on global and regional development issues. At the Doctoral Program coordination office, I found much support for my fieldwork trips to Peru in 2001 and 2003 and for all the administrative issues to be solved. My “Doktorvater”, Prof Uwe Holtz, was an invaluable help for the
dissertation work. I was awarded a doctoral degree in political science by the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bonn in 2006.

During my years at ZEF, I came to meet colleagues from all around the world, some of whom I am still in touch with, and I even had the opportunity to visit some of them in the last years, while I was in Africa. I did not live in Bonn but in Duisburg (where Kindernothilfe, Albert’s NGO, is located). Therefore, I missed some of the closest experiences of being a student of ZEF in Bonn, for example the many parties. However, I tried to participate, as much as I could in the activities at ZEF, provided I could find a good train connection back home. Commuting between 2 cities in Germany was also an experience on its own. I remember many funny, bizarre but also sad situations in my comings and goings between the two cities. Bonn itself is a very nice and welcoming city. Strolling in its streets is one of my favourite pastimes until now. Every time I am in Germany, I go to Bonn and at least have one day in town. After the time in Bonn and at ZEF, I was very much looking forward to going back to work, especially with grassroots organisations, as a development practitioner.

In 2004, Albert and I moved to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he became the country representative of the Kindernothilfe for Ethiopia and Zambia. In 2006, I joined the team of consultants of the UNOCHA Horn of Africa Pastoralist Communication Initiative. PCI is a joint project of UNOCHA in Ethiopia and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom. I work as a consultant on legal and political affairs related to communities, land and environment in the Horn of Africa, especially in the border region of Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. At PCI, my colleagues again come from all around the world, especially East and West Africa. I have had many bizarre experiences since I started working for PCI, as being stuck in the mud without food for 2 days on the border with Sudan, my car fallen in ditches in the bush, having to cross rivers to get out, rain, lots of insect bites, even handling weaponry. At the same time, I have had the opportunity to get to know one of the most remote areas of Africa and the fascinating people who inhabit the place, like the famous South Omo tribes, among them the Hamar, the Mursi, the Nyangatom, the Dassanech, the Tsemay, and the Kara. Going to those places, talking with their elders and their leaders, and learning about their cultures has been an invaluable experience, which I cherish very much. I have been working as a consultant specialised in legal and political affairs related to land rights, environment and communities. I will certainly miss it when we go back to Germany next year. I look forward to continue working on development issues in the future, preferably in a Latin American context, which I hope can be a reality sooner than later.
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<th><strong>Dr. Kyaw Kyaw Win</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality:</strong> Myanmar</td>
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<td><strong>Age:</strong> 44 years</td>
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<td><strong>Batch:</strong> 2000</td>
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<td><strong>Day of exam:</strong> 12/09/2003</td>
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<td><strong>From:</strong> University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture</td>
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<td><strong>Title of the PhD thesis:</strong> Plot-Specific N Fertilizer Management for Improved N-Use Efficiency in Rice-Based systems of Bangladesh</td>
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<td><strong>Institution:</strong> Yezin Agricultural University (YAU), Myanmar</td>
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**Current position:** Lecturer, Department of Agronomy

My working group and me during my doctoral field research in Bangladesh: I am the one on the left. Dr. Eric Crasswell from ZEF is in the back.
I was born in Kyaukse, a small town located 50 km south of Mandalay, the second capital of Myanmar. I have one elder brother, one elder sister and two younger sisters. My parents are tailors. They attended primary school, but they did not have a chance to study anymore after that. Therefore, my parents took care of their children’s education. My parents paid for my education until I joined university.

I studied at Primary and Secondary School in Kyaukse (1970-1980), Regional College in Mandalay (1981-1982), and Yezin Agricultural University (1983-1986) for my B.Ag. degree. After completing my first degree, I joined at the Department of Agronomy, Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) as a demonstrator in 1989. In 1994, I started my Mater degree as a part-time student in YAU and I had got M.Agr.Sc. (Agronomy) in 1998. During that time, I had a chance to attend a one month training course for Post-harvest Technology at KMUTT, Thailand in 1997. I was promoted to Assistant Lecturer in March 1998. I also attended a one month training course for GIS offered by ICIMOD (Nepal). In 1999, I sat a selection examination for a DAAD sandwich PhD scholarship program. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation selected me for DAAD scholarship.

I left for Bremen in April 2000 to take a six months language course at the Goethe Institute. After my completion of the language course, I transferred to Bonn to start my PhD study under the supervision of Prof. Paul L. G. Vlek at ZEF. The interdisciplinary course work at ZEF was very attractive, because I could interact with economists and social scientists. The disciplinary course also made me to open my knowledge in widescreen of natural resource management. At the end of the course work at ZEF, I moved to International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines to setup my PhD thesis research proposal with Dr. JK Ladha and Dr. Buresh, working group of IRRI team in April 2001. Then I transferred to Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Bangladesh to do my field work with guidance of Dr. M. Murshedul Alam for 14 months. I really enjoyed the field work because my research was the issue of the use of N fertilizer and it was relevant for the tropical developing countries including my country. I had got exposure not only to new agricultural technology but also to the culture of Bangladesh. I returned to IRRI with my research samples to do chemical analysis in July 2002. At the beginning of October 2002, I went back to ZEF to write my thesis. The period of October 2002 – September 2003 was reasonably exciting because data analysis was one thing but getting a scientific story out of it was actually another challenge. Finally, I became one of the PhD holders from ZEF's doctoral program in September 2003. I happily passed my stay at ZEF due to the easier life supported by Dr. Günther Manske, Ms. Hanna Peters, the entire ZEF C staff and other colleagues within the program. My study at ZEF was an immense step in my professional journey of growth.

I went back my country as a Doctor at the end of October 2003. I was promoted to the rank of lecturer in December 2003. My personal vision of development and future goal is contributing to promote Myanmar's agricultural sector and to the alleviation of poverty in my country. I am therefore trying my best to continue my research work in the field of Agronomy, convey my knowledge to my undergraduate, master and PhD students, and setup the relationship between my University and International Institutions like ZEF for student exchange programs to get advanced agricultural technology.
Dr. Samuel Nii Ardey Codjoe

Nationality: Ghana
Batch: 2001
Degree: Dr. agr.
From:
University of Bonn, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science
Current position:
Lecturer

Age: 38 years
Donors: BMBF
Day of exam: 19/02/2004
Title of the PhD thesis:
Population and land use/cover dynamics in the Volta river basin of Ghana, 1960-2010
Institution:
Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS), University of Ghana
My name Samuel was given to me by my Christian parents, Mr. J.E.K. Codjoe, a retired accountant and farmer and Ms. Regina Aryee, a retired civil servant, from the biblical account in I Samuel 1:20. Nii, is a title for Chiefs among the Ga Mashie ethnic group from the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Ardey (from Dade which literally means “metal”) was the nickname of my great grandfather who is purported to have led a war against another ethnic group in Ghana. Sometimes I am also referred to as Kwabena because I was born on a Tuesday. I am the fourth of six children and was born in the late 1960s, three years after the first President of my country i.e., Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (seen as the champion of the independence struggle in Africa, and the only person in history to have been made a co-President in another country, i.e., in Guinea together with President Sekou Toure) was overthrown by a coup d’état. There are many who believe that Nkrumah’s overthrow derailed the development agenda not only for Ghana, but also for the entire African continent.

