

60th Anniversary of the Institute

60 years of research, policy advice and training at IDOS

Anna-Katharina Hornidge and Axel Berger
German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)



Bonn, 11 March 2024. The German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) was founded on 2 March 1964. It was a period in which Germany's involvement in international development cooperation was gaining momentum, with the founding of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 1961. IDOS, then still called the German Development Institute (DIE), was founded to prepare university graduates for work in the new field of development policy and international cooperation and to support German development cooperation through research and policy advice. The first training course was officially opened on 27 April 1965 by Federal President Lübke and Federal Minister Scheel.

We look back at six decades of intensive research, policy advice, training and joint learning, with the con-

stant aim of finding innovative and implementation-oriented solutions to current development challenges. The focus here is on the further development of international cooperation in the context of geopolitical shifts, but also on the design of climate-stabilising restructuring of economic and social systems, and the socially just and sustainable integration of low- and middle-income countries into global value chains. We conduct research on the effects of climate change and the design of policy instruments for climate adaptation or the compensation of losses and damages. We provide indices that can be used to measure multidimensional and gender-specific poverty or state fragility and to review cooperation instruments accordingly. Against the background of increasing social polarisation and political autocratisation in countries of all income groups and on all continents, we work and advise on policies and instruments for the protection and promotion of democracy.

In September this year, we look forward to welcoming the 60th course of our Postgraduate Programme. The Managing Global Governance (MGG) Programme with decision-makers of tomorrow from Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa is already in its 18th year. At the same time, the fourth course of the Shaping Futures Academy, our training and dialogue programme for mid-career level executives from nine African countries and Europe, will start in a few weeks.

“We look back at six decades of intensive research, policy advice, training and joint learning, with the constant aim of finding innovative and implementation-oriented solutions to current development challenges.”

Our renaming – from the German Development Institute (DIE) to the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in 2022 – is a sign of the further development of our institute, as well as of the change in the environment in which we have been conducting scientific research, advising political decision-makers and training early and mid-career professionals for six decades. IDOS has become internationalised, in terms of both our team and our work styles: We work in international partner networks to enable sustainable

futures through transformative research and knowledge cooperation.

The focus of our work is on the interdependence and mutual connectedness of development and sustainability. Decent living worldwide and for all social groups is only possible today and even more so in the future if planetary guidelines are adhered to, i.e. if economic and social development is accompanied by the protection of biodiversity, clean soils and oceans and a radical reduction of climate-damaging emissions. This requires the design of sustainable development paths in countries of all income groups, but with targeted support for low- and middle-income countries. A rule-based international order with recognition of human rights and international law and constructive multilateral cooperation is needed, especially in a multipolar world.

We aspire to co-shape a collaborative multipolar world for sustainable and socially just futures, against the background of advancing climate change and biodiversity loss, social polarisation and political autocratisation, demographic change and geopolitical tensions. We do so by conducting high quality research, independent policy advice, and learning across borders and regions. To this end, and as an international research institute and think tank, we are tasked with continuously developing ourselves further.

It is thus indispensable to identify and work against colonial and hegemonic continuities between and within societies and regions. This entails designing and implementing research agendas together with partners, identifying structural power imbalances and developing context-specific forms of redistribution that repeatedly enable the forging of compromises and consensus. This is our contribution to supporting decision-makers in Germany, Europe and worldwide in shaping sustainable futures. We do not see policy advice as a one-sided transfer of knowledge, but as the enabling of joint learning processes, also together with our international scientific partners.

Independent, transformative and collaborative science is more necessary than ever, especially against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions and populist tendencies, and with the aim to develop viable solutions to the global challenges of our time. This is what we stand for at IDOS: sustainable futures in a world increasingly characterised by transregional tensions.