

2022 - 2023

ASFARI INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND CITIZENSHIP

IMPACT REPORT



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ASFARI INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY
& CITIZENSHIP

معهد الأصفري للمجتمع المدني والمواطنة



ABOUT US

The **Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship** at the **American University of Beirut** was established as a regional civil society hub in 2012. It aims to serve the growing ecosystem of robust, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive civil society in the Arab region that strives for a new social contract between citizens and states by producing research and knowledge as well as providing a safe and inclusive physical and virtual space for learning, sharing, mobilizing, and networking.

OUR VISION

The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship believes in accountable, transparent, efficient, inclusive, and responsive social institutions which fulfill their roles as duty bearers vis-à-vis both citizens and residents.

The vision of the Asfari Institute is the concept and practice of citizenship where people in their diversity enjoy individual rights and freedoms and are aware of their positions as rights holders.

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01

A YEAR AT A GLANCE

80



Events

21



Op-eds

19



Publications

10



Podcasts

6



Book launches

5



Campaigns

3



Blog series

02 | RE-IMAGINING CITIZENSHIP IN THE REGION

OUR COMMITMENT TO CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The Asfari Institute is dedicated to fostering meaningful collaborations and exchanges with local, national, and regional civil society organizations while advancing a critical reflection on citizenship in the MENA/SWANA region. This commitment is enhanced through the institute's multifaceted approach, which includes nurturing communities of practice, facilitating the exchange of expertise,

producing and disseminating relevant knowledge, identifying and co-creating new research questions, implementing capacity-building programs, and fostering collaborative dialogues on an array of issues relevant to civil society and citizenship. Through these initiatives, the Asfari Institute actively promotes a more engaged and empowered citizenship across our region as well as a vibrant and autonomous civil society ecosystem.

LAUNCHING THE GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP OBSERVATORY

Housed at the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, the Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory (GGCO) at AUB was officially launched in December 2023.

Through GGCO, the Asfari Institute aims to empower citizens to actively participate in public life, champion good governance and innovation, shape policymaking with evidence-based insights, and provide a collaborative platform for experts, policymakers, and civil society organizations to drive positive societal change.

The observatory explores citizenship across three pillars:

1. governance, public sector reform, and education;
2. mobilities and migration; and
3. constitutions and legal frameworks.

LEARN MORE

Interested in collaborating with GGCO? Learn more and reach out to us [here](#).



CLICK
TO VIEW



EMPHASIZING DIALOGUE ON CITIZENSHIP AND NATION-BUILDING

In May 2023, the Asfari Institute, in collaboration with the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, the Mohammad Atallah Chair for Ethics at AUB, and Carnegie Middle East Center, launched the “Re-Imagining Citizenship Inaugural Conference.”

This annual event convenes thought leaders and practitioners to stimulate conversations about citizenship, nation-building, and inclusion amid enduring conflicts. It aims to create a vision that promotes more inclusive and equitable citizenship practices, contributing to positive social change, especially in conflict and crisis-affected regions.



President
Fadlo R. Khuri at
the Re-imagining
Citizenship
Inaugural Annual
Conference

”

“Ensuring active participation of all citizens has been proven over several centuries to be superior to systems where one size fits all. Citizenship forms the basis for democratic societies, I would say for participatory societies, not just democratic societies.”

03 | BUILDING A CIVIL SOCIETY LEARNING AND EXCHANGE HUB

COURSES AND CERTIFICATES

Certificate in Influencing and Political Acumen:

In collaboration with the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Asfari Foundation, the Asfari Institute kicked off a new certificate aimed at empowering civil society to address their specific needs when challenging established norms and practices. The certificate enhances the advocacy skills of CSOs in regions marked by endemic conflict and equips them to serve as agents of transformative change, contributing to the development of equitable societies in the region.

Empowered Voices Self-Paced Courses:

The Asfari Institute is developing an online educational platform of self-paced courses on inclusive political participation. This platform aims to increase understanding and foster awareness of inclusive political participation in Lebanon and the region, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable political landscape that amplifies the least heard voices and perspectives.