I grew up in a small fishing village on the Gulf of Guinea (part of the Atlantic Ocean) named Teshie. Typical of most communities in my neighborhood at the time, my nursery and kindergarten schools were housed under a big Nim (Azadirachta indica) tree which was infested with lizards for most parts of the day, and that earned us the nickname “Odakro”, meaning the lizard school. Growing up on the coast was fun, because we could occasionally play truancy and go to the beach to help out the fishermen pull their seine nets, and they in turn rewarded us with some of their catch. Although we received a lot of spankings after those adventures, it never deterred us from going again and again. At age 7 when I was ready to enroll in class one, I moved to live with my father in a plusher neighborhood at Adabraka in Central Accra. That was a very difficult period for me because it was a totally new environment. All of a sudden, I had to switch from using my bare hands to eat, to using forks and knives. As I moved higher up the school ladder, I had to study totally foreign geographical concepts, such as the fjords of Norway, the prairies in Canada, and learnt about the Berlin wall, the Czars of Russia, the Ottoman empire of Turkey, Alexander von Humboldt, Carl Troll, etc. I wondered at that point what these concepts, people and empires had to do with me. To be honest, I almost always dozed off during such lessons.

Things went very smooth during my primary school days until one rainy June morning in 1979. While at school; we heard gunshots all over town. We later learnt that a junior officer (Flt. Lt. J.J Rawlings) in the Ghana Armed Forces had taken over the reigns of power, apparently to rig the country off the corruption that had engulfed it. Those were very challenging times in the history of my country. As a young person I had to go to bed at 6.00 p.m. as a result of the numerous curfews that were enforced. The said junior officer, who later became a democratically elected President, went on to rule the country for over two decades. In the early 1980s, my country witnessed a dramatic reduction in domestic production, deterioration in government finances, sharp decline in export revenues and sizeable external and fiscal imbalances. There was a sharp fall in external reserves, as well as a large accumulation of trade barriers on top of the substantial public sector loans to finance national expenditure programs. These problems brought about shocks, resulting in domestic macro-economic maladjustments reflected most notably by high level of external debts, unemployment, stagnant growth, a decline in standard of living and other socio-economic malaise. The last straw that broke the camels back was the drought of 1983. With the country unable to cope with mounting economic
problems and attendant social upheavals, it resorted to the "Brentwood Sisters" viz., the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank borrowing, irrespective of the conditions attached to the loans. This indeed for me was the most difficult time in my country's history. However, we survived that period.

I spent five years in a boarding school at Suhum in the Eastern Region of Ghana, for my secondary education and two years at Swedru in the Central Region for my advanced secondary education. Most of the time, I was a student performing slightly above average. However, at the advanced secondary level, I won two academic prizes in History and Geography and that really was the defining moment of my academic career. From then on I did not look back and kept working hard. No wonder I gained admission to the University of Ghana, which is one of the pioneering universities in sub-Saharan Africa. The others are the Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, University of Ibadan in Nigeria and the Makerere University in Uganda. I graduated from the University of Ghana with a degree in Geography, and was appointed as a National Service Personnel at the Population Impact Project (PIP), an outreach project of the University of Ghana. PIP’s goal is to make relevant population information available to appropriate policy makers and other opinion leaders.

After a six-month stay at PIP, I was offered to participate in a Master’s program in Geography at the University of Oslo in Norway. I left Ghana for Norway on December 27, 1993, exactly one week after I had married my secondary school sweetheart, Gertrude. She joined me in Oslo after one year. Life in Norway (the land of the midnight sun) was very tough but enjoyable. I remember when I had to wake up at 2.00 a.m. under freezing temperatures (the lowest I experienced in Oslo was –38°C) to work as an “avisbud” i.e., a newspaper boy.

As an African in Scandinavia, I got very confused when there were longer days and shorter nights. Although I had been introduced to that concept in a Geography lesson way back in my secondary school days in Ghana, I had no clues what it actually was until I experienced it in Norway. I had sleepless nights because the sun was almost up even at 12.00 midnight. It was very painful for me when I had to leave Norway after a five-year sojourn, because that was where my first two boys, namely Carl and Kelvin, were born. I returned to my birth country in 1999, and went back to PIP. In 2000, I was offered the opportunity to work with the GLOWA project at ZEF for my Doctoral Degree.

Germany was a bit easier for me to start with, especially since I had lived in Scandinavia for five years. In fact, I had been on cruise liner ships from Oslo to the German city of Kiel when I was a student in Norway. Things that baffled me in Germany were the huge size of the then Chancellor, (I had and since not seen any Head of State as huge as he was), the beer drinking in Bavaria, the carnivals on the streets of Cologne, and the general order in German society. My doctoral studies at ZEF offered me the opportunity to work with a multi-disciplinary team. My PhD study was on “Sustainable Management of the Water Resources of the Volta Basin”. This study brought together scientists from diverse academic fields (hydrologists, meteorologists, agronomist, demographers, economists, etc.) all over the world. I successfully executed my sub-project, which resulted in the publication of a book entitled “Population and Land Use. Cover Dynamics in the Volta River Basin of Ghana, 1960–2010”.
I still have fond memories of the university hospital in Bonn, because that is the place where my wife Gertrude delivered my third son, Brian, on June 24, 2003. Brian was later given the German name Wolfgang by my colleagues at ZEF. The entire doctoral program was well-organized and we enjoyed tremendous assistance from Dr. Günther Manske and his team. I say kudos to all of them and especially to Hanna Peters. She was such a great lady. Let me at this juncture pay a glowing tribute to the founding directors, namely Prof. Dr. Paul Vlek, Prof. Dr. Joachim von Braun and Prof. Dr. Andreas Wimmer. I will also like to especially mention Prof. Dr. Eckart Ehlers for supervising my dissertation at ZEF. ZEF gave me so much and transformed me from a mere population geographer to a multi-disciplinary scientist.

After ZEF, I moved back again to my homeland and was appointed an Associate Project Director, and a Lecturer at the Population Impact Project and the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS), University of Ghana, respectively. Currently, I teach courses in Population, Environment and Development and Population Agriculture and Food Security at RIPS. I am also the Principal Investigator for an inter-disciplinary study on “Food Security and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Afram Plains of Ghana”. This study is part of the Advancing Capacity to Support Climate Change Adaptation (ACCCA), a project that is being sponsored by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and START International. Furthermore, I am the coordinator of the social science component of a three-year USAID grant to establish the Climate Change Collective Learning and Observatory Network in Ghana (CC LONG) Project. Finally, I am the national team leader for research on “Sustaining Agricultural and Forest Land Uses in the Afram Plains of Ghana” for National Working Groups in Africa. This study is sponsored by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

In the opening remarks to an editorial (captioned “The trouble with Africa”) to a special issue on Africa (Vol. 63(5), 2006), the editor of the International Journal of Environmental Studies stated and I quote “The poverty, pain and potential of Africa are obvious. Two big points: almost no democracy; and almost nothing but dictatorship”. These are issues that have plagued my continent since time immemorial. However, there are interesting developments and I dare to say perhaps a light at the end of the tunnel. The Organisation of African Union (OAU) has transformed itself to the African Union (AU), and there is now the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Stalwarts like my own John Agyekum Kufour (who currently heads the AU) and Olesugun Obasanjo of Nigeria are moving heaven and earth to propel the continent to greater heights. Although some of us believe the road is rocky and may even be rockier, we trust God will help us through.

