



“Change Agents” – The Faces of Change

A conference sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

University of Heidelberg
18 June 2013

Summary

On 18 June 2013, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) held a one-day conference titled “Change Agents – The Faces of Change” in Heidelberg, Germany. Some 200 scholarship holders, DAAD alumni, university professors and other experts from the fields of science and development policy attended the event, which took place at the University of Heidelberg.

The conference explored the role of higher education as a driving force for sustainable development. DAAD scholarship holders from developing countries and emerging economies hoping to bring about social, economic and environmental change in their countries spoke about their experiences studying at German universities and their plans for the future. Alumni occupying leadership roles in their home countries provided insight into their current work. German university professors discussed both the challenges and critical success factors in the education and training of “change agents”.

Successful development cooperation

In their opening speeches, both Federal Minister Dirk Niebel and DAAD President Margret Wintermantel looked back at the 25 years of successful collaboration between the Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ) and the DAAD. The career paths of the DAAD scholarship recipients and alumni who spoke at the Heidelberg conference are proof of the success of the organisations’ educational programmes – 70 percent of all scholarship holders return to their respective countries, with most of them taking on leadership positions and initiating much-needed change back home.

The successful cooperation between the BMZ and the DAAD will continue into the future. Part of the conference was devoted to discussing the needs of the partner countries and potential opportunities.

Needed: Expertise and leadership skills

For scholarship holders and alumni, one of the greatest challenges is the (re)integration process. It is important, for one, that incoming scholarship holders prepare for their stay in Germany prior to their arrival by taking intensive language courses. It is also important to have strong networks in place come time to return; networks help returning scholarship holders establish valuable contacts and provide them with the support they need to stay on track. Imparting teaching skills to the scholarship holders helps them share their newly-won know-how more effectively and train new experts. Scholarship holders wishing to apply what they’ve learned in Germany to their home context also require skills in the area of change management. .

Conclusion: Expertise as well as competencies in innovative thinking and leadership are critical success factors for graduates hoping to act as “change agents”, initiate social change and champion sustainable development in their home countries.

Higher education: Key to development

One of the main points up for discussion during the conference was the significance of higher education and science for sustainable development. Developing countries and emerging economies need well-educated and high-minded professionals who are committed to driving economic, environmental and social change at home. They need innovative individuals with access to international networks and the willingness to take on responsibility. That is why Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) includes the promotion of "higher education and research for future elites" as a key element of its official education strategy.

Basis for the conference was the "Development-Related Postgraduate Courses" programme, an initiative between the BMZ and the DAAD with 25 years of success under its belt. Since its inception in 1987, the programme has provided funding through the DAAD to more than 6,000 university graduates from 137 countries, enabling them to receive first-class training at a German university and internationally-recognised advanced degrees.

More than 90 percent of the scholarship holders complete their degree programmes. The success of the initiative, now over 25 years old, is documented in the DAAD's recently released study titled "Knowledge – Action – Change".

Academic excellence and real-world relevance

The scholarship holders enrol in courses that have been assessed and identified by the DAAD as especially relevant for future professionals from developing countries. Along the way, measures were taken to increase the relevance of the funding line even further. The "Development-Related Postgraduate Courses" is now in high demand among universities and students alike.

The programme is geared towards young, academically educated professionals who have completed their degrees with honours. The participants, who are generally under the age of 36, have at least two years of work experience in business, administration or a civil society organisation. An exception to this rule are three doctoral programmes specifically aimed at promising young university lecturers and researchers.



Qualifying as a “change agent”

The first and foremost criterion in selecting future scholarship holders is academic excellence. The DAAD also determines the extent to which the general principles of development policy and the programme objective justify an individual’s funding. The most promising candidates, therefore, are applicants whose reintegration into the home labour market is ensured – through a leave of absence from their employer for the duration of their studies and the guarantee of employment upon return, for instance.

The aim of the programme is to qualify future professionals as experts in their fields while training them to be capable and competent managers, intercultural multipliers and so-called “change agents”. This ensures that they are able to initiate and steer middle to long-term technological, economic and social development processes.

As shown in the DAAD study “Knowledge – Action – Change”, 70 percent of the scholarship recipients actually return to their home regions and fill positions in middle to upper management within six to eight years after their return. By applying their acquired knowledge and experiences they show themselves to be committed implementers and drivers of change processes at home.