A NEW HUB FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE REGION

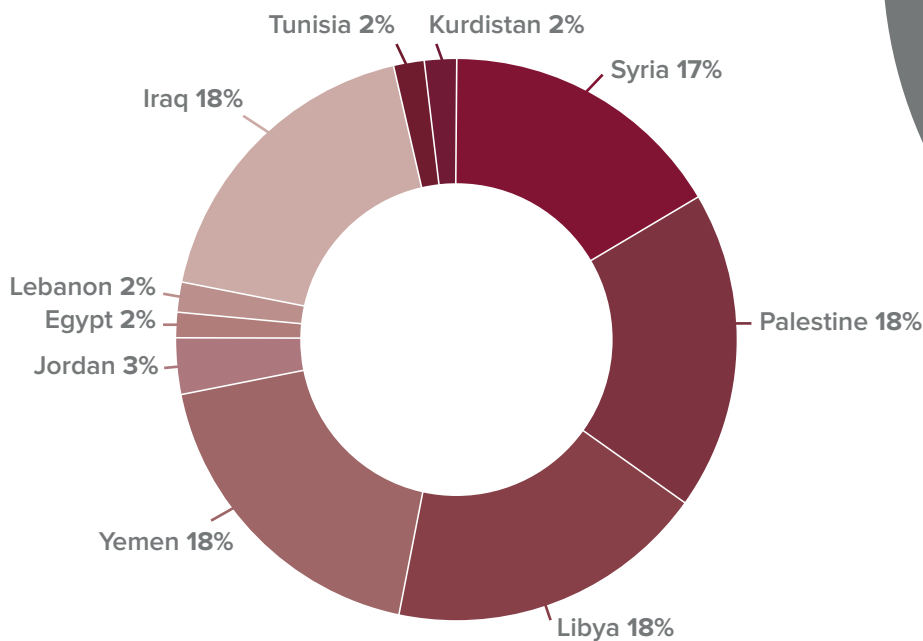
In collaboration with the Asfari Foundation, the Asfari Institute developed a platform that aims to promote inter-civil society organizations dialogue and exchange of knowledge in the MENA region entitled *Midan: A Knowledge Hub for Civil Society*. Midan offers CSOs and activists from the region the space to amplify the visibility of their knowledge products and make locally produced knowledge production more accessible for researchers and activists in the region.



**STAY TUNED FOR MIDAN'S SOFT LAUNCH,
SCHEDULED FOR THE BEGINNING OF 2024!**

ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE REGION

Our capacity-building programs have had a significant impact on equipping civil society organizations and their representatives from the MENA region with the knowledge and skills on citizenship, climate change, collective action, and cultural diversity to advocate effectively for positive change and a more inclusive society.



”

“A nurturing environment for women by allowing us to express and discuss all issues and learn about feminist issues in other countries, as well as gaining experience from other colleagues, as well as the group for the policy paper on environmental rights from different countries and cultural diversity.”

Women Peace and Security Summer School Fellow

”

“Each session was so valuable and informative; they went beyond my expectations! Thanks to AUB and Asfari Institute for including me in this training, I felt like I was part of this whole training and the university. I cannot wait for other trainings in the future.”

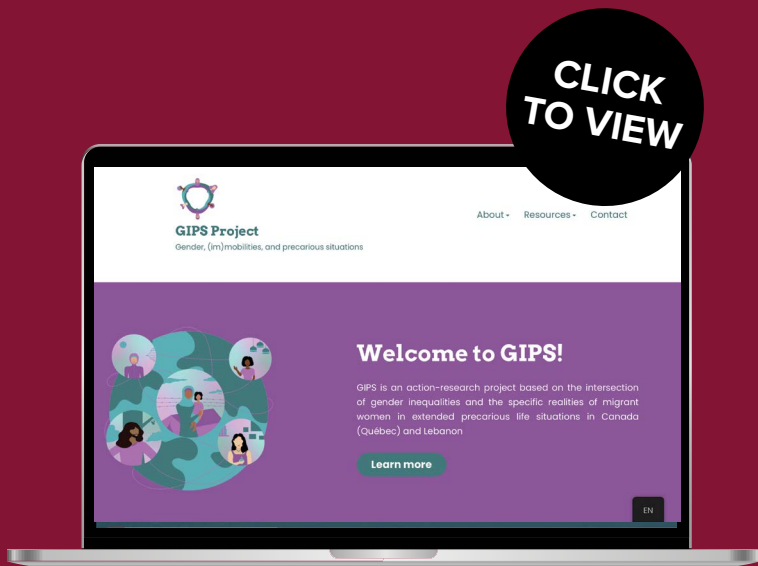
Participant in the Masarouna SRHR Training Program

4 | ENGAGING WITH MIGRATION AND REFUGEES ISSUES

VISIT TO UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTREAL AS PART OF THE GIPS RESEARCH PROJECT.