My ultimate career goal is to use an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach, such as integrating social science and biophysical science to develop an effective framework for managing African resources, in a way that promotes sustainable livelihoods on the continent. This is due to the fact that the threat from climate change is likely to undermine sustainable livelihoods while food security is at the heart of policies that promote healthy, strong and adaptive populations. I wish ZEF a wonderful tenth anniversary celebration. Long Live ZEF! Long Live Germany!! Long Live Planet Earth!!!
Dr. Abebaw Efigie Degnet

**Nationality:** Ethiopia

**Age:** 36 years

**Batch:** 2001

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Degree:** Dr. agr.

**Day of exam:** 22/12/2004

**From:** University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Title of the PhD thesis:**

The Economics of Smallholder Coffee Farming Risk & its Influence on Household Use of Forests in Southwest Ethiopia

**Current position:**

Senior researcher

**Institution:**

Ethiopian Economic Association / Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute
I was born and raised in a rural area of North Shoa, Menz in Ethiopia. My parents were farmers and were dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. When I reached school age, my parents sent me to school and used their meager resources to pay for school fees and related expenses.

I attended primary and secondary schooling in North Shoa, Menz. I received my BSc (1994) and MSc (1999) Degrees in Agricultural Economics at Alemaya University. Then I received a study leave from the Jimma University College of Agriculture for a PhD study at the Center for Development Research (ZEF). There I obtained my PhD Degree in Agricultural and Resource Economics from the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Bonn. During my PhD Studies at ZEF, I took both disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses. I carried out my research within the coffee-project at ZEF.

I am very grateful to DAAD for granting me the scholarship to pursue my PhD in Germany. I would also like to express my appreciation to ZEF for providing me all the necessary inputs to carry out my research. I also extend my gratitude to the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for funding my field work via GTZ.

My professional career actually started at Jimma University, where I taught several courses on Economics and Agricultural Economics. At Jimma University, I also served as head of Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension and as head of Research and Publication Office of the University until June 2006. In addition, I also worked as a senior researcher at ZEF in the BIOTA East Project between January and August 2005. During my stay in Germany, Bonn, I have published several papers in scientific journals.

Currently, I am a senior researcher at the Ethiopian Economic Association/Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute. The major areas of my current research include poverty reduction, human resources development and rural safety nets. I am involved in several research activities on these topics. Among others, a research team in which I was the principal researcher has won a research prize in January 2007 from Global Development Net Work (GDN) to study "Impact evaluation of Ethiopian Health Services Extension Program." This study is now under way and will be completed in June 2009.

I intend to carry out classical policy analysis and development research on development challenges and poverty in Africa in general and in Ethiopian in particular.

I am married to Wubit Tamirat and we have one son.
Dr. Pepijn Schreinemachers

**Nationality:** The Netherlands

**Batch:** 2001

**Degree:** Dr. agr.

**From:**

University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Current position:**

Postdoc

**Age:** 30 years

**Donor:** Robert Bosch Foundation

**Day of exam:** 10/04/2006

**Title of the PhD thesis:**

The (ir-)relevance of the crop yield gap to food security in developing countries. With an application of multi-agent models to farming systems in Uganda

**Institution:**

University of Hohenheim

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Prasnee and me celebrating our PhD degree at ZEF

My batch. I am waving in the fourth row.
I come from a village in the southernmost province of the Netherlands, an area that is both close to Germany and Belgium. My parents are Theo and Lizette, and I also have an elder brother, Maurice.

For unknown reasons, I was concerned about the environment early in life. At around the age of 10, I begged my mom to make me a member of Greenpeace, to save the whales, and of WWF, to save tigers and pandas. The direction was hence set early. My grades in biology and slight dislike for chemistry, however, shifted my interest to another type of animal and I decided to study economics.

At the age of 19, I moved out of my parents' house to enter Wageningen Agricultural University to study Agricultural Development Economics. I liked to think about global matters of politics and economics, of development and poverty, even though there were no solutions and lecturers taught us how good intentions had usually failed to reduce poverty in poor countries. Inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall and later collapse of the Soviet Union I thought it would be better to dedicate myself to countries in Eastern Europe than to tropical ones where white men had not done much good. I hence decided to learn Russian and go there for one year to do an internship on collective farms and write a thesis about it, which was a defining experience for me.

Having completed my studies in Wageningen, I applied to a private consultancy firm. On my job interview I was asked: “Imagine you have to bring some equipment to a country in Eastern Europe. We gave you a briefcase with some money. Now you have to pass customs and they don't let you through, what would you do?” Thankfully, another job offer accidentally rolled into my lap and I went as research assistant to The World Bank in Washington, DC. I worked at the research department analyzing data on farm restructuring in transition countries. My boss, Zvi Lerman, was a great source of inspiration and I got interested in doing research.

I wrote to Peter Wehrheim at ZEF to see if there were any possibilities there and was later offered a scholarship from the Robert Bosch Foundation. After having stayed in Russia and the USA, moving to Bonn felt a little like going home. At ZEF, I very much enjoyed being part of a group of students with similar interests, from many countries, and with as many different opinions. Life in Bonn was highly enjoyable, I think it is a beautiful town and I loved being able to bike around.

My research was on the analysis of crop yield gaps – the difference between maximum yields achieved under research conditions and the actual yields that farmers achieve in their fields. For this, I looked into a case study in Uganda. Thomas Berger was my tutor and he got me interested in quantitative modeling and complex systems research. Though always generally pleasant, studying at ZEF was sometimes also hectic and stressful as the research had its ups and downs and the end was occasionally hard to see.

After completing my studies at ZEF, I continued as a post-doc in a project on upland agriculture in Vietnam and Thailand at Hohenheim University. For this, I am currently outposted to Chiang Mai, Thailand. The choice of Thailand was logical, as a happy marriage to someone coming from there was one interesting by-product of my studies at ZEF. Prasnee was in my batch at ZEF.
Dr. Prasnee Tipraqa

**Nationality:** Thailand  
**Batch:** 2001

**Degree:** Dr. rer. nat.

**From:**  
University of Heidelberg, Faculty of Chemistry and Earth Sciences

**Current position:**  
Postdoc

**Age:** 33 years  
**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ, International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

**Day of exam:** 28/06/2005

**Title of the PhD thesis:**  
Opportunities and constraints of integrated farming system in Northeast Thailand. A case study of the Huai Nong Ian catchment, Khon Kaen province

**Institution:**  
Institute of Land Use Economics in the Tropics and Subtropics, Hohenheim, Stuttgart
I come from Si Sa Ket, which is one of the poorest provinces of Thailand, situated about 550 km northeast of Bangkok. I was the second of four girls in our family. Both my parents were serving the Royal Forest Department until their retirement. Perhaps therefore I chose to study forestry at Kasetsart University in Bangkok. During my studies I had a part-time job at the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC). After completing my bachelor in forestry, I continued with a master in environmental science, which widened my view from trees to include human needs and people living in the forest. Supported by my boss, and perhaps influenced by my forestry friends who worked with the local habitants in community forestry development, I was inspired to work like them and I applied for scholarship at ZEF, which I got.

From my first day in Bonn, I met good friends and we started our adventures in Bonn and learned to integrate into the German culture together. During the first week at ZEF -- good lord! -- everyone in my batch kept repeating the same thing: “my name is..., my topic is about..., what is your name?” However this lessend once the interdisciplinary lectures started. At the end of the course, I was surprised that we could evaluate the course, which I had never experienced in Thailand.

