



The new alms-giving

## Welfare states rising

DAR ES SALAAM AND DAKAR

African countries are quickly stitching together social safety-nets

UNDERNEATH THE mango tree that marks the centre of Kondo, a village in northern Tanzania, Mwanaidi Saidi prides open a green box. Inside are the 110,000 Tanzanian shillings (\$47) she has saved since she joined the country's nascent welfare scheme. "The money helps me solve small problems," she says. It has helped her buy school uniforms for her four children, medicine for her ill mother and ingredients to make the samosas she sells by the side of the road.

Tanzania's main welfare scheme, known as the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN), has expanded quickly since it was created in 2013. Today Ms Saidi's is one of 1.1m households, or about 10% of the total, that are enrolled. Recipients receive some money simply for being poor. They can earn extra cash from toiling on public-works projects or for making sure their children attend school and health clinics. On average, recipients are paid the equivalent of \$13 per month.

Richer African countries such as Botswana and South Africa have operated welfare schemes for many years. Poorer ones are now rushing to do the same. Kenya has created several, including one that sends money to households in drought-stricken areas. Ethiopia's main welfare programme, which requires recipients to work, used to operate only in the countryside but is spreading to cities. From 2010 to

2015 the countries of sub-Saharan Africa launched an average of 14 schemes per year, up from seven per year between 2001 and 2009. These countries spend an average of 1.2% of GDP per year on social safety-nets, using a broad definition that includes pensions as well as support for children and the poor. That is only a little less than the average for developing countries (1.6%).

It is an extraordinary development. Many of the African countries building welfare systems today are far poorer than countries in Europe, Latin America and Asia were when they did the same. In sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, 41% of people subsist on less than \$1.90 a day. Welfare alone cannot bring that proportion down to zero. But it helps. It also changes poor Africans' expectations of their governments.

One reason so many African countries are building social safety-nets is that they have become wealthier and more politically stable. Another is that they have lots of examples to copy. African countries have learned not just from each other but also from countries such as Brazil and Mexico. Attitudes are changing, too. Political leaders have often been flinty-hearted. Armando Guebuza, then the president of Mozambique, claimed in 2007 that "the lack of a habit of hard work" was perpetuating poverty in his country. But in Tanzania, argues Ladislaus Mwamanga, the director of the Tanzania Social Action Fund, the agen-

cy administering PSSN, poverty is no longer seen as a character flaw. Donors increasingly see handing cash as an efficient form of aid. Academics have shown that very poor people are feckless; when you give them money, they spend it wisely. Fully 90% of the cost of Tanzania's programme is funded by donors such as the World Bank and the British and Swedish governments. Mr Mwamanga says that, since PSSN amounts to just 0.4% of GDP per year, "in theory" Tanzania can take on more of the burden.

Senegal also started distributing money to poor households in 2013. As in Tanzania the programme has grown quickly, now covers about 20% of the population. But the political context is quite different. Although many of the bureaucratic changes associated with Senegal's cash-welfare programme are paid by aid agencies, most of the money distributed to poor households comes from the government. As a result it has become a political football.

Pape Malick Gningue, the director of Senegal's main welfare scheme, calls it the "baby" of Macky Sall, the current president. Mr Sall promised to create the scheme in 2012 while running for the top job. Once in office, he insisted that it was rolled out quickly to every town and village in the country. Mistakes were inevitably made in the rush. But Mr Sall, who faces a re-election battle on February 24th, can point to it as something he has done for poor people. A meeting with welfare recipients in Darou Thioub, near Dakar, is briefly hijacked by a woman who loudly declares that the money she should credit Mr Sall for the money they receive. She turns out to be a local politician for the president's party.

African welfare is hardly generous. In Senegal, households receive \$43 a month (three months' worth of the average payment of \$13 a month, the equivalent of 21% of household disposable income). Families are large in most African countries, so the money is spread thin. The women in Darou Thioub say that they "eat" the cash within a few days. They spend it on school fees or on tiny businesses, such as buying packets of instant noodle powder which they divide and sell on.

But at least much of the money does eventually go to poor people. In Senegal, an analysis in 2016 found that 93% of cash welfare recipients were living below the poverty line. That makes social safety-nets very different from things like fuel and fertilizer subsidies, which tend to go to middle-class people. Cash welfare may also reach the poor better than new schools and hospitals. Aline Coudouel at the World Bank says that the poorest people often cannot reach such institutions, or are turned away when they do.