For both the BMZ and the DAAD, it is of critical importance that as many individuals as possible are trained as experts and “change agents” in their home countries. For this to happen, however, improvements must be made in the quality, relevance and access to research and teaching in developing and emerging countries. German higher education institutions have been facilitating this process over the past several years. They have established partnerships with developing and emerging countries with the aim of modernising curricula and teaching methods, setting up joint research projects and improving higher education management practices. The DAAD intends to strengthen and expand its work in this area in the future.

Questions and ideas for the future

The conference at the University of Heidelberg took stock of the work that has been done so far, and mined experiences to gain new insights and potential for follow-up action. The conference focused on three primary questions:

- Why does it make sense to invest in motivated and talented individuals?
- What kinds of conditions are required for these bright individuals to be able to successfully initiate and drive sustainable change in their home contexts?
- In the spirit of the BMZ education strategy, how can German universities contribute and what role do their international degree programmes play in the facilitation process?
- What kind of support do they need from the BMZ and the DAAD in order to fulfil this mandate?

Ambition and commitment

Round Table I: Perspectives from degree programmes

The conference began with a panel discussion for current DAAD scholarship holders from developing and emerging countries who have already gained work experience in their home countries and have come to Germany to receive an advanced degree at a German higher education institution, qualifying as “change agents”.

Promoting women

Suaad Abdo from Yemen is getting her Master’s in Public Policy and Good Governance at the University of Erfurt. She is specialising in Conflict Studies and Management. Before arriving in Erfurt, Abdo worked as a project officer for SOUL, a civil society organisation in Yemen. While there, she worked primarily on projects aimed at empowering women. Abdo remains committed to this cause. “My aim is for women in Yemen to gain access to good education and to be able to live self-determined lives,” she says. For Abdo, meeting independent women who work in Germany is encouraging – as is the experience of expressing her opinions freely.

Climate change

Syahrina Anggraini had already made a name for herself both at home in Indonesia as well as internationally as a consultant in the area of climate change and environmental protection before arriving in Germany. She is currently studying Environmental Governance at the University of Freiburg. “I am studying in Germany to gain a new angle on my career,” says Anggraini. She hopes to bolster her expertise in the area of environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

Promoting economic growth

After getting a degree in Engineering, Álvaro Díaz Bustamante specialised in promoting small and middle-sized enterprises (SMEs) in his home country of Chile. He is now a DAAD scholarship holder enrolled in the Small Enterprise Promotion and Training programme at the University of Leipzig.

THE PANELLISTS:

Suaad Abdo

Yemen

Syahrina Anggraini

Indonesia

Álvaro Díaz Bustamante

Chile

Li Ma

China

Tesfamicheal Wossen

Ethiopia

“The fact that my job involved working with diverse sets of people makes it important for me to learn how to interact with multi-cultural groups,” said Bustamante. His goal is to advise governments regarding the promotion of SMEs. Impressed with Germany’s infrastructures, Bustamante is amazed at how easy it is to not only plan but to implement projects in Germany. “I can get so much done in a single day here,” he said. “It would take me between two and three days to get the same things done in Chile.”

Protecting the environment

Li Ma from China worked first as a translator and interpreter and then as a team assistant for the China Railway High Speed project at Siemens Ltd. China. She is now enrolled in the International Management programme at the ESB Business School Reutlingen to qualify as a future decision-maker. Ma is interested in German-Chinese relations and environmental protection. "Everyone complains about the destruction of the environment, but nobody's doing anything about it," she says. "I want to take the lead in protecting the environment – because we are running out of time."

Food security

Tesfamicheal Wossen from Ethiopia is a PhD student in the University of Hohenheim's Global Food Security Programme. His thesis focuses on technology adaptation in the context of climate change. Both his teaching and research are devoted to land use economics in the tropics and subtropics. "I am interested in how developed countries set up their food and nutrition programmes," says Wossen. "I want to find out and do the same for Ethiopia." His primary focus is developing strategies for fighting hunger.

Open to new experiences

The scholarship holders are brimming with ambition and personal commitment. They see their studies in Germany as an important part of their personal and professional development. They believe, however, that the programmes should include more practical components and advising that is more individualised. They also see a need for more intensive language preparation for scholarship holders prior to their stay in Germany. This is fuelled by the scholarship holders' desire to be able to engage with their German counterparts as quickly as possible.

