

## HOT SPOTS

# STRUGGLE AND STRIFE

### THE IMPACT OF EBOLA

The ebola epidemic has cut agricultural production in West Africa dramatically. In Guinea, coffee output has fallen by 54 percent, cacao by 35 percent, and palm oil by 75 percent because the plantation workers have fled. Border closures and quarantine measures hinder trade and interrupt supply chains. In 2014 half a million people were suffering from food shortages. The decline in food production has been fairly limited on a national scale, but is high in those areas hit by the disease.

### PEACE LEADS TO MORE CONFLICT

In Colombia, the war between the government, paramilitaries, guerrillas and drug gangs has led to many people being evicted forcibly from their land – especially indigenous people, Afro-Colombians and peasant communities. A law passed in 2012 envisaged that some of the millions of hectares that changed hands illegally will be returned. It was designed to be part of a peace process; in practice the usurpers who had established mines and plantations or built houses on the land just chased the rightful owners away again. Murder, rape and torture have also been reported.

Colombia

Brazil

### ACTIVISTS MURDERED

In Brazil it is dangerous to want to stay in your home. The Guarani-Kaiowá people have long been at the top of a list maintained by the Indian Missionary Council of the number of people murdered in the Amazon. In 2000 to 2013, one person from this group was murdered every 12 days, including 16 of its leaders. While the violence grows, around 50,000 Guarani-Kaiowá in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul wait in temporary camps for their land rights to be recognized.

Guinea

Ghana

### DISAPPOINTING FUEL CROP

In the first decade of the millennium, the rising demand for biofuels led to the establishment of many oilseed plantations in Africa. In Ghana, 132,000 hectares were turned over to jatropha cultivation. But the plants need more water than anticipated, and to cut their irrigation costs, farmers started growing it on better land where they used to grow food crops. Add social conflict to the mix: in Ghana, land rights do not belong to the individual farmers but to the clan chief. In several instances, the chief has sold the land to an investor without the farmers' knowledge. They defend their land how they can – with road blocks or weapons. Falling petroleum prices make jatropha cultivation unprofitable, and the jatropha has to be uprooted and replaced by other crops.

### LAND RIGHTS ABUSED

Cambodia is an attractive destination for foreign land investors. Since 2000, at least 2.1 million hectares have been transferred for large-scale commercial agricultural development, affecting between 400,000 and 700,000 people. Forced evictions, politically motivated prosecutions and a biased judiciary foster a culture of violence and impunity. The vast majority of ordinary Cambodians benefit little from the injection of foreign capital: the United Nations Special Rapporteur has questioned the impact of concessions on the country's long-term stability.

### THE DEVIL'S TREE

Well-meaning foresters have inadvertently created a thorny problem in East Africa's drylands. Introduced in the 1980s from its native South America as a way to produce fuelwood, *Prosopis juliflora* quickly became an invasive weed that herders call "the devil's tree". It grows quickly, outcompeting native species, and forms impenetrable thorny thickets that take over huge areas of rangeland and clog waterways. Livestock find the leaves unpalatable but eat the pods. The seeds are passed out with dung, helping spread the tree to new areas.

### A WAR CAUSED BY MINING

At 12,500 hectares, the copper, gold and silver Panguna mine on Bougainville, part of Papua New Guinea, was one of the largest open-cast mines in the world. The mine, which was operated against the wishes of the local population, caused enormous environmental damage, especially by discharging untreated waste water into the rivers and the sea. In 1989, a rebel movement sabotaged the mine, leading to its closure. The rebels turned into an effective armed independence movement in the 1990s. Lawsuits sought billions of dollars in damages from the mine operators, but failed. A referendum on independence for the island is supposed to be held before 2020.

Cambodia

South Sudan

Northern Kenya, Ethiopia

Tanzania

### HUNTERS VS HERDERS

Maasai pastoralists are fighting a move by the Tanzanian government to establish a 1,500 square kilometre wildlife corridor bordering the Serengeti national park, one of the country's main tourist attractions. The government wants to evict the 30,000 herders who live in the area, and displace tens of thousands of others who graze their cattle there in the dry season. It has leased the corridor to the Ortello Business Corporation, an Emirati company that flies in wealthy clients to hunt wildlife.

Bougainville,  
Papua New Guinea

### FLEEING THEIR FARMS

Escalating conflict between the government and rebels in South Sudan since 2013 has forced more than a million people to flee. They cannot cultivate their fields, and are now reliant on outside help. Flooding exacerbates the situation. Politicians of the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups are fighting over power in this newly independent, oil-rich but politically weak state.