Welfare can be targeted too accurately to the poor. Lant Pritchett, a develop-

second was indicted in June. But it was unable to try a third suspect for lack of evidence. He was released after more than a year in custody. Heiko Maas, the German foreign minister, says his country faces a similar problem. Testimony from battlefield interrogations is inadmissible in court. Documents recovered by Kurdish fighters have no chain of custody.

Australia has a useful tool: the “declared-area offence”, which makes it a crime to enter proscribed areas. Only Mosul and Raqqa were labelled as such, however. To use the law, prosecutors must prove that suspects entered those cities. Even that can be difficult. Once they are convicted, states must decide where to hold them. America provided no more than 300 fighters and even fewer came back. Jailing them is easy. Not so in Europe, where the numbers are often greater. Some European countries already have problems with radicalisation in their prisons. Adding returned fighters to the mix could incubate the next round of extremists.

Faced with such problems, politicians understandably throw up their hands. If their citizens committed crimes abroad, should they not be tried there? But eastern Syria’s Kurdish-led administration is not a state. Its rudimentary courts lack due process and may not exist much longer. With their American protectors gone, the Kurds will face attacks by both Bashar al-Assad’s regime and the Turkish army. They will probably cut a deal with Mr Assad. If their detainees wind up in Syrian jails, history suggests what may happen next. Mr Assad’s dungeons have produced generations of radicals, who are occasionally set free when politically expedient.

That leaves one last option. “The Pentagon was very clear with us that there’s a good chance they get sent to Guantánamo,” says a congressional staffer. America has not added prisoners to the camp since 2008. President Barack Obama spent eight years trying to close it, and its population has shrunk from 242 detainees in 2009 to just 40 today. Democrats will probably oppose any attempt to reverse the trend.

Dealing with those who return will require a mix of trials, monitoring and rehabilitation. Police will need resources, and prosecutors ways to introduce sensitive evidence in open court. Deradicalisation programmes have merit, especially in prisons and for those brought to Syria and Iraq against their will or as children.

No Western politician wants to be responsible for bringing potentially dangerous radicals back home. But leaving them in Syria or dumping them on developing countries does not make the problem go away. It also sends a message that Western governments do not care about the millions of Syrian and Iraqi lives their citizens helped to destroy. ■

## Israeli politics

# Labour pain

As the Palestinian issue has faded, so have Israel’s old left-wing parties

“PEACE HAS become a dirty word.” That was the main reason given by Tzipi Livni (pictured) for quitting politics on February 18th. Over the course of two decades in the Knesset, Ms Livni, once a protégé of Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s nationalist prime minister, came to support the establishment of a Palestinian state. But too many voters moved in the opposite direction. Her party, Hatnuah, was unlikely to win any seats in April’s election, in which it will no longer take part.

The Palestinian issue was once the dividing line between left and right in Israeli politics. But as hope for a solution has waned, so too have the fortunes of left-wing parties. Most prominent among them is Labour, which sought peace with the Palestinians under leaders such as Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak (all former prime ministers). In April it will be lucky to win a dozen seats (out of 120). To its left is Meretz, which may not win enough votes to be represented in the Knesset.

Roughly half of Israelis support a two-state solution, but three-quarters of them do not believe an agreement can be reached soon. The latest peace talks broke down in 2014. A decade of prosperity and relative stability under Mr Netanyahu has left Israelis comfortable with the status quo. When asked about their priorities, they usually place the Palestinian issue fourth, after security, the economy and education, says Dahlia Scheindlin, a pollster.

Labour’s manifesto reflects this. It fo-

cuses on bettering the lives of the middle class. The party’s leader, Avi Gabbay, refuses to disclose details of his peace plan and sees no reason to remove Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Without the Palestinian issue, though, little marks Labour out from most other parties. It long ago lost its socialist ideology. Mr Gabbay is a former telecoms executive who served as environment minister under Mr Netanyahu. Some call Labour’s leadership “Likud light”.

Not Mr Netanyahu, though. The prime minister has spent years trying to brand the left as a threat to Israel’s existence. One campaign advertisement released before the election in 2015 suggested that a Labour government would open the door to the jihadists of Islamic State. Older Israelis remember Labour as the party that built the country; younger ones lack such reverence. The centre-left has become factious. Labour ended its alliance with Hatnuah last month. At least three parties will compete in April for a centre-left electorate that has not increased in size for a generation. After each loss at the polls, Labour boots out its leader. Mr Gabbay is the ninth party head since 2000. Likud has had just two.