They also value the experience of living in a foreign country, getting to know a foreign culture and interacting with people from different backgrounds. This also enables them to work effectively as "change agents" once they have returned to their home countries.



Leadership and Change Management

Round Table II: Perspectives from universities

What can be done to better support the scholarship holders once they have returned to their home countries? How can they be prepared to enter local labour markets and to take on positions of leadership as “change agents”? Three university professors from Germany addressed these and many other questions during the conference’s second panel discussion. The panel participants instruct the rising “change agents” in the fields of Development Management, Urban Studies and Public Health.

Producing multipliers is key

Gabriele Bäcker, Director of the Institute of Development Research and Development Policy at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), runs the interdisciplinary Master’s programme in Development Management. Her institute provides advanced training for young professionals from southern countries. As such, it helps local programmes and projects in the area of development cooperation cover their needs for management experts. The inter-disciplinary programme, which was first offered in the year 2000, integrates the fields of Economics, Social Sciences, Political Sciences, Law and Geosciences. Students from more than 50 countries around the world have participated in the programme since its inception.

“Producing multipliers is key to what we do,” said Gabriele Bäcker. “We train them, giving them what they need not only to apply but to pass on their newly-acquired knowledge in their home countries.” She emphasised that change is possible – it just takes time. This is why it is so difficult to measure success rates.

New generation of experts

Philipp Misselwitz has been studying urbanised refugee camps in the Near East since 2005. As an associate at the University of Stuttgart he led the research project “Camp Cities – Community-driven Planning for Urbanised Refugees Camps.” Once a Professor for International Urbanism at the University of Stuttgart, Misselwitz initiated and directed the international DAAD-funded dual degree programme in Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design. The aim of this programme is to produce an all-new generation of experts and decision-makers that is

THE PANELLISTS:

Dr. Gabriele Bäcker

Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB)

Prof. Dr. Philipp Misselwitz

Technische Universität Berlin (TU Berlin)

Prof. Dr. Rainer Sauerborn

University of Heidelberg

trained to devise solutions for addressing the complex environmental, cultural and social challenges brought on by the rapid urbanisation processes and social upheavals in the Middle East and Northern Africa. The programme is jointly run by the University of Stuttgart and the Ain Shams University in Cairo.

Philipp Misselwitz has been teaching International Urbanism and Design at the TU Berlin since 2013. He is also the Chair of the university’s Habitat Unit, which advocates participatory urban policy, urban management models and planning.

He was able to gain experience in the area of development cooperation during his work at the University of Stuttgart. “Some of my colleagues think our work with foreign students is no more than a hobby,” said Misselwitz. He wishes for greater visibility and appreciation for university partnerships with developing countries. In his eyes, it’s this brand of cooperation that makes sustainable change possible.

More time for advising

Rainer Sauerborn worked for three years as a district medical doctor in rural Burkina Faso. After his return to Germany, he trained as a paediatric specialist. In 1996 Sauerborn was appointed director of the Institute of Public Health at the University of Heidelberg. "At our institute we focus on health systems research, quality research, and the financing of basic health care in low-income countries," he explains. "We also work on infectious and non-infectious disease epidemiology." Medical students take courses in Public Health, Epidemiology, Health Economics and Global Health Policies and Systems. For Rainer Sauerborn there is no question as to how valuable the training is for the scholarship holders. He sees them as important and much-needed drivers of change in their home countries. But good, hands-on advising demands time, of which there is often a shortage, as he pointed out. "The scholarship holders are basically clamouring for our time and attention. You need to give us the opportunity – and the means – to do our job and do it well," said Sauerborn.

More preparation and follow-up

Gabriele Bäcker is wary of the "change agent" label, preferring to use the term "leadership" instead. She does, however, believe that no matter what word you use, the idea stays the same: "It's all about working together toward change and developing strategies in international contexts."

For all three university professors, it is important not only to fund scholarship holders, but to facilitate the creation of supportive infrastructures in their home countries. This means providing advanced training at German universities so the scholarship holders can train the next generation of experts once they are back home. "For this to happen, both teaching and the research infrastructure have to be improved in the developing and emerging market countries," says public health expert Rainer Sauerborn. "I hope we can intensify our work in this area together with the DAAD."

The panellists also agreed on the need to involve other development organisations more closely in the funding of scholarship holders as a way to capture synergies.

