



### *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges*

## **Meeting on Migration and Urbanization American University of Beirut, Lebanon March 16-17, 2009**

### **Purpose**

The aim of the *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges* project is to explore trends and processes of change in East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia. In this meeting\* we will focus on the issues of forced (refugee and IDP) migration, labor migration and urbanization and their potential to be sources of instability and conflict. We will also explore how the key trends in migration and urbanization are related to other processes of change, such as global economic integration, the exploitation of natural resources, environmental degradation and climate change, transnational ideological movements, pandemic diseases and food security. We are eager to listen and welcome additional ideas to shape our conversation to be as creative and productive as possible.

The group gathered for this meeting is a small but rich representation of national and professional backgrounds and a variety of disciplines. We very much hope for, and invite, all participants to address the issues under discussion not just from the perspective of their discipline or nationality, but from a more holistic perspective that includes both regional and global concerns. We hope and expect that the knowledge and insight gathered from these conversations will enrich policy discourse, and encourage long-term thinking. We hope the meeting will also create new professional relationships and opportunities for follow-on collaboration and research.

We encourage candor and lively discussion, and to ensure the comfort of our participants, **all discussions at this workshop are not for attribution.**

### **Structure**

Our workshop will take place over two days, with discussions organized into six broadly-themed sessions. We have provided discussion topics as a starting point for reflection and analysis.

The overarching question guiding our conversation is: How do the processes of change, as embodied in forced migration, labor migration and urbanization, affect political and social stability and the prospects of conflict within societies and between nations?

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### *Session 1: Setting the Stage*

This session will provide the strategic context for the discussion by clearly identifying the global economic, social and demographic trends relevant to migration and urbanization issues. The conversation will be broad but also serve to explore and perhaps adjust how we frame the following sessions.

### *Session 2: Labor migration*

In session two, we will examine the implications of labor migration in the regions, focusing on specific examples such as Asian migration to the GCC states and within the Middle East.

- Salient trends in the past five years
- Impact on local labor markets
- Social welfare of local and expatriate workers
- Cultural tensions

### *Session 3: Forced Migration (refugees, internally displaced, and disaster related)*

- Most acute situations and long term trends
- Economic impact on receiving countries
- Stress on infrastructure
- Cultural tensions
- Security concerns

### *Session 4: Urbanization*

- Mega cities and urban trends in the regions
- Implications for infrastructure and the environment
- Impact on social services (e.g. health and education) and human welfare
- Cultural tensions
- Local and national politics

### *Session 5: Challenges for States and Societies*

- Resiliency, absorptive capacity, and adaptation
- Security implications for sending and receiving countries
- Repatriation and reintegration

### *Session 6: International Dimensions*

- Governance and policy challenges
- International cooperation
- International tensions and conflicts
- Role of diasporas