

# DIASPORA - MIGRATION - PEACEBUILDING

## BICC-Newsletter

### Workshop “African Diaspora Groups as Facilitator for Peace and Development”

**Within the framework of the 13th International Metropolis Conference, which this year is taking place in Bonn from 27 to 31 October, BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) is holding a workshop on 29 October from 14:30 to 18:00, which is entitled: *African diaspora groups as facilitators of peace and development.***

The Workshop seeks to investigate in what ways African diaspora groups in Europe get involved in peace processes in their countries of origin as well as their common ground and possible scope of cooperation with European NGOs and development agencies.

In recent political and academic debate, there is a clear tendency to highlight the constructive potential of diaspora groups to facilitate peacebuilding processes in their countries of origin. These positive chances can be found, for instance, in smaller projects and initiatives, particularly in the area of development cooperation. Financial remittances and the positive influence of the transfer of knowledge, such as the exchange of experts (so-called social remittances) play another important role. Various NGOs and development agencies have begun to look into new ways for a more systematic integration of diaspora activities and potentials into their peacebuilding and development efforts.

However, little empirical research has so far been undertaken to unearth the actual strengths, limits and effects of diaspora activities in the specific (post-) conflict processes. Indeed, fact-based information on the legal, economical, and social framework conditions of diaspora and migrant organizations in Europe and on the situation in the African countries of origin is still lacking. Priorities and individual objectives of the various diaspora groups that may indeed differ from those of European state and non-state agencies have not sufficiently been looked into, either.

### Diaspora – Migration – Peacebuilding

“Worldwide migration is not a threat, but highly enriching if it is shaped as an advantage to all involved. Migrants are part of the solution to our national and global problems,” former President of the *Bundestag*, Prof. Rita Süßmuth said on the occasion of the international BICC conference *The Security – Migration Nexus* early this year in Bonn.

For BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) one of the five leading peace and conflict research institutes in Germany, the topic ‘diaspora—migration—peacebuilding’ is new territory. Besides the conference mentioned above, BICC has elaborated first concept papers and studies. The Center is also member of a consortium carrying out a multi-year international European research project on “Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings (DIASPEACE).” Taking the example of the Horn of Africa, the project intends to gain new insights into diaspora activities in the countries of origin, the recipient countries and on the transnational level.

All too often, the discussion on international migration processes is superimposed by diffuse fears and scenarios of catastrophes, which makes dealing with this global topic unemotionally more difficult. We would like to initiate impulses both for applied research and politics, which will enter a balanced and equal dialogue between all involved actors.

The new BICC-Newsletter *Diaspora – Migration – Peacebuilding* will report at irregular intervals on our activities in this topic. It shall offer further information and also serve as an exchange of ideas with cooperation partners.

We wish you interesting reading and look forward to your contributions in the discussion and your comments.

Yours  
Peter J. Croll  
Director BICC





Therefore, the interdisciplinary workshop brings together a broad range of representatives from European development agencies, research institutes, diaspora groups, and NGOs from both European and African countries, seeking to identify commonalities and intersections regarding the objectives and potentials of the affected stakeholders and will lay a basis for future applied research activities.

Amongst the participants are Mehari Taddele Maru, African Rally for Peace and Development, Ethiopia, Pekka Virtanen, University Jyväskylä, Finland, Andrea Warnecke, BICC, Germany, Dr. Awil Mohamoud, African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), The Netherlands, and Jean-Luis Bisangwa, Imbuto e.V., Great Britain.

As a follow-up to the projects that BICC has carried out on the nexus between diaspora, migration and security, this workshop also offers the opportunity to get to know first empirical results from the EU DIASPEACE project. It also gives a greater number of experts the chance to discuss the theses posed during the International BICC Conference *The Security-Migration Nexus*, which took place in February this year.