In November 2023, the Asfari Institute team, represented by Carla Akil, visited the Québec team of the Gender, (Im)mobilities, and Precarious Situation (GIPS) Project. This project, in collaboration with Université de Montreal, focuses on the lived experience of migrant women in Lebanon and Québec, Canada. The visit aimed to strengthen collaboration and understanding of shared goals. The visit included fruitful discussions with Québec team members to enhance joint initiatives. Carla also met with local partners to express gratitude for their support and explore new avenues of cooperation for future strategies.

Read more about the project [here](#).



READ MORE

LAUNCHING THE ANNUAL COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION PROGRAM ON FORCED MIGRATION

In May 2023, the Asfari Institute, in partnership with the IDRC Research Chair on Forced Displacement and the Mohammad Atallah Chair for Ethics at AUB, launched the Annual Collaborative Program on Forced Migration. This initiative addresses the challenges of forced displacement by fostering dialogue and sharing research. It extends beyond the annual conference, driving collective efforts to support displaced populations and work toward sustainable solutions to one of the most urgent humanitarian crises of our time.



05

CHANGING THE RHETORIC ON CARE WORK AND ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE SWANA REGION

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CARE: MOBILIZING ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARAB STATES INTERACTIVE MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

In collaboration with the Government of Mexico and UN Women, the Asfari Institute facilitated a discussion that allowed various stakeholders to participate in a conversation regarding the state of both paid and unpaid care work in the Arab region, as well as the challenges and prospects for promoting the care agenda in the region. Additionally, participants had the chance to gain insights into the Global Alliance for Care, its focus areas, accomplishments, and avenues for involvement in advancing a Regional Strategy on Care for the Arab Region.

CARE SMALL RESEARCH GRANT

In partnership with the Global Alliance for Care, the Asfari Institute initiated an open call for small research grant applications targeting scholars, activists, and researchers interested in exploring the overlooked dimensions of care work and its significant societal implications. By supporting this research, the Asfari Institute fosters a deeper understanding of the societal implications of care work, which will, in turn, inform civil society-led policy changes and societal attitudes toward care work in the MENA/SWANA region.



06 | INTRODUCING THE SECOND AND THIRD COHORTS OF THE SENIOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Asfari Institute kicked off last year a senior international fellowship program to enrich our academic and research environment with the fellows' expertise and global insights. Their diverse perspectives inspire innovative thinking and cross-cultural collaboration, fostering a vibrant intellectual community dedicated to advancing civil society and citizenship discourse. Our senior international fellows significantly contribute to our mission, making a lasting impact both within our institution and beyond through their research, participation in various events, writings, and engagement in our convening efforts.

Meet our second and third cohorts:

SECOND COHORT:



Lamia Moubayed,
Expertise: Development economy



Leila Hessini,
Expertise: Feminist philanthropy



Paola Salwan Daher,
Expertise: Sexual and reproductive health and rights



Rabie Nasser,
Expertise: Macroeconomic policies and conflict socioeconomics with emphasis on Syria



Dr. Aruna Rao,
Expertise: Gender and development



Dr. Charlotte Karam,
Expertise: Gender equality in the workplace



Mariana Karkoutly,
Expertise: Human rights, legal and transitional justice



Prof. Mohamad Bazzi,
Expertise: Journalism and youth engagement



Dr. Saleh El Machnouk,
Expertise: Constitutional law

07 | EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL AND CSO PARTNERS:



Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies



Embassy of Mexico in Lebanon



Global Alliance for Care



National Institute for Women in Mexico (INMUJERES)



Université de Montreal



London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)



Gender and Development Journal



Royal Tropical Institute



Embassy of Denmark in Lebanon



Embassy of Norway in Lebanon



Embassy of Sweden in Lebanon



Embassy of Finland in Lebanon



United Nations System Staff College



UN Women in New York



NGO CSW NY



Madaniya Network



Marsa Sexual Health



Qorras



Haven for Artists



Jeyetna



Nazra for Feminist Studies



University of Bath



Institute of Development Studies



Mawjoudin



Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University



Lebanese Observatory for Workers and Employees Rights



Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

CURRENT AND PREVIOUS DONORS:



