



BONN INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CONVERSION

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“The Food that is in the Mouth is not yet in the Belly” (Kikuyu Proverb)—Reaching the Practitioners

by Peter J. Croll

Ten years ago, on the occasion of the conference “Conversion—Opportunities for Development and Environment”, the then Assistant Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, expressed his hope that “We are now in a position to decrease military budgets for the benefit of development.” At that time, it was expected that “peace dividends” would be shared by all. This conference in Dortmund was the cradle of BICC.

Those days seem gone now. Overall, more resources are being allocated to military expenditure. In almost forty countries worldwide, conflicts are being disputed violently producing dramatic social and economic setbacks and contributing to large-scale poverty. Small arms, as tools of power, plunge societies into long-lasting and even more destructive conflicts—a vicious circle.

The environment BICC is working in has changed dramatically over the last years, not only since 11 September 2001. The main trends in the international debate now focus on tackling crisis- and conflict-related issues. Topics such as “The Reduction of Poverty by 2015”, “Globalization”, “Human Security” and, of late, “Fighting Terrorism” range high on both international and national agendas.

Progress on these issues cannot be made without a contribution from conversion. However it is not only a question of converting resources, but also—and perhaps even more so—of winning over the hearts and minds of the key decision-makers. This is where BICC’s key role lies.

As the new Director of BICC, one of the most prominent questions I ask myself and all involved in the institute is “Quo vadis BICC?” In trying to find an

answer, and before my first ‘100 days’ are over, I would like to share with you some ideas, hoping to provide food for thought and to initiate some responses.

Adapting our tasks to the needs of our clients— ‘Zooming out’

Crisis prevention and conflict management play an ever-increasing role in multilateral and bilateral economic cooperation. As the causes and triggers of conflicts are complex, it becomes increasingly obvious that foreign, development and other relevant policies need to be coherent. At the center of the long-term concepts and strategies as well as the programs and project work of development organizations, questions of disarmament and security play a vital role. The challenge for us at BICC lies in ‘zooming out’ the results of our applied research work into the various operational measures of our clients. Building local capacities against small arms proliferation, for instance, forms a vital part in the

democratization—and thus good governance—of the respective country or region. Security sector

reform, which includes democratic control of the military, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, is another important component of good governance and may become part of the policy dialogue between developing countries and their partners. PRS (poverty reductions strategies) might be a further topic. Assisting organizations to get such subjects into the mainstream of their development work as cross-sectoral topics is one example of the ‘zooming out’ approach.

Pro-active PR—Integrated conversion and changing the mind-set

Almost all results of our work are published internationally. These publications help to strengthen our institutional know-how and at the same time ensure that BICC’s ideas are distributed widely via the Internet.

In our role as a think tank, the establishment of in-house study groups on special topics ensures that we keep up-to-date on the most relevant events and may even open up new market niches and new partners for BICC. Expert roundtables, together with an increasingly extended and more open marketing of our products, will

“Quo vadis BICC?”

complement the idea of 'zooming out'. By creating awareness and by changing mind-sets through pro-active PR, we aim to get crucial topics on the agenda.

Training/Capacity-building

To bring change about, training is vital. In addition to the existing fellowship program, I envisage focusing on a wider training program within BICC and its commissioned projects. Close cooperation with universities in special training programs on conversion should be increasingly fostered in the future.

The future

Our work will continue to concentrate on the six focal areas which retain their relevance. During the last eight years of BICC, we have managed to move these topics to the center stage of conversion. In some areas, we have earned worldwide recognition and are proud to say that our institute is among the leaders when it comes to providing expert advice and opinions on 'small arms', 'post-war conflicts', 'defense industry restructuring' and 'community-oriented conversion'.

This is some of the food for thought I already found on my desk at BICC. I am confident that BICC's previous work will form a solid base for further growth and adaptation. The greatest asset of any institution—and even more so of a think tank—are the qualifications, commitment and dedication of its staff. I am convinced that we will manage to convey our message of the importance of conversion if we increasingly link our applied research work to that of the practitioners in policy-making bodies.

Peter J. Croll is the Director of the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC).

