

## Global Diplomacy Lab 2019



**Challenge:** Global Power Shifts: Political and Economic Inclusion for the Next Generation. Collaborating to Realise the Potential of the Demographic Dividend

**Incubator Lab** (10th Lab): from 16 to 19 June 2019, Accra, Ghana

**Impact Lab** (11th Lab): from 27 to 30 October 2019, Berlin, Germany



For more information on the Global Diplomacy Lab please visit:  
[www.global-diplomacy-lab.org](http://www.global-diplomacy-lab.org)

- 5 Foreword
- 6 Introduction

### **Executive Summary: Recommendations to the German Federal Foreign Office**

- 9 A Nano Diplomacy Concept: Building Inclusive and Equitable Cities by Addressing Demographic Issues
- 10 Five Elements to Foster Mutual Trust and Commitment in Transnational and International Collaboration between Germany and African States
- 11 Data, Trust and the Demographic Dividend
- 12 Making Diversity Work: Recommendations for Strategic Diversity Management

### **The Challenge**

- 13 "The Times Are over When Diplomats Only Talked to Diplomats"
- 14 "Africa is a Continent of Hope"
- 15 Exploring Accra, Exploring the Challenge
- 16 "For Me, the Demographic Dividend is an Aspiration"
- 18 "We Often See a Lack of Alignment between Partner Countries and Donors"
- 19 Power Dynamics at Play
- 21 Reflections on Inclusion

### **Partners and Places**

- 23 From the Parliament to the Street: Collaboration with Local Partners
- 25 Eating Hummus in a Tango Studio

### **Methodology**

- 27 From Your Secret Friend, with Love
- 28 Simulating Diplomacy, Even When It Hurts
- 31 "Crystallising the Core Understanding of What the Lab is All About"

### **In the Field**

- 33 Lessons from the Streets
- 34 Putting Research into Practise
- 36 A Classroom Full of Hope
- 37 Fighting Child Marriage for a Healthier Society
- 39 Mapping the Post-Colonial Layer

### **Reflection & Conclusion**

- 41 Challenges and Questions for 2020 and Beyond
- 42 Conclusion



# Foreword

## **The Challenge of the Demographic Dividend**

Today, the West African country of Niger has a population of 23 million. According to UN projections, it will reach 66 million by 2050; within merely 30 years, its population will almost triple. With a world-record fertility rate of 7.2 children per woman, Niger is an extreme example, but not untypical for the demographic dynamics on the African continent. Over the coming 30 years, Africa's population is expected to double from today's 1.2 billion to 2.4 billion.

For some, Africa's youthful and rapidly growing population raises hopes of a demographic dividend: this opportunity opens up when the number of young people of working age is large in comparison to those who depend on support – in other words, young children and the elderly. With the right social and economic conditions in place, such an age structure can lead to accelerated economic growth as young people join the workforce in increasing numbers while the birth rate declines due to improved access to education and reproductive health.

However, a fast-growing population also poses a great challenge to social security, health and education systems and can breed conflict over resources. "If these problems are not tackled, the high birth rate will lead to poverty and forced migration because society can't cope with these challenges," says GDL Dean Ruprecht Polenz. "Therefore, both sides, Germany and African states, have an interest in addressing this question."

## **The GDL goes Africa**

How to help harness Africa's demographic dividend via international collaboration was the challenge of the 2019 Curriculum. It meant breaking new ground in several ways: for the

first time, the GDL ventured into Africa by organising this year's Incubator Lab in Accra, Ghana's capital; for the first time, a Leading Partner, the German Federal Foreign Office, assumed the role of the Challenge Holder.

To make true on its promise of adopting a more inclusive approach to international diplomacy, the GDL worked with a great variety of local partners, both in Berlin and Accra, from all strata of society: GDL members were invited to Ghana's parliament, visited a hip business hub for aspiring entrepreneurs, and a project for street children. They talked to politicians and artists, met students and academics, and learned from experts and activists supporting street children.

## **The Demographic Dividend: An Interdisciplinary Undertaking**

The question of how to realise Africa's demographic dividend touches upon a wide range of factors such as governance, economic development, health and education, gender roles, traditional values and moral codes, just to name a few. As if that were not complex enough, among many stakeholders on the African continent memories of European colonialism and racism are painfully present and shape the perception and discussion of the issues at hand, as many discussions during the Labs were to demonstrate.

The complexity of the challenge was attested to by the many intense discussions during the Labs that would often continue long after the last official point on the agenda had been addressed. The 2019 Labs were a daring enterprise: testing new locations, formats, partners and methodologies. They were, in other words, a great experiment – just as it befits a true Lab.

# Introduction

## The 2019 Curriculum

For its 2019 Curriculum, the GDL set itself an ambitious goal: with the support of its Challenge Holder, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the members were to tackle the topic of international collaboration to realise the potential of Africa's demographic dividend. Taking into account European and African voices, official actors as well as NGOs and civil society, the GDL was to work on an issue crucial to reaching the ambitious targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, specifically SDG 17, Strengthening Partnerships.

38 GDL members from more than 20 different countries first got together in Accra, Ghana, in June 2019 for the Incubator Lab. With the aim of testing methodologies for ongoing collaboration throughout the year's Curriculum in mind, the first ever Lab in an African country offered the opportunity for the GDL to explore the challenges of the demographic dividend on the ground. In Accra, contact was made with a variety of local actors involved in tackling the issue: GDL members visited institutions such as the National Population Council and the Street Children Empowerment Foundation in order to learn more about the complexities of population dynamics, about how the demographic dividend can strengthen economic development, and about how this process can be supported institutionally. These experiences led participants to critically evaluate their previous knowledge about the topic as well as to reflect on the local organisations' strategies, aims and long-term projects. They raised questions such as: how can local actors become involved in larger-scale, international discussions about the demographic dividend? How can institutions such as the Federal Foreign Office support this process; how can existing partnerships on the ground be strengthened?

Having learned about the demographic dividend and its potential from different points of view in Ghana, as well as in a series of virtual sessions between July and October 2019, the November 2019 Impact Lab brought participants together in Berlin, Germany. This gathering enabled the group to collaborate on developing a variety of strategic approaches to the set challenge. During the Impact Lab, GDL members, actors involved in collaborations with African countries in the Federal Foreign Office, as well as in other institutional contexts and civil society, worked together on suggestions that would eventually be of help to the Challenge Holder in the efforts to bring non-traditional stakeholders to the table when talking about the demographic dividend, or when seeking out new ways to work with the population data available. Many debates during the Impact Lab touched upon matters of trust and of the post-colonial legacy that play a role in the negotiations of today. However, they also productively addressed the question of how discussions about the demographic dividend are potentially impacted by the composition of the delegation at the table.

## The 2019 Report

This report is one of the results of the 2019 GDL Curriculum. Throughout, it offers not so much a chronological narrative of the Accra and Berlin Labs, but rather, offers various insights into collaboration strategies within the GDL and into exploring a challenge from a variety of perspectives. It provides a look at the dynamic processes which take place when an issue such as the demographic dividend is addressed by a group of professionals from different national, cultural, religious and employment contexts and reflects a type of diplomacy that transcends

official networks and also takes place around a shared dinner table in Accra or during a gathering with local activists in a Berlin community centre.

Starting from the outcome – the set of suggestions provided to the Challenge Holder at the end of the process – the report looks back at perspectives on the demographic dividend and its negotiation in an international context, and then moves on to explore the challenge from the political to the cultural arenas. The introduction of partners and places as well as of the GDL’s unique methodology make for a detailed insight into the co-creation process that is specific to the GDL. Accompanying GDL members

into the field – from Accra’s projects for street children to Berlin’s African Quarter, where the city’s post-colonial legacy is visible – enables the reader to learn more about the multiple challenges the group encountered throughout its 2019 Curriculum. Finally, the conclusion and reflection at the end provide an outlook on the future: what do the findings of the 2019 Labs mean for opening up collaboration practices between traditional and non-traditional actors in the context of Africa’s demographic dividend? Which changes will the debates over post-colonialism, power and diversity bring for the GDL? And what do its members take away from the process?







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## Recommendations to the German Federal Foreign Office

### I. A Nano Diplomacy Concept:

#### Building Inclusive and Equitable Cities Addressing Demographic Issues

The Nano Diplomacy concept aims to bring international collaboration to the level of local authorities. It proposes to cross-fertilise the sister city/town twinning model with ongoing city diplomacy and to create a new model of cooperation and for building trust between countries. This concept developed by GDL members seeks to focus on the achievement of the demographic dividend in Africa in an inclusive and equitable manner through the development of concrete actions for implementation in the short-term.

With this approach, the German Federal Foreign Office can pave the way for a transformative approach to cities as international foreign policy actors that can contribute to the realisation of national interest. Furthermore, it can spearhead this approach at EU level, advocating for the empowerment of European cities as representatives of European foreign policy.

