

Forced Migration Studies and Policy Dialogue—Promoting New Ways of Knowledge Production and Policy Transfer

Online Workshop, 15 September 2022

On 15 September 2022, the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), on behalf of the FFVT project, and the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) jointly organised the online workshop “Forced Migration Studies and Policy Dialogue: Promoting New Ways of Knowledge Production and Policy Transfer”. Invited participants met under Chatham House Rules. The workshop was structured around two sessions: Session one discussed why new ways of doing forced migration research are needed, and session two looked into how to implement such new ways. Each session featured brief impulses and discussions which brought in perspectives from German and Canadian government representatives, public and private research funders, refugee-led organisations and international forced migration researchers from the Global South, North and East.

The first session examined why new ways of knowledge production and policy transfer are needed and highlighted the value of localised research with refugees conducted in more equitable partnership constellations. The speakers established that localised and contextualised knowledge is necessary to identify new approaches in Forced Migration Studies, provide more legitimacy to the field, and challenge the prevailing policy paradigms dominated by forced migration conceptualisations from the Global North. Refugee-led research and localisation can unlock context-specific solutions, innovation, and best practices that cannot be developed and conducted otherwise. Hence, new ways of knowledge production must ensure the participation of people with a lived experience of forced migration in funding, research and policy from the outset. Furthermore, the speakers emphasised that scholars and practitioners from the Global South and East face significant barriers in the current structures of knowledge production, such as little and insecure funding, scarce opportunities to lead research projects, limited involvement in agenda-setting and decision-making, and difficulties accessing data. A systemic change is needed to reach the objectives of localised research, refugee participation and equitable partnerships. This is why communities of practice must reflect on and deconstruct predominant politics of knowledge production in Forced Migration Studies while acknowledging that they are embedded in postcolonial structures with unequal power relations.

The second session assessed how to make new ways of research happen. The impulses pointed to their complexity and challenges and highlighted existing research and funding approaches that already apply these new ways successfully. It was argued, for instance, that different actors generate knowledge for different purposes, but these actors seldom cooperate and coordinate their efforts across work areas and disciplines. Hence, information is often fragmented and compartmentalised, also raising data access ownership issues. Examples of already existing good practices provided valuable ideas on how to change the current research and policy paradigms. As some initiatives demonstrate, the convening power of research funding institutions can be utilised to

build equitable partnerships between funding institutions and research networks in the Global South, thereby contributing to more participatory and equitable research as a standard practice. A nuanced and reflective approach to the design and during the rollout of such an initiative is equally important to allow for adjustments as needed. Also, well-designed monitoring and evaluation can expand effectiveness. Therefore, there is a need to invest international support and resources in fostering and enhancing international networking among initiatives that work to create lasting, systemic change.

The final discussion synthesised the different elements of knowledge production that must be considered going forward, including funding structures, approaches to research, research methodologies, partnerships and collaboration. The participants concluded that there is momentum in Forced Migration Studies as a research field to foster systemic change. Therefore, cooperation with and among networks in the Global South and East working on forced migration and establishing strategic partnerships that link humanitarian and development approaches among researchers and funding institutions shall be the objectives for moving forward.

With this event, FFVT contributed to highlighting the relevance of multi-disciplinary and diverse Forced Migration and Refugee Studies in Germany and beyond, which can assist policymakers in addressing the challenges related to forced displacement in the best-informed way as possible.

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Project info

Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer

The cooperation project “Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer” (FFVT) aims to strengthen interdisciplinary forced migration and refugee research in Germany. To this end, the project, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), brings together research on migration, development, conflict and violence, climate change, health, governance and human rights and other topics. In this way, FFVT supports the networking of researchers and institutes working in all relevant research fields dealing with forced migration. To provide young academics with teaching and training opportunities in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, it plans to establish study and graduate programmes. Furthermore, FFVT promotes the internationalisation of German research activities further and, therefore, offers a global fellowship programme, among other things. The dialogue between academia, practitioners, the media and politicians is another key element of its work. FFVT is to contribute to establishing a sustainable infrastructure for research on Forced Migration and Refugee Studies in Germany to facilitate excellent academic work in this field.

FFVT is jointly run by the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), the Centre for Human Rights Erlangen- Nuremberg (CHREN, University of Erlangen Nuremberg), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS, Bonn) and the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS, University of Osnabrück).

Please note that the content provided is a summary of the points discussed during the event. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of FFVT, its members or funders.

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