Staff Spotlight:



Lars Fischer

Lars Fischer joined the BICC Project Management Team in September 2000. He deals primarily with base closure issues and is involved in the consulting and service project for communities in North Rhine-Westphalia affected by base closure. In addition, Lars also works on questions concerning the effects of the structural reform of the Bundeswehr on local communities.

Along with the actual management of the conversion process itself, communication between all involved is of the greatest importance. Hence communication is an essential aspect of his day-to-day work. Lars assists communities with the organization and running of workshops, conferences and citizen-participation initiatives, offering professional advice on base closure issues. He has great pleasure in working with both his colleagues and his contacts in the respective administrative authorities. The fact that he is part of the active process of redesigning former military sites for civilian purposes motivates him to continue working in this field.

Lars studied geography (with an emphasis on ecology and the environment), biology, limnology and soil-science at the University of Bonn, focusing on environmental planning as well as sustainable development at the urban and regional levels. Before joining BICC, he worked as a student employee for an international consulting company in Cologne, TÜV Rheinland Sicherheit und Umweltschutz GmbH, for about five years, during the last two of which he was a freelancer in the field of national and European environmental protection planning. Lars is happy that his tasks at BICC allow him to combine his know-how in the field of environmental planning with active peace work.

In his free time, Lars enjoys listening to pop and rock music, playing board games with friends, cooking and reading detective novels, particularly Scandinavian authors such as Henning Mankell.

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Conversion on the Solomon Islands

From November 2001 until May 2002, BICC's Kees Kingma is working for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the coordinator of its Peace & Development Programme on the Solomon Islands.

The country in the South Pacific experienced a violent internal conflict between 1998 and 2000, ended by a peace agreement. However, the main peace-building challenges still remain: continuing tensions between groups originating from different islands; the inability of the police to enforce law and order; and the large numbers of weapons still in circulation. Conflict and economic mismanagement resulted in two consecutive years with an economic decline of 10 percent and the ensuing social hardship.

Kees Kingma recently wrote the following from the capital, Honiara:

Here in Solomon Islands, BICC's perspective of conversion has so far been turned upside down. During the violent conflict, people (men!) in parts of the province of Guadalcanal produced a large number of homemade guns from pipes that normally supplied the villages with water. As a result, women have to walk many extra miles to fetch water for their families. The gunpowder used to fire these guns was taken from old dumps of World War II ammunition, left behind by the US forces.

UNDP's program aims to assist the government in providing productive livelihoods for the people affected by the fighting. Since the cease-fire, many of the militants have been absorbed into the police force as "special constables". The program will support the government in the demobilization of these special constables by helping to draw up a demobilization plan, establish a guidance and referral system, and provide initial resettlement support. The real challenge to conversion is their resettlement and reintegration into civilian life.

The program will also help by providing immediate employment opportunities in the repair and rebuilding of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water systems, sport fields and jetties. In addition, it will revive micro-enterprises, such as rice-processing mills, timber mills and soap-making facilities, which were destroyed during the violence. Of particular importance is the creation of longer-term employment prospects for people who have been affected by the conflict (including ex-militants) through training for self-employment. This will do much to restore the community-based economy and provide employment, particularly for women.

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Burying the Hatchet

On 27 March 2002 BICC brief 22 titled, *Burying the Hatchet: The Decommissioning of Paramilitary Arms in Northern Ireland*, was launched at a well received public ceremony in Belfast's historic Linen Hall Library. Written by Corinna Hauswedell and Kris Brown, this publication was produced by the collaborative research project, Demilitarization in Northern Ireland – The Role of Decommissioning and Normalization of Security in the Peace Process (DINI), undertaken by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) in co-operation with the Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity (INCORE).

This comprehensive publication on decommissioning, the first following the breakthrough of 23 October 2001, analyzes the reasons that made the arms issue in Northern Ireland such a difficult obstacle for the peace process. Examining both the historical evolution of the decommissioning debate and its present position within the peace process, the brief will:

- Describe, from the perspective of the various players, how the issue of decommissioning historically originated, developed, and became institutionalized.
- Analyze the underlying factors and patterns of the peace process that influenced the way decommissioning was handled: the twin track approach of the Agreement, the role of external involvement, especially of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD), and the problem of proliferated violence.
- Analyze the prospects for further decommissioning and identify the imposing challenges that lie ahead.
- Offer a key set of lessons that may contribute to ongoing efforts to build a new understanding of mutually agreed security in Northern Ireland, and conversely, to draw universal lessons from the Northern Irish situation that can benefit comparable international peacemaking and disarmament initiatives.