Clara Fischer

## Diaspora as a peace-broker

**Taking the Horn of Africa, i.e. Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea as region of investigation, a multi-year international research project within the 7th EU research framework programme deals with the shapes and effects of diaspora activities in home and host countries as well as on the transnational level. In the project, entitled: *Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings (DIASPEACE)*, BICC, together with international partners, is collecting a substantial amount of data on transnational networks and kinds of activities of such groups and is developing new methodologies to assess the effects of their commitment.**

The project DIASPEACE is led by the University Jyväskylä in Finland. Partners in addition to BICC are the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPG), the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), the Centro Studi Politica Internazionale (CeSPI), the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) in Ethiopia and the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Somalia.

The Horn of Africa is one of the regions most ravaged by political and humanitarian crises. Decades of wars between states as well as between hostile sections of

### DIASPEACE

University Jyväskylä, Finland—[www.jyu.fi](http://www.jyu.fi)

Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), Germany—[www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de)

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPG), Germany—[www.eth.mpg.de](http://www.eth.mpg.de)

International Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), Norway—[www.prio.no](http://www.prio.no)

African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), The Netherlands—[www.diaspora-centre.org](http://www.diaspora-centre.org)

Centro Studi Politica Internazionale (CeSPI), Italy—[www.cespi.it](http://www.cespi.it)

Forum for Social Studies (FSS), Ethiopia—[www.fssethiopia.org.et](http://www.fssethiopia.org.et)

Academy for Peace and Development (APD), Somalia—[www.apd-somaliland.org](http://www.apd-somaliland.org)

[www.diaspeace.org](http://www.diaspeace.org)



## DIASPEACE kick-off workshop in Brussels

From 5–6 May, the kick-off Workshop of the DIASPEACE project took place in Brussels, Belgium. Altogether some 23 participants attended the two-day workshop, including representatives from each of the eight partner organizations, the EC and the sister project INFOCON (Involving Transnational Communities—Civil Society Forum on Conflict).

BICC was represented by Peter J. Croll, Volker Franke, Bettina Conrad und Andrea Warnecke, who together with Markus Höhne, Max-Planck-Institut, facilitated a discussion of basic joint guidelines for research under work packages 2 and 3.

the population have led to the weakening or even the collapse of state structures, particularly in Somalia, and to the formation of large diaspora communities in Africa, Europe and North America. Whilst the Somali diaspora has become one of the largest diasporas worldwide, Eritrea is considered a classic example of an economy, which is dependent on remittances from members of its diaspora. The Horn of Africa takes a particularly important place in European foreign and security policy, not only due to its historical ties, but also to its geographical proximity. Increasingly, the question is asked which role diaspora groups play in the respective peace- and development processes in their countries of origin.

In addition to taking stock and conducting an empirical analysis of the diaspora networks and their activities in the individual European states and on a transnational level, the study will provide a critical analysis of the legal, economic and social living conditions of migrants in Europe. An analysis of the involvement of diaspora groups in projects and initiatives of European (state and non-state actors) in the field of conflict management will be another result of the project, which will not only study the effects of their engagement in the countries of origin, but also the strategies and approaches taken by these countries to involve or possibly limit interference from the diaspora.

DIASPEACE consists of five main research components:

- Defining joint analytical tools and research methodologies;
- Providing a comparative assessment of transnational diaspora networks from the Horn of Africa and their interfaces with European civil society and state institutions;

- Case studies of diaspora as agents of conflict and peace from the Horn of Africa;
- Interaction between European state actors and diasporas in conflict resolution and peace-building;
- Synthesis and dissemination of the research findings and identification of further research directions through workshops and seminars for interested diaspora groups.

The project is to be carried out in close cooperation with respective diaspora groups as well as state and non-state institutions in Europe and Africa and shall suggest instruments to foster policy dialogue and the constructive engagement of diasporas.

Detailed information on the DIASPEACE project can be found at [www.diaspeace.org](http://www.diaspeace.org).

