

LERC presents the results of the joint project with Relief International in the presence of USAID.

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Reported by Damian Naylor and Ali Ajrouch, LERC Interns

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University – Louaize hosted a presentation for high level officials from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Relief International (RI) to show the results of the joint project executed between RI and LERC “Profiling Expatriates Prospects for Local Development Partnership” from December 2008 to March 2009.

Those who attended the event were Ms. Denise Herbol, Mission Director for USAID in Lebanon, Dr. Sateh Arnaout, Advisor to the Presidency of Council of Ministers, Mr. Imad Hamze, Chief of Party of Relief International in Lebanon, Mr. Amin Nehme, Director of LDN, and from NDU, Dr. Assaad Eid representing NDU President Fr. Walid Moussa, LERC Adjunct Researcher Dr. Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous with a group of his students, LERC Director Ms. Guita Hourani as well as staff, researchers and interns at LERC.



(From left to right) Mr. Nehme, Ms. Hourani, Dr. Arnaout, Ms. Herbol, Dr. Eid, Mr. Hamze, and Ms. Sayegh at the beginning of the event (July 2009).

The morning began with the singing of the national anthems of the United States of America by Damian Naylor and of Lebanon by Joelle Zlaket and Basma Abdel Khalek. LERC Director, Ms. Hourani, welcomed the guests and gave a brief introduction on the objectives of the cooperation between LERC and RI. Then, on behalf of Fr. Moussa, VPRD Dr. Assaad Eid welcomed the audience at NDU and discussed research strategies and stated a commitment by NDU and LERC to continue building for the future. “I wish to reiterate my conviction and that of our President, that such projects and endeavors should always be met with support and encouragement,” said Dr. Eid.

Following the opening remarks, Ms. Herbol discussed USAID’s efforts to build local development projects across all of Lebanon. “We cannot overestimate the positive impact of the Lebanese Diaspora on Lebanon’s economy,” stressed Ms. Herbol during her speech. She outlined USAID’s commitment to help foster economic relationships between Lebanese emigrants and those residing in Lebanon, especially at the local level.



Ms. Herbol delivering her speech (July 2009).

Relief International was represented by Mr. Imad Hamze, who spoke about the importance of the Empowering Municipality and Local Economic Development (EMLED) program. He stressed the need for allowing emigrants to give back to their country. He recalled, “I was an emigrant myself and I wanted to help my country on many occasions but was not able to.” His efforts, along with all those of Relief International have helped to remedy these difficulties. He made a poignant observation about the preservation of a Lebanese identity among all emigrants worldwide.

To give a detailed description of the EMLED project conducted by Relief International and LERC, Project Manager at LERC Ms. Basma Abdel Khalek presented the methods and conclusions of the research. The project surveyed emigrants from Northern and Southern Lebanon, specifically Akkar and Jezzine on their willingness to assist in community-building projects in their respective villages. The research concluded that an overwhelming majority, approximately 95% of those profiled, demonstrated a readiness to assist in local development.

Following Ms. Abdel Khalek’s presentation, Ms. Hourani and Ms. Liliane Haddad gave participants a virtual tour of LERC’s electronic archives, including their use of new computer software to facilitate research and collection of information. Ms. Hourani and our distinguished guests used this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of Mr. Ali Hijazi and Ms. Basma Abdel Khalek in managing the joint project. Their dedication ensured the success and growth of the project.



Awarding Mr. Ali Hijazi (July 2009).



Awarding Ms. Basma Abdel Khalek (July 2009).

The ceremony concluded with refreshments and a tour of the Lebanon and Migration Museum at NDU. On behalf of USAID, Relief International, and LERC, we would like to thank all who participated in making the day a huge success.



In front of the LERC Collection at the Lebanon and Migration Museum at NDU (July 2009).