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## Environmental migration: Promoting a “no regrets” approach today

By Dr. Fabrice Renaud

The image of residents of low-lying island states having to leave their homeland because of sea level rise has been emphasized by the media and has come to symbolize the displacement of people induced by environmental push factors, particularly climate change. Such depictions typically oversimplify the complex relationship between human mobility and environmental change. Nevertheless, in the last couple of decades, the issue of environmentally induced migration has and is being discussed in the scientific literature and at the policy level<sup>1</sup>. The debate around the topic is at times quite vivid between proponents and opponents of the concept.

The first point of contention is whether or not environmental processes should be singled out as push factors that would explain specific migration patterns. Indeed it is widely recognized that migration is typically the result of a variety of factors. Thus, putting the spotlight on only one of these might be, as some experts argue, counter-productive. This is an important consideration and indeed in many cases environmental pressure, although clearly identified, is only one of many other factors forcing people to move.

The second difficulty when addressing environmental migration is the lack of agreed-upon definition. Several categories of environmentally induced migrants have been put forward to date generating additional debates in particular when the term “refugee” is used—as in climate or environmental refugees. The term refugee is not used appropriately in this context as it has a specific legal connotation linked to the 1951 Convention relating

to the Status of Refugees which offers protection to individuals who are persecuted for one of the five Convention grounds. These do not consider environmental degradation processes or environmental hazards. Lacking an agreed-upon definition, it is challenging to measure the phenomenon and assess its magnitude, or assign institutional responsibility to address the problems related to environmental change and mobility<sup>2</sup>.

Despite definition problems and academic debates surrounding the topic, there is an increasing recognition that environmental factors, particularly those aggravated by climate change, will generate more humanitarian needs in the future<sup>3</sup>. In particular, people who migrate and have to cross a border because of environmental stress factors are not systematically protected by major conventions and as of now, policymakers do not have the tools to prepare for, prevent, or respond to environmental migration.

In view of the above, a decision framework has been proposed that includes categories of environmental migration and which helps determining who is likely to be displaced by various types of environmental stressors<sup>4</sup>. The categories of migrants are:

1. Environmental Emergency Migrants: people who have to flee because of the swiftness of an environmental event and who have to take refuge to save their lives.
2. Environmentally Forced Migrants: people who “have to leave” in order to avoid the worst of environmental deterioration. The urgency for flight is less than for the previous category.
3. Environmentally Motivated Migrants: individuals who “may leave” a steadily deteriorating envi-

<sup>2</sup> Warner, K. 2010. “Global environmental change and migration: Governance challenges.” *Global Environmental Change*. Special issue on Resilience and Governance. Vol. 20, pp. 402–413.

<sup>3</sup> Guterres, A. 2008. “Climate Change, natural disasters and human displacement: a UNHCR perspective.” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, Available at <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/type,RESEARCH,UNHCR,,492bb6b92,0.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> Renaud, F., O. Dun, K. Warner and J. Bogardi. 2001. “A decision framework for environmentally induced migration.” *International Migration* (forthcoming).

<sup>1</sup> See for example Jäger et al.. 2009. “Synthesis Report of the European Commission Project “Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios (EACH-FOR).” Available at [www.each-for.eu](http://www.each-for.eu).

ronment in order to pre-empt the worst. Here, there is no emergency nor is it a last resort action to move.

The reason for the sub-categorization of environmental migrants is to highlight the different ways in which the environment prompts people to move and the different mode/ pace of action taken by the affected individuals. The decision framework has environmental stressors such as slow onset and rapid onset hazards as starting point. It then focuses on what happens with respect to human movement once such an event has taken place, taking into consideration the opportunities of communities to maintain or adapt their livelihoods, and eventually pointing to one of the environmental migration categories above. It is hoped that such a framework can help to (a) determine what types of assistance and interventions are required, (b) identify who will be most in need of immediate support, and (c) plan for resource allocation at a time of crisis or to prevent a crisis.

Much discussion is still needed around this. However, given the likely continued degradation of our environment and the likely increase in environmental hazards impacts in the future, it is important that resources be devoted to research further the subject. Research and policy discussions should focus on what can be achieved, at various governance levels, in order to protect individuals or groups of individuals who will be displaced or migrate because of predominantly environmental push factors. Inaction on these fronts could have dramatic human consequences. Acting now would constitute a no-regrets approach.