The start of decommissioning has opened a new chapter in the struggle to abandon the culture, the political influence and the markets of paramilitarism, one of the vital pillars of Northern Irish sectarianism – an imposing task that must be undertaken by both politicians and civil society. It will need this broader perspective of demilitarizing and civilizing a divided society to define the ultimate role and goal of taking the guns out of politics.

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BICC Publications

In addition to its annual *conversion survey*, the BICC publishes *disarmament and conversion studies* and other books, BICC publishes *reports, briefs, and papers*. These series analyze the international conversion process, report on conversion projects and experiences, and offer scientific as well as practical know-how. Further details can be obtained at www.bicc.de/publications/.

Brief 21: Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, *Small States—Big Worries: The Choice of Armed Forces in the Baltics*, February 2002.

Brief 22: Kris Brown and Corinna Hauswedell, *Burying the Hatchet—The Decommissioning of Paramilitary Arms in Northern Ireland*, March 2002.

Forthcoming:

Brief 23: Kiflemariam Gebre-Wold and Isabelle Masson (eds.), *Small Arms in the Horn of Africa: Challenges, Issues and Perspectives*, April.

BICC 2002. *Conversion Survey 2002: Global Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization*. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, Germany, May.

BICC Notes

On 1 March, Dr Daniel Yifru, Director of Political Affairs of IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority for Development) visited BICC. During the reception, a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between IGAD and BICC** was signed. Both organizations aim to develop their cooperation in the Horn of Africa, fostering the idea of curbing **small arms and light weapons (SALW)** in all their aspects. While BICC will focus its inputs on the technical aspects of small arms and light weapons, IGAD will complement these efforts by concentrating on the overall political dimensions of SALW issues in the region.

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On 6 March, in cooperation with the US Embassy in Cologne ('Amerika Haus'), BICC organized a **roundtable on Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: How to Prevent the Spread of Chemical and Biological Weapons?** Prof Marie Isabelle Chevrier gave a report on current developments. She had been a member of the Federation of American Scientists Expert Working Group on Biological Weapons Verification, an author of and contributor to more than twenty working papers on Biological and Toxin Weapons Arms Control, and an advisor to the US delegation to the negotiations on strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC).

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On 18-21 March representatives from 41 African countries, 29 OECD countries, eight international and regional secretariats and 33 NGOs met in Pretoria, South Africa, to participate in the **African Conference on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (UNPoA): Needs and Partnerships**. Participants, amongst them Peter Croll, Director of BICC, emphasized that tackling the uncontrolled spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is a major concern for all states and that the UNPoA represents an important international achievement and provides a flexible framework for action for the prevention, combating and eradication of the illicit trade in SALW.

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BICC researchers Sami Faltas and Mark Sedra helped organize and assisted a **workshop on Human Security and Weapons Control** in Tirana, Albania on 4-5 April. This workshop was part of a **UNDP program on Human Security in Albania** as a sequel to the UN's *Weapons in Exchange for Development* projects in Gramsh and other districts. The workshop was attended by government and UNDP officials, as well as NGO representatives and journalists from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania and Yugoslavia.

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A **workshop on Small Arms and Light Weapons Issues in Uganda**, organized by BICC together with the Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), will take place in Jinja, Uganda from 14-17 April. More than 30 participants—mainly from Uganda but also representatives and stakeholders from various organizations in Kenya and Germany—will focus on creating an awareness of the negative effects of small arms and light weapons.

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BICC, in cooperation with the NGO coalition European Coalition on Oil in Sudan (ECOS), is organizing a conference on Sudan's war economy. **Money Makes the War go Round? Transforming the Economy of War in Sudan** will be held 12-13 June 2002 in Brussels.

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