Breaking Cycles of Displacement

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

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SUMMARY

On 28 and 29 November 2018, BICC hosted an international conference entitled "Breaking Cycles of Displacement" in Bonn. The conference presented and discussed the findings of the four-year-long comparative BICC research project "Protected rather than protracted—Strengthening Refugees and Peace" funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). This project scrutinized opportunities for finding solutions to protracted displacement and investigated in how far the participation of displaced persons in peace processes influences the sustainability of their (re-)integration.

The conference analysed commonalities and differences of protracted displacement contexts and discussed innovative conceptualisations of protracted displacement based on the project´s research approach to understand the perspectives of those concerned. Case studies from East and West Africa, South America, the Middle East and South-East Asia were presented, covering local (re)integration of displaced persons as well as their role in peace processes, such as in Syria, Afghanistan and Colombia. One critical outcome was that—in particular during peace negotiations— the displaced are rarely heard. Another topic of the conference were the different coping strategies of the long-term displaced. Participants discussed factors that shape prospects for social integration, the challenge of aid dependency but also translocality and its effects on living conditions and the legal status of the displaced.

Among the roughly 70 participants of the BICC conference were researchers, experts from national and international non-governmental organisations, UN organisations, such as UNHCR and IOM as well as the BMZ. Participants came from Africa, Europe, South-East Asia and the United States.

In the camp Nduta near Kibondo, Tanzania, where those
who want to return are waiting for a means of transport back.
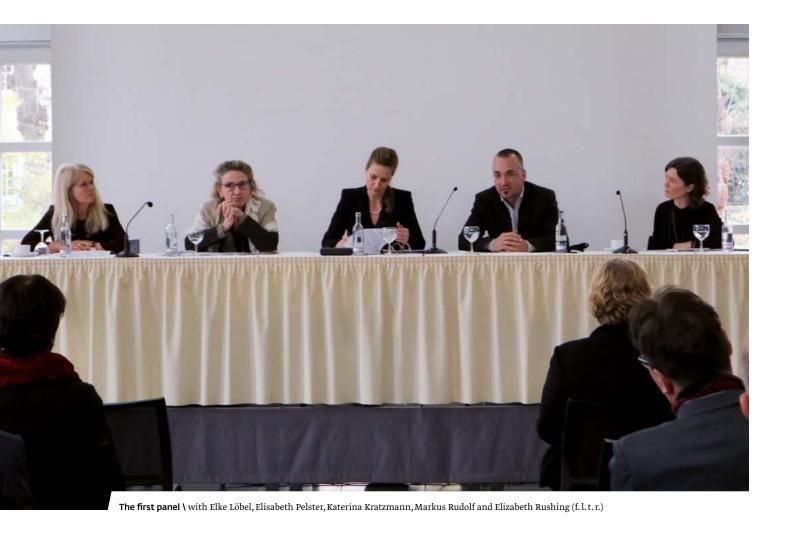
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Elke Löbel \ German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in her welcome speech, encouraged academia to get involved by providing facts and figures on forced displacement and counter myths-building by populist parties.

Karen Jacobsen \ started her keynote with the title "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Return and Protracted Displacement" with the UNHCR definition of protracted refugee situations and called for a reconceptualisation of protracted refugee situations stressing the need of paying more attention to and investigating deeper the political dynamics of protracted displacement. She illustrated how discourses on refugees and refugee policies of receiving countries shift as a consequence of a changing political context in the receiving country and changing conflict patterns in the countries of origin of refugees. Examples for exogenous factors that influence the political calculus of receiving governments are political transitions such as a different government and a shift in policy priorities, external shocks such as the breakout of (renewed) violent conflict in neighbouring countries, natural disasters, a changing global political landscape or economic downturn, or a changing political context in the country of origin of refugees that spark discussions on refugee return. Repatriation, Karen Jacobsen stated, is one of the favoured durable solutions for protracted refugee situations since there is a lack of political will for large-scale resettlement and local integration. She pointed out different forms of repatriation: voluntary and spontaneous return, the active encouragement of refugee return by the government of the receiving country and the revocation of the refugee status of displaced populations through the cessation clause and ensuing forced repatriation/deportations as occurred—for example—in the case of Rwandan refugees. Changing government stands towards return might thus worsen the situation of refugees forcing them to make the "tough choice between a rock and a hard place", i.e. to either return to

their country of origin which might still be far from safe, or to remain irregularly in the receiving country. Experience shows that most refugees facing this choice prefer to stay in a state of limbo in a neighbouring country rather than facing the risk of returning to an insecure situation. Karen Jacobsen concluded that premature (forced) return will lead to renewed displacements and a continuation of the cycles of displacement.

**The first panel ** with Elke Löbel, Elisabeth Pelster, Katerina Kratzmann, Markus Rudolf and Elizabeth Rushing (f. l. t. r.)

Research should aim to understand the resilience and coping strategies of protracted persons

In the panel discussion "Displacement dynamics and the features of protractedness: Towards a new conceptualisation of protracted displacement" Elke Löbel, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Elisabeth Pelster, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Markus Rudolf, BICC, and Elizabeth Rushing, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, gave their inputs. The discussion was moderated by Katerina Kratzmann, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Elizabeth Rushing \ reminded the audience of the high degree of vulnerability of IDPs

Invited by Katerina Kratzmann to elaborate on the conceptual framework and outcomes of the research project "Protected rather than protracted", Markus Rudolf argued for applying a broad understanding of protractedness and substituting the term 'protracted refugee situation' by 'protracted displacement dynamics'. Going beyond dominant definitions of protracted refugee situations (like the one by UNHCR) he suggested a focus on refugees and IDPs as well as all those displaced persons who are not ascribed a certain status like that of irregular, often urban migrants or stateless persons. This means taking the shared experience of displacement as an entry point rather than legal status, which heavily depends on national jurisdictions and might change in space and time. Reporting on the most important findings from the project, Rudolf suggested that research should aim to understand the inherent dynamics of peoples' mobility and livelihoods and the resilience and coping strategies of persons in protracted displacement. He further identified a gap between theory and research on the ground and called for a more rigorous translation of theoretical assumptions into empirical research designs. Connected to these outcomes, Rudolf finally advocated a discussion about the limits of and expectations about what development aid can or could achieve.