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## Staff Spotlight



Marius Kahl

Marius Kahl joined BICC as an intern in 2007 for four months. In April 2010, he returned to BICC to work on the Capacity-building and Consultancy project for the South Sudan DDR Commission, which is located in Juba, Sudan, where Marius will be working roughly four months of the year in total supporting it. A major part of his work focuses on achieving the successful socio-economic reintegration of former combatants in South Sudan who were and will be demobilized. Furthermore, Marius is responsible for liaising with relevant German institutions like the German Parliament and NGOs.

Marius served as an Officer (Navy) in the German Armed Forces until 2007. While in the Navy, he obtained a degree in economics. He served amongst others as Watch Officer aboard, Deputy Chief of the *Bundeswehr* Operations Center and held a post at the Federal Ministry of Defense.

After leaving the Armed Forces as Lieutenant Commander, he moved to London and received an M.A. in Conflict, Security and Development at King's College London. In his M.A. thesis, he examined the role of the international financial institutions in socio-economic reintegration.

Besides African security and post-conflict transitional challenges, Marius is interested in the evolution of UN peacekeeping as well as the integration of respective policies in international engagements of different countries abroad (whole of governance approaches).

In his free time, Marius enjoys going jogging and sailing, but given the lacking sea in Bonn, he started rowing on the river Rhine as a fitting 'substitute'.

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## Peace on earth?

On 16 September, the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) in cooperation with the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF) organized a symposium "Peace on earth?—Initiatives for disarmament, non-violence and dialogue". The event, supported by Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung Nordrhein-Westfalen, was part of the 30th anniversary conference, entitled "CHANGINGcourse—reclaiming our future" of the Right Livelihood Award which took place in Bonn.

Aim of the symposium was the implementation of dialogue and networking between international and national peace and conflict researchers on the one hand and Laureates of the Right Livelihood Award (RLA) on the other in order to find a basis for common activities in the future. Laureates who participated in this event were Dekha Ibrahim Abdi (Kenya), Katharina Kruhonja (Croatia), Susanne Kjaer (on behalf of the Laureate Inge Genefke, Denmark), Theo van Boven (Netherlands), René Ngongo (DRC), Neshan Gunasekera (on behalf of the Laureate Christopher Weeramantry, Sri Lanka) and Mauricio Hernandez (ATCC, Colombia).

During the symposium they discussed the topics:

- On the way to global zero—Where are we now?
- Ethnic conflicts—Solutions from theory and practical experience.
- Victims of war—A challenge for post war reconciliation.
- Resource management in a fairer world.



Although various questions reaching from global disarmament to conflict resolution, transitional justice and resource management were debated in the symposium,

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, global peacemaker from rural Kenya, succeeded in expressing one of the symposium's key ideas: "The participation in a peace process is not about the mathematics of numbers and percentages in relation to who is in majority or minority. It is about plurality, diversity, participation and ownership of all affected by the conflict."

The statements of the panelists and the discussions will be documented and published in November 2010.

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## Friedensgutachten 2010

On 18 and 19 May, the *Friedensgutachten 2010* (Annual State of Peace Report) was presented to the Bundestag Committees of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Economic Cooperation as well as in the *Bundespressekonferenz*, which was attended by several national and international journalists. The editors also met with representatives of the federal ministries for Economic Cooperation, Foreign Affairs and the chairwoman of the German Green Party Claudia Roth.

The *Friedensgutachten* was also presented in some public panel discussions. For example BICC, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and Women In International Security (WIIS.de) invited the interested public to Bonn on 14

September to discuss "A new strategy for Afghanistan—On the way to peace?" with Dr. Andreas Heinemann-Grüder (former BICC, now Head Academy for Conflict Transformation), Henning Riecke (DGAP), Matthias Ries (German Development Service, DED) and Ute Lange (WIIS.de).

With the war in Afghanistan in its ninth year, the *Friedensgutachten 2010* critically takes stock. It reviews the new Western strategy and discusses perspectives of withdrawal. Peace policy goal must be to sustainably improve the security of the people in Afghanistan. How can insurgents be incorporated into the pacification of the country? This question not only poses itself in Afghanistan as is shown in civil wars and violent conflict in Nigeria, Sudan, Yemen and the Middle East, the North Caucasus, in Colombia, and in Sri Lanka. An important motivation and justification of non-state violent actors is the fight against injustice. Security guarantees, material incentives and participation can prepare the ground out of civil war.

