

# Arab Expatriate Exchange

Spring 2016 Volume 6



The International Organization for Migration's insitutional communication with expatriate groups from the Middle East and North Africa

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## CNIEA: Helping Iraqi immigrants build a new life in Canada

The Canadian Network of Iraqi Engineers and Architects ([CNIEA](#)) is a registered non-profit corporation for Iraqi Engineers and Architects who live and work in Canada. The overall objectives of CNIEA are to play an active role in assisting members to practice their profession in the engineering and architectural fields, while facilitating professional opportunities and building bridges with Canadian society and markets. The Network is open to Iraqis of all political, religious or racial backgrounds.



CNIEA got its start in 2009 in one of Canada's famous Tim Horton coffee shops, when a group of friends and colleagues gathered in Mississauga, Ontario. Some of those present were employed and working, while others were not. The idea to establish a network of professionals in the same field arose as the most active and helpful way for those not working to find professional opportunities. Seventy nine engineers and architects from across Ontario attended the first meeting in the end of 2009. Membership has steadily increased, and today CNIEA is proud to have 686 members.

Members help each other search for jobs and prepare resumes, as well as offering interview practice sessions. Additionally, the mentorship program aims to build strong personal ties and professional skills, and to help new members adjust to life in Canada and enter the job market. CNIEA also does internal referral to other social support services such as programs run by not-profit organizations and other Iraqi and Arabic associations that can assist newly arrived migrants.

Additionally, CNIEA coordinates with other Canadian non-profit and governmental organization such as Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and University of Toronto new comer programs. Other initiatives, such as Magnet--a not-for-profit initiative, founded by Ryerson University and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, aims to address unemployment and underemployment. Finally, CNIEA is one of the founders and active members of [Professional Immigrant Networks](#) which includes many ethnic organizations.

CNIEA participates in regular meetings with these organizations, and regularly shares information from partners on their programs and courses for language enhancement, Canadian cultural review, searching for jobs, establishing businesses, protecting human rights, and other initiatives that support people newly arrived in Canada.

In addition to being well known to the local Arabic and Iraqi media in Ontario and Alberta, the network maintains a robust online presence via a website and social media.

Newcomers can join CNIEA through online registration or by contacting the board and executive members directly. More than 50 members have been employed through CNIEA activities, and more than 120 members are receiving support from Network services.

## Young Egyptian-American professional connects peers



*Yomna Sarhan is Founder and President of the Society of Egyptian American Professionals (SEAP). She is currently the Membership and Global Partnerships Coordinator for the International Road Federation, a nonprofit organization focused on infrastructure development and sustainable transportation systems around the world. She is also pursuing a Master of Public Policy at the George Washington University in Washington, DC.*

### **What is your link to the Arab expatriate community?**

I grew up in Cairo and moved to Washington, DC with my family in 2002. I met many Egyptian Americans through my parents and our families would get together on a weekly basis. So, I've participated in social gatherings with the Egyptian-American community for years. Recently, as an undergraduate at Georgetown University, I started reaching out to Egyptian American youth and organizing get-togethers.

The gatherings I organized quickly grew larger and attracted more Egyptian-Americans from outside my network. In February 2015, my parents encouraged me to create a professional platform to gather Egyptian-American youth and have a meaningful impact on the community. With the help

of a very supportive team, I founded the Society of Egyptian-American Professionals (SEAP) in 2015.

### **How did you make SEAP a success?**

Prior to establishing SEAP, my team and I conducted a thorough gap assessment to determine what niche we are filling. We researched organizations doing similar work and we made an extensive effort to reach out to as many Egyptian-Americans as possible. Then we decided that there really was a need for a high-quality professional network for Egyptians in the US.

So far, we've had over 150 Egyptian-Americans engage with our organization. I think SEAP appeals to many people because it has a specific purpose (professional development) and it's something everyone can benefit from no matter what stage of career they're in. This is an important lesson we learned from the successful Tunisian diaspora network (Tunisian American Young Professionals\*). Also, at SEAP we develop our events with only one question in mind: how can our members directly benefit from this?

Being in DC, professionals are overwhelmed with countless events. It's important to differentiate ourselves by creating programs that directly benefit the attendees. So, we organize workshops, roundtable discussions, coffee chats, as well as other networking opportunities.

Also, SEAP is fixedly apolitical and areligious, which is critical since Egyptians should be united, not divided.

### **How did being a member of the Arab expatriate community contribute to your goals and achievements?**

Speaking for many of my Egyptian-American peers, being members of the diaspora means that we feel an obligation to give back to our communities, both in Egypt and in the US. The importance of community outreach is integrated in SEAP's goals, as we hope to expand our programming to Egypt and engage with professional development initiatives there.