After the course, time for fieldwork was approaching. Many of my friends, including me, had to adjust their research topics right before the fieldwork. Yet, thanks to this change, I could widen my thoughts and understanding of reality and the complexity of agricultural development in Thailand. My research topic was about integrated aquaculture, livestock and woodlots in the farming system, and the opportunities and constraints for resource-poor farmers to adopt it. The International Water Management Institutes (IWMI) in Thailand gave me good support during one year of fieldwork in Khon Kaen, Thailand. Doing fieldwork gave me the practical skills that I always wanted to have.

My experience at ZEF after the fieldwork was different from the first year at ZEF. It was first difficult for me to analyze the data and write down results. Yet, I managed to learn quickly enough and was able to defend my thesis in June 2005. Apart from the research skills for my academic career, ZEF also provided me the best mate who will always be with me afterwards.

After ZEF, I got a chance to continue my line of research, this time on the adoption of agricultural innovations by hill tribe farmers in Northern Thailand with the Uplands Program at Hohenheim University from 2005 to 2006. After that, I received a scholarship from the START program to do a post-doc at Chiang Mai University from 2006 to 2007. This time I focused on the agriculture of the Karen hill tribes in northern Thailand. Doing research outside my own country has always been my dream. I now got this opportunity from the University of Hohenheim on a research project in southern China. My current research focuses on the economic assessment of Jatropha in China. I'm also still working on publishing output from my previous study about agricultural commercialization of the Karen people in Northern Thailand, funded by the START program.

At ZEF, I also met my husband, Pepijn, with whom I now live in Stuttgart and work at the same institute at the University of Hohenheim.
Dr. Sayan Chakrabarty

Nationality: Bangladesh
Batch: 2002
Degree: Dr. rer. pol.
From:
University of Giessen, Faculty of Economics

Current position:
Assistant Professor

Age: 33 years
Donors: BMZ via DAAD and GTZ
Day of exam: 14/07/2006

Title of the PhD thesis:
Does 'Social Labeling' Displace Child Labour and Increase Child Schooling? : Evidence from Nepal

Institution:
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Bangladesh,
Those colorful days

“Driver, would you like to go?”

“Yes, sir. Where do you like to go?

Oh, it is a child Rickshaw puller! What should I do? ....

The person then decided not to ride in that Rickshaw and started walking along the river side “Surma”. On the way he thought thoroughly about his decision. He could not understand whether he made a good or bad decision. He tried to avoid exploiting a child labor, but on the other hand the child could have earned some money to buy food. The person was then in a dilemma, this dilemma perpetuates and always hunted his mind. This is how a monetary economist, by heart and soul, was transformed into a development economist. This little incident motivated and inspired me to do research on child labor.

On 6th August, 2002 I was standing in the train station “Bonn Hauptbahnhof”, alone and little scary. I was a little afraid of being lost in an unknown world. Everything looked different and completely new to me. I was looking around to see a friend although I did not know him; I had only seen his picture. Suddenly one woman came and asked me“ excuse me, are you looking for somebody?” I got a little relieved and with her help I found a way to contact ZEF. I still remember the lady and her lenient voice when I recall my first day at Bonn. From the very beginning this experience helped me to believe that I would not be alone in this friendly world although I was a bit homesick.

I do not know how the ZEF people could feel my homesickness. ZEF organized the daily routine in such a way that one could hardly feel pity for his/her home. The days at Bonn started with a lot of interesting events like excursion, parties, and various cultural activities. These cultural programs were quite important to stabilize the students' mind for studying. Then the real study life started with interdisciplinary and disciplinary course work.

I entered into a new chapter of my life in 2003-2004; I conducted my doctoral field research in three different South Asian countries. The field research was really challenging and full of thrilling experiences in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. In those auspicious days during my pilot field research, Mr. Guido Lüchters, my best teacher and friend, accompanied me. I remember those days when we visited NGOs and carpet industries to make an efficient survey design. From the pilot
study I was able to understand the difficulties and challenges I might face in the final study as many of the children were working in the underground economy. In some cases it was very difficult to collect information from NGOs and government offices; clearly employees at the NGOs were not very enthusiastic to support me with all the documents and information I wanted. For them it was also somewhat an 'internal strategy' to fight against child labor and therefore they were little bit reluctant to reveal special knowledge/ information. Although my research was directly supported by GTZ (The German Technical Cooperation termed my research as one of the top priority research projects) and ILO (International Labour Organization), this tough situation sometime made me feel and act like a private detective - including the dangers of course. I think learning depends on how much difficulties we are facing in the field, problems and sufferings are the creators of scientific solutions. We are really unfortunate and our probability of learning is very low if we do not face any difficulty or suffering during field work. The more difficulties we have to solve the more efficient we are.

The scientific planning of a field research includes a pilot survey and a reliable code book. Theory selection is another most important factor for a good doctoral field research. The main and hardest point always is to distinguish between mere correlation and causality. Like: "Ah! I see a correlation between 'snow falling' and 'developed' countries. And therefore I conclude that countries where snow falls in the winter are more developed than the countries where no snow falls in the winter." I know you are smiling. For disguising such logical flaws we need to develop or follow good theoretical framework before designing our questionnaire for field research so that we do not erroneously conclude causality between snow falling and development. Fancy mathematical formulas will not protect us from false conclusions - they might only deter shy colleagues from asking necessary questions temporarily. But false scientific conclusion and policy could kill a lot of human beings immediately.

Some of the pathetic stories of child laborers in the field really touched my heart. One of such stories is with Sunil (12) and Suresh (10). They worked at least 14 hours a day in a carpet factory at Kathmandu in exchange for two meals a day only, without any payment. Sunil and Suresh had no chance to go to school. I was curious to know about these two children - the employer informed me, their father, an agricultural day laborer, was in debt to his landlord and pledged his two children as collateral for his loan. One day a broker (who collects children to employ in the carpet factories) bought them from their landlord and since then they were working in the carpet factory. They would render their labor without any payment until the present employer could discount the money he spent to buy the children from debt bondage (the amount of money was paid to the broker). Nobody knows how much labor and days would be required or equivalent to the money the employer spent to buy these two children.

I understood case studies (as an example of a qualitative study) could be one of the most important ideas to start empirical field work. Sometimes we could re-think and re-structure our ideas by case studies. If we know how many children are working only for food and how the children are used like a bond by their parents for
getting loans, then what do we say? We might say stop child labor immediately by imposing strict laws or trade sanctions. Do you think it would be a solution? Then, how may children would starve for the law? And, how many children would shift to work in the other hazardous industries?

Hinduism and Buddhism believe in the concept of re-birth (which might be a funny idea, as you have to 'suffer' or 'benefit' in the next life from what you contributed and left in this world). Although there is no scientific proof for such ideas, I like the philosophy. This philosophy is very interesting for the globalization process where wages and employment are not increasing in the same pace with productivity and it might result in further increase in child labor and poverty. Many children are still working in a hazardous situation. The economists and policy makers are still struggling to ripe benefit for all in the globalization process. Let's imagine, in the next life one of us could be a child laborer working in the carpet industry or we could even be re-born as a child soldier.

Close your eyes and try to visualize this situation.