Asfari Foundation



Nordic
Co-operation

Nordic Council of
Ministers

Ford
Foundation

Ford Foundation



UN Women



OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

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INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Carnegie Endowment for
International Peace



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
Die grüne politische Stiftung

Heinrich-Böll Stiftung



IDRC · CRDI

International Development
Research Centre (IDRC)



Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung



OXFAM
International

Oxfam



Malala Fund



UNESCO



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08

BUILDING SYNERGIES WITH AUB COMMUNITY

- Mohammad Atallah Chair for Ethics
- Nature Conservation Center (NCC)
- Department of Political Studies and Public Administration
- AUB Archaeological Museum
- Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS)
- MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders Program (TLU, TLS and TLG)
- WISH Program
- Global Health Institute
- Global Engagement Initiative
- AUB Libraries
- AUBMC Clinical & Translational Research
- AUB Mediterraneo
- IDRC Research Chair on Forced Displacement
- The Palestine Land Studies Center
- Education for Leadership in Crisis



Most of our spaces are accessible and used by the entire AUB community, fostering our value of shared access.

... AND ONGOING SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENTS

We aim to establish a safe space and environment for our students and, above all, to provide them with unwavering support during their most significant accomplishments.

1. DR. HASSAN ABBAS AWARD IN CITIZENSHIP & SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Asfari Institute at the American University of Beirut established the Dr. Hassan Abbas Award in Citizenship and Social Justice in memory of Dr. Abbas, a distinguished figure known for his contributions to citizenship, social justice, and academia. The award is given to exceptional AUB students who exhibit academic excellence, a dedication to citizenship, social justice, and freedom, exemplary character, and a commitment to promoting tolerance and inclusivity. Dr. Abbas, a renowned author, scholar, and activist, left a lasting legacy, and this award honors his inspirational life and values. In 2023, the awardee of the Dr. Hassan Abbas Award in Citizenship & Social Justice was Rand Zeitoun.

2. HOSTING THESIS PRESENTATIONS AT THE ASFARI INSTITUTE

The Asfari Institute serves the students by offering them the space and support to defend their theses. In August 2023, MasterCard scholarship student Chancelyne Yein defended her master's thesis "*A Critical Review of the Circular Economy Concept and Sustainable Development in Bamenda, Northwest Region of Cameroon*" at the Asfari Institute Conference Hall 113.

3. HOSTING MEPI-TLS WORKSHOPS

The Asfari Institute hosted multiple MEPI-TLS workshops for students and staff on different gender topics, including feminist leadership, gender mainstreaming, feminist peacebuilding, gender in monitoring and evaluation, and feminist advocacy.

4. SUPPORTING STUDENT-LED INITIATIVES

As of 2023, the Asfari Institute hosts the first student-led digital gender publication platform, Mouzakara Jandariya (MJ). MJ sees writing as activism, striving to promote gender literacy on AUB campus and cultivate a culture of gender-focused writing among students. The platform offers a safe space for students to express themselves, facilitating quality content creation and publication with minimal restrictions. By empowering students to voice their perspectives, MJ promotes awareness and understanding of gender issues in the academic community.



09 | HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME OF OUR SELECTED HIGH-LEVEL EVENTS

EDUCATION AS AN EQUALIZER AND ENABLER:

The high-level policy forum, co-organized with the Malala Fund and the Issam Fares Institute shares research findings on the effects of austerity and restructuring programs on Lebanon's education sector in the context of potential IMF adjustments. The event emphasizes safeguarding education during economic reforms and influencing policy discussions in Lebanon.



SHIFTING NARRATIVES:

The Asfari Institute in partnership with the Nordic Embassies and the Nordic Council of Ministers organized a high-level event on the participation of women in upcoming municipal elections in Lebanon. The event aimed to enhance the advancement of gender equality and empower women to have a substantial role in shaping their communities.

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY:

The Asfari Institute in partnership with the Mexican Embassy in Beirut organized a networking event on feminist foreign policy. The event aimed to foster strong alliances and collaborative partnerships between diplomats, academia, policymakers, and CSOs to strengthen commitment toward feminist foreign policy.



10 | IN SOLIDARITY WITH GAZA

The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship expresses its unyielding solidarity with the innocent people of Gaza, Palestine. We are gravely concerned by the persistent breaches of international law and humanitarian principles in the region. Our commitment is not just to observe, but to actively participate in the creation and dissemination of knowledge that sheds light on these events and fosters understanding.