Another critically important aspect to consider, according to the panellists, is the scholarship holders' return to their home countries. The culture shock is often far greater upon their return than it was when they arrived in Germany for the first time. That is why it is more important than ever to prepare them for their return. One way to get them launched as "change agents" is to provide additional soft skills training in the areas of Leadership and Change Management. Also central to the reintegration process are the existence of well-established and active alumni networks that let the scholarship holders know they are not alone.





Official opening in the “Alte Aula”

Professor Bernhard Eitel, Rector of the University of Heidelberg, opened the conference with a speech entitled “Excellence and Responsibility: The University of Heidelberg’s Commitment to Development Cooperation”.

Rector Eitel reminded the audience that the University of Heidelberg has long been known for its innovative solutions, superlative research and numerous international contacts and partners. As such and with *semper apertus* (always open) as its motto, the university proved the perfect venue for an event addressing the complex and international dimensions of driving economic, social and environmental change.

Nearly half of all foreign students at the University of Heidelberg come from developing countries. According to Rector Bernhard Eitel, investing in future elites and training them to become “change agents” is essential. As he put it, international collaboration and knowledge sharing are the only way to effectively address the global challenges of today – something the University of Heidelberg does well.

“We need ‘Change Agents’”

Federal Minister Dirk Niebel on the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) education strategy

Developing countries need highly educated professionals who are able to take the lead. “Education is a driver of sustainable economic growth and contributes to both better health and smart resource management. Education empowers people to demand their right to social self-determination and participation,” explained Federal Minister Dirk Niebel. “Education gives people the chance to take control of their lives and independently shape economic, social and political development. It is for this reason that education is a basic human right – and it is one of the primary focus areas of our development cooperation work. We need highly educated professionals who are ready to take on responsibility,” he continued, “so-called ‘change agents’.” According to Niebel, sustainable development is unthinkable without these “faces of change”.

In his speech, Federal Minister Dirk Niebel spoke about the BMZ’s “Ten Objectives for More Education”, the official title of its education strategy. “One of our targets is to promote higher education and research for future elites. It is a clear and very hands-on articulation of our ‘building the future’ motto. What we are doing is promoting the decision-makers of tomorrow, the future leaders in politics, business and civil society,” explained Niebel. “We support universities in their efforts to educate national decision-makers and integrate them into global knowledge networks.”

“Brain Circulation” instead of “Brain Drain”

The scholarship holders and alumni from the joint BMZ-DAAD programmes know the importance of mobility – for sharing experiences and expertise, for innovation and technology transfer, and for building networks. “Mobility should in no way lead to ‘brain drain’,” said Federal Minister Niebel. “What we hope to achieve is more along the lines of ‘brain circulation’, which hinges on the scholarship holders returning to their home countries.

“The DAAD is a central partner when it comes to training professionals and managers, and strengthening research in our partner countries,” reinforced Niebel. “In addition to individual scholarship programmes, we also work together to fund institutional partnerships between universities and other institutes of higher learning. The DAAD and the German higher education institutions, both highly committed to their work, make an important contribution to Germany’s bilateral development cooperation.”

Tried and true: Academic exchange

As Federal Minister Niebel noted, “Our international guests are proof enough that the cooperation between the DAAD and the BMZ is effective. Academic exchange is clearly a success model of German development cooperation.”

Exchange continues long after the scholarship is over, and ideally, said Dirk Niebel, the scholarship holders stay in contact with Germany once they have returned to their home countries. “These people are Germany alumni, important partners for us when it comes to economic, cultural and development policy projects. Back at home, they act as multipliers, passing along expertise and values.”

As their numbers grow, there has been an increasing interest and need to interlink these experts and strengthen their ties to Germany. One of the ways this is happening is through the “Alumniportal Deutschland” website.

Partners in Development Cooperation

DAAD President Margret Wintermantel on the role of the DAAD and German universities in development cooperation

Margret Wintermantel called express attention to the significant role universities play in helping address and overcome development challenges, from climate change and poverty to security and migration. “These kinds of questions are becoming more and more complex by the day, demanding an ever-increasing amount of research and expertise. To find the answers, we need highly educated and well-trained professionals, especially from the developing world,” said Wintermantel. “And we need excellent, internationally collaborative research.”