**The basic principles of the Nano Diplomacy concept are as follows:**

- **Peer-to-peer exchange and cooperation:** International cooperation will be conducted at the local level.
- **Demand-driven collaboration:** Collaboration areas will not be imposed from the top by the national governments' agendas, but will be chosen by the cities themselves.
- **Cities as foreign policy actors:** Oversight by the German Federal Foreign Office will ensure that the pursued plans contribute to the long-term goals of national governments.
- **Increased ownership of the process:** Local authorities are closer to the citizens; there-

fore, the impact of any action is expected to reach citizens directly.

- **Focus on inclusivity and equity:** Increasing socio-spatial segregation and unequal access to services, public spaces and decision-making are among the biggest problems in cities in Africa and must be addressed accordingly.
- **Capacity-building on the ground:** A Secretariat supported by the German Federal Government will support capacity development in the participating cities.
- **Inclusion of African expertise:** The pool of experts will include experts from Africa and the African diaspora.
- **Provision of small to medium-sized grants:** The Secretariat should gather and provide information on all available funding and grant opportunities for cooperation projects and publish this information in a centralised manner.
- **Accountability and transparency of the process:** In order to ensure accountability and transparency, a steering committee should be created that includes stakeholders from the government and civil society, respectively.

#### **The Role of the German Federal Foreign Office**

Germany has extensive experience relating to urbanisation that it can share with developing countries. Civil society participation in local decision-making, combating poverty, realising human rights, and ensuring social stability and inclusion are among the areas in which German cities can offer their expertise and best practice. In return, German cities can discover traditional and/or innovative solutions to various urban challenges in African cities.

## II. Five Elements to Foster Mutual Trust and Commitment in Transnational and International Collaboration between Germany and African States

Our key assumption is that the way in which cooperation and negotiation processes are designed and implemented is directly linked to the respective results. We, as members of the GDL, invite the Federal Foreign Office to reflect upon the complex power structures in which the actors in global diplomacy are embedded and include procedures that foster mutual trust and commitment.

For this purpose, we propose the following Five Elements:

### 1) Acknowledgement of power structures, history and responsibility

Germany has a colonial past with a comparatively small number of African states. Still, cooperation between all African states and Germany is embedded in unequal and hegemonic structures. The Federal Foreign Office and its respective partners should be prepared to acknowledge inequality and power structures at different stages during the diplomatic process, whenever needed.

### 2) Fact and interest-based work towards solutions

The cooperation partners shall acknowledge that countries both in Europe and Africa face demographic challenges, and that impactful solutions can only be developed by taking both sides into consideration. The collaboration process needs to be based on mutually acknowledged demographic data and facts, paying attention to the different perspectives and needs.

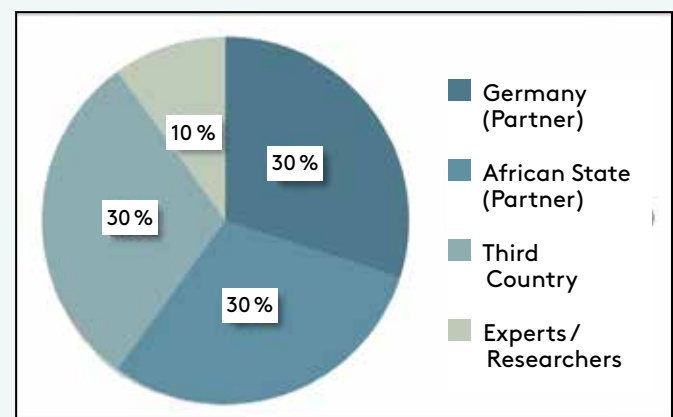
### 3) Preconditions for developing mutual goals

Defining mutual goals is the basis for establishing collaboration. The involved partner countries must have the autonomy to define key challenges and interests.

Based on the respective articulation of challenges and interests, all collaborative partners may offer help and options for cooperation.

### 4) Including multilateral perspectives in the process of solving bilateral challenges

Next to key stakeholders of the two countries, we recommend including stakeholders from third countries in order to expand bilateral perspectives and views, and to promote a less biased outcome. We suggest the following composition of delegations:



Graph 1: Suggested composition of delegations

### 5) Roles during the collaboration process/ building mutual trust and commitment

1. Facilitators in the process should be representatives from both countries/parties.
2. Sharing responsibilities in the group: announce timekeeper, note taker, structurer, observers from different backgrounds.
3. In order to ensure a trustful and equal process, take the time to reflect the dynamics and results together with all partners and observers after every step. Change the room setting after every other step in order to foster trustful dynamics in the collaboration process.
4. Acknowledge inequality and power structures in the process whenever needed (see 1).

### III. Data, Trust and the Demographic Dividend

#### On Data:

Data has an immense potential for harnessing the demographic dividend. However, the analytical intentions of states, NGOs or state and non-state collaboration can be a point of contestation and mistrust.

#### A. Questions that could be of interest to, and worthy of reflection for, the Federal Foreign Office:

- Who provides the data?
- What power and which interests can be leveraged from the data?
- How can collaborating states access reliable data, e.g. from commercial non-state actors such as social media companies?
- How can transparency be ensured when it comes to production and delivery of the data?
- What are the underlying messages when individual state representatives make use of the data?

#### B. Recommendations to the Federal Foreign Office:

- Support research collaboration between domestic and partner country universities to enhance data reliability.
- Identify alternative data sources (as opposed to Big Data corporations) and support partner countries in developing guidelines for responsible privacy guidelines that meet both the safety needs of people and the demand for data.

#### On Trust:

When it comes to trustworthy cooperation between European and African countries, the colonial legacy should not be underestimated as an underlying factor that influences the relationship between partners. This is specifically the case in relation to data, as the collection of, e.g., population data was done with racist intent in the past against colonial subjects.

#### A. Questions that could be of interest to, and worthy of reflection for, the Federal Foreign Office:

- Trust is multi-layered. How can trust be established not only between cooperating governments, but also with the respective societies that these governments represent?
- Which party harbours distrust towards the collaboration process, and how can this distrust be appropriately addressed?

#### B. Recommendations for the Federal Foreign Office:

- Support trust building measures between cooperating countries, for example by funding a research project on data and colonial history.
- Use research collaboration, as commitment to science instead of politics can be important in building trust.
- Support capacity building for data collection and data analysis (especially Big Data) in partner countries.
- Emphasise the value of data, with a focus on doing good for the people.

## IV. Making Diversity Work: Recommendations for Strategic Diversity Management

“Gender, race and ethnicity are at the forefront of diversity and inclusion efforts in the foreign policy space and most organizations are striving to, at a minimum, provide accurate representation of these subgroups on their staff.” (Report by Vestige Strategies)

Diversity drives performance and ensures that organisations are places where people can thrive and fulfil their full potential, while also making the organisations future-fit.

We propose that the FFO adopt a **hedge-walk-fly** approach: building competences to develop a discourse around diversity and create a greater understanding of the key concepts (**hedge**), increasing diversity and inclusion practices within the organisation (**walk**) and finally transforming the practice of diplomacy, making it more inclusive (**fly**).

**Hedge:** Diversity and inclusion is based on a wide range of theory and has its own language. In order to work effectively on implementation, the language and corresponding frameworks must first be mastered.

**Walk:** Improving diversity and inclusion at the German Federal Foreign Office leads to more productive negotiations carried out on an equal footing.

**Fly:** It’s not about doing different development, but doing development differently. Methodologies shape the way discourse is undertaken. Co-creation is key in creating mental models that transcend Eurocentricity.

# The Challenge

## “The Times Are over When Diplomats Only Talked to Diplomats”



An interview with Stefan aus dem Siepen, of the Federal Foreign Office, the Challenge Holder for this year’s Labs.

How did the Federal Foreign Office choose Africa’s demographic dividend as the topic for this year’s Global Diplomacy Lab?

Good relationships with Africa are very important for the Federal Foreign Office, they are one of our priorities. The importance of the continent has grown over the last years and decades. We think that demographic development in Africa is one of the major challenges the continent is facing. It is of course something that has to be tackled by Africa itself, like everything happening on the continent. But as Africa is our neighbour, and as Germany and African states are increasingly trustful partners, we are talking about this issue. We are offering our co-operation.

Do you think that traditional diplomacy can learn something from the GDL with its creative and inclusive approach?

Of course. The times are over when governments talked only to governments, and diplomats talked only to diplomats. The world is so complicated that we depend on the advice and input coming from the outside. So we talk to civil society representatives, to religious leaders, to scientists, artists and others. The GDL is a brilliant example of this approach, with so many people coming from various angles and different geographic backgrounds. It is a great opportunity for us to learn.

What is your hope for this Lab?

I look forward to concrete proposals that can be translated into political action – because at the end of the day that is what counts.



## “Africa is a Continent of Hope”

GDL member Firmin Adjahossou, originally from Benin, is currently working as a Civil Affairs Officer with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. He was the Host of the first GDL Lab on the African continent, the Accra Incubator Lab in Ghana.