I think ZEF is a unique institute where one could get an opportunity to learn and conduct interdisciplinary field research. Along with scientific knowledge, the field research is very important to develop managerial skills - how to manage your field staff, how to approach different kinds of people with various religious and cultural norms, how to solve conflicts within a group and how to work in a national conflict situation or during natural disasters. These skills would obviously ensure a good researcher with all the relevant managerial capabilities who can lead the future development research. I would greatly appreciate the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for funding such research initiatives. One of the most important but neglected areas is to implement the results and policy implications of these research findings. Without implementation we will only increase the number of books on "poverty" in the library whereas the economics books on poverty increase the dust of a library.

While the person was walking down by the river side Surma six years ago, he was thinking to do research on child labor. He is now walking along the bank of the Rhine at Beethoven's city, thinking how to implement his research results. He can see a close relationship between Surma and Rhine – both of the rivers mingle with the ocean, this is how the universe teaches us about the eternal unity, although people forget it frequently.
Dr. Asia Khamzina

**Nationality:** Uzbekistan  
**Age:** 29 years  
**Batch:** 2002  
**Donors:** BMBF and DAAD  
**Degree:** Dr. agr.  
**Day of exam:** 14/02/2006  
**From:** University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture  
**Institution:** German – Uzbek Khorezm Project

**Current position:** Postdoc

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
The assessment of tree species and irrigation techniques for afforestation of degraded agricultural landscapes in Khorezm, Uzbekistan, Aral Sea Basin
When did you do your PhD study at ZEF? And on which topic?
I started the study in March 2002 and finished in October 2005. My thesis was on land desertification in Uzbekistan and I received the doctoral degree from the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Bonn.

Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?
I wanted to do a research in the Aral Sea Area, the ecologically deteriorated region in my home country Uzbekistan. ZEF provided such an opportunity by accepting me as a junior researcher in its long-term project in Uzbekistan. This project aims at the ecological and economical restructuring of land and water use in the Region of Khorezm, one of the largest areas affected by the Aral Sea crisis. I was also fascinated by ZEF’s international program that attracts students from all over the world.

What do you consider as the main benefits of doing your PhD study in the framework of ZEF’s doctoral program?
Just being in the international environment greatly benefited my personal, cultural and professional development. It gave me a better understanding of traditions and perceptions of people from other countries. International food parties which we had at ZEF were a particular delight 😊.

Where did you do your field research and on which topic?
I did my field research on afforestation of degraded agricultural land in Khorezm. My research work included the selection of appropriate salt-tolerant tree species for increasing the productivity of land which is no longer suitable for cropping. Establishing plantations on highly saline nutrient poor land with minimal investments was also part of my research, as well as studying the bio-drainage function and the nitrogen fixation by the tree plantations.

What did you find remarkable during that period?
I found most remarkable the opportunity to design and lead a field study using high-tech equipment, communing with nature, measuring soil, water, plant responses and slowly coming to understand soil-plant relationships.

What happened professionally to you after graduating at ZEF?
I am still associated with ZEF as a postdoctoral research fellow within the framework of the ZEF project in Uzbekistan.

In what way do you profit in your current position from your education at ZEF?
In a very direct way: Three years with ZEF and the Uzbekistan project improved my knowledge of the study area and the research topic and triggered new ideas for further tree research.

Anything you want to say or add and has not been asked!
The PhD time I spent at ZEF and in the field in Uzbekistan was the best time of my life!
Dr. Carlos Javier Puig

**Nationality:** Argentina

**Batch:** 2002

**Degree:** Dr. rer. nat.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science

**Current position:**
GIS, Remote Sensing and Natural Resource Management Specialist

**Age:** 38 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Day of exam:** 21/09/2005

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Carbon sequestration potential of land-cover types in the agricultural landscape of eastern Amazonia, Brazil

**Institution:**
The Conservation Land Trust
Corrientes, Argentina
I come from a medium size family of central Argentina. Both my parents were teachers and I am the only of the three brothers who continued with a formal education. When I was 18 years I took the decision to move and find my own way, so I started a long journey that has not finished yet. I studied and worked in different countries (Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Germany and Ethiopia) and institutions (University of Patagonia, CIEFAP, YPF, CATIE, CIAT, WWF, Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute, United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change, ZEF, UNDP Project, The Conservation Land Trust) where I enriched my experiences of life and work. After 14 years since I got my university degree I have a strong background in sustainable management of forests and natural resources in temperate and tropical environments. I spent a good number of these working years assessing deforestation processes and land cover and land use changes in several countries.

Currently, I am working with the Conservation Land Trust in Argentina, where I am developing a GIS of ecosystems, human and natural processes in a 1.3 million hectare nature reserve. At the same time, I am working on different issues to achieve the objective of this conservation organization and consolidate the sustainable management of the biggest Argentinean swamp area “Esteros del Ibera” as a protected natural area in the north of this country and restore its ecosystem components.
In addition to the above mentioned experiences, I also worked on other activities such as forest management, forest plantation, climate change, biodiversity conservation and assessment of land degradation, ecosystem fragmentation, flood risk areas, tropical forests biodiversity and environmental impacts.

At ZEF I developed the research “Carbon sequestration potential of land-cover types in the agricultural landscape of eastern Amazonia Brazil” that brought me into a very controversial and actual research topic. My stay at ZEF was not only important because I reached my first objective: to work on a relevant research topic during my doctoral study, but it also allowed me to interact with colleagues and people from many different nations and cultures. From them I learnt many interesting things and how to establish right interpersonal, organizational and cross-cultural working relations. For me, ZEF did not mean formal education only, it was also a place to develop friendships around the world and be in touch with the most relevant topics and events concerning development issues.

During my doctoral study I had the opportunity to get to know and be immersed in a very interesting country and culture as the German one is. I consider myself very lucky because I did not miss anything while I was in Germany and I found my best group of friends and my love.

Development has different faces according to who is looking at it, but development must be reachable by most people if it is seen under the umbrella of solidarity and common property. We do not necessarily need big budgets, projects or investments to achieve development. It can also be achieved as a sequence of many small actions to which everybody can contribute to his own benefit as well as that of mankind. The rapid degradation of natural resources in many countries is not only caused by local but also by foreign interests. The management of our environment should be considered the most important task by all of us to bring or increase well-being and the opportunity to develop new alternatives to economic activities.
Dr. Feyera Senbeta Wakjira

Nationality: Ethiopia

Age: 41 years

Batch: 2002

Donors: BMBF

Degree: Dr. rer. nat.

Day of exam: 15/02/2006

From:

University of Bonn, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science

Title of the PhD thesis:

Biodiversity and ecology of Afromontane rainforests with wild Coffea arabica L. populations in Ethiopia

Current position:

Research Officer

Institution:

Ethiopian Coffee Forest Forum
I, Feyera Senbeta Wakjira, was born as the son of a farmer in Western Oromia, Ethiopia on September 13, 1966. I grew up in the rural area dominated by natural forests and went to school with the age of 7. I attended the primary and secondary schools at Hachnee and Fincha'a, respectively and completed high school at Shambu Comprehensive Secondary School in 1984. I received Diplomas in Forestry at Wondo Genet Forestry Institute. Then, I was employed at the Ethiopian Forestry Research Center and worked for four years as an assistant researcher. Soon after this, I graduated from Alemaya University of Agriculture and became a lecturer in 1994 at the same university where I worked for two years. Later on I received my Master of Science in Natural Forest Management from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in 1998. Soon after I was employed as a lecturer in Wondo Genet College of Forestry and serviced the college for four years. In 2002, however, I realized my biggest dream: I finally joined the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, as a PhD student. In 2006, I received my Doctoral Degree (Ecology) from the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Bonn.