The annual *Friedensgutachten* is a joined publication of the five major German peace research institutions and is funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF). This year's *Friedensgutachten* was edited by Christiane Fröhlich, Margret Johannsen, Bruno Schoch, Andreas Heinemann-Grüder and Jochen Hippler on behalf of these five institutions.

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**Friedensgutachten  
2010**

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 an der Universität Bonn  
 Deutsche Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (DSF)  
 Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)  
 Institut für Konfliktforschung und Frieden (IKF)

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## New BICC Publications

Fatal Transactions Newsletter No. 6, Juli 2010.  
 Feature: Kritische Evaluierungen des Tschad-Kamerun-Erdölpipe-line-Projektes.

Fröhlich, Christiane, Margret Johannsen, Bruno Schoch, Andreas Heinemann-Grüder und Jochen Hippler (Hg.). 2010. *Friedensgutachten 2010*. Münster: Lit Verlag.

Grebe, Jan und Jerry Sommer. 2010. "Griechenland: Hohe Militärausgaben trotz Finanzkrise." *BICC Focus*. No. 9. Bonn: BICC, Juli.

Grebe, Jan und Jerry Sommer. 2010. "Greece: High military expenditures despite the financial crisis". *BICC Focus*. No. 9. Bonn: BICC, September.

Heinke, Susanne (ed.). 2010. *Annual Report/ Jahresbericht*. Bonn: BICC, May.

Isikozlu, Elvan and Ananda S. Millard. 2010. *A typology of wartime rape*. BICC brief 43. Bonn: BICC, forthcoming.

Koltermann, Felix. 2010. *Der Gaza-Krieg im Bild*. Occasional Paper VI. Bonn: BICC, August.

Müller, Marie. 2010. *Revenue transparency to mitigate the resource curse in the Niger Delta? Potential and reality of NEITI*. Occasional Paper V. Bonn: BICC, June.

Warnecke, Andrea (ed.). *Diasporas and Peace: A Comparative Assessment of Somali and Ethiopian communities in Europe*. DIASPEACE Working Paper. BICC brief 42. Bonn: BICC, May.

Warnecke, Andrea, Dennis Tänzler and Ruth Vollmer. 2010. "Climate Change, Migration and Conflict: Receiving Communities under Pressure?" *Background paper on Climate Change and Migration*. German Marshall Fund of the United States-Study Team on Climate-Induced Migration. June.

## BICC Notes

On 13 September, Peter J. Croll gave a presentation of BICC's work at the 18th General Assembly of the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA) in Luanda, Angola, which took place from 12 to 14 September and was entitled "Content is King". The main focus of Croll's talk lay on BICC's arms program framework and on the question "SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons) control through radio broadcasting in Africa." He also referred to the role of the media in conflicts. His

co-speaker in the panel headed by Leefa Martin, SADC Secretariat, was Fabian Pianka, Head of media-political relations, Deutsche Welle.

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 Peter Croll at [croll@bicc.de](mailto:croll@bicc.de)



The Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum (from 21 to 23 June 2010) continued its annual successful international conference in 2010 under the title "The Heat is on—Climate Change and the Media". A BICC workshop "Environmental migration and conflict" sought to disaggregate the nexus between climate change-induced migration and the scope for conflict in receiving areas by identifying and assessing the impact of these mitigating factors. Following a review of previous research and conceptualizations, the panelists Fabrice Renaud, Head Environmental Vulnerability and Energy Security Section UNU-EHS, Dennis Tänzler, Senior Project Manager Adelphi Research, Astrid Ziebarth, Program Officer GMF Berlin Office, Jerry Sommer, journalist and BICC Research Associate, and Andrea Warnecke, Senior Researcher at BICC, debated especially focusing on the role and scope of action by relevant stakeholders—governments, NGOs, and the media—in receiving areas.

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 Andrea Warnecke at [warnecke@bicc.de](mailto:warnecke@bicc.de)



On 17 and 18 June, an international BICC conference on "Security Apparatuses in Authoritarian and Fragile States—Functions and Reform Potentials" took place at the Wissenschaftszentrum Bonn.

Four panels discussed "Rationalities of Security Formations in Non-democratic Regimes", "Roles and Functions of Security Forces in Fragile States", "Interplay of State and Non-State Actors", "Rule of Law and Democratization through SSR" and "Consequences for Research and Policymaking". This conference was supported by the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF) and the Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank of Bonn.

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