During her input, Elisabeth Pelster accentuated the importance of reliable data from her perspective as an operations manager at UNHCR. She identified a tremendous lack of quality. Also, quality of analysis provided by institutions, academia or NGOs would in some cases prove disappointing. "Getting the numbers right or not getting them completely wrong", she argued, is decisive for efficient and effective provision of humanitarian assistance. Relying on experiences in Bangladesh, Pelster observed that humanitarian aid cannot replace political solutions. National governments quickly become sidelined and relieved from their responsibility concerning the protection of refugees or IDPs, in the latter case even on their own territory. Equally, committed local actors in Bangladesh felt overwhelmed by the invasion of international aid, which is why the UNHCR is pursuing a go-local strategy, by hiring local staff, cooperating with local NGOs and sourcing food from local markets to create benefits for the receiving society. Durable solutions, particularly local integration and resettlement, completely depend on the governments of the receiving or third countries and can hardly be influenced by international actors. A (refugee) status is generally decisive for persons to establish sustainable solutions. Regarding return, she argued,

there is no need for programmes, but for fact-based confidence that people will be able to secure their livelihoods. She also stated that displacement and return movements go hand in hand with urbanisation. People do not necessarily return to the same place of origin or to a place where they find security, but to a place where they see a future for themselves and their children.

Elke Löbel opened her talk by emphasising that the complexity of developmental challenges in contexts of displacement requires the incorporation of all relevant stakeholders. She stressed the need to acknowledge the unique character of each refugee situation and called for greater cooperation and coordination between all national and international organisations and UN bodies. In elaborating what development cooperation can achieve to respond to protracted situations, Löbel stressed the need to locally engage with a long-term approach, building on continuous government-to-government-negotiations. Referring to the Syrian crisis and German bilateral cooperation with Jordan, Löbel showcased potentials of such close cooperation and illustrated examples of success that were achieved by BMZ and its partners.

Elizabeth Rushing, IDMC, opened her talk with the notion that not only people but also countries are stuck in protracted crises situations considering that three-quarters of the currently 40.3 million IDPs are divided among ten countries. After stressing the differences of legal status between refugees and IDPs, Rushing reminded the audience of the high degree of vulnerability of IDPs and the fact that their protection remains left out of the international agenda. She also accentuated the importance of reliable and longitudinal data to make sense of the "displacement continuum" in order to explain similarities and differences of internal and cross-border movements, non-linear mobility, pendulum or step-by-step movements. She emphasised that internal displacement can increase the vulnerability of IDPs but also of receiving communities as well as of communities of origin. The additional costs and financial losses associated with displacement, in the case of major crises, can add up to a significant share of affected countries' GDP and threaten socioeconomic development at the local and national level. To conclude, she

Katerina Kratzmann \ moderated the discussion

noted that the Global Compact on Refugees does not adequately address internal displacement, despite similar displacement drivers and needs of refugees and IDPs, and stressed the need for internal displacement to remain on the global policy agenda.

Elisabeth Pelster \ identified a tremendous lack of quality in refugee data

**The panellists ** Katja Mielke, Esther Meininghaus, Per Byman, Gerard Mc Hugh and Christian Völkel (f. l. t. r.)

Peace processes and displacement:
The cases of Syria, Afghanistan and Colombia

Moderated by Per Byman, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC),
Gerard Mc Hugh, Conflict Dynamics International, Esther Meininghaus
and Katja Mielke, BICC, and Christian Völkel, GIZ, presented
on "Peace processes and displacement".

In his talk on "Internal displacement in peace processes and agreements", Gerard Mc Hugh pointed to the increasing involvement of international actors in internal conflict resolution, which leads to a higher complexity of peace processes and sometimes a multiplicity of different processes. He named four key elements of peace processes, which indicate different possibilities for inclusion or consideration of displaced persons: (1) The design of the process, for example whether the process is a mediated dialogue or whether there are any specific decision-making rules; (2) the composition of the participants; (3) the implementation modality and (4) confidence-building measures. He stated that displaced persons are often not considered in the design, either due to a lack of resources or knowledge or due to the explicit interest of other actors in not including them. Mc Hugh furthermore called for sequencing and linking across dialogue processes as well as for more direct engagement of displaced persons and suggested to use digital technologies for their real-time consultation. Nevertheless, even in cases where the concerns of displaced persons are taken into account, often no concrete action follows. Measures regarding reintegration, he cautioned, might reignite conflict. In order to assess how peace processes and their implementation can effectively include displaced persons, Mc Hugh pointed to egality in representation and a de facto say in the decision-making of all relevant groups.