I can tell a lot about the fascinating thing of studying at ZEF. Among others, I acknowledged the multidisciplinary, multi-cultural, and international learning programs and the social event. Being at ZEF, you don’t feel loneliness, you always feel as if you were at home. The relationships among the students and staff of ZEF are incredibly inspiring to work and enjoy. It was only, in a very few occasions that you feel you are really away from home. Only, during the Christmas and New Year period, when most students disappear, ZEF really terrifies you. Being educated at ZEF, you have a deep and special feeling, which you can’t really express fully. However, there are many imprinted memories of ZEF which you will keep remembering forever.

Staying in Bonn was quite interesting. The only thing I felt sad about was that I was not able to communicate in German. This language barrier, to some extent, limited my inspiration to understand a lot about the cultural and social setting of the society I lived in. Otherwise, I really enjoyed my stay in Bonn and never felt uncomfortable. I will always have fond memories of living in Bonn and Germany.

Currently, I am highly involved in the activities of the Ethiopian Coffee Forest Forum (ECFF). The ECFF is a non-profit civil group working on conservation research, education, communication and sustainable use of forest resources in Ethiopia. ECFF is also working on biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, social equity and policy dialogues in Ethiopia. As a staff of ECFF, I participate with my acquired knowledge to enhance the sustainable use of natural resources in Ethiopia. My professional duties in ECFF are primarily promoting and strengthening the ecological and biodiversity research wing of ECFF. I am also involved in building the capacity of the local community through training, raising awareness and education so as to improve forest resources utilization as well as biodiversity conservation.

In addition to this, I am currently working as an Assistant Professor at Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, Hawassa University and offering many courses both for graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, I am advising and supervising many graduate students from Addis Ababa University. Since August 2006, I am working as a post-doc research fellow in the “CoCE” Project on wild coffee in Ethiopia led by the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn.
Dr. Till Stellmacher

Nationality: German

Batch: 2002

Degree: Dr. agr.

From:
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

Current position:
Researcher

Age: 34 years

Donors: BMBF

Day of exam: 22/12/2006

Title of the PhD thesis:
Governing the Ethiopian Coffee Forests: A Local Level Institutional Analysis in Kaffa and Bale Mountains

Institution:
ZEF, CoCE Coffee Project
I grew up in a small town in the rural area of the Eifel Mountains. After high school, I studied social geography with a focus on human-environmental interaction at the University of Bonn. With the aim of gaining work and study experience overseas as a student I took the opportunity to do internships in two national parks in Russia, to work for an environmentally-concerned NGO in Canada, and to take part in a field excursion to the Ivory Coast and Ghana. In the final stages of my studies, I moved to Manchester/UK to study as a member of the Erasmus Exchange Program.

My master's thesis was on vulnerability and coping strategies to flash flood hazards among the rural poor in Bangladesh. Supported by the DAAD, I had the chance to conduct field work in remote villages in the north-east of the country for several months, and to work as an intern with an NGO in Dhaka.

The experience of living and working in different parts of the world as an undergraduate not only internationalized my life and thinking but fostered my personal and professional interest in the field of 'development', from a scientific and practical perspective.

After finishing my MSc degree, I was employed with “Bread for the World” and the “Church Development Service” (EED), both German development NGOs. In October 2002, I joined ZEF as a doctoral student in the project “Conservation and Use of wild Coffee Arabica in the montane rainforests of Ethiopia” (CoCE). My PhD work was concerned with the analysis of the institutional framework that affects coffee forest resource use, management and conservation.

For research, I spent more than one year in Ethiopia. Most of the time, I worked on the local level, doing interviews and group discussions with forest resource users in remote villages within the coffee forests of south-western Ethiopia. This period was definitely one of the most intensive times of my life, providing me with many experiences, deep understandings and appreciations that I will positively treasure forever.

Not only the period spent ‘in the field’ contributed to the fact that the time as a ZEF doctoral student stands for much more than obtaining a PhD title. I enjoyed and benefited very much from working within a large German-Ethiopian research project team with an interdisciplinary background. Being member of the project, the ZEF doctoral program, the department “Political and Cultural Change” (ZEFa) and the research group “Natural Resources and Social Dynamics" at the same time provided for a lively exchange of knowledge, experiences and assistance among colleagues of all backgrounds, e.g. in the form of a mutual review of our work. I also appreciated the truly international working atmosphere, with meetings sometimes joined by 10 people from seven countries and three continents.

This social environment led to a network of friendships that exists - scattered between Argentina and Japan - until the present.

On December 22nd 2006, I successfully defended my PhD thesis at the Institute for Food and Resource Economics, University of Bonn. Since then I have been working as a post-doc researcher in the second phase of the CoCE research project at ZEF.
Dr. René Tomás Capote Fuentes

**Nationality:** Cuba

**Age:** 31 years

**Batch:** 2003

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD and GTZ

**Degree:** Dr. rer. nat.

**Day of exam:** 12/07/2007

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Resilience of Mangroves on the South Coast of Havana province, Cuba

**Current position:**
Researcher

**Institution:**
Centro Nacional de Biodiversidad (CenBio) at the Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática (IES), Havana, Cuba
René Capote-Fuentes received his Doctoral Degree on July 12, 2007, from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the University of Bonn. He has been a doctoral student at ZEF since October 2003. He did research on ecological systems on the south coast of his home country Cuba under the supervision of Prof. Uta Berger (University of Bremen) and Prof. Paul Vlek (ZEF). After his graduation ceremony he found some time to give us an interview:

*Dear Dr. René Capote, congratulations. Now you have reached the finish of the doctoral marathon, can you remember what your expectations were when you came to ZEF? And have they been fulfilled?*

Actually, I was quite curious to assess my academic level on a global scale. Well, I found out that Cuban research in my academic field, ecology, is in quite a good position to engage in wider international cooperation.

*Why did you come to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?*

After finishing my Master’s Degree at the University of Havana in Cuba, I was determined to go abroad for doing my PhD. A colleague of mine recommended me to apply to ZEF. He knew ZEF as an international and interdisciplinary institute with a broad approach to development issues. That sounded attractive to me.

*On which topic did you do your PhD research?*

I did my thesis on the “Resilience of mangroves on the south coast of Havana province, Cuba” and received my Doctoral Degree from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the University of Bonn. My supervisors were Prof. Uta Berger and Prof. Paul Vlek. My closest collaborator was my tutor at ZEF, Dr. Manfred Denich.

*One of the countries you focused on in your field research was your home country Cuba. What were your experiences during that time?*

Indeed, during my one-year field research I conducted a comparative study on the resilience of mangroves on the south coast of Havana province, Cuba, in Mexico and in the USA. From the USA I used secondary data, whereas from the other locations I collected primary data myself. In all cases I owe a lot to the support of good colleagues and friends.

In fact, I was quite impressed by the amount of knowledge of the local population about their environment. I also enjoyed their way of living, which is usually very simple in infrastructure, but less contaminated by modern styles like those linked to financial issues. Their support was technically and emotionally
indispensable for my research. For example, I never missed the aero-spatial-based equipment for finding locations in the field, as long as an experienced farmer or fisherman was with me. It really is my wish that these people benefit from my research in the near future.

