

LERC Holds a Workshop on Administering Field Surveys and Conducting In-depth Field Interviews with Dr. Kamel Dorai

Saturday 12th June 2010

Reported by Jared Keyel, International LERC Intern

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University held a workshop entitled *Administering Field Surveys and Conducting In-depth Field Interviews* on June 12, 2010 at NDU. The purpose of the workshop was two-fold: first, for the participants to gain a background understanding of Iraqi migration patterns over the past few decades, and second for the participants to learn useful tips and techniques for conducting field interviews and surveys.

LERC was lucky enough to have Dr. Kamel Dorai return to NDU for another workshop on research skills. Dr. Dorai is a Researcher at the CNRS - Paris (the French National Center for Scientific Research). He is currently based at the French Institute for the Near East in Damascus (IFPO) and was recently appointed Director of Migrinter at the Université de Poitiers, France.



Dr. Dorai beginning his presentation (June 2010)

Dr. Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, LERC former Acting Director and Chair of the FPSPAD at NDU, opened the workshop by welcoming Dr. Dorai and introducing the main topics of the workshop.

During the first session, Dr. Dorai gave an in-depth history of Iraqi migration both to Lebanon and throughout the world. Dr. Dorai stated that 1.5 million Iraqis have left Iraq since 2003. He stressed the point, however, that the period between 2003 and today is not a turning point for Iraqi migration but rather continuity with the past. Migrants and refugees leaving Iraq during this

period capitalized on the family, social and business networks that existed from previous waves of emigration. One unanticipated aspect of the Iraqi refugee situation is that of “circulating refugees”. In some cases, Iraqis return to Iraq in order to check up on properties that they own or to retrieve important documents such as university degrees and pension papers. According to Dr. Dorai, refugees come to Lebanon because of the possibility of higher wages and Lebanon’s connections to immigration movements to Europe, even though entering Lebanon illegally carries a greater risk of imprisonment than in Syria or Jordan.



Workshop participants listening to Dr. Dorai (June 2010)

For the second session, Dr. Dorai provided practical guidelines on how to conduct an effective interview. He began by stating that it is very important for the interviewees to have a clear understanding of who is conducting the study. Because in the case of refugees, benefits and services from international organizations and NGOs are often involved, it is paramount that the interviewer makes it clear that his or her research will not have any effect on these benefits. Dr. Dorai went on to say that the interviewer should always remain as neutral as possible. Avoid asking direct questions about sectarian affiliations and do not wear obvious religious symbols. Other useful tips from Dr. Dorai included knowing how much time the interview will take and bringing business cards to pass out to interviewees.



First interview simulation between Dr. Dorai and Iraqi student at NDU Mr. Firas Hasan (June 2010)

After a coffee break, two simulations were run. First, Dr. Dorai and an Iraqi student participant played the roles of an interviewer and an Iraqi refugee. Dr. Dorai played the part of the interviewer and showed the group how to run an interview with open-ended questions. This simulation was run in Arabic in order to increase its authenticity. For the second simulation, the Fieldwork Coordinator for the Iraqi projects and a surveyor had the opportunity to play the roles of interviewer and of an Iraqi refugee. In this simulation, the two worked through a questionnaire in English for the benefit of those in attendance who did not speak Arabic. During the simulations participants were able to ask questions and offer comments on how to improve both the survey instrument and interviewing techniques.



Second interview simulation between Ms. Menhem (left) and Ms. Mokdad (June 2010)

At the close of the workshop, all participants were awarded a certificate of participation. Following the distribution of certificates, a group photo was taken.



Group photo with Dr. Dorai (June 2010)