As Wintermantel pointed out, this sentiment is iterated in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) education strategy “Ten Objectives for More Education”. One of the objectives is to “Promote higher education and research for future elites”. The strategy commends and recognises Germany’s universities for their resource and capacity commitment to development cooperation. “We welcome this new emphasis and are also motivated by it. It is our intention not only to continue but to expand on the successful cooperation between the BMZ and Germany’s institutions of higher learning.”

Investing in the future

Margret Wintermantel reminded the conference audience that in 2012 alone, the DAAD invested a total of 93 million euros in development cooperation programmes. More than 37 million came from the BMZ. For this she thanked the Federal Ministry. “We can imagine doing even more,” Wintermantel added. “The DAAD is well prepared for the future.” This is documented in the recently published external evaluation of the DAAD’s development-related programmes, which shows that the vast majority of funded elites return to their home countries as highly-qualified and successful professionals. “They are all ‘change agents’ – or let’s just call them impressive individuals who have brought about change in their home countries, champions of sustainable and self-determined development.”

The president of the DAAD went on to mention other goals. “We want to launch a number of new initiatives in direct response to our partners’ needs.

This includes increasing job-market relevance and strengthening the linkages to business. It includes chipping away at the barriers to education and homing in on the innovative potential of e-learning for development cooperation. We also want to work more closely with national and international partners.”

Partnership of equals: University partnerships

Experience shows that participation and ownership are preconditions for the success of development cooperation measures. “That’s why we focus on establishing partnerships of equals where universities from Germany and universities from developing countries develop and implement projects together,” said Wintermantel. “Based on the common interests of the partners, the projects lay the foundation for productive and effective partnerships and networks. They also strengthen the universities’ role in civil society, lending them a certain degree of influence.”

One of the important milestones mentioned by Margret Wintermantel was the statement on development cooperation issued by DAAD’s Executive Committee in May 2013, which called on the DAAD and German universities:

- To continue to promote international collaboration in academic networks,
- To take greater advantage of the experience and expertise of German universities to achieve development cooperation goals,
- To strengthen the research and teaching capacities of partners,
- To continue to strengthen partnerships and improve the effectiveness of collaborative efforts.

“We want to help universities establish development cooperation even more firmly as a ‘selling point’ in the context of education and research,” continued Wintermantel. “At the same time, we are urging financial sponsors to integrate German universities even more into the field of development cooperation as partners and multipliers.”

“We are ‘Change Agents’”

Panel Discussion: The experiences of DAAD alumni from developing countries

The focus of the panel discussion with DAAD alumni from developing countries was the significance of local experts for developing and emerging countries. It became clear that people who want to affect change not only require knowledge and discipline-specific skills, but also strength and persistence to succeed as “change agents”.

Courage and passion top the list

Ummu Salma Bava is Professor for European Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India – in an emerging country undergoing change, but in which tradition and the status quo are still forces to be reckoned with. Twenty years ago, Ummu Salma Bava decided to study in Germany despite the potential language barrier; the UK or USA was the more popular choice among her peers at the time. The panel discussion addressed this aspect of going against the grain and making decisions that depart from the mainstream. “People who want to make a difference must be willing to go against the current. They need the courage to take risks,” said Bava. “And they need one more thing: Passion. That’s what drives you forward. It’s what helps you persevere when you’re going it alone.”

She also mentioned responsiveness and openness as further must-haves for triggering change. The panellists agreed that study abroad and immersion into to new culture and language can help develop these traits in a person.

Change is possible – it just takes time

As Doaa Mohamed Soliman reported, going abroad not only changed her but others as well. “My friends were initially put-off by my decision to go to Germany,” she said, but that did not last for long. According to Soliman, they have followed suit since then and now travel abroad and are open to other cultures.

The native Egyptian’s first experience in her new world was one of culture shock, but as Soliman pointed out, the experience was an invaluable preparation for her current job as an expert for digital media at the Anna Lindh Foundation – and organisation dedicated to fostering cultural dialogue.

THE PANELLISTS:

Dirk Niebel

Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development

Prof. Dr. Margret Wintermantel

President of the DAAD

Prof. Dr. Ummu Salma Bava

India, Director of the Europe Area Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Dr. Augustine Titani Magolowondo

Malawi, Africa Regional Programme Coordinator, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

Doaa Mohamed Soliman

Egypt, Digital Communications Officer, Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue among Cultures

“Everything was foreign to me in Germany,” she said. “But after a while I started recognising what the two countries had in common.” She learned the importance of being open to others and considering their viewpoints. Soliman also made it clear that social and cultural transformation require patience. “It is not easy to make changes in Egypt. But change is possible – and that’s important to know.”

