

PRESS RELEASE
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International Conference \ **Breaking Cycles of Displacement**

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Life in displacement has become a permanent state of being for two-thirds of the nearly 70 million displaced persons worldwide. The peace and conflict research institute BICC has been conducting research on the situation of long-term displaced for a number of years. As the final event of a multi-year project that has been supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), BICC organized an international conference on 28 and 29 November in Bonn.

In her opening speech, **Elke Löbel**, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) praised the academic work of BICC. The institute not only showed that life in constant insecurity fosters dependency but also that displacement and return are by no means linear but rather highly complex processes. She also stressed: **“To provide truly sustainable solutions, we need to look at the conflict dynamics themselves and the role that refugees, internally displaced and returnees play in this context.”** Taking up the research’s recommendations for future actions—developing a long-term political approach, which takes the living conditions of displaced people and host communities into account and focuses on local integration—will be key for upcoming measures under German development cooperation. With an eye to the debates on the UN Global Compact on Migration, **Elke Löbel** encouraged academia to get involved by providing facts and figures on forced displacement: **“We need a language that can be understood by the various different groups in society.”** She welcomed the opportunity for exchange between politicians, researchers and civil society at the conference.

Participants discussed the challenges of protracted displacement as well as the comprehensive empirical research conducted by BICC on the subject. **Markus Rudolf**, project leader at BICC stresses: **“We investigate the topic from the perspectives of those concerned - This is our research approach through which we learn a lot about motivations and strategies of displaced persons.”** Case studies from East and West Africa, South America, the Middle East and South-East Asia were presented at the conference and participants analyzed commonalities and differences of protracted displacement. The local (re)integration of refugees as well as the role of refugees in peace processes, such as in Syria, Afghanistan and Colombia, were central topics at the conference. One critical outcome was that—in particular during peace negotiations—refugees and internally displaced people are rarely heard.

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Another topic of the conference were the different coping strategies of the long-term displaced. Participants discussed the challenge of aid dependency but also translocality and its effects on living conditions and the legal status of the displaced.

Future research questions, according to **Conrad Schetter**, Director for Research at BICC, are: **“Practitioners as well as academia are equally concerned about how the self-reliance of refugees and internally displaced can be strengthened in humanitarian protection systems. For displaced people are not only looking for protection but want to take their fate into their own hands.”**

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