**This was the first time that a Lab took place in an African country. How was Ghana chosen?**

Several other members of the GDL, mostly from Africa and including myself, felt that we cannot call the GDL a global network if we are not able to have a Lab in Africa. Ghana seemed a suitable place for several reasons: It was the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonisation, and it was an important country for the Pan-African movement. In addition, I happened to live and work in Ghana at that time, so I offered to support and Host the Lab in Ghana.

**What was your motivation to volunteer as a Host?**

Some people were a bit sceptical about having a Lab in Ghana at first. I am used to that: In my engagement in different forums and countries throughout the past 20 years, I have constantly been confronted with this narrative about Africa as a continent of despair. Therefore, organising a Lab in Africa was a personal challenge for me to show that Africa is a continent of hope, a continent of possibilities.

**Looking back, what has been the most important outcome of the Incubator Lab in your view?**

I saw some big shifts in perception concerning Ghana and Africa among the participants, and this is very positive. Also, we managed to create even more space for members to participate during the Incubator Lab than in previous Labs. That is the essence of a Lab: Its experimental nature. In many ways, I think this experience in Accra has been a milestone for the GDL.



## Exploring Accra, Exploring the Challenge

On a well-rounded first day in Accra, GDL members learned about the Pan-African movement, discussed the demographic dividend and designed the GDL's first flag.

The Incubator Lab in Accra started off at the DuBois Centre for Pan-African Culture, dedicated to William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, an African American academic, civil rights activist and Pan-Africanist. During his lifetime, Du Bois fought against racism, called for the self-determination of colonised African states and advocated for the Pan-African principles of solidarity and collaboration between people of African descent. He spent his last years in Accra where he died in 1963. His home was transformed into the DuBois Centre for Pan-African Culture which provided a fitting location for GDL members to start exploring the local and African context.

After an introduction to Pan-Africanism offered by a local guide, the first session of the 2019 Lab began. To warm up for the challenge, participants were divided into groups and asked to discuss concepts related to Africa and the demographic dividend: gender equality, prejudices, family structure, redefining fertility and poverty, Pan-Africanism, cross-sector alliances, dignity, education and innovation, religion, cultural codes, and responsible diplomacy. The participants identified questions that were to shape many discussions to come: How can we identify and challenge our own biases? How can education systems formed by colonialism be updated? How can cross-sector alliances be built to work towards common goals, such as realising Africa's demographic dividend?



### Getting to the Task

Then, the participants were given an unusual task: GDL member and artist Jörg Reckhenrich asked them to design a flag that captures the essence of the Lab. Competing designs included colourful African symbols, abstract logos and hands symbolising collaboration, diversity and dialogue. The winning design, elected by all participants, featured a turquoise, star-like symbol on orange ground. "The GDL 2019 curriculum flag was inspired by the Adinkra symbol Sesa Wo Suban which means to change or transform your character," says GDL member Theresa Carrington, who was part of the winning team. "That is what GDL is all about, transforming to become better versions of ourselves. It was the perfect choice."

The day was concluded with welcoming remarks by Stefan aus dem Siepen, representative of the Challenge Holder, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, as well as by Honorary Joseph Osei Owusu, the first deputy speaker of the Parliament of Ghana.

## “For Me, the Demographic Dividend is an Aspiration”



**GDL member Elizabeth Maloba, a facilitator, speaker and entrepreneur from Kenya, addresses the controversies and sensibilities surrounding the term “demographic dividend,” common misperceptions of Africa and her hopes for the 2019 Labs.**

The term “Africa’s demographic dividend” sparks many different associations as we have witnessed in our discussions during the Lab. How do you define the term?

For me, it is an aspiration. In Africa, we say: If you have a large youthful population, you have more people in the workforce and less of an economic burden, and thus we finally have the chance to achieve the dividend. In Europe, on the other hand, Africa’s demographic development is seen as something fear-provoking: Not as a potential dividend, but as a crisis leading to instability, poverty and migration. As a facilitator, I have witnessed many discussions between Europeans and Africans about this issue, and it is always interesting to observe how this dynamic of different perceptions plays out.

Do you see the economic conditions in place in order for African countries to fulfil their potential demographic dividend?

Somewhat. I see that African countries are making big steps towards achieving economic

growth. The countries with the fastest growing GDP worldwide are all African. But they are growing from a very small GDP. There needs to be more space for this growth to be strengthened. When Asia achieved its demographic dividend, the global architecture of trade, finance and taxes looked very different from now. Some of the steps that India and Bangladesh took, such as giving subsidies to farmers or protecting manufacturers, are not available to African countries today because it would contravene international law, e.g. the regulations of the World Trade Organization.

In one of the panel discussions during the Impact Lab in Berlin, you mentioned that many measures proposed by European countries to lower fertility rates are not targeting the right sector. What do you mean by that?

If you want to impact something, you don’t always have to intervene directly at the point at which you are hoping to generate change. Many interventions to affect fertility rates in Africa target the health sector, for example by giving women access to abortion and family planning options. We might need to do that. But the factors that influence a family’s decision regarding the number of children to have are to be found elsewhere.

To give an example, I look at the micro level and my own family tree. My father’s and mother’s parents, who lived in rural communities in Kenya, had many children. But both families came to the decision that their children needed an education, so both my mother and my father went to school. With education came hopes, dreams and aspirations. So when they got married, my parents decided in the 1970s to plan their family. It was a very controversial decision in their community back then, but they stuck to it.

So when we talk about family planning, we’re talking about very personal decisions that are influenced by many factors: Do I want to work or not, how many children can I really manage to support... Therefore: Focus on education, show people that there are opportunities



beyond their current imagination! I grew up in a village in Kenya. If you went back and told 12-year-old Elizabeth: One day you will buy an airplane ticket, she would say, you must be joking. Once you educate people and offer them opportunities, they will automatically think about family planning. Nobody that I know who made a family planning decision did so just because condoms were available.

### What is your hope for the 2019 Labs?

One of my biggest hopes is that we, the GDL, can show foreign ministries from donor countries that there are other aspects on the table than those they usually look at. It is important to consider the contexts in which we are having these discussions. Africa and Europe do not share a very pleasant history. When African tribes signed agreements with Europe, what happened? With these memories, can African

countries trust agreements with Europe today? At the same time, we Africans have to understand: Maybe the Germany of the 21st century is very different from the Germany of the 1900s. Different times call for different strategies. We all have to change our approaches.



## “We Often See a Lack of Alignment between Partner Countries and Donors”



**GDL member Stefan Cibian is the Executive Director of the Făgăraș Research Institute in Romania and an Academy Fellow with the Africa Programme of Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. His research focuses on development and statehood in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly on uncovering the gaps between international approaches to development and local practices.**

Together with GDL members Elizabeth Maloba and Patrick Mpedzisi, you facilitated the prototyping session that stood at the core of the Impact Lab in Berlin and paved the way for the final recommendations to the Challenge Holder. What was the guiding question for this session?

In the context of today’s diplomatic and development cooperation practices, there is often a lack of alignment between partner countries and donors when working on certain topics together. There is always one country that puts resources on the table to make changes and another country that has to implement the respective changes, and obviously the perspectives are very different. These current practices make it very difficult to reach a common understanding. What we as organisers of the prototyping session did this year at the GDL is to generate and test different approaches of how this situation can be tackled: How is it possible

to have discussions among states on sensitive topics such as the demographic dividend, so that these engagements become more honest than they currently are?

For this format, the three of you chose a complex methodology that involved a simulation of expert discussions that included external experts. What was the idea behind that?

To decide on the methodology, we looked at different aspects: The need to test different factors at the same time and the diversity of the GDL members, which is one of its greatest strengths. So we formed four groups while taking advantage of this diversity: One group was mostly formed of people coming from government institutions, one group included all non-governmental stakeholders, like civil society and business, and the other two were mixed. The task was to curate an expert discussion that allows for more open international dynamics. Each group decided on its own methodology. Some even appointed observers to see how the group members interacted and how the members’ reactions influenced the discussions.

What do you hope the GDL can contribute to traditional diplomacy?

One big challenge in the context of diplomacy and development cooperation is that inter-governmental relations are happening in very rigid formats, and there is no innovation to bridge the lack of alignment mentioned before, or to include relevant voices that are usually not heard. Therefore, one should find ways to include people with different backgrounds, as we did during the Labs. People from business or civil society have a different perspective on many of the issues diplomacy engages with. That is why we framed our simulation as a discussion of experts: Every GDL member is an expert in his or her field and can contribute something meaningful. In brief, the GDL can bring innovative approaches, methodologies and multi-sector formats to traditional diplomacy.

## Power Dynamics at Play

**The simulation at the Impact Lab in Berlin revealed how power dynamics shape conversations - and offered insights into what a more inclusive diplomacy would require.**

By Sonja Peteranderl

International collaboration in a nutshell: The GDL Impact Lab simulation challenged the participants to develop an approach for facilitating a dialogue of an expert working group about the Demographic Dividend.

External experts from the African diaspora in Berlin were invited to join the conversation. Conflicts that arose during the group discussions showed how asymmetric power structures and unspoken conflicts can prevent real cooperation.