*What were the main conclusions you drew from your data and knowledge on the mangrove ecosystems in the regions you did your PhD research in?*

My main practical conclusion is that there is no need of much new ecological knowledge to slow down the degradation of mangrove ecosystems, and to restore many of them. We know well enough by now that mangroves, together with other wetlands, are world-wide important for human food and water consumption, as well as to flood regulation and coastal protection. We know a lot about the fragile interplay between water and soil levels, enabling the restoration of mangroves that have been degraded. Generally spoken, there is too much focus on science and too little attention for the practical and technical implementation of solutions. This has to change.

*What is the “take home” message of your time as a PhD student at ZEF?*

I really appreciated the opportunity of getting into contact with international colleagues, at the institutional as well as at a more personal level. The doctoral studies program provided me with the possibility to extend my academic network considerably. Besides, I had the opportunity to travel Europe and to visit Australia.

*What are you going to do now after having graduated?*

First of all, I intend to return to Cuba and go back to my home Institute of Ecology and Systematics, and to Havana University. One of my priorities will be to remain active at the international level and extend Cuba’s international scientific networking activities. And I will also attempt that more is done on implementing knowledge instead of collecting it only.

Dr. Capote, we thank you for this interview and wish you a bright future!
Dr. Irit Eguavoen

**Nationality:** Germany

**Batch:** 2003

**Degree:** Dr. phil.

**From:**
University of Cologne, Faculty of Philosophy

**Current position:**
Postdoc

**Age:** 31 years

**Donors:** BMBF

**Day of exam:** 11/07/2007

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
"Now you have a new pump, you have to manage it." Household water management, water rights and institutional change in Northern Ghana

**Institution:**
ZEF, Bonn
Irit Eguavoen is a German Social Anthropologist who started her PhD study at ZEF in October 2003. She conducted her research on household water in Northern Ghana. In July 2007, she successfully defended her thesis “Now you have a new pump, you have to manage it. Household water management, water rights and institutional change in Northern Ghana” at the Institute of Ethnology, University of Cologne. Her PhD project was supervised by Prof. Keebet van Benda-Beckmann from Max-Planck-Institute for Ethnology/ Halle as well as by Prof. Michael Bollig and Prof. Michael Casimir from the Institute of Ethnology/ Cologne.

So, Dr. Eguavoen, what did you find out about household water management issues in Ghana?

Well, I've been living and working in Sirigu, a Savannah village in Northern Ghana for a period of ten months. My research covered a variety of topics concerning water at the local household level: water use, water rights, water history, water management, water allocation etc. I did a lot of surveys, interviews and observations to get an idea about the situation and the problems. Water is such an important and central issue in people's live that it was not difficult at all to get access to information. It is subject of many conversations and people were happy to tell me what is going on. What I found striking was that many rules and regulations stipulated by the national level don't take the specific local conditions into account. Of course, this is also not possible because there is always local diversity within a country. So it often happens that regulations are introduced officially, but people cannot or refuse to implement them. Rules and measures just make no sense at times. Usually, users respond by creating appropriate institutions taking these official regulations but also their local conditions into account. Still, there may be some rather contra-productive effects. In Sirigu, for example, more water pumps were installed. But at the same time, institutional access to water became more limited and the users' flexibility to choose their water sources got diminished.

Why did you go to ZEF to do your doctoral research in the first place?

To be honest I did not know anything about ZEF when I applied for the vacant scholarship within the GLOWA Volta project, which I had found in my home institute in Berlin. My MA thesis on Nigerian vigilantism had just been submitted by this time and I started to think about what comes next. Therefore, I was rather surprised by the fast development entailing my application – request of work sample, interview etc. When I started with the ZEF doctoral program, I was still preparing my remaining final exam in Berlin. It might sound a bit funny but I really got motivated joining ZEF after the application interview, when I read the ZEF annual report in the train going back home. What attracted me most was to work in the framework of a project with some idea of applied science in the development context as well as the idea to work amidst a large group of other doctoral students.
What do you consider to be the main benefits of having done your PhD study in the framework of ZEF's doctoral program?

Exactly the two things that attracted me: ZEF and the project context provided very good logistic and scientific support while doing field research. There are other scientists and Ghanaian stakeholders interested in my results and ideas. Writing a PhD at German university institutes can be a rather lonely business. So I am very grateful for the embedment in working groups at ZEF, such as the GLOWA Volta sub-project “Institutional Analysis” led by Dr. Wolfram Laube and the ZEF research group “Natural Resources Social Dynamics” under the leadership of Dr. Peter Mollinga. Via this research group and the frequent review of other colleagues' work, my knowledge on other regions, problems, natural resources and theoretical approaches has been widened enormously. This has helped me with my own work and motivated me a lot. What I enjoyed most at ZEF was this exchange of ideas, in fact. I think this forum function is the best that ZEF offers to doctoral candidates.

And what are the “fresh” young Doctor's plans for the future?

I want to remain in science. From my training at ZEF I know that I want to continue doing applied research or to work on topics which are of crucial relevance for the people the research is about. But I would also like to go more into lecturing and tutoring because I enjoy doing that and looking at development, contributing to the development of human capacity is one of the most rewarding tasks to perform.
Dr. Dilys Sefakor Kpongor

**Nationality:** Ghana

**Batch:** 2003

**Degree:** Dr. agr.

**From:**
University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture

**Current position:**
Researcher

**Age:** 34 years

**Donors:** BMBF and Water and Food Challenge Program (CPW&F)

**Day of exam:** 24/05/2007

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Spatially explicit modeling of sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* (L) Moench) production in a complex terrain in a semi-arid region of Ghana using APSIM

**Institution:**
Glowa Volta Project - UNU-INRA
UNU-INRA, ISSER Building Complex
Accra, Ghana
Ms. Dilys Kpongor Sefakor from Ghana just received her doctoral degree from the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Bonn. Our proud and new doctor did her research on modeling of sorghum production in Ghana under supervision of Prof. Vlek (ZEF) and PD Dr. J. Burkhardt (Institute of Plant Nutrition, University of Bonn). In an interview she relates on her research and experiences at ZEF.

**ZEF: Dear Dr. Kpongor, you just finished your PhD study at ZEF. How and when did you come to ZEF?**

Dr. Kpongor: I did my Master study in the framework of the ARTS program (“Agricultural Science and Resource Management in the Tropics and Subtropics”) at the University of Bonn from 2001 to 2003. During that period I frequently visited ZEF to attend public lectures. Also, one of my supervisors was at ZEF, as well as a number of Ghanaian students doing their research there. From the visits and interactions, I admired among others the international working environment. I also appreciated the educational facilities at the disposal of the students as well as the expertise of the researchers. So immediately after completing my Master in Agriculture at the University of Bonn, I joined the PhD program at ZEF, starting in October 2003.

**On which topic did you do your PhD research?**

I did my thesis on land use in West Africa. The title of my thesis was “Spatially explicit modeling of sorghum production on complex terrain of a semi-arid region in Ghana using the model APSIM”. The latter means “Agricultural Production System Simulator”.