Esther Meininghaus and Katja Mielke focused on "Refugees and 'diaspora' actors in peace processes—Syria and Afghanistan". They illustrated how the exclusion of relevant groups in peace processes leads to non-sustainable processes and prolonged conflicts. In the case of Afghanistan, they showed how the exclusion of certain groups had to be revised in the long-term. For example, the Afghan opposition groups were excluded as signatory party of the Geneva Accords (1986 – 1989). In 2001, they formed the main parties of the Petersberg agreement, in particular three of the four factions were mainly comprised of exiled Afghans. The two BICC researchers also showed that the peace processes in both countries were and are overdetermined by external actors. Despite claims of inclusivity, groups that are labelled terrorist are generally excluded. Advocates or representatives of

displaced persons are hardly acknowledged in the design of the processes, which means that questions like refugee return or land rights are sidelined. Rare cases of individual participation of displaced persons are limited to high-profile individuals which cannot claim to speak as representatives of those displaced (e.g. in Syria 50 % of the country's population). Concluding, Meininghaus and Mielke pointed to intra- and intergroup dynamics within negotiating parties in peace processes as a research gap.

Christian Völkel presented on "The Colombian peace process and its implications for internal displacement". He cautioned against expecting too much from the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC. While it had contributed to a reduction of internal displacement, the FARC had not been the only actor causing displacement. The peace agreement contained clauses excluding displacement from amnesty and placing it under the mandate of the Truth Commission. A law on reparations and collective returns from 2011 is still under review due to disagreements over its implementation. However, additional seats in the parliament for victims of the conflict have been introduced to increase their political representation. Furthermore, special economic programmes for the areas most affected by violence have been set up. Völkel visualised how a tangible downward trend in displacement since 2002 had slowed down right after the signing of the peace agreement, and displacement in some regions is rising again. Reasons are violence by other non-state armed groups and FARC dissidents, leading to a deteriorating security situation in some regions. To sum up, some progress has been made towards a stabilisation as well as compensating victims, but regional differences within Colombia are huge and often overlooked.

Supang Chantavanich \ discussed with Amrei Meier, Heidrun Bohnet and Clara Schmitz-Pranghe (f. l. t. r.)

Employment and social factors are crucial for local integration: Cases from Thailand, Turkey and Uganda

In the panel "Prerequisites for sustainable local integration" Heidrun Bohnet, Université de Genève, Supang Chantavanich, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, and Clara Schmitz-Pranghe, BICC, discussed three case studies of local refugee integration. The moderator was Amrei Meier, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

Supang Chantavanich from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok presented 'The Case of Burmese in Thailand', who have been in protracted displacement for 30 years. Almost 100,000 Burmese are located in camps near the border, and most of them are engaged in income-generating activities. While some were relocated through resettlement programmes, (mostly spontaneous) repatriation also occurred but remained limited due to the outbreak of renewed violence in Myanmar. While Thailand has no formal policy of direct local integration, one can observe a gradual policy transformation allowing for the limited local integration of displaced persons. Chantavanich differentiated between de jure local integration and de facto local integration. De jure local integration describes a change in legal status a \ from being a displaced person confined in one of the camps to being a migrant worker, b \ from being a spontaneous returnee to being a migrant worker by either registering in the Population Census in 2015, obtaining a passport and returning as a migrant worker, or by obtaining a ten-year residence card as it was the case of the Rohingya who arrived before 2006. De facto local integration, on the other hand, takes place through access to language (e.g. by learning the Thai language in non-formal education services, by income-generation activities inside and outside the shelter (e.g. through work for NGOs, informal trade, in the agriculture and service sector). Chantavanich argued that the success of local integration depends on the policy framework, the numbers of persons to be integrated, economic, cultural and social coping strategies of displaced persons (e.g. diversification of income sources, reliance on transnational networks), and efforts of national and international stakeholders. She presented transnationalism as a possible fourth durable solution.

Heidrun Bohnet presented empirical findings of 'Refugee integration in south-eastern Turkey' by focusing on the aspects of access to employment and social integration. With regard to employment, Syrian refugees in principle have access to work permits though permits are limited to certain sectors (agriculture, textiles, construction and services), and registration is tied to a specific location and employer. This is why the informal sector plays an important role; social networks often facilitate employment opportunities. Often, access to work is not immediate, limited and insufficient to maintain a living, which can lead to negative coping strategies such as child and/or forced labour. Experiences of discrimination are frequently reported. Socially, Syrians are marginalised, and interaction with locals is often only superficial. Bohnet concluded that access to both employment and social integration is crucial. Access to information, long term and flexible working opportunities, education and training opportunities are needed as well as increased opportunities for social interactions.

The last presentation by Clara Schmitz-Pranghe 'Uganda—A role model for refugee integration?' focused on South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda. Schmitz-Pranghe pointed to the limitations and challenges of Uganda's settlement approach and self-reliance-strategy (SRS), particularly examining refugees' access to land, employment, and intergroup relations.

The audience \ listening to Supang Chantavanich's presentation on 'The Case of Burmese in Thailand'

Participants \ followed Heidrun Bohnet's presentation of her empirical findings on 'Refugee integration in south-eastern Turkey'

Small plots sizes, poor soil and seeds quality and security constraints considerably impede self-reliance. Moreover, the consent of the receiving communities to host settlements and provide land is not always given and depends on perceived benefits from receiving refugees and the general availability of land. Employment opportunities are scarce in the remote locations of the refugee settlements, and aid agencies are often the only possible employer. Financial and security-related constraints to the freedom of movement also limit people to find employment elsewhere. Intergroup relations which are shaped by socio-economic status differences, cultural and socio-economic commonalities and differences and direct effects of the settlement approach further influence employment, settlement and mobility patterns of both Ugandan and refugee communities. Schmitz-Pranghe argued that despite Uganda's widely praised progressive refugee policy, the facts on

the ground provide a different picture. Many refugees completely depend on humanitarian aid or remittances. Moreover, Uganda's settlement approach is highly dependent on continued donor support. Once the funding decreases and receiving communities feel that they no longer benefit from the refugees' presence, the sustainability of the settlement approach is in jeopardy. Schmitz-Pranghe concluded that the political discourse of self-reliance in Uganda is decoupled from questions of full socio-economic and de jure local integration but focuses instead on temporary local integration rather than on finding durable solutions for protracted displacement. Lastly, self-settled refugees are left out of the picture completely.