### **Fighting Stereotypes: Africa is not a Country**

The task of the simulation to discuss the Demographic Dividend referring to “Nambia” (a fictitious country with demographic values drawn from existing countries) and “Euroland” (representing a Western country) was met with scepticism by the experts – it triggered the problem that Westerners see and treat Africa as “one country.”

Africa is a diverse continent, but yet the public discourse, media and also stakeholders participating in global diplomacy might insist on referring to it as one uniform place. Generalised assumptions, clichés and superficial debates deny historical, cultural and economic peculiarities between, but also within, the countries on the African continent. The experts invited to the GDL session also stressed that the experience of a single person from one African country cannot be used to make valid statements about the needs and challenges of all population groups and stakeholders in that country.

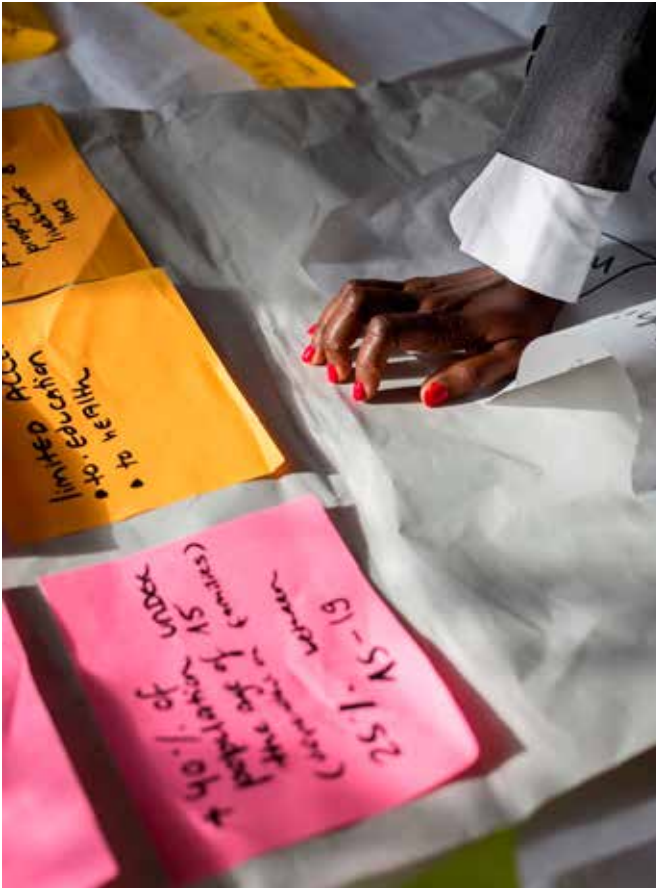
### **Predefined Mindsets: The Form of Cooperation reflects asymmetrical Power Dynamics**

A complicated methodology and two pre-formulated work questions were presented to the external experts. This reflected the common phenomenon that the donors often predefine the problem in international collaboration projects and therefore also frame the possible pathways to a solution – without considering the opinions and real needs of the locals and experts. “If we feel unable to transform the question and the process, then the conversation cannot go any further,” said one of the experts at the GDL session, expressing her frustration with the one-sided process.

The imposed top-down process became another example for the discrimination black people have to deal with on a daily basis. “As black women, we always feel like space invaders, like we should not be there,” an expert explained. “That causes frustration, because these issues are important and we have a lot to say.” Small aggressions such as not being treated as equal team members mount up over time and build into a culture where black participants feel they are regarded only as quotas, but not heard, recognised and accepted.

The experts suggested that experts like themselves should be approached without a predefined mindset and process, that experts should be invited to join in the early stages, even before new projects have started, and that





An improved internal knowledge management could tap this potential. In the long run, overhauling recruiting processes at the Federal Foreign Office in order to diversify the workforce, but also hiring local consultants from African countries or the diaspora for delegations can help to make teams more diverse and enable better informed processes.

### **Tackling Distrust: The Context of International Collaboration Processes is often invisible**

The colonial past, but also current exploitative practices such as corruption and unfair business practices of foreign companies abroad, negatively impact confidence in international cooperation, but are rarely addressed in concrete terms.

Challenges such as the Demographic Dividend are linked to structural problems, partly resulting from the colonial past, but also tied to current injustices such as corruption or exploitation of African countries by foreign companies. Some foreign companies evade taxes by falsely declaring the amount of extracted raw materials to be lower than it actually is, thereby minimizing the revenue of African states and distorting economic performance, for example. Framing problems such as the demographic dividend as an “African problem” simplifies the challenge it represents.

Acknowledging and addressing existing problems can promote trust in international cooperation. But trust building must also take the form of policy changes that go beyond lip service. “We need to be real – and we need to be ready to feel uncomfortable,” as one of the experts put it.

local grassroots organisations should be contacted and not just asked to confirm assumptions, but invited to work on the definition of the challenges together. The African diaspora in Germany could be a useful resource for the Federal Foreign Office to engage with – members of the diaspora can serve as cultural brokers.

The Federal Foreign Office should also tap more into local knowledge in its own structures – local staff in the embassies are in direct contact with a variety of local stakeholders and know the challenges first-hand, but their insights seldom flow back to the Head Office, for example.

## Reflections on Inclusion

At the end of the 2019 Curriculum, GDL members Elizabeth Maloba and Patrick Mpedzisi had a conversation on inclusion, an emerging theme in the dialogue over the course of the year. Elizabeth is a freelance facilitator, speaker and entrepreneur with 20 years of experience in addressing complex challenges. Patrick is an organisational development consultant with 19 years of experience working on regional processes in the non-profit sector in Africa.

*In your experience, when has inclusion played a decisive role in negotiations and/or policy initiatives?*

E: For years, pastoralists in Ethiopia's lowlands relied on strong customary land tenure systems to survive. Historically, legislation failed to clearly define communal rights to rangelands and the specific roles that communities and the

government should play in administrating and managing these resources. The negative impact of this impasse included devastated livelihoods as a result of rangeland degradation and shrinking herds. Several years of work led to the communities' arguments being included and legislation being passed that provides the legal basis for registering and certifying community landholdings, as well as enabling customary institutions to function as Community Land Governance Entities (CLGEs).

P: Inclusion has two levels which are not always the same, but can often seem the same. The first is inclusion based on a target group which presupposes that bringing in different target groups or stakeholders will result in different perspectives and consequently better policies or negotiations. The second level is including different perspectives. Working largely in the non-profit sector I have witnessed the power of development finance to "sponsor," deliberately



or inadvertently, certain narratives. For me, inclusion must seek to go beyond including different stakeholders but must also seek to include different narratives.

### Is inclusion a part of the collaboration between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU)?

E: Within both the AU and the EU inclusion translates into considering the interests of different member states, of local government authorities and of civil society organisations, as well as other recognized key stakeholders. The development of common policy within this framework is complex. To be successful, policy makers need to ensure that the positions of the stakeholders are included, that where there are large divides in opinion common ground is sought, and that policy decisions result in the common good of the populations they represent.

P: The spirit of including citizen voices within the African Union's decision making processes, hence in any collaboration, is central to the Pan-African notions behind the AU. The presumption that African governments are carrying the diverse views and interests of their citizenry requires greater scrutiny. No sooner had the AU been constituted then various governments began to develop national policies meant to regulate and, in some cases, stifle civil society voices. This illustrated very early in the AU's existence that there are differences between the perspectives and narratives of the governing and the governed in Africa. This could also be said of the narratives in Europe. Hence, the concept of inclusion in terms of AU-EU collaboration needs to go beyond the two mega institutions and must not be limited to their spaces.

### Is inclusion different across cultural divides?

E: There are differences of style across cultural divides. These differences exist at the continental level, at the national level, and at the sub-national level. They also exist in cross-sectoral contexts. This makes inclusion uncomfortable. It requires that interlocutors find a way to build a consensus despite the fact that they may not hold the same values.

P: There are definitely different norms and styles for arriving at inclusion. Modern diplomacy follows the styles of communication established within European states during the Renaissance era. It would be interesting to explore how diplomacy worked within the African formations before colonialism, and how different intercontinental relations would have been had these practices been uninterrupted.

### Is inclusion a buzzword, a matter of inspiration, an improvisation and rhetoric, or the result of a longer process of trust building?

E: Inclusion has to be genuine. Bringing people from diverse backgrounds and groups to the table while seeking to retain control of the conversation and ensure that the dialogue does not change is tokenism. Inclusion can only thrive in a context where there is trust.

P: To go beyond being a buzzword, inclusion must go further than the notion of different perspectives and narratives, with a view to ensuring that those who have provided the specified spaces actively listen and engage.

The longer version of this conversation can be found on the GDL Blog.



# Partners & Places

## From the Parliament to the Street: Collaboration with Local Partners

To fulfil its commitment to see the bigger picture and include unheard voices, the GDL worked with a great variety of local partners from all spheres of society.

