

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 27-4-2017

## **AUB-USJ NGO Fair: A timely collaboration for service and citizenship**

The Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service at the American University of Beirut (AUB) kicked off its 7th annual NGO Fair. This year, the two-day fair was organized in collaboration with Université Saint-Joseph (USJ), with 90 local, regional, and international NGOs holding information booths simultaneously on both university campuses.

The fair is an opportunity for NGOs to share their mission, community projects, and activities as well as for students to learn about volunteering and internship opportunities that match their skills and interests. Scholarship students were also to showcase community service projects they engaged in as part of their scholarship programs alongside a range of NGOs and agencies in Lebanon.

“As we move from a college education to a college experience, service is going to be an essential part if tomorrow’s generations are going to learn from the challenges of today,” said AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri. “We believe that universities are key in this area. They should be the engine with thousands of young people passing through our doors, feeling empowered, being handed the tools, the knowledge, and the belief that they are the ones who can make a difference, who can rebuild marginalized and troubled societies, starting here in Lebanon, and throughout the Arab world.”

President Khuri spoke about ongoing AUB civic engagement programs, such as the Ghata project which today holds nine schools in the Beqa’, each serving 700 refugee students, and emphasized the “absolute necessity” for collaboration on civic engagement, building on strengths, and turning theory into practice in the region.

Fouad Maroun, Secretary General of USJ, who represented their Rector, Pr. Salim Daccache, followed up on the idea of collaboration for citizenship and highlighted the responsibility of both

institutions “in maintaining and nurturing, with our students, faculty and staff, the spirit that led to the birth of our nation.” He added that civic engagement forms better people who positively impact society and that good citizenship and leadership for the common good are part of the USJ Charter.

During the fair, the second phase was launched of the National Volunteer Service Program (NVSP): A World Bank funded project that seeks to improve social stability and service delivery in the most vulnerable Lebanese communities hosting Syrian refugees through NGOs that apply for grant funding to implement youth volunteering projects, soft skills development, and psychosocial awareness activities. To-date, 48 volunteering projects benefiting more than 3,300 youth volunteers have been successfully implemented throughout Lebanon.

Collaboration also takes place within AUB’s department, under the umbrella of CCECS, for the various initiatives. “Utilizing a fully integrated participatory approach, the Center harnesses the expertise of AUB faculty and staff, and the dynamism of its students, to work closely with targeted communities to design and pilot innovative projects that respond to the most pressing societal challenges,” said Rabih Shibli, director of CCECS.

Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator spoke about the important role of the “under-represented” youth in bringing about a better Lebanon, while discussing the Sustainable Development Goals set globally by the UN for 2030. “With education, you also have responsibilities and the future of this country lies in your hands and you have the responsibility to promote a better future for all,” he told the students.

“Volunteering puts youth at the center of development and empowers them to become agents of change, by enabling them to identify and find solutions to the most pressing problems facing them and their own communities,” said Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a speech read on his behalf by acting country manager, Sepehr Fotovat. “In doing so, volunteering helps to diffuse tensions by bringing youth together around shared goals, thus bringing more cohesive societies through citizenship development.”

“Volunteering is particularly important in our society because people lack confidence in the State, hence the risk of their becoming passive,” said Minister of Social Affairs Pierre Bou Assi. “The only way to bring back the interest in [serving] society is to involve the people for this cause. This is how we transform people from being ‘residents’ to becoming ‘citizens’.”

ENDS

**For more information please contact:**

Simon Kachar  
Director of News and Media Relations  
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 Ext: 2676  
Email: [sk158@aub.edu.lb](mailto:sk158@aub.edu.lb)

**Note to Editors**

### **About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

**Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:**

Website: [www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>  
Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)