**Jörn Grävingholt ** moderated the panel discussion with Marieke van Houte and Elke Grawert (f. l. t. r.)

How to overcome the remnants of war? Conditions for sustainable reintegration in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan

What conditions are constraining and what conditions are conducive to sustainable reintegration? Elke Grawert, BICC, and Marieke van Houte, Erasmus University Rotterdam, presented cases from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan in a panel discussion moderated by Jörn Grävingholt, German Development Institute (GDI).

In her presentation based on field research conducted in 2018, Elke Grawert focussed on "Reintegration processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone". She analysed the factors which were conducive and constraining for sustainable reintegration in the eastern region of Sierra Leone bordering Liberia, where half of the population was displaced to during the war. She listed four factors that were conducive to reintegration: 1\ the peace agreement which included a roadmap for transitional justice with a special court and a truth and reconciliation commission; 2\ collaborative work—including returning refugees and ex-combatants—which was organised by the local chiefs; 3\ the peace dividend of humanitarian assistance and development projects; and 4\ the freedom of movement under ECOWAS as it facilitates cross-border trade and allows much interaction across borders for the people in the region.

Yet, one shortcoming of the transitional justice process was widespread impunity, which failed to establish rule of law and created a climate conducive to violent mobilisation during election campaigns, like in 2018. Another constraining factor is the lacking exit strategy of many actors in international assistance: Elke Grawert proposed that projects

should be transferred gradually to local institutions and include an exit strategy. Finally, she criticised target group-specific assistance such as standard DDR, which provides reintegration support to former combatants but no equal assistance to the victims of war, thus creating grievances and social divides. Consequently, DDR should be included in all-encompassing reintegration programmes for civilians as well as former combatants.

Marieke van Houte spoke about "Constraining and conducive conditions for 'sustainable reintegration' in Afghanistan". She introduced a concept of belonging which takes into account that people may have multiple places they feel attached to. This belonging is manifested in a dynamic, non-linear interaction between individuals and their social and cultural environment, including economic and institutional processes. She identified three strategies of belonging by people who have returned to Afghanistan from different European countries. The first strategy is to identify and cope with existing structures claiming a belonging to Afghanistan. The second seeks to continue a European lifestyle while the third tries to bridge the gaps between what is considered Afghan and European respectively. As factors that affect post-return belonging in Afghanistan, Marieke van Houte mentioned the timing of migration, the socio-economic background and motivation of the returnees as well as their perception of stability/ security in Afghanistan. She described post-return mobility as the most decisive factor. There is a significant difference between the post-return experiences of people who have the capacity to leave again and people who lack such possibilities. Mobility continues to be not only an essential desire but a major facilitating factor for reintegration. Case studies on Afghan returnees from Europe show that a legal status in the former country of residence helped people to manage the risks of going back and establishing a new existence—feeling at home in both or more countries. In this respect, the reduction of legal options for migration and asylum in neighbouring or and "Western" countries turns out to be a constraining factor for reintegration. Marieke van Houte concluded that in terms of sustainable reintegration, continued transnational mobility can prevent return from inflicting harm on fragile places and people.

**Marieke van Houte ** identified three strategies of belonging by people who have returned to Afghanistan from different European countries

**Ruth Vollmer ** outlined three main characteristics of situations of protracted displacement

Protracted displacement:
A denial of rights over long periods of time

Ruth Vollmer (BICC) presented a preliminary overview of the findings of the project "Protected rather than protracted. Strengthening displaced persons and peace". She outlined the research approach of the project as being focused on a \\ the perspectives and practices of the affected populations and b \\ on inter-group relations with regard to their effects on livelihood opportunities. Displaced persons were defined as everyone who considers him/herself involuntarily displaced.

On this basis, Vollmer outlined three main characteristics of situations of protracted displacement, which had emerged from the case studies:

