

For Immediate Release



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“GHATA” Project by AUB

Selected as Wise Awards 2018 Finalist

The American University of Beirut (AUB)’s Ghata project was selected for its “innovative and impactful approaches to today’s most urgent education challenges” as a finalist for the 2018 World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) awards. Established in 2009, WISE annually recognizes and promotes six innovative projects from around the world that address global educational challenges.

Designed by AUB faculty and students under the guidance of the AUB Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) director Rabih Shibli, and in partnership with the Kayany Foundation and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ghata project brings education to refugees in informal tented settlements in Lebanon, where over half of the 1.1 million Syrian refugees are below the age of 18 and only 40% of primary school aged refugees are enrolled in schools. Ghata is a portable, scalable, and sustainable unit which brings education to refugees in collective shelters and tented settlements. Designed based on refugees’ shelter building strategies and using strong low-cost material, a 20 square-meter unit only takes two refugees and six hours to assemble. This holistic restorative built environment makes high quality education accessible to refugees, increases knowledge attainment, and nurtures hope among displaced communities. To date, ten “Ghata schools” have been made operational in Lebanon, reaching more than 5,000 refugee youth annually.

“In the midst of chaos and uncertainty, Ghata (Arabic word for cover) offers dignity, quality education, and hope for a brighter future to refugees enduring a protracted crisis,” said Rabih Shibli as the project’s architect. “Ghata is a restorative environment built with portable, low-cost local material by refugees, and operated by mentors of the same community who will continue to lead the educational process when the schools are reassembled in Syria upon their safe return home.”

Stavros N. Yiannouka, CEO of WISE, congratulated the Ghata project for its recent recognition. “Each of the 2018 WISE award finalists has constructed an effective, tested solution to a global educational challenge,” he said. “Whether it is ensuring fundamental education for refugees or creating the next generation of empathetic and conscious leaders, each project is already transforming lives and provides an inspirational model for others to adopt. This is vital to our mission at WISE, which centers around collaboration”.

Coming from eleven countries, the award finalists were selected from a pool of 413 projects and evaluated for their innovative solutions to educational challenges and their positive social impact. Winning finalists are required to be successful, innovative education projects that have already demonstrated a transformative impact on individuals, communities, and society. They must be financially stable, have a clear development plan, and be scalable and replicable.

Upon review by a jury of experts, six WISE award-winning projects will be announced in July 2018 and celebrated at the WISE@ forum in New York in September 2018. In addition to global visibility and networking opportunities, each winning project will receive \$20,000.

For further information, visit <http://www.wise-qatar.org/wise-awards>.

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 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.

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