

# Bridging Commitment and Initiative

*The Future Foundation for Development supports people in their endeavor to achieve an ethical, ecological and social world in form of a cooperation based on communication on equal terms. Together we pursue establishing bridges between people around the world – bridges between different realities of life; bridges aiming at improving living conditions, exchange of experience and mutual understanding.*

Already in 1992 the Mexican sociologist Gustavo Esteva demanded abolishing development aid, criticizing it as a form of continued colonialism. According to him, the common idea of development simply follows a linear thinking of progress, measured on a western scale, causing human and ecological exploitation. Such help leads to a deprivation of the right of decision-making, he said. The millions spent in the so-called developing countries did not result in an independent improvement of the living conditions for the majority of the population.

A sobering observation indeed, which raises an essential question: How to enable independent development processes regarding responsibility for human beings and the environment? How does the Future Foundation for Development work to promote these processes?

## **Helping persons to help themselves**

The Future Foundation for Development cooperates with 84 projects in 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. With substantial support from our local partners, groundwork for a self-determined life in dignity is laid out. The cooperation focusses on organic agriculture, holistic health care, emancipatory education, human and ecologic rights, support of microbusinesses and transparent microcredits accompanied by adequate trainings, as well as the use and promotion of renewable energies. In almost all of the partners' projects, the majority of people committed to such work are women.

## **The utmost question: Which resources are available?**

Our project partners are social entrepreneurs who are familiar with their respective local situations. They always act on their own initiative. They commit themselves to their projects beyond any political, confessional, or ethnical affiliation. Together with a group of concerned people, they push their

work ahead. Point of origin is always the question, which resources and skills are available, personally and as a group – it is not about satisfying private needs. The process of determining the existing resources gives way to creative thinking and lets the "beneficiaries" of the projects become the main actors.

## **Organic agriculture, water management**

Over 70 percent of the worldwide population suffering from malnutrition live in rural areas. They are small-scale and subsistence farmers owning less than two hectares (five acres) of land, shepherds, fishers or agricultural laborers. Over 50 percent of the world's population does not have access to clean water.

This is something the Future Foundation for Development seeks to change by supporting organic agriculture, water management and the regional trading of organically produced agricultural goods. The aim is to secure self-sufficiency for the small-scale farmers based on their resources and their own possibilities followed by the promotion of local and regional economic cycles.

## **Education:**

### **School and advanced education are the key**

The central element of all projects is education. Studies, such as the World Agriculture Report (2009), compiled by over 400 scientists, demonstrate the importance of how theoretically available knowledge is actually reaching the recipients. This is something we experience every day. To ensure the success of a project it is important that the teaching is diverse, in theory and praxis, and relates directly to the daily lives of the addressees. Education has to appeal to thinking, feeling and acting. That is why most of the trainings for farmers take place in their fields. And why all schools cooperating with the Future Foundation for Development promote the

use of alternative teaching methods focusing on supporting each individual child in the setting of his or her cultural background, inspired by Waldorf and Montessori education or the ideas of Paolo Freire.

### **No school without meals**

Most of our educational project partners are schools that accompany children up to seventh or eighth grade. In addition to the regular curriculum, they offer courses on traditional crafts such as tailoring, pottery, knitting, crocheting, weaving and the making of mats and baskets. These skills are quite essential for the future of the children growing up in rural areas.

However, learning cannot be successful with an empty stomach. Thus, students are introduced to organic farming on school farms and grow the vegetables and fruits needed to prepare school meals themselves.

### **Holistic health care**

The Future Foundation for Development advocates the provision of a preventive, holistic basic health-care system. Students are trained in basic hygiene, farming and the use of medicinal herbs. They are also taught the different causes of diseases. Furthermore, campaigns about Aids, healthy nutrition and the use of traditional medicine, such as the Siddha-Medicine in South India, are part of the programs.

### **Microcredits and small-sized businesses**

The support of small-sized businesses is a vital element in fighting poverty. Examples are the processing of raw materials, the marketing of food products, the overcoming of seasonal fluctuations by means of technology like for example the drying of fruits and the production of essential oils. Training in packaging and marketing of products and education in traditional crafts are also part of the support. The rational provision of microcredits accompanied by the supply of knowledge about the implementation of business ideas are important for the expansion of the small business sector. The main objective is to create local and regional self-supporting economic cycles, whereas microcredits just represent a motor in form of a temporary aid embedded in a holistic and sustainable advancement of competences.

### **Human and ecological rights**

We support groups and communities who advocate the implementation of human and ecological rights regarding their own personal surroundings. They can be small farmer organizations defending their land and protesting against big mining companies, indigenous groups who claim the maintenance of their forests and steppes or women fighting for equality.

### **Renewable energies**

Our natural resources are finite. A simple sentence with a lot of consequences. This is especially evident

in the countries of our project partners. The deforestation by international companies, the use of firewood in desert land, the mining of raw materials (minerals), gold, silver and diamonds while violating traditional laws and destroying nature. Another aspect is the climate change, which causes the absence of the monsoon or devastating floods. Respecting the limits of growth also means using renewable energies related to the available local resources.

### **Creating self-sustaining cycles**

The different fields of the projects often follow a chronological sequence. Thirty years of development cooperation have shown that change can only be successful when it is implemented over long periods of time, when change has become part of everyday life and sustainable economic independence is achieved. This is why it is important to accompany people and their projects beyond a predetermined timeframe.

It is our aspiration to enable people - despite globalization - to create decentralized and self-determined habitats, which are ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable.

### **Transparency on both sides**

Transparency in the cooperation is the basic element of our work. Regular meetings and visits, reports, transparent decision making processes and commitment contribute to a trustful and reliable cooperation with our project partners. Making it possible to understand the transfer of donations as well as the use of donations is our utmost responsibility and that of our partners.

This transparent assignment of funds and our low administration costs are confirmed yearly with the seal of approval awarded by the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI). The auditing reports on our Foundation can be found on our website. Our project partners document their appropriation of funds through annual reports by independent auditors.

### **Cooperation within Germany**

For further support of its project partners the Future Foundation of Development cooperates with other German associations, whom we also offer administrative services if the funded projects correspond to our project criteria and goals.

### **Money serves social innovation**

The Future Foundation of Development was founded in the context of the "Gemeinschaft für Leihen und Schenken" (GLS) out of the impulse for a conscious use of money, taking responsibility for social, ecological and economic cooperation on the international level.

Thanks to the donations being transmitted by GLS, scope for development is created and new innovative ideas about social development in the future are born.