First, she emphasised the dimension of mobility which, contrary to common assumptions about "warehoused refugees", characterises many of the situations, especially, but not only after (official) assistance to displaced persons diminishes or ends. Numerous patterns of varied and non-linear movements were uncovered by the field research, such as circular movements from place to place relating to a search for livelihood opportunities, back-and-forth movements between places of production and places of protection determined by the cyclical occurrence of violence, or attempts at return, which may end somewhere in-between exile and origin or result in renewed (internal or international) displacement or onwards migration, for example when the conflict that induces them to flee re-erupts. Both before, during and after return, (cross-border) mobility is one of the most significant livelihood strategies for many people, so that in conclusion enabling cross-border mobility is one of the most effective ways to support displaced persons. Whether mobility turns out to be a successful or an erosive livelihood strategy depends a lot on an enabling environment, as well as on individual capacities and resources of people.
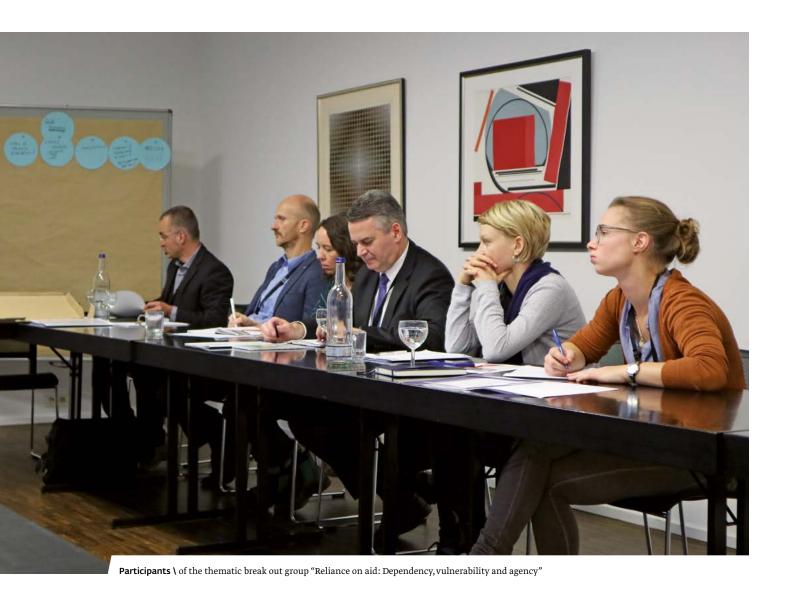
At a conceptual level, the varied mobility patterns in situations of protracted displacement presented here transcend the legal categories, as they are proof that these overlap, at least over time. One and the same person can be a refugee, labour migrant, returnee and IDP over and over again. The flip side of the 'mobility coin', which is equally relevant under conditions of protracted displacement is forced immobility. Immobility might be caused by forced recruitment or simply by not having the means to flee to safety; political factors for immobility are encampment or closed borders but also the hope for resettlement that can have immobilising effects. What is often overlooked are the adverse effects of immobility on livelihood opportunities. Neither the mobility of people in situations of protracted displacement nor the problems caused by forced immobility have so

far informed respective approaches in development cooperation.

As a second main feature, Vollmer mentioned the heterogeneity of the affected populations. Findings from the project show a clearly positive impact of a high socio-economic status regarding the potential for re-establishment after displacement, mainly due to better access to resources like social and financial capital. This interacts, however, with the transformative effects of displacement which can render skills and degrees useless and provide economic and educational opportunities for people who might have been excluded from them previously.

Third, social and inter-group relations are crucial for the lived realities of displaced persons along two different dimensions: One is social networks of family members (abroad), neighbours and other (displaced) persons who support displaced persons. The second consists of hostile or exploitative inter-group relations, which can block livelihood options. The relationship between displaced people and receiving communities varies and can be influenced by the duration of displacement, by the rhetoric and policy of influential political actors, among other factors. A relational approach towards understanding the livelihood strategies and needs is important for designing effective interventions to support displaced persons.

To conclude, Vollmer stated that protracted displacement is far too often conceptualised as people being in the wrong place, whereas in effect it needs to be understood and acted upon as a denial of rights over long periods of time.

**Participants ** of the thematic break out group "Reliance on aid: Dependency, vulnerability and agency"

"Others do the war, but we do the catering"

The thematic break out group "Reliance on aid: Dependency, vulnerability and agency", moderated by Michael Kühn, Welthungerhilfe, discussed the tension between humanitarian and developmental aid delivery on the one hand and the agency of displaced persons on the other and debated consequences development cooperation and humanitarian aid should draw from this interrelation.

Michael Kühn \ moderated in the break out group "Reliance on aid"

The discussion focused on the question of the effects year-long aid delivery in situations of protracted displacement might have on the agency of displaced persons and in how far aid delivery fosters dependency patterns among beneficiaries of aid. The group agreed that humanitarian, as well as development aid, have an impact on local livelihood strategies of beneficiaries as well as on social and economic interpersonal and intercommunal relations and local market structures as well as on macro-political structures.

Acknowledging these dynamics, the group agreed that aid by external actors obligatorily needs to consider effects on the agency of displaced persons and members of the local communities and balance the possibly counter-productive effects aid delivery might have with other crucial aims of humanitarian aid, e.g. providing life-saving emergency relief. The question of which effects humanitarian aid wants to achieve needs to be posed with the participation of all stakeholders, including the local population that benefits from aid deliveries and local administrations. So far, local administrations often do not take any role in the process of aid delivery participants criticised and called upon local administrations to take up responsibility and to get more strongly involved in delivering aid services.

The discussion also emphasised the role of the donor community who delivers aid from a position of supremacy: "Humanitarian assistance became a part of the problem instead of a solution", a participant stated, "others do the war, but we [humanitarian actors] do the catering". In this regard, participants also discussed the question of who should benefit from external aid, criticising that aid delivery is usually bound to very limited categories of people in need. Reintegration programmes for ex-combatants were often expensive while assistance for victims and displaced persons would not receive equal attention. Moreover, a great proportion of refugees who live in urban areas did not have access to aid delivery at all but were dependent on social networks and remittances instead. The limitation of humanitarian aid to very limited humanitarian categories of people in some cases, participants agreed, would have the unintended adverse effect that persons in need of support try to match the criteria of humanitarian actors—sometimes by deliberately increasing their vulnerability.

As concerns the sustainability of services and infrastructure beyond the end of a project, discussants stressed the limitations of humanitarian aid delivery. Concepts like capacity-building often would not work on the ground. To achieve a minimum degree of sustainability in the delivery of aid, participants again claimed that local administration would have to step up and be more strongly involved in coordination efforts.

Despite the critical review of some of the effects of humanitarian and development aid, at the end of the discussion, participants emphasised the need for and the positive impacts of humanitarian aid. They referred to a recent DIE study that revealed that in cases where no aid was provided in the first five years after a conflict, none of the countries involved remained stable. Moreover, participants agreed that even though some groups might oppose aid, the fact that other groups are in urgent need legitimise aid delivery.