Labour has failed to take many votes from Likud and is threatened by the emergence of new centrist parties and alliances. Benny Gantz, a former army chief, has launched a party that has taken much of Labour’s support. More threatening, still, is a last-minute merger between Mr Gantz’s party and Yesh Atid, headed by former chat-show host Yair Lapid.

Labour got a boost from a primary on February 11th that elected a diverse slate of candidates. Mizrahim (Jews of Arab descent) and women took many of the top spots. Even so, Labour will probably not win enough seats to lead the opposition, let alone form a government. After a decade of right-wing rule, perhaps just staying alive is an accomplishment. ■



Livni leaves the scene



Teaching in English around the world

## Language without instruction

LAHORE AND LUCKNOW

**More children in Africa and South Asia are being taught in English. That's often a bad thing**

**"R**OLY POLY right, right, right. Roly poly left, left, left," sings a class of five-year-olds at a government primary school on the outskirts of Lucknow, a city in India's Hindi-speaking heartland. This English-medium school, one of seven that opened last year among the 215 government schools in the Sarojini Nagar administrative block, is part of an effort by the government of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, to counter the rise of private schools. Private schools have been mushrooming in India—private-sector enrolment rose from around a quarter of pupils in 2010-11 to over a third in 2016-17—and in Sarojini Nagar there are 200 registered private schools and many more unregistered ones. One of their main attractions is that the great majority of them use (or claim to use) English as the language of instruction.

As a recruitment drive, the policy seems to be working. A school nearby saw its enrolment rise over 50% in six months when it switched the medium of instruction from Hindi to English last April. As an edu-

cation policy, however, it is not ideal.

The language in which children are taught can be hugely contentious. Colonial history determines its political salience. Where colonial powers wiped out the indigenous population, such as in America and Australia, it is hardly an issue: the colonial language has crushed indigenous ones, though a few of these are making a comeback (see United States section). In places that were colonised unsuccessfully or not at all—such as Europe, Japan and China—indigenous languages rule. But controversy erupts in countries with a century or two of effective government by a colonial power—in South Asia and Africa, for instance—where the colonial language remains considerable sway.

In sub-Saharan Africa, only Tanzania, Ethiopia and Eritrea do not use a colonial language at all during primary education. Others use either English or French. That is partly because of inertia. Developing curricula and printing books in local languages is expensive, and doing so in scientific subjects in which the terminology is in

English is difficult. Keeping English or French is also, in some places, politically convenient. Where tribes compete for power, the colonial language can be less controversial than the local ones. And then there is the self-interest of the elites, usually the only people who can speak the colonial language properly. "They have a huge return to their linguistic capital" when it is the official language, says Rajesh Ramachandran, of the Alfred Weber Institute for Economics in Heidelberg, Germany. The bias in favour of English is sometimes ferociously enforced: Rose Goodhart, a teacher in Ghana, has seen children beaten for speaking in their mother tongue.

It is not just inertia and coercion that work in favour of English. It is also, these days, popular demand. English is the language of technology. In Africa and South Asia, most higher education is in English, so those who aspire to a college education must master the language. "In higher studies, like medicine and engineering, English is a must," says Atul Kumar Srivastava, president of the Association of Private Schools of Uttar Pradesh, and headmaster of St Basil's School, Lucknow.

English-medium education is no longer the preserve of the elite. Sameena Asif, whose husband is a street hawker, sends her three children to private school in Lahore, Pakistan. "They won't get a degree or a job if they can't speak English. I have a BA in Urdu, but it's useless. I'm embarrassed that I was educated in Urdu."

Many state governments in India, like that in Uttar Pradesh, are establishing or expanding English-medium education. All primary schools are English-medium in Jammu & Kashmir; Andhra Pradesh announced last year that its elementary schools would convert to English; others are experimenting on a smaller scale. In Pakistan, the Punjab provincial government announced in 2009 that it would go English-medium, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa announced the same in 2013.

### The medium clouds the message

Yet there are problems associated with much English-medium schooling. Visitors soon discover that, except in elite establishments, interviews in most “English-medium” schools have to be conducted through an interpreter, in the local language, because neither teachers nor pupils speak much English. At the Lucknow primary school, the head teacher and two out of four teachers speak reasonably good English, but the other two little. Since most of the pupils’ parents are illiterate, they are unlikely to be aware of that.

Such difficulties are reflected in the findings of much research into the educational outcomes of English-medium schooling. The most-often cited study into private versus government-school outcomes in India, carried out in Andhra Pradesh in 2013, found that on average pupils in private schools performed a bit better than those in government schools. But pupils in Telugu-speaking private schools did considerably better in maths than those in English-medium schools.