This also means that SEAP is an important representation of Egypt in the US. As our organization grows and expands, we can effectively become a bridge between both countries. This is especially important when politics and international dynamics can cause rifts.

### **How do you engage with the Arab region (projects, partnerships, visits, etc.)?**

SEAP is working on a long-term project of developing programs in Egypt. Also, I foresee the potential for collaboration among the Arab diaspora in the US to create joint programs across several Arab countries. There's so much potential, it's just a matter of creating a strong foundation for the future.

*\*Editor's note: See feature article on TAYP in the [Summer 2015](#) edition of the Arab Expatriate Exchange*



### **Submit to the next issue**

Submissions accepted for the following sections:

- Successful project
- Highlighting a Diaspora Group
- Expatriate Success Story
- Announcements

For information and submissions, e-mail [iommenanews@iom.int](mailto:iommenanews@iom.int)

## NARWI – a crowdfunding platform for Arab expatriates to support Arab entrepreneurs

In March 2016, in collaboration with IOM and other organizations, Silatech launched the Narwi crowdfunding platform. Narwi is a Micro Endowment (Micro Waqf) platform designed to support the establishment and growth of youth-led microenterprises in the Middle East and North Africa. Narwi's mission is to mobilize new forms of charitable giving through a platform that connects young entrepreneurs with capital and knowledge, mobilized through the crowd, empowering them to grow sustainable businesses and create jobs for others.

Research conducted by IOM on Arab diaspora communities in the post-Arab Spring era indicated a great willingness among many in the diaspora, and particularly second-generation youth who previously had not been interested in their parents' countries of origin, to contribute to reform and development in the Arab world.

However, IOM's research also identified a level of frustration among this same population as they could not find opportunities that allowed them to contribute in meaningful ways within their means. As one respondent in a focus group expressed, "We are not all doctors, and not all of us have the time or resources to return to our homelands, but many of us still want to help in the little ways we can. For me though, it has been hard to find those opportunities that allow me to show my support to my homeland in the way I want."

While previous efforts to engage diaspora groups in development have focused almost exclusively on high-skilled and high net-worth individuals, the development and adoption of new technologies have made it easier than ever to effectively harness the many smaller contributions that the wider diaspora are willing and often eager to make.

Crowdfunding programmes make it easy for diaspora to meaningfully contribute to economic development in their communities of origin in a highly personalized way, allowing them to choose the project and the individual to whom they would like to contribute based on everything from the community the project is based in, to the type of project, to the backstory of the individual entrepreneur.

The Narwi crowdfunding platform is the result of over two years of collaborative work including research with diaspora communities, the building of extensive partnerships, and the technical development of the platform itself. The platform hosts profiles of entrepreneurs from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Somalia, and Yemen, with plans to expand to include entrepreneurs from Morocco and Tunisia in the near future.

Silatech and IOM will continue to work closely to build partnerships with Arab diaspora associations that can both expand Narwi's reach and inform its further development as an instrument to harness the skills and interests of the Arab diaspora to engage in development in their countries of origin.

## What's new at IOM?

- February: IOM Egypt launched a pilot project called "It's a Match" which was designed to bring together migrant and host communities in Greater Cairo. The pilot also used a click-funding social media campaign to raise awareness on the issue of xenophobia and the importance of social cohesion. (Photos below)
- February: IOM participated in the first Working Group Meeting of the Peer-to-Peer Learning Workshop for Host Municipalities in the Mediterranean organized by the Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI). The workshop is part of CMI's Mediterranean Refugees & Host Communities Knowledge Action Program which aims to support social cohesion and address the welfare of people in refugee and host communities.
- April: [IOM Tunisia](#) and the National Migration Observatory held an interactive seminar exploring the link between migration and development to understand how national policies interact with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- April: [IOM Morocco](#) held a training for migrant associations as part of the Government of Morocco's strategy to integrate migration into national development projects. The training aimed to improve participants' knowledge on how to identify needs and objectives around which to develop projects, as well as how to research funding opportunities and mobilize partners.



## Announcements

- **May 5-7:** The Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted its annual Lebanese Diaspora Energy Conference, bringing together Lebanese diaspora from throughout the world to discuss opportunities for greater cooperation and engagement between Lebanon and its diaspora;
- **May 11-12:** The Abu Dhabi Dialogue Senior Officials meeting took place in Dubai. The ADD brings together Ministries of Labour of GCC countries and major countries of origin for labour migrants in the GCC with the aim of enhancing understanding and collaboration in international labour recruitment and employment;
- **Week of May 29:** CMI will organize the Peer-to-Peer Learning Workshop for Communities Hosting Refugees in the Mediterranean. The workshop will take place over 3 days in Jordan.