The group concluded that despite claims of an apolitical and impartial character of humanitarian aid, it is de facto highly politicised and often replaces political solutions rather than serving as a bridge until a political solution is found. Therefore, it was considered of utmost importance to carry out the discourse on humanitarian aid in the concerned countries and to include the perspectives of affected communities and individuals.

**Simone Christ (r.) ** moderated the break out session "Integration: Conflict and cohesion"

Factors shaping integration processes

Moderated by Simone Christ, BICC, the participants of the break out session "Integration: Conflict and cohesion" shared their experiences on integration processes of displaced persons and discussed questions of intergroup relations and social cohesion. Based on this, the group came up with suggestions for development cooperation on how to strengthen social cohesion.

Integration is a contested concept due to very different understandings of what integration is about. Simone Christ confronted the participants with four different definitions of integration ranging from Ludger Pries and Hartmut Esser to a UNHCR definition, who then revealed a huge difference in the understanding of integration. This understanding differed not only between academic views and public opinion but also between academics working in Western contexts as opposed to academics and practitioners concerned with the topic of local integration in non-Western contexts. While some definitions focus on integration as a process, others emphasise it as an aim. Participants emphasised the importance to include society as a whole as part of the integration process in a proper definition of integration.

In the following, the group discussed and agreed that the local context is crucial. Here, both the legal framework conditions and the legal status of a displaced person, as well as social aspects and the general recognition by the society, play an important role. Group participants were in disagreement on whether the first or the second aspect is more important. While in many contexts, access to rights seems to be of utmost importance for all other aspects of socio-economic and political integration, some participants claimed that many refugees considered to be able to work far more important than enjoying the right to work. Many displaced persons feel vulnerable

Lively discussion \ about intergroup relations and social cohesion

because of everyday experiences of discrimination and harassment which is not necessarily bound to a lack of legal status. It was mentioned that in some cases even the local population in which displaced persons integrate lacks access to rights, for instance in informal settlements and slums. Moreover, the group emphasised the important role cultural factors such as legacies of violence and language play in any integration process. Despite the important role of language, especially in the Latin American context, discriminatory discourses and practice against displaced persons exist despite a common language. On the one hand, language enables access to rights and the labour market, on the other, it can stigmatise. Other factors influencing integration processes raised by the group were the space in which integration takes place (spatial integration in either camps/slums or urban settings), the government's and societal discourse on refugees or demographics of the receiving communities.

Based on the previous discussion, the group exchanged views about the agency of displaced persons against the backdrop of different factors influencing integration processes and which strategies displaced persons use to cope with the challenges of integration. They agreed that age and capacities considerably shape the ability to cope. Participants reported that in some cases, displaced persons are not necessarily willing to fully integrate but prefer to keep options for return or onward mobility open. Lacking full access to the receiving society, some refugees also rely on previous identities and integrate into diaspora networks or build up parallel economic or educational systems.

The session concluded with a discussion of suggestions for the implementation of a development project to strengthen cohesion and prevent conflict in areas affected by displacement. As best practices, the group discussed media awareness projects, transitional justice instruments, projects providing cultural activities or the farmer field groups of the Welthungerhilfe. Moreover, members of the group stressed that programmes need to be context-specific and have a long-term approach and need to identify and engage actors that serve as trust and recognition-based mediators in the concerned communities.

**The break out group ** dedicated to "Translocality: Livelihoods and legal status"

Translocality:
Choice or means of survival for displaced persons?

The thematic break out group "Translocality: Livelihoods and legal status", moderated by Benjamin Etzold, BICC, discussed various aspects of translocal networks and livelihoods.

Translocality can be defined as the simultaneous embeddedness of actors in multiple places, is based on social network relations and practices that cut across territorial boundaries. Translocal networks of displaced persons emerge, it was assumed, whenever people are not blocked from engaging in them. Pre-existing translocal networks are mobilised to gather the support needed during displacement and to establish oneself in new places. In fact, they significantly shape people's trajectories and determine destinations, depending on how much control people have over their movements. New networks are forged while people move from place to place.

Translocality is not a phenomenon limited to refugees or even migrants. Today, many people are mobile and connected across distant places; however, their movements and interactions may take place under quite different conditions. While the classical durable solutions to refugee situations are rightly criticised for their sedentary bias, many displaced persons consider translocality not as a choice but rather a means of survival. Members of the group suggested that in terms of self-reliance and resilience, having weak ties in many different places may prove to be an advantage over strong local integration in one place as translocal networks can be an enormous asset. Some members, however, warned that the fluidity and liquidity of translocal livelihoods also have adverse effects.

In terms of research on transnational interactions and diaspora groups, the group critically observed that place and context were often not considered sufficiently and that researchers endorsed methodological nationalism, for instance, by homogenising and essentialising groups of a particular country of origin ("the diaspora"), begging the question of how long one can or should speak of a migrant community. Instead, group members recommended looking at people (individuals and groups), their coping strategies and everyday practices, at places and the mobility and interactions of the displaced that connect multiple places, as well as at other links and interrelations, such as flows of ideas or money. Additional aspects to be taken into consideration included initial reasons for leaving their place of residence and how compelling these were, conditions

at the place of arrival and during transit and cases where people never made it to their planned destination. The role of infrastructure (transport, roads, communication technology) was emphasised, as the actual distance between places is a function of access to all these as well as economic resources. Last, there are different levels of analysis to be kept in mind (family, diaspora groups, village) and related questions such as whether families split up or not and intragroup decision-making processes where people move as groups or families. The recently introduced idea of "Refugia", a utopian transnational polity created by refugees, was applauded for detaching the debate from the notion of territory but criticised for not addressing many of the practical challenges of people engaged in translocal relations.