Collaboration with local partners lies at the core of the GDL principles: It means to consider the interests of all relevant stakeholders, to include voices that in traditional diplomacy often remain unheard, and therefore to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at stake. This principle is closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 17 which calls for partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society in order to realise sustainable development.

### **The Importance of Local Stakeholders: Building Networks**

In 2019, local partners were given an especially prominent role during the Incubator Lab in

Accra in order to help GDL members immerse themselves into the local context. Many of the members set foot on sub-Saharan Africa for the first time. Supported by the Incubator Lab's Host Firmin Adjahossou, the GDL partnered with stakeholders from government, business, civil society and academia. Among them was the African Parliamentarians' Network Against Corruption (APNAC), founded in 1999 by parliamentarians from different African countries who identified corruption as one of the most important factors hampering sustainable economic development. Fabrice Fifonsi, Executive Director of APNAC, collaborated closely with the GDL throughout the Incubator Lab and contributed valuable insights. A second partner was Ghana's parliament: its first deputy speaker, the Honorary Joseph Osei Owusu, welcomed the participants with a speech on their first day in Accra; on the second day, GDL members





visited the parliament. “We engaged Ghana’s parliament because we wanted those who are in charge of policy at the national level to be a part of the process,” explains Incubator Lab Host Firmin Adjahossou. “It helped us to include the political dimension in our discussions.”

#### **Field Visits: Including Further Expertise**

To offer further valuable input, the programme included field visits to two important research institutions: The National Population Council, which advises Ghana’s government on all matters concerning population dynamics, and the Centre for Democratic Development, an independent think tank, “to bring in expertise and analysis,” explains Firmin.

To learn about some of the most delicate social issues first-hand, a third field trip was organised to visit the Street Children Empowerment Foundation which helps street children to attend school. “The demographic dividend is affecting youth strongly,” says Firmin, “therefore we wanted a youth-focused organisation to be involved.” Along similar lines, youth and education were the overarching topics of a fourth field trip to Sopodiva Training Centre, where students from francophone African countries improve their English skills. To enable an even more detailed impression, the Incubator Lab featured a speaker from the African Union, Daniel Batidam, as well as visits to the DuBois

Memorial Centre for Pan-African Culture and to Impact Hub Accra, a space for aspiring young entrepreneurs. “The Incubator Lab was a great success,” Firmin concluded. “The local partners were very happy about the collaboration. And the members learned a lot from them.”

#### **Incorporating Tradition**

After the official end of the Incubator Lab, a small group of GDL members was able to hear an additional voice which is usually excluded from international collaboration: GDL member Theresa Carrington invited Chief Paul Asana Agoo, a traditional local authority, to Accra to meet those lucky few GDL members who had not yet departed. Chief Agoo is the senior divisional chief of the Zaare traditional area which has approximately 20,000 inhabitants. Theresa knows him through her social enterprise “Ten By Three” which has been working with the chief to reduce poverty in Ghana for over a decade. In front of a small group of GDL members, Chief Agoo talked about life in Ghana’s traditional communities and his hopes for his country and answered the many curious questions of this eager listeners. “Chief Agoo was willing to drop everything to meet with GDL members,” says Theresa, “because he felt by sharing details about local power structures, GDL members would be better equipped to positively impact Ghana.”





## Eating Hummus in a Tango Studio

**How unconventional choices of location and catering reflect the GDL's values and reinforce its aims.**

On a cold October morning in Berlin, several dozen people were sweating, stumbling and laughing as they tried to navigate in pairs across a crowded dance floor at Mala Junta, an Argentine tango studio in Berlin's Schöneberg district. The German capital has long been known in the international tango community as one of the tango hotspots in Europe. Alas, this was not one of the ordinary dance lessons that regularly take place at Mala Junta. Those cheerful amateur dancers were the participants of this year's Impact Lab. GDL member Julie August, a seasoned tango dancer herself, guided the participants during their first tango steps.

"Tango is not just like any other dance. It is not – or not only – about learning steps," says Julie. "It is about connecting with a partner, about the communication as a couple and the communication with the other couples that are on the dance floor, about the perception of the needs and possibilities of the person you share the dance with. It's about improvisation and creativity, awareness and mindfulness. In my opinion, these are all diplomatic skills: connect with the person you have to talk to, perceive his or her needs and possibilities, mind the environment and other people nearby."

### **Synergy Effects: The Power of Place**

Mala Junta was not the only unconventional location of the 2019 Lab. The first day of the Impact Lab was concluded in Be'Kech, a cosy café and co-working space defining itself as "anti-café" as it defies conventional business logic: Whoever shows up here only pays for the time they spend at the venue, not for food and drinks. "Since the first Lab, it was my mission to bring a very personal note to an environment that is characterised as rather conservative," says Sue Lyn Chong from the GDL Secretariat who picked most of the locations and service partners. "At the GDL, we believe in the power of place and

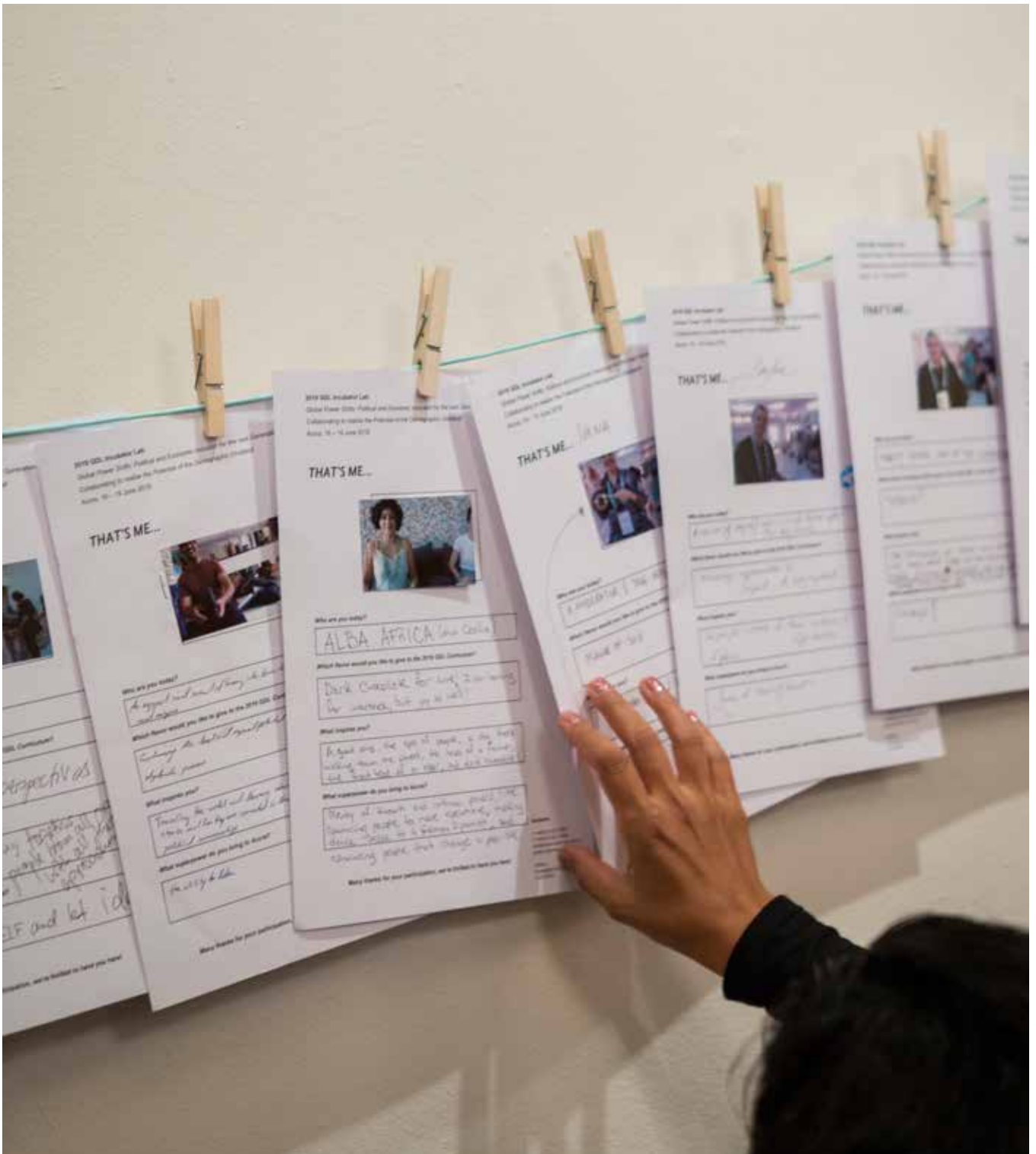


the powerful synergies coming to life when people interact with their environment."

The final session of the 2019 Lab was held at the Village Community Center that aims to create a safe space for alternative male identities, offering courses in yoga, meditation, drawing, writing and other fields. Village Founder Kai Ehrhardt facilitated a short lesson in mindfulness in which he invited the participants to focus on their breath and body. After three intense days of discussion, collaboration and constant reflection, this moment of peaceful inwardness provided a welcome respite for many participants. "It was a conscious way to connect with my inner senses," says GDL member Leona Lillian Abban from Ghana, "becoming aware that within me there lies something complex which was providing strength and enabling me to do anything."