**What relevance does the issue have for the development in Ghana?**

Sorghum is an important crop and one of the main food items in Navrongo, a semi-arid region in northern Ghana where I did my field research. Soils in this area are very poor and sorghum production is based on a low input basis. Its cultivation is limited to the home fields were the soils are relatively more fertile. Higher fertility is attributed to the use of animal manure which is the main fertilizer but not readily available. Also, crop residues are harvested from the bush farms and taken away to be used as bio-fuel (e.g. for cooking) and for other domestic use with the waste ending up in the home fields. This has led to a high variation in the amount of soil nutrients within the region: in residential areas with home fields the soil are relatively higher in organic matters and soil nutrients with amounts decreasing with increasing distance to the bush farms, where the soils are poorer.

**So what did you do exactly in your research?**
What I did was modeling how sorghum can be grown more sustainable and efficiently. The overall goal was to increase the level of food security in the region and to use soil in a more sustainable way. I developed different scenarios which were simulated with the APSIM model, using variables such as fertilizers and the crop residue management in both home fields and bush farms. Grain yield production was forecasted for 29 years using stochastic weather data, based on a historical record of weather data for the region collected in the GLOWA Volta project. My conclusion was that if the removal of crop residue continues at this level, the quality of the soil in the homestead fields, which are important for sorghum production, will go down to the levels currently prevailing in the bush farms, even with a moderate use of fertilizers. This would have a disastrous effect on the livelihoods and food security of the people in the region in the long run.

In what way is your PhD study contributing to sustainable development in the region?

One of my recommendations is that since future generations will have to cope with the negative consequences of the current practice of farmers, there is a need for government policy interventions. For example in the form of appropriate incentives for farmers to motivate them to use resource conserving technologies, such as returning crop residues to the fields, using cover crops, and producing farm yard manure. Posterity should not pay the price for the current practices of farmers.

What do you consider as the benefits of having done your PhD study in the framework of ZEF’s doctoral program?

The interdisciplinary concept gives you the opportunity to get in touch with other disciplines, which was very useful. ZEF also collaborates with renowned international institutions, hence widens the exposure to potential future employers. I was lucky to be a part of the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPW&F) which was executed by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi–Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). Through this program, I gained a lot of contacts with renowned crop simulation model developers which are very useful to my professional life.

What are your plans now you have finished your doctoral thesis?

I have been offered a post-doctoral position in the GLOWA Volta project as a crop modeller, and am due to attend an interview at the University of Ghana for a position as a Research Scientist with their Agriculture Research Unit in July, 2007.

Dear Ms. Kpong, we thank you for this interview and wish you all the best for your future private and professional life!
Dr. Jonathan Stephen Mbwambo

**Nationality:** Tanzania

**Batch:** 2004

**Degree:** PhD. Development Studies

**From:**
Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania

**Current position:**
Lecturer, Natural Resources management

**Age:** 39 years

**Donors:** BMZ via DAAD

**Day of exam:** 10/4/2007

**Title of the PhD thesis:**
Agro-biodiversity and food security among smallholder farmers in Uluguru Mountains, Tanzania

**Institution:**
Sokoine University of Agriculture, Development Studies Institute, Morogoro, Tanzania

My Batch 2004 at ZEF: I am the one in the middle with the white shirt.
The historical environment of my family has included rural, urban and suburban locations in two regions in the Northern Part of Tanzania. My Parents were born and brought up in Usambara Mountains in the Northern Tanzania.

The Usambara Mountains are part of the Eastern Arc Mountains of Tanzania and the mountains are important in the biodiversity richness and it is from these mountains that many endemic species including the African violet (Saintpaulia spp) survives.

My parents moved from the Usambara Mountain to a small town of Mto wa Mbu, translated from Kiswahili (the Tanzania National Language) as Mosquito Creek. Mto-wa-Mbu is situated along the Maasai plains next to the famous Lake Manyara National Park. Lake Manyara National Park is a World Biosphere Reserve located in the Eastern branch of the Eastern Africa Rift Valley. It was on the Rift Valley at Manyara that Ernest Hemingway based his book “The Green Hills of Africa”, an account of his hunting experiences of the 1930s. The Park has a tremendous variety of habitats and animal and bird life. The most well known animals of Manyara Park are the tree-climbing lions.

Other animals include elephants, giraffes, gazelles, zebras, baboons, blue monkeys, wildebeest, waterbucks, warthogs, klipspringer, leopards and over 370 species of birds. Visitors of the park are often met with
squadrons of banded mongoose darting between the acacias, while the diminutive Kirk's Dik-Dik forages in their shade.

Pairs of klipspringer are often seen silhouetted on the rocks above a field of searing hot springs that steam and bubble adjacent to the lakeshore in the far south of the park.

My education began in Mto-wa-Mbu Primary School located about 100 meters from Lake Manyara National Park. I remember we used to chase baboons and Antelopes visiting our school farm separated by a 7 meters road leading to the national park. Thus, our early school life was that of a mixture between wildlife beauty and fear of injuries by larger animals including hippos, elephants and buffalos.

I did my secondary education at Moshi Secondary School, some 150 km from Manyara National Park at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. Mount Kilimanjaro is the world's highest freestanding, snow-covered equatorial mountain. Though threatened by the climate change, Kilimanjaro continue to preserve attractive overhead of images of a towering cone rising majestically from the fertile green foothills of the mountain where coffee grows for both local and export markets.

I completed my advanced level secondary education and joined Sokoine University of Agriculture for Bachelor of Science in Horticulture. I joined the same University for MSc. Management of Natural Resources and Sustainable Agriculture (MSc. MNRSA). I am glad to say that I was the first graduate of the first batch of MSc. MNRSA graduates at the Sokoine University of Agriculture.

I began my career in research and teaching in 2001 after having joined the Development Studies Institute of Sokoine University of Agriculture. I am currently teaching Natural Resources assessment for development planning for both post-graduate and undergraduate degree programs. Other areas of teaching include Science and technology for agrarian development, rural production and farming systems and natural resources management for development.

I joined ZEF as a PhD student with a DAAD scholarship. I knew about ZEF from Prof. Msuya who was one of the pioneering PhD students at ZEF and under the supervision of Prof. Von Braun who, I hope I am correct, left ZEF and joined IFPRI in Washington. I was attracted by the interdisciplinary nature of the ZEF programs and the vastness of teaching and research experience linked to developing countries like Tanzania.

My experience in ZEF as a PhD student still looms large in my mind, largely because of its outstanding faculty and interdisciplinary approach to development. The first weeks of my stay at ZEF were full of academic excitements and I was thrilled to learn that professors and researcher at ZEF are not only talking about Africa, Asia and Latin America as scholars, but also as people who have spent time in those countries and are willing to visit them as often as time and resources allow. The fact that ZEF is able to draw from expertise from all over the world makes it ideal for a development-related career development.
Adding value to ZEF as an institute is the city of Bonn with its quiet atmosphere. The presence of the Rhine River and the glittering parade of long and loaded vessels makes one enjoy not only the view but also the magnificent weather associated with the microclimate created by the river. I remember taking the side seats of the University of Bonn’s library just to combine my reading and the beauty of the river. The multicultural background of its citizens also adds to the value of the city of Bonn.

In conclusion, I would like to say that living and working as a student at the University of Bonn and ZEF in particular changed my vision of development. I now see the efforts of individual countries that try to meet the challenges of underdevelopment in other countries by building a global partnership for development. The unity and cheers brought out during disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses at ZEF energized my view of Europe and Germany in particular as important partners for my country’s development.
Dear (former) doctoral students,
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