History provides some intriguing examples of the effect of being educated in the mother tongue or some other language. A policy change in South Africa introduced in 1955 by the apartheid government used the medium of education to sharpen the divide between whites and blacks, increasing the years of schooling that children got in their mother tongue. Two extra years of mother-tongue schooling, instead of schooling in Afrikaans or English, raised both literacy and wages, according to a recent study of historical data.

A similar effect was seen in Ethiopia after the downfall of the Derg, a communist military dictatorship, in 1987. The Derg had mandated that education be in Amharic, a Semitic language with its own script, very different from Oromigo, a Cushitic language spoken by the Oromo people and written in the Latin script. A study from 2017 looking at Oromo children educated just before and just after the change showed an 18-percentage-point increase in literacy. Newspaper readership was also 25% higher among the mother-tongue-educated people, which very likely meant greater political participation.

cerned that their offspring speak English, rather than that they learn history or arithmetic. They may think it worth sacrificing some of the knowledge and understanding that can be gained from being educated in the mother tongue for better prospects in the labour market. But there seems not to be a trade-off. A forthcoming study looked at 12 schools in Cameroon which taught children in Kom rather than, as is standard practice, English, during the first three years of school. Not only did Kom-medium children perform better in all subjects than English-medium ones in third-year tests; in the fifth year they even outperformed English-medium children in English.

“Parents are right that speaking English works for a child,” says Zia Abbas of The Citizens’ Foundation (TCF), a charity that runs 1,500 schools in Pakistan at which children are taught in Urdu. “But they don’t understand the difference between English as a subject and English as a medium of instruction. The children end up not learning English, and not learning anything.”

Some governments have taken this on board. In Pakistani Punjab the new Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government, which took power in the province last year, is to reverse the previous government’s move from Urdu to English. “We don’t have enough qualified teachers,” says Murad Raas, Punjab’s education minister, “and children in the rural areas can’t learn in English. They must be taught in a language they understand.” Punjab is developing a new Urdu-medium curriculum.

Uganda has implemented mother-tongue instruction for the first four years in 12 different languages, and seen big improvements in learning in some languages, though not all. Kenya, too, is moving in the mother-tongue direction. Last month the

government introduced a new curriculum which includes a half-hour lesson in “literacy”—in the mother tongue—every day.

The infinite variety of language means that even the choice of mother tongue is not an easy one. Urdu is the mother tongue of only a minority of Pakistani children. In Punjab most families speak Punjabi at home. So why does TCF not teach Punjabi children in Punjabi? Because, says Riaz Kamrani of the charity, “there are a dozen languages in Pakistan, and we don’t have the resources to use them all as a medium.” Urdu is a compromise.

These complexities mean that mother-tongue teaching requires careful planning. Ben Piper, who leads a USAID-funded literacy programme in government schools in Kenya, found, to his surprise, that children taught in their mother tongue learnt less maths than those taught in English or Swahili (the mother tongue of only a minority of Kenyans). The problem, he realised, was that teachers are assigned jobs by a central agency, without regard to their mother tongue, so they often do not understand the local language in which they are supposed to teach. In Ghana Elorm Apatay was teaching in an English-medium junior high school in the Volta region. To help his pupils, he also spoke to them in Ewe, his and their mother tongue. But because there are so many dialects of Ewe he had to employ linguistically talented pupils to translate for those who did not understand his Ewe.

The complexity of the linguistic landscape in many countries argues not for abandoning mother-tongue teaching, but for developing layered curriculums that ease children into learning other languages. TCF is doing that for the inhabitants of the Thar desert, in a remote part of Sindh province. Their mother tongue is Dhatki. Sindhi, the provincial language, is quite close to that. Urdu, the lingua franca of Pakistan, is necessary but less familiar. English is hardest of all, but as desirable to the Thari people as to anybody else. So the curriculum will start children off in Dhatki and gradually introduce them to the other languages they will need as citizens of Pakistan, and of the 21st century. English will be a subject, not a medium.

Such linguistically sensitive schooling demands more resources than most governments can afford. Instead, more pupils are likely to be taught in English, despite the drawbacks that entails. Their parents will make sacrifices to buy what they believe to be an advantage for their children. “If our children don’t speak English, they can’t excel in today’s world,” says Rukayat Tanvir, whose husband is a shopkeeper in Lahore, and who sends five children to an English-medium private school. “It gives me pleasure to hear my daughters speaking English even though I can’t understand