### **Sustainability in Action**

Just like the locations, the food served during the Labs often entails a special story as well: the delicious African-oriental lunch served at Mala Junta, for example, was provided by a catering service that employs refugees from places such as Syria and Afghanistan. "Sustainability is one of our core principles and thus we follow a holistic approach to it – ecologically, socially and economically," says Sue Lyn. "By bringing GDL members and partners to unconventional spaces and working with people from completely different backgrounds, we bring a new voice to the table and translate our values into action."



# Methodology

## From Your Secret Friend, with Love

**Fostering a sense of community is not just a goal in itself: It is the basis for trustful collaboration.**

Between discussions and group work, participants of the 2019 Labs experienced moments of cheerful surprise: A piece of chocolate on their desk, a flower in their bag, a greeting card from their “secret friend.” This is one of many initiatives that helps foster the strong sense of community characteristic of the GDL: On the first day of both the Incubator and the Impact Lab, each participant was assigned another member as their “secret friend,” to anonymously sweeten their experience with small surprises and gestures. “This was not just to make everyone feel good – even though the initiative definitely achieved this goal – but to foster a sense of community and an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual appreciation and trust in which everyone feels safe to express their opinions,” explains GDL and Advisory Council member Julia Spinelli. “Such an atmosphere is the basis for a truly open and honest discussion and for the exchange of viewpoints and ideas – one of the most important goals of the GDL.”

## **Social Forms: From the ‘Open Diary’ to a Night on the Dancefloor**

Another of these small but meaningful initiatives adding to the Lab was the open diary during the Incubator Lab in Accra: GDL members were encouraged to collect impressions from the day to contribute to an “open diary wall,” a collective, creative diary reflecting the great variety of perceptions and emotions among the participants.

In addition, social gatherings were an integral part of both the Incubator and the Impact Lab and have a long tradition in the GDL. In Accra, GDL members were invited to the German Ambassador’s residence, where, to the sound of groovy Ghanaian beats in the background, they transformed the carefully cultivated garden into a dance floor; in Berlin, on the last evening of the Impact Lab, they gathered for the final party in the Literature Café and Craft Beer Bar “The Word Berlin,” and listened to the Afro-German Trio “3 Women and The Bass” before hitting the dance floor again.

## **Building Trust, Co-creating Ideas**

Social gatherings like these are not just fun. They also provide valuable space to reflect on the events of the day, continue discussions that had started earlier, develop new connections and deepen existing ones. Together with initiatives like the “secret friend,” they help foster an environment of mutual trust which is the basis for fruitful collaboration. “Only when everyone involved feels safe to express their thoughts and opinions, nobody holds back out of fear of disapproval or negative repercussions,” says Julia. “And only this way will truly innovative and disruptive ideas be developed.”



## Simulating Diplomacy, Even When It Hurts

**In one of the most challenging sessions of the Impact Lab, participants teamed up with external experts to develop innovative models for collaboration between Germany and African countries.**

The second day of the Impact Lab in Berlin was hosted by the Challenge Holder, the German Federal Foreign Office. After the colourful locations GDL members had become used to in the course of the 2019 Lab, including a hip innovation hub in Accra and a vegan café in Berlin, the plain, white conference room in the Foreign Office provided an unusually austere atmosphere.

For the key session of the day, the facilitator team consisting of GDL members Elizabeth Maloba, Patrick Mpedzisi and Stefan Cibian had developed a complex methodology aimed at fostering fresh approaches for collaboration and, in parallel, testing group dynamics in different settings. The overarching question of the session was: How might we design a framework that enables international collaboration to har-

ness the demographic dividend? The three facilitators divided the participants into four groups according to principles that imitate a variety of real-life settings: One group consisted mostly of participants working for governments, while other groups were dominated by members from civil society or business. All were asked to develop their own methodology for the subsequent discussion. For the second part of the exercise, the groups were joined by external experts from a variety of fields: among them were Koffi Nomenyo, employee at KfW, Germany's state-owned development bank, and the founder of Africa-Germany Young Leaders Program Building Bridges e.V.; Dr Tanja Kiziak, deputy manager of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development; Maithy Moune, co-managing director of the Each One Teach One e.V. Afro-Diasporic Library in Berlin and founder of the Black German networking platform Black Business Matters; and Nora Kiefer, a scientific advisor for the Deutsche Afrika Stiftung (German Africa Foundation).



### **Speaking to the Challenges: Working with Complexity and Uncertainty**

The task was a challenging exercise for many participants. Several groups decided to break the complex question down into something more manageable, such as: How can we improve collaboration between Germany and African states in order to harness Africa's demographic dividend? Many participants also struggled with the rather complex methodology adapted from design thinking. "As a method itself it was interesting, I have never worked with it before," says GDL member Hatem Salama from Egypt. "But it would have been important to make clearer in the beginning what was expected from the participants." Nevertheless, he took away helpful new impulses from the session: "I will try the method in my own line of work."

The road to the final results that were presented on the following day proved winding and stony at times. This was due to the complexity of the question and the methodology as well as the controversial and sensitive issues coming up in the course of the discussions: Do European states pursue a hidden agenda in their dealings with African countries, as some GDL members from African countries feared? Does traditional diplomacy exclude important voices from civil society and traditional power structures, as others suggested? Is the selection process for diplomats inclusive enough towards minorities? These and other questions sparked intense and sometimes heated debates.



### **Keeping up the Dialogue**

Yet it was precisely these controversies from which many participants took away their most important lessons. "Some perspectives can be very far from our own views," says GDL member Trini Saona. "But I think it is important that we strive to maintain an open dialogue, given the vast diversity that we have in this group. We should always bear in mind that, at the GDL, we have embarked together on a journey of continuous learning – this is the Lab part of it."



## “Crystallising the Core Understanding of What the Lab is All About”

GDL member Jörg Reckhenrich, an artist and systemic consultant, led a co-creation session in which members were asked to design a flag for the GDL. Their favourite design was sewn into a flag and hoisted at the residence of the German ambassador in Accra a few days later.

During the 2019 Labs, the GDL experimented with design thinking. How does this methodology work, and what advantages does it have to offer?

Design thinking is a methodology to run a user-centered approach to develop ideas and solutions through a fast iteration process. The cornerstones of the methodology are: Creating a design challenge – what is the problem we want to solve – and building a prototype to test the solution on the ground. Topics of the methodology can be new products, services or business opportunities.

If you have a clearly formulated challenge, no matter in which field, design thinking is a very good methodology to think through various ideas and test them very quickly. The key to design thinking is to verify at a very early stage whether the proposed ideas are significant and useful. When the participants go back to the challenge holder and understand that their ideas do not fit, they can get to work and improve them.



During the Incubator Lab in Accra, you asked the participants to design a flag for the GDL. What did you hope to achieve, apart from the actual artistic result?

The idea is very simple. I have used it many times in my work with businesses and other organisations. In order to understand how different people perceive a situation, it is very useful to unveil their mental concepts of it. Once you have those on the table, it is much easier to have a dialogue about the different perspectives on an issue. Instead of having a broad, abstract discussion about what the demographic dividend is all about, my question was: What is our identity as a Lab?

As an artist, how did you perceive the group work and its results?

I really enjoyed observing the various approaches. There are people who are doers and simply start to draw, while others prefer to discuss first. This session was a wonderful opportunity to see the mixture of doers and discussants at the table and to appreciate the great variety of people that the Lab brings together.

The results were marvellous. What matters most is that people were very engaged, and all did their best. And I think the artistic competition about the strongest design that we had at the end crystallised the core understanding of what the Lab is all about.





# In the Field

## Lessons from the Streets

**The Street Children Empowerment Foundation in Accra helps vulnerable children to shape their own future – with music and games.**

By Sonja Peteranderl

On one side of the impoverished fishing community Jamestown in Old Accra lies the sea, and on the other side smoke clouds from the burning of electrical waste rise into the air. On a small soccer field inside a building in the centre of Jamestown, a dozen children sing and clap their hands.

What looks like fun is actually a rescue mission to bring children off the street and enable them to create a brighter future for themselves.

“We use play as a tool to engage children,” says Paul Semeh, the founder of the NGO Street Children’s Empowerment Foundation (SCEF). “The attention span of street children is very short – and kids are not ready for school after all of the abuse that comes with living on the streets.” Despite the fast-growing economy in Ghana, about 100.000 children are currently roaming the streets. Some are orphans, some have escaped abuse in their families, others have come from the countryside to the city to earn some money.

## Building on Experience: Supporting Street Children

As a teenager, Paul Semeh was homeless for a while himself – this is why he understands what the children go through. They have to get used to a regular everyday life again – and to rules. “On the streets, we live by ourselves, we brush our teeth whenever we want, we make our own rules,” he explains. “And the fist is power – so street children fight a lot.”