Members of the group turned to the potential of fostering translocal connections of displaced people through development assistance and critically remarked that a lot more resources are currently being invested in preventing mobility. Suggestions on how to improve people's mobility and connectivity were to simply invest in better infrastructure and access to ICT such as free wifi and to provide assistance to displaced persons in a way that does not make them place-bound (through rechargeable cash cards, for example). The participants identified one open question, that of how to support good local connections for people after their displacement in the sense of bridging social capital, i.e. networks of displaced people and members of receiving communities and across social hierarchies. While it was stated that complete social isolation after displacement rarely happens, many displaced people find themselves well networked within their own diaspora and immediate societal subgroups as well as translocally, but lack interactions with "mainstream society".

**Elizabeth Ferris ** and Bernhard Braune on the concluding panel

Finding solutions:
Exchange between politicians, academia
and practitioners needed

In the concluding panel, Bernhard Braune, BMZ, Elizabeth Ferris, Georgetown University, Elisabeth Pelster, UNHRC, Lorenza Rossi, IOM, Markus Rudolf, BICC, and Karin Sorensen, Danish Refugee Council, exchanged their views on "Cycles of violence and displacement: Prevention of and solutions to protracted displacement".

**Karin Sorensen ** underlined that it is crucial to put displaced people in the focus and to listen to them before designing programmes

Bernhard Braune opened the panel by expressing his appreciation for this kind of exchange between research and policy, since—as he pointed out—sound evidence is needed to guide the design of development programmes. The question he posed to the Panel and audience was: "Is the exchange we are having good enough?"

Elizabeth Ferris linked her three take-aways of the two-day conference back to its title. She summed up that it had become evident that the three 'durable solutions' do not suffice to break the cycle of forced displacement. The case studies presented had revealed the involuntariness of a lot of the so-called 'voluntary repatriation', the lack of equal rights and societal incorporation of people who are 'locally integrated', and the dwindling resettlement numbers against rising demand. She encouraged practitioners to keep working towards durable solutions but also to acknowledge that they will not be sufficient to meet the challenge.

Her second take-away was that de facto, 'self-reliance/ resilience' have become a fourth solution. On the one hand, the idea of self-reliance is intriguing to everybody from governments to donors to practitioners and refugees; however, even where self-reliance has been achieved, such as in Kenya, even though refugees are not allowed to work, these people still live very "close the edge". One broken arm, Ferris said, can end their self-reliance, and in the larger context, the focus on self-reliance means that the implicit promise of the international community to care for those who were forced to leave their homes is no longer valid. In the absence of reachable durable solutions, she continued with her third take-away, mobility and translocality are other forms of solutions or coping strategies. Ferris' question was about the role of conflict resolution and the conflict resolution community. She wondered how their very relevant work and expertise could be integrated better and brought into a better exchange with those people working on refugee issues. Increasing collaboration is needed to break the cycle of forced displacement.

Karin Sorensen added that it is crucial to put the displaced people in the focus and to listen to them before designing programmes. Without genuinely including displaced persons, there cannot be proper solutions, she argued, thereby re-affirming the approach of the project "Protected rather than protracted". She also pointed to the crucial importance of communication and the gap between existing data and evidence on the one and public and political debates on the other hand. She concluded with a hopeful remark regarding the new architecture of responsibility introduced by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in particular: She believes that how responsibility for refugee situations is planned to be distributed more fairly between countries holds considerable potential for improvements. Better ways have to be found to include local levels of government, which hold the key to much-needed localised solutions. She also observed that research—and especially research-based recommendations—can be very detached from

Markus Rudolf \ with the panellists Elisabeth Pelster and Lorenza Rossi (f. l. t. r.)

the actual reality of people in the field and asked the question how data can be used better to actually support solutions.

Rossi clarified that in her view there is more than enough data, at least regarding the humanitarian / emergency side. Thanks to new technologies and new ways of collecting data, its amount is already surpassing the existing capacities to analyse and take it up in programming. Rossi pointed to the need to use humanitarian data or such from the displacement tracking matrix (DTM) beyond the immediate needs of affected populations for further analysis and communication with policymakers. The challenge, according to her, is how to ensure that the data provides the real picture AND how to ensure that migrants are not put at risk through the large-scale collection of data about them?

Regarding burden sharing, Rossi emphasised that such principles are not only needed between but also within countries, as very often the large groups of IDPs or refugees are hosted in some of the most marginalised parts of countries, which require assistance and compensation. She also argued that the fact that irregular migrants and IDPs are forced to work in the informal sector and at lower wages disrupts

the general labour market as well as housing costs and thus negatively impacts the local population, whereas regularising their status would mean they could be absorbed better by the national economies. A recent analysis of 17,000 interviews with North African migrants, mostly in Libya and Europe, had revealed that they had collectively spent a minimum of US $ 5.2 million to reach Europe, money that could have been spent in better ways if the border regime would allow it.

Elisabeth Pelster emphasised that humanitarian aid is extremely political and that it can never replace a political solution / settlement. She warned against a Disney-Worldisation of humanitarian action and political solutions and insisted that the role and responsibility of nation states would remain crucial. The famous handing over of programmes and projects after the end of international support, she said, usually suffered from the lack of integration of municipal institutions set up to administer refugees into the political and institutional set-up of the country. With a view to the GCR, she agreed that the reconfiguration of the components of refugee

aid and assistance bears some potential even though altogether it does not contain anything new. According to her, durable solutions should be individual solutions, since communities of refugee or displaced persons are highly heterogeneous and so are their ways of "getting by". Listening and finding solutions with them rather than for them is therefore crucial. Finally, she emphasised the UNHCR's need not for data, but for reliable data and explained that every time refugees had been counted or registered by UNHCR, their numbers went down by 25 to 30 per cent compared to the previous estimate.