A new perspective on the home country

Augustine Titani Magolowondo agrees: It is important to know that change is possible. The first time he left his home in Malawi, one of Africa's least developed countries, was when he embarked for studies in Germany. "Up until that point, I had never experienced any kind of organisation – public or private – that actually functioned with any measure of efficiency or predictability," he said. "As a result, I returned to Malawi with higher expectations."

Also memorable for Magolowondo were the contacts made to colleagues and friends from around the world during the Development Management degree programme at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB). Magolowondo was careful to emphasise another point as well: During his degree programme, it became clear to him that certain values and principles, such as democracy and human rights, are universal. This newfound conviction is driving his actions as an agent of change and is reaching an even larger circle of people in his home country.

"Change agents" take on responsibility

The three alumni on the podium are engaged in making change happen in their home countries: They are "change agents". But what exactly does this mean? This question was the subject of lively debate.

"Change agents are people who take on responsibility," said DAAD President Margret Wintermantel: "People who seize the opportunity to get a good education in Germany, for example, and then return to their home country or region to put what they've learned into practice. They pass on their knowledge and train as many people as possible."

Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) also knows that it is not enough to rely on external experts for knowledge and skills transfer in developing countries. Instead, young people should be given the skills to be able to recognise challenges, develop solutions and act with a sense of self-responsibility. "Not development aid, but development cooperation – that is the key to achieving sustainable change," said Federal Minister Dirk Niebel.



According to the minister, the BMZ-funded development cooperation has "long been on a trajectory towards greater impact and efficiency."

Alumni networks: Providing individual support and facilitating change

The three alumni are indeed believers in the idea of "change agents" and what this means, but because the term sometimes has a negative connotation in their home countries, they choose different words, such as "facilitation", "change maker", "motors of change" or "change enforcer".

They also pointed out that an alumnus cannot be forced to try to change something in his or her country. Individuals need to decide for themselves, how much they want to get involved. "We need to take small steps. We need to be patient and, above all, we need to maintain and promote the dialogue with others," said Magolowondo.

A Country in the Grip of Change

Literary evening with author and journalist Raj Kamal Jha

Change requires experts, but it also requires a common understanding based on serious reflection, that change is both necessary and possible. Change can only succeed if people take a hard look at their own traditions, if they are willing and able to recognise injustices and if they develop a vision for a better future.

Literature can also play a major role in these sensitisation processes. Which is why Katharina Narbutovič, head of DAAD's Artists-in-Berlin programme, spoke with Indian journalist and author Raj Kamal Jha about his work as a writer and senior editor of The Indian Express in New Delhi.

Like DAAD's scholarship holders and alumni, Raj Kamal Jha also ventured into a strange new world. He was born in Bihar, one of the poorest and most underdeveloped states in India. He spent the first

18 years of his life in Calcutta and earned an engineering degree at the Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur. He then went on to the University of Southern California to study journalism, after which he volunteered at the Los Angeles Times and Washington Post.

As a journalist and author, Raj Kamal Jha wrestles with some of India's stark realities – with poverty, violence and injustice. His very first novel "The Blue Bedspread" won him international renown.

"The complexity of India never ceases to amaze and fascinate me," he said. "Part of this is something that is both a source of hope and one of the drivers of violence: About 600 million of the 1.2 billion people in India are under the age of 25 and they all want a better future."

Conclusion

After a day of lively discussion, conference attendees were able to look back at 25 years of successful collaboration between the DAAD and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

They also identified a number of future challenges, including providing the "change agents" with the necessary soft skills to help ensure success as they take on leadership roles in politics, business, education and society in their home countries. They also recognised the importance of and need for post-scholarship support from the DAAD as a way of strengthening and sustaining the commitment once the scholarship holders have returned home.

One of the ways to do this is through healthy alumni networks, which capture valuable synergies by sharing knowledge, experience and contacts.

Improvements in higher education infrastructures in developing and emerging countries are also much-needed, as is increasing the access to education, enabling more experts and "change agents" to be trained directly in the countries that need them the most.

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