As such, the Asfari Institute organized the Palestine Conversation Circles in collaboration with the Palestinian Land Studies Center (PLSC) at AUB, which is an event series aimed at informed discussions and facilitated knowledge exchange about the atrocious situation in Gaza.

FRAMING PALESTINE: MEDIA NARRATIVES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR TRUTH

ECHOES FROM THE PAST: UNRAVELING THE HISTORY OF THE NAKBA



DIGITAL DILEMMAS: NAVIGATING INFORMATION DISORDERS IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

11

A LEARNING SPACE FOR THE ASFARI INSTITUTE TEAM CENTERED ON CARE AND WELLBEING

In our approach, we emphasize the importance of self-care and collective well-being. We are keen on ensuring staff development, such as skill-building and mentorship to support professional growth. Prioritizing the visibility of every team member's contribution and fostering a flexible, safe, and comfortable work environment remains one of the institute's core values.

Fatima Nasser, Administrative Officer, presented her thesis on "Women Leadership on Disaster Management: Beirut Blast" at the Academic Council on the United Nations System Annual Meeting 2023 held in June 2023 at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C.

Carla Akil, Assistant to the Director, received a full scholarship to pursue a short course at the University of Amsterdam entitled "Power to the People: Activism and Grassroots Organising" from June 2023 to July 2023.

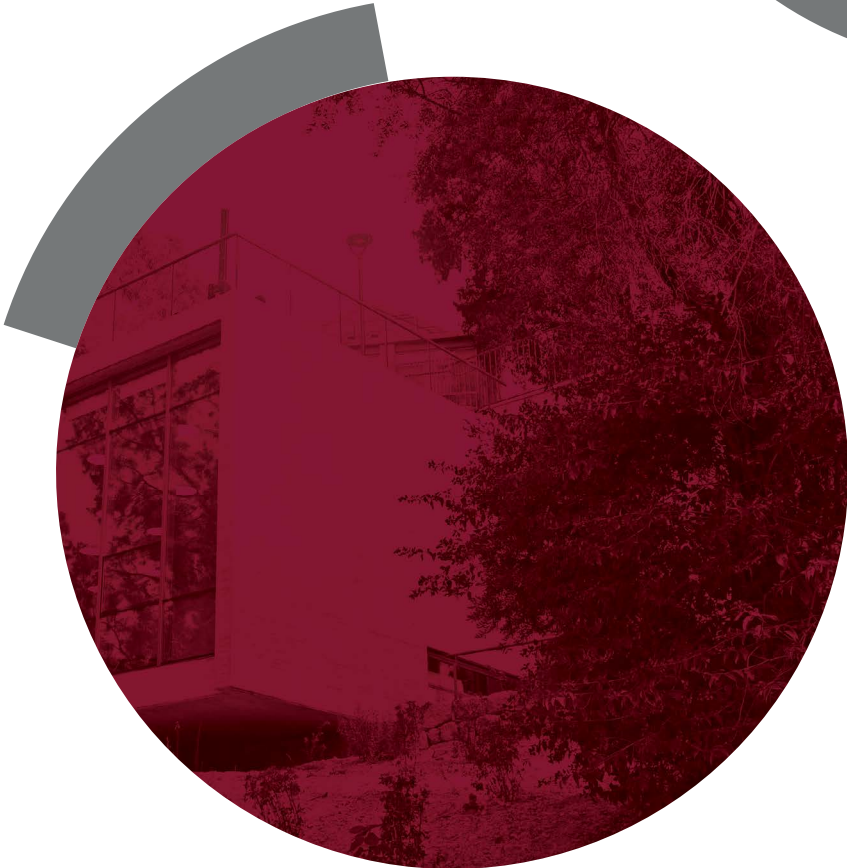
Sarah Al Bouery, Senior Research Assistant, attended the IMF Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (CEF) course on Gender Inequality and Macroeconomics in Kuwait City from October 29, 2023, to November 2, 2023.



THE WAY FORWARD

The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship is looking forward to the coming years. Guided by its new strategic plan, it will harness its energy and resources to engage in research, knowledge production, alliance building, convening, and exchange which serve a diverse and vibrant civil society ecosystem in the SWANA region and contribute to redefining the meaning and practice of inclusive citizenship.

Lina Abou-Habib,
Director





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