Semeh and his team pick up children from the streets and also help vulnerable children within the Jamestown community to access basic education. Within three months, they prepare the children for regular schools: By singing Ghanaian songs, they learn, for example, how individual letters sound and thus get to know the alphabet step by step. Knowledge is also passed on through games. Little by little, the children then learn to follow rules again – each child is supported along the way by counsellors and psychotherapists.

## Empowerment and Mutual Learning

The NGO also tries to reach out to the families of the children, especially the mothers who often raise their children alone. “Once we empower the children, we also empower the mothers,” says Semeh. Within their centre for grassroots enterprises, the NGO offers training programmes and supports female entrepreneurs with knowledge and microfinance models to found their own local companies. Street children are no problem, says Paul Semeh – instead, he sees their potential. “We always ask what teachers can teach the children. Instead we should ask ourselves what these children, who have already experienced and overcome so much, can teach us adults.”

## Putting Research into Practise

**At the Centre for Democratic Development, GDL members gained valuable insights into Ghana's multi-stakeholder approach to tackle pressing issues such as poverty.**

By Jörg Reckhenrich

On the second day of the Incubator Lab in Accra, the participants split up into four groups for break-out sessions on different topics that are relevant in the context of Africa's demographic dividend. One of these sessions was hosted by the Centre for Democratic Development Ghana (CDD), an independent think tank dedicated to the promotion of democracy, good governance and economic openness in Ghana and Africa. The CDD organises and runs research as well as provides qualified data and information. It aims to be more than a traditional research and advisory body: it is also a training centre that raises awareness among today's and future generations.

### **Bridging Divides**

In the first part of the day, the leading question on the table was bridging research and practise so as to promote good governance, and, specific to Ghana's situation, how to eradicate poverty. Participants explored SDG 17 and the idea of multi-stakeholder partnerships by way of a profound and detailed presentation relating to examples from Ghana and addressing cooperation within and across the government, civil society and the private sector. They also learned about monitoring data and ensuring transparency.

What followed was a lively exchange about details, from the organisation of data collection, the role of technology, tracking, the accountability of the data itself, analysing the information, how to combine it into a useful





output, all the way to the role of key stakeholders. GDL members understood how important this research is for a better understanding of all dimensions of the demographic dividend, including the impact of practise and the effect of projects on the ground – and that it should aim to be inclusive, integrating as many stakeholders as possible.

### **Cooperation for Sustainability**

The CDD supports specific initiatives with its data and research competences. Following the morning session, GDL members had the opportunity to get to know some of these initiatives: The “I am Aware” campaign collects, analyses, archives and disseminates user-friendly socio-economic data on the state of public goods and public

service delivery in 216 districts, located in all ten regions of Ghana. The Afro Barometer is a Pan-African view on all parameters of development and provides an online data analysis tool. WAEON (West African Observer Network) is a network organisation which tries to ensure peaceful and credible elections in West Africa.

With these tools, all organisations together aim to promote the adoption and implementation of international and regional norms in relation to elections, democracy and good governance and to help member organisations train personnel in election monitoring, civic and voter education and other election-related processes – a valuable insight for the GDL with regard to putting research into practise in the context of the demographic dividend.

## A Classroom Full of Hope

**At the Sopodiva Training Centre in Accra, GDL members met students from neighbouring countries, learning their vision for Africa.**

Those GDL members who joined the field trip to the Sopodiva Training Centre were greeted by friendly faces and flashing colours: Many of the students awaiting them were wearing traditional garments from their home countries. They had travelled from francophone West-African countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin and Chad to participate in Sopodiva's English courses and thus enhance their future career chances. In addition to language training, Sopodiva offers courses in career development as well as accommodation. One of Sopodiva's goals is to create a community, explained Sopodiva's director Serge Oga who warmly welcomed the GDL members.

### Education for the Future

For African countries to be able to harness their demographic dividend, granting quality education to their growing youth population is a key requirement. A qualified workforce can raise productivity and economic growth; and educated women pursuing a career tend to have fewer children and to invest more into their own education—ideally, setting in motion a virtuous circle.

At the Sopodiva Training Centre, GDL members met men and women from the region who were fully aware of the importance of education for their personal, as well as Africa's, future. GDL members had a chance to learn about their personal stories, aspirations and views concerning Africa's challenges. Asked about their ideas on how to harness the demographic development, the students quickly overcame their initial shyness: "our governments have to learn to use their resources better," "Africans themselves have to develop solutions," "encourage entrepreneurship," "improve education," "African countries have to unite to work together"... The heavy heat in the classroom soon was forgotten as students and GDL members were floating ideas. "We don't understand the importance of our own products," criticised a student from Mali. "We have to learn how to create our own companies, like Google," added another.

### Towards a Different Society

It was a lively discussion that left GDL members with authentic insights, fresh ideas, new questions—and a dose of optimism after having witnessed the creativity and ambition of these young people. "Our Africa is still mired in poverty," Sopodiva's website states. "But don't you think that if we can enrich ourselves individually, that would be the beginning of a revolution?"



## Fighting Child Marriage for a Healthier Society

**Ghana's National Population Council advises the government on all population-related issues and promotes its family planning goals among the population.**

By Louisa Dery,  
Volunteer at the Incubator Lab in Ghana

On their field trip to the National Population Council (NPC) of Ghana, GDL members discussed various aspects related to the demographic dividend with the NPC experts. Among the issues addressed were the high birth rate, infant mortality, fertility, reproductive health as well as the tally of the well-being of the people and the challenges the council faces in targeting these development-related issues in Ghana.

### **Addressing Family Planning and Child Marriage in Ghana**

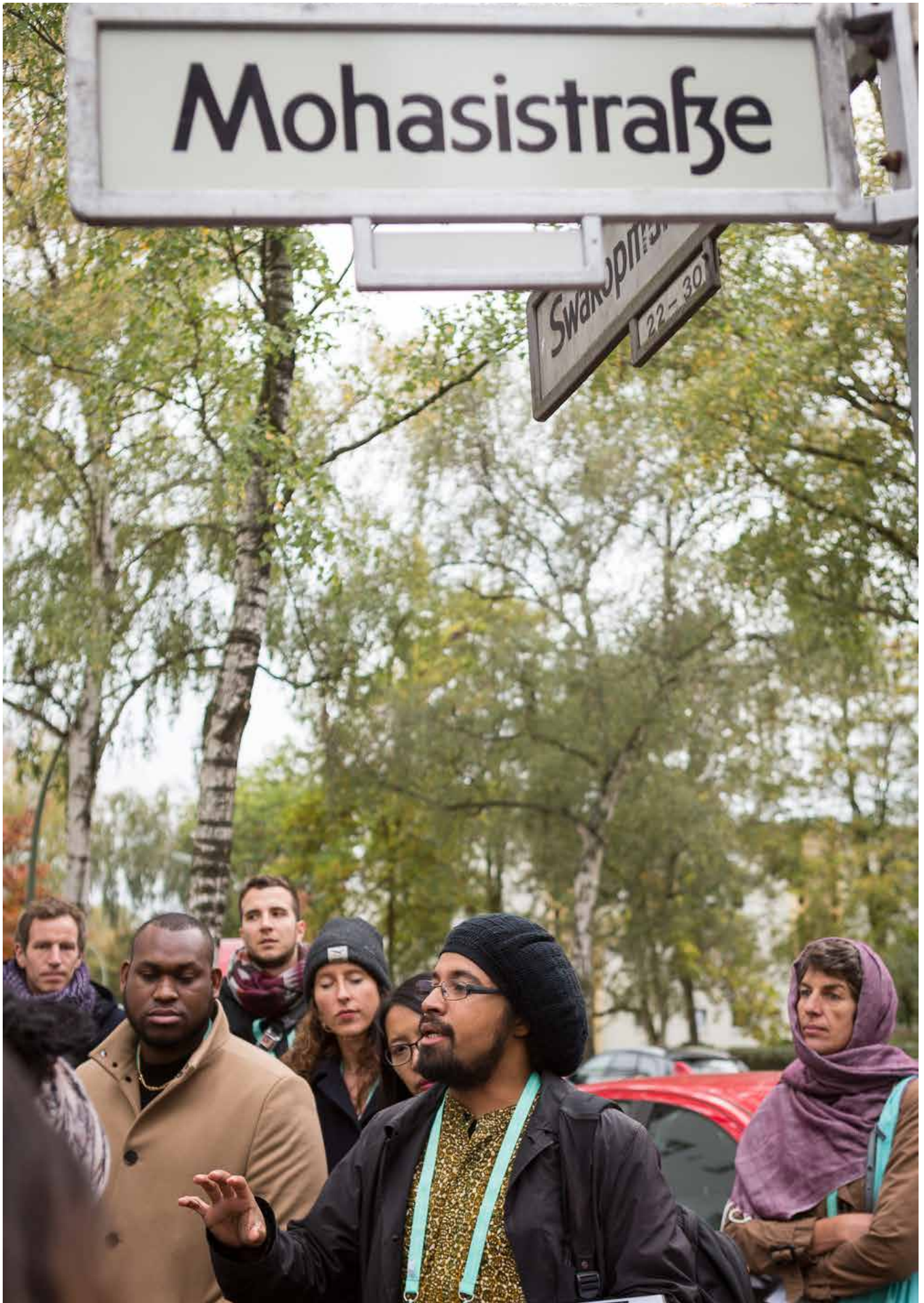
Dr Leticia Appiah, executive director of the NPC, spoke about the government's decision to encourage two to three children per couple. She added that education on family planning in hospitals such as during antenatal sessions is being provided to promote this goal. She and her team also discussed how to make sure that children below the age of 18 survive, adding that, just as much as the country is advocating for a limited number of children per parent, it must also ensure that children can grow up healthfully and without suffering from hunger.

