

The 1st Conference for “Refugees=Partners” Initiative



Economic Inclusion to Mitigate the Refugee Crisis

Beirut, Lebanon

2 August 2019

Press Release

"Refugees = Partners" project held its first conference titled "Economic Inclusion to Mitigate the Refugee Crisis", Friday, 2 August 2019, at the Bristol Hotel, Beirut.

The conference aims to address the repercussions of the refugee crisis on Lebanon by acknowledging the structural dysfunctions of the Lebanese economic system and the challenges faced in dealing with the refugee crisis, and highlighting the economic contributions of Syrian refugees as well as potential options to build an inclusive socio-economic environment.

In his keynote speech, Dr. Tarek Mitri, Director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, focused on the role of civil society, experts and academic research communities in Lebanon in confronting the polarized and discriminatory discourse and influencing policy-making, comprehensive policies and interventions.

The first session entitled "Current Status of Refugees: Legal, Socio-economic and Humanitarian Response" addressed the decision-making mechanism for policies governing the refugee situation in Lebanon and alternative policies that can guarantee the creation of economic opportunities for all and the preservation of their rights. The session also discussed how the development of the policy-making mechanisms in Lebanon could mitigate the burdens and create economic opportunities for Lebanese and refugees. In four parallel working sessions, researchers presented the results of their research and their views on the impact of the refugee crisis on the Lebanese economy and the possibility of developing practical policies to address the refugee crisis and turn them into development opportunities that benefit both Lebanese host communities and refugees. They reviewed the most important opportunities and challenges with respect to discriminatory laws and policies, the legal framework governing institutional relations with refugees, and macroeconomic performance: growth, demand, humanitarian aid economics, labor market, local economic dynamics, public services and refugees. In its closing statement, the Conference and its participants stressed the importance of

research methodology that drives impact and effects policy and make changes in the decision-making process in the face of populism and hate speech, which is not based on independent scientific research and evidence. They also called for the use of opportunities to strengthen and enable networking and cooperation between experts and activists, particularly in advocacy, resource sharing and access to refugee data and information in the country.

Background Note:

Refugees = Partners project is a research-based initiative implemented in coordination between the Lebanese Economic Associations (LEA) and the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR) to promote an inclusive socio-economic environment by creating a counter-narrative on rights and protection of the Syrian refugees through advocacy, social activism and calls for policy change. The project intends to accomplish this through evidence-based knowledge and a wide-reaching media campaign that highlights the shared humanity between the Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees, with a focus on the socio-economic impacts and contributions of Syrian refugees to the development of local communities.

The initiative, which is a joint effort by Lebanese and Syrian civil society organizations, intends to create a platform for constructive dialogue, identify challenges, opportunities, and share responsibilities, counter the polarized and hostile narratives against refugees and enhance the emergence of inclusive policies that benefit both the Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.

Resources Page:

You can find the conference's concept note, agenda and press release in addition to images and infographs on the following portal:

<http://refugees-partners.org/refugeespartners-conference/>

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