*Andrea Warnecke*

## The African Diaspora Policy Centre – A unique platform of knowledge and expertise



**The African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) is an independent research foundation based in the Netherlands. The ADPC is the only platform of knowledge and expertise (think tank) in Europe in the area of migration and development set up by the diaspora for the diaspora in order to generate knowledge, information and policy insights on the subject from this stakeholder perspective—a point of view which has not been sufficiently documented.**

The Centre serves to facilitate an effective policy dialogue through sharing and exchanging information, knowledge, expertise, new ideas, insights and different perspectives, practical experiences, past lessons and best practices among migrant organizations, civil society associations, mainstream development agencies, government institutions and other stakeholders concerned with migration

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and development issues in Europe and beyond. The Centre is particularly concerned with contributing to better development in Africa through the provision of a platform that enables the African diaspora in Europe to connect more closely with the continent as a collective force, pool their resources and proactively undertake initiatives for the promotion of peace, better governance and brain gain in Africa. The Centre is unique in acting as a valuable strategic link between African diaspora communities in Europe and Africa. The added value of the Centre is to assist the tangible contribution of the African diaspora to the efforts geared to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa by 2015 and beyond.

The Centre focuses on four interlinked themes:

*Migration and development:* The aim of this theme is to contribute to the discussion in the migration- and development-related issues by generating knowledge and insights intimately informed by the African diaspora perspectives, mindsets, experiences and expertise.

*Peacebuilding:* The aim of this theme is to mobilize the African diaspora in the EU countries coming from the conflict-torn countries located in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa regions to play a proactive role in the promotion of peace and political stability in their respective countries of origin.

*Better governance:* The aim of this theme is to help make African diaspora expertise available for the construction of effective, responsible, transparent, accountable and democratic systems of governance in Africa.

*Brain gain:* The aim of this theme is to involve African diaspora professionals, academics and researchers in the Netherlands and Europe in a 'brain circulation scheme' designed to mitigate the adverse effects of the brain drain in Africa.

The ADPC achieves its goals by conducting evidence-based policy-related research, organizing expert meetings and conferences, undertaking capacity building training, facilitating contacts and networking relations and providing consultancy and information services.

The ADPC is committed to stimulating informed policy debates and discussions in the field of migration and development. In this regard, the Centre generates through research knowledge and information

## Other publications

BICC *brief* 36. Jerry Sommer, Andrea Warnecke (ed.), *The Security-Migration Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities of African Migration to EU Countries*. Bonn: April 2008.

BICC Konzeptpapier. Andrea Warnecke, Julie Brethfeld, Volker Franke. *Die Rolle der afrikanischen Diaspora im Konfliktgeschehen*. Bonn: April 2007.

Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville. „Global migration and transnational politics“. Working paper no.1., Centre for Global Studies, George Mason University. 2008

Smith, Hazel and Paul Stares (ed.). *Diasporas in Conflict: Peacemakers or Peace wreckers?* Tokyo: United Nations Univ. Press, 2007

Minzoul Assal und Leif Manger (eds.). *Diasporas Within and Without Africa. Dynamism, Heterogeneity, Variation*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute. 2006

Conrad, Bettina and Tricia Redeker Hepner (eds.). *Eritrea Abroad: Critical Perspectives on the Global Diaspora. Special Issue of the Eritrean Studies Review, 4 (2)*, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press. 2005

targeted at three primary stakeholders in the field. For instance, ADPC produces knowledge and information targeted at informing, raising awareness and mobilizing the African diaspora organizations in the western hemisphere so that they could contribute efficiently and more considerably to the development of Africa. Diaspora organizations have no access to valuable information because of their marginal position in comparison with other stakeholders in the field. Secondly, the Centre produces information and policy supporting documents that are aimed to help the newly formed diaspora representatives in Africa dealing with migration- and development-related issues to formulate better informed policy positions and instruments. These are policy proposals that can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions. Finally, the Centre plays an advocacy role by raising awareness, informing and influencing policy changes among policymakers in the host countries dealing with migration- and development-related issues. In short, the ADPC is a platform for informed constructive dialogue between the diaspora and the various stakeholders in the field of migration and development.

Dr. Awil Mohamoud  
Executive Director  
African Diaspora Policy Centre