The ensuing discussion revolved around a number of relevant aspects:

Opinions differed with regard to the two Global Compacts, which were still under negotiation at the time of the conference. On a positive note, participants stressed that there are some new tones and, if implemented correctly, the new architectural set-up introduced by the GCR could lead to positive changes in response to refugee crises. Some assessed as promising the multitude of actors coming together, including international financial institutions like the World Bank, academia and the private sector even though—they admitted—the needs are still a lot higher than available funding. The fact that benefits for refugee-receiving communities and governments should become more tangible in the new framework could lead to a stronger commitment from their side, but it participants cautioned that the round of stakeholders has to be made really inclusive. Lessons from the CRRF implementation in a number of countries preceding the vote on the GCR were drawn upon to try and predict its potential. While some saw no conceptual breakthrough in the approach to the refugee situation when looking at its implementation in Ethiopia or Tanzania, others pointed to visible changes, for example in Ethiopia, where the language had changed a lot, and the government had recently started allowing mentioning of IDPs for the first time ever.

The concluding session \ highlighted that migration should no longer be regarded as exceptional but rather as normality

**The audience ** listening to the presentations

On the implications of the GCR for non-signatory countries of the Geneva Convention, the example of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh was referred to. There, the UNHCR pursues a "solidarity approach", very much in line with what is foreseen by the GCR, and while Bangladesh rejects the Compact, Thailand hosted the first solidarity approach meeting only under the condition that no commitment whatsoever would emerge for Thailand. If seen as a test case for the GCR, it shows that everything depends on how much the non-binding commitment will translate into real support towards durable solutions in individual crisis situations.

As regards the separate process of the GCM (Global Compact on Migration), participants appreciated that migration was no longer framed as a problem and used the opportunity to call for a general shift in perception: Migration should no longer be regarded as exceptional but rather as normality. More attention to regional differences was called for, using the example of West Africa, where a lot more consideration is given to integration and mobility within the region than to movements out of Africa, as the larger part of migrants remain within their regions

of origin. On the subject of return and reintegration, participants emphasised the crucial role of an enabling environment that allows returnees to make use of their skills and qualifications. Some criticised the targeted recruitment of high-qualified non-nationals for draining and harming economies in the Global South.

The claim that there is more than enough data, certainly more than can be processed, sparked a longer discussion. It raised questions as to who owns the data, which purposes the data serves or does not serve and what quality or reliability statements can claim which are deducted from this kind of large-scale data sets.

**Benjamin Etzold ** focussed on aspects of translocality

One participant stressed that not enough is being done to empower local people to have access to data (on themselves) and that data is usually produced to satisfy the needs of governments. For research purposes in general, it turned out, that there are still significant gaps in data availability, especially regarding cross-country refugee data. There is also a risk that data availability might guide research "to search where the light is" and overlook important but hidden aspects. This led to the aspect of how large-scale data sets are collected. Questions of access, for example, are easily eclipsed, so that very remote or confined communities are underrepresented in large data sets. Also, for international researchers, access can easily be facilitated using institutional power (of

UNHCR for example), while for local researchers conditions might be more difficult. Some dimensions of meaning-making and understanding between interviewee and interviewer in field research are simply eclipsed in quantitative or automated data processing. As Markus Rudolf pointed out, he encountered several instances of self-declared economic migrants, who only over a long conversation revealed that their economic problems initially all began with conflict and / or repression. Such layers of complexity cannot be grasped with yes/no-questionnaires, and it shows that the claim that quantitative data sets allow for better predictions has to be taken with some caution. Long-term, qualitative field research allows for a more varied understanding of complex realities by taking the context of data collection into account, including different layers of linguistic and cultural translation.

On the exchange between academia and policymakers, the participants highlighted two aspects: The need for a sound evidence base actually backing up the conclusions, and good communication. Some participants felt that academia could do a better job at communicating their research findings and criticised a tendency to paint things in a certain way without conclusive evidence, which risks undermining trust. The migration hump was taken to be a case in point. The model that argues that economic development in developing countries increases out-migration up to a certain point, as more people are able to afford it, was said to be based only on macro-level data and lack conclusive evidence. It was also criticised for sending a confusing message in the sense that "we can no longer do the right thing". Other participants, however, expressed their frustration about the low uptake and invisible impact of research on policy-making or political communication with the public, despite constant expressions of interest in research. Difficulties with the migration hump model, it was argued, emerge because development cooperation aims at preventing migration, whereas research on the link between migration and development supports policies that enable and foster migration. The ministry representative contradicted the perception that the aim is to inhibit or minimise migration. He positioned himself in the frame of the GCM as well as Agenda 2030 (goal 10.7) and their

notion of "safe, orderly and regular migration", which should be enhanced and called unregulated migration a problem. The BMZ, he added, assists countries to build migration regulation capacities and in counselling centres in 13 countries does not only support people's reintegration but also informs about legal migration channels.

In his final words, Braune described the exchange as "fruitful, useful and certainly not simple". Sorensen highlighted that the narrative of migration as something to be stopped needs to be overcome and that the problem with irregular migration is the protection crisis and extreme vulnerability of people on the move, solutions to which can only be found through a human rights-based approach. Rossi drew attention to the political dimension of regime collapse, which is at the beginning of a most forced migration movements and deplored that no lessons seemed to be learned from this. Pelster called upon all participants to keep protection instead of protractedness at the heart of what they do.

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