Moving on, child marriage was discussed. Child marriage poses dangers to females especially and reduces educational opportunity for girls. Usually, these girls' education is cut short due to poverty and teenage pregnancy. These phenomena are mostly seen in the northern part of the country, as well as in the coastal belt in the south in places such as Jamestown, Chorkor, Labadi, Osu and Teshi.



### **Sustainable Partnerships: Wealth through Health**

Consequently, the NPC partners with the Ministry of Health to improve healthcare and reduce inequality in rendering health services to its people. In so doing it helps to create wealth through health in Ghana. The council strives to educate women and men about the need for family planning. Men in the rural areas in Ghana often feel they need to have as many children as their forefathers did, without considering whether they are able to ensure their well-being and provide for their basic needs.



## Mapping the Post-Colonial Layer

**On the first day of the Impact Lab, GDL members went on a guided tour of the African Quarter to explore Germany's colonial history.**

By Julia Sattler

Who should sit at the table when the demographic dividend is negotiated? Who can take the initiative in discussions about it? How does the past shape present between collaboration countries, and interactions between people?

The 2019 Labs made clear that communication matters, as do perspective, positionality and agency. When tackling the demographic dividend in Africa, the legacy of imperialism plays a role. This recognition underlines the need for conversations about the historical relationships between European and African countries. There is not yet a framework for how to deal with this topic in the context of diplomacy – a critical lack that was addressed in discussions among GDL members.

### **Postcolonial Sites in Berlin**

Recently, post-colonialism has gained more visibility in Berlin, the site of the 1884/1885 Berlin Conference. One location where this becomes visible and where discussions about the design of public spaces and street names have emerged is Berlin's so-called African Quarter ("Afrikanisches Viertel"), in Berlin Wedding. Between 1899 and 1958, several streets in this location were named after African countries (e.g. Ghanastraße or Kameruner Straße), specific regions (e.g. Transvaalstraße), landscape features (e.g. Mohasistraße, after Lake Muhazi in Ruanda), towns (e.g. Tangastraße, after a Tanzanian town with the same name), or even German colonisers (e.g. Nachtigalplatz, referencing Gustav Nachtigal, an explorer and Commissioner for West Africa; and Petersallee, named by the National Socialists after Carl Peters, a most controversial coloniser and promoter of the German colony of East Africa).

To familiarise themselves with the complexities of post-colonialism in Germany, the par-

ticipants of the Lab explored this area with the scholar and activist Kwesi Aikins. The tour confronted them with debates about the re-naming of some of the streets, and with the role of Germany in the imperial age. Aikins offered insights into his perception of the current negotiations of the German State in relation to the genocide of the Herero and Nama people of Namibia – a topic touched upon repeatedly throughout the Lab as it points to the complexities of addressing the atrocities committed, of finding a solution and answer to the demand for reparations, and of committing to political strategies involving all groups concerned.

The tour of the African Quarter showed that the mediation of history in the public sphere is not a neutral process. As Aikins explained, there is no unity among inhabitants of the neighbourhood with regard to the representation of the quarter's connection to the colonial era. A 2011 commemorative plaque relating the history of the quarter points to these discussions: While on one side, the city informs about the area's history, the other side contains a text put together by post-colonial initiatives and members of the African diaspora, and emphasises the harm done during the colonial period and its consequences. Both texts represent part of a larger effort to explore the legacy of colonialism in Berlin.

### **Challenging the Legacy: The Role of Diplomacy**

With the demographic dividend at the centre, and with the Federal Foreign Office of Germany being the Challenge Holder in the 2019 curriculum, discussions about Germany's and Europe's colonial legacy became crucial. The question of how diplomacy can work with civil society – and then, with whom exactly – was brought up, as was the importance of including African experts in any discussion. At the same time, concerns were voiced that there might be a "hidden agenda" behind European interests in Africa and its demographic dividend – once again pointing to the fact that despite all ongoing efforts to build trust, the colonial era still matters, be it only to ask again: Who should sit at the table when the demographic dividend is discussed?





# Reflection & Conclusion

## Challenges and Questions for 2020 and Beyond

The 2019 Labs saw some heated debates and critical feedback. For the GDL, this was a great opportunity – to reflect and to learn, to improve and to evolve.

For most participants, the 2019 Labs were an intense experience: next to many cheerful hours, there were moments of frustration and irritation, intense discussions and, rarely, outright conflict. Given the complexities and sensibilities surrounding this year's challenge and the huge diversity of the participants involved, this was hardly surprising. To name just one example, a dispute arose regarding the relevance of mutual trust in development cooperation: while many African GDL members shared the assessment of Incubator Lab Host Firmin Adjahossou that "trust between states and institutions is a big issue, we have to do more to improve it if we really want to collaborate," some representatives from the German side preferred to focus on the content of international collaboration. It was only one of several disagreements that, on the one hand, may have made the process harder, but on the other hand demonstrated how important it is to address these openly instead of hiding them behind a polite diplomatic statement.

Staying true to its member-driven nature, the GDL places great importance on feedback and constructive criticism. Feedback rounds were held both in Accra and in Berlin. Each time, members and the Challenge Holder participated. On these occasions, important points and questions were raised:

- When it comes to dedicating time and resources, what is the right balance between methodology and the actual content of the challenge?
- How much content-related preparation is necessary for each member to be able to tackle a complex and often unfamiliar topic?
- How do we avoid an overuse of convenient buzzwords instead of concrete and possibly controversial proposals – and what counts as buzzword anyway?
- How can we ensure and measure impact?
- How do we align expectations between the GDL and the Challenge Holder?
- How does the GDL deal with acute conflict situations?

### Towards the Future of the GDL

The discussion about these questions has already begun in various forums and among members themselves. "One of the options that are currently being discussed is to develop a charter for the GDL that enshrines its basic values," says GDL member Julia Sattler. "Even though it may have been unpleasant, I see something positive in the fact that discussions and conflicts occurred during the Lab because this proves the need to develop a mechanism for dealing with these issues."

Experimenting is a creative and sometimes messy process that involves lots of trial and error. To get innovative, fresh results, people need the freedom and space for this creative process to play out, with all affiliated risks and uncertainties. The strength of the GDL is that it provides this space and is open to constant learning and evolving – a laboratory in the full sense of the word.

## Conclusion

**The 2019 Curriculum was intense and insightful, inspiring and challenging. It generated fresh solutions for old problems and raised new questions for the GDL to reflect upon.**

In many aspects, the 2019 Labs may have been the most challenging ones in the GDL's history. The task was complex, the topic loaded with sensitivities and controversies. Yet it is specifically the challenges that lead one to grow and evolve. And at the end of a long, intense and sometimes arduous process, GDL members produced concrete proposals to the Federal Foreign Office on how to improve collaboration with African states and how to help harness the demographic dividend.

Staying true to its identity as a laboratory, the GDL experimented with new formats and methodologies to make full use of the great diversity of its members, spark their creativity and encourage co-creation across geographical, professional, and ideological divides. Different facilitators worked with simulations, artistic tasks and design thinking in order to open up minds and hearts, to encourage the participants to leave trodden paths, to brainstorm freely, to put their wildest ideas on the table, look at them from different angles, combine these, modify them and thus create something new.

### Reaching High for Change

The goals of the GDL are ambitious. Tackling Africa's demographic development and turning it into a dividend might be one of the most pressing tasks of the 21st century, and certainly one of the most complex ones. It was therefore



not surprising that at one point during the Impact Lab the question came up: are we trying to achieve too much? Are we reaching too high?

One attendee answered these questions with a resounding No: GDL Dean Ruprecht Polenz. In his closing speech on the last day of the Impact Lab, he praised the proposals developed during the Lab and reminded the participants that even seemingly small initiatives can have a great impact: "If only ten cities in Germany would be twinned with ten cities in African countries," he said, referring to the concept of Nano Diplomacy that had been developed during the Lab, "and if they were to start thinking about how to harness the demographic dividend, this would be a tremendous success."

He ended up his speech with a quote from American anthropologist Margaret Mead that spoke to the hearts of many who were listening to him: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

# Participants of the Labs 2019

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Margaret Mead

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