

## **Dr. Guita Hourani Presents a Paper at the International Conference on the Syrian Refugees of the Lebanese American University**

**By LERC Staff**

The Syrian crisis and its consequences particularly the refugee crisis was the topic of the international conference organized by the Institute for Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Beirut, March 27–28, 2015.

Facing this humanitarian calamity, scholars, officials and practitioners from Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Germany gathered for two days to discuss sustainable ways of coping with the massive refugee flow.

Dr. Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center and Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Notre Dame University-Louaizé, presented a paper entitled “Transitioning from an Aid-Centered to a Development-Centered Assistance Model Helps Refugees and Host Communities and Enhances Their Resilience”.



*Dr. Guita Hourani, Comodore Hotel, March 2015*

In her presentation, Dr. Hourani opened her presentation by indicating that “research and theoretical literature of the past several years has shown how mass inflow of refugees generates

both short- and long-term repercussions on the hosting communities.” She said that “the Syrian crisis has had an immense impact on the hosting communities, particularly in Lebanon which hosts an estimated 1.5 million registered refugees”

Dr. Hourani emphasized that “overall, the Lebanese have been hospitable to the Syrian refugees; however, overall downward socioeconomic mobility coupled with tough competition in the labor market by the Syrians and a disparity in humanitarian assistance between the refugees and poor host communities, has led to disproportionate competition, thus generating animosity toward the Syrian refugees.” She further articulated “that this so called “labor market flooding” has caused fierce competition for scarce low- and medium-skill jobs, has driven minimum wages down, and has put many Lebanese out of work.”



*The panel of speakers at Comodore Hotel, March 2015*

After stating some facts about the impact of the Syrian refugees on the labor market of Lebanon, Dr. Hourani posited that with protracted refugee situations, interventions need to move from an aid-centered to a development-centered assistance that would benefit the refugees and the affected and vulnerable host communities. This approach, she stresses would a) reduce the level of resentment and tension in the labor market between nationals and refugees; b) provide refugees with livelihoods and income-generating opportunities, hence, reducing dependency on aid; c) engage affected host communities by creating labor-intensive employment projects, thus helping them avoid insolvency; d) capitalize on the availability of abundant and cheap labor; e) enhance the refugees’ skills and capacities through training and work experience that will benefit them in post-return and post-war reconstruction; f) aid the host country in its developmental goals in sectors affected by the presence of Syrian refugees; and g) reduce the vulnerability and

enhance the of both refugees and host societies to being lured into security-threatening, illegal, and immoral activities.

The paper presented, as well as the policy brief that was required as part of the participation in this conference will be published by the Migration Studies of the Lebanese American University.