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The Migration Agency

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

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## Diaspora can make a difference: Giving back to Sudan through the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals

Sudan suffers from a water scarcity gap, with 3.8 million people having limited access to safe drinking water. Alsugya Charity Organization is a Sudanese organization working to address this water scarcity gap and is specialized in locating and providing drinking water for poor rural communities across the country. Through the Temporary Return of Qualified National (TRQN III) Project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, IOM Sudan supports the capacity development of Alsugya organization

Starting in March 2014, the TRQN project has aimed at building the capacity of government and non-government institutions through the transfer of knowledge from Sudanese nationals residing in the Netherlands and other European countries who share their experiences and skills. In 2015, the project placed twenty five expatriate professionals in projects ranging from water management and education, to corporate governance, project management, awareness sessions on counter trafficking and smuggling, training of visually impaired individuals in pottery making, and media.

Salwa Abdulah is both Dutch and Sudanese and currently lives in the Netherlands. She is one of the twenty five who returned to Sudan under the TRQN project to train relevant staff at Al-Sugya because of her expertise in water management. Salwa, one of many Sudanese diaspora professionals across the world, feels strongly about contributing to the development of her home country.

“As a migrant to the Netherlands, I was obsessed with the development of my country of origin, Sudan. I am aware of the role I must play in order to improve the condition of my country. I was thinking about different ways of fundraising and at the same time, I was looking for a job opportunity in the field of water management and development which I am very much passionate about. The Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) program, launched by IOM, came at the right moment and gave me the opportunity to leverage my passion for my country of origin into something tangible. I am very enthusiastic about its mantra that diaspora can make a difference.”

During her stay in Sudan, Salwa trained twenty two of Alsugya's staff in collaboration with the Geographical Information System (GIS) department in the Ministry of Irrigation on the use of GIS to map and assess water points.

As an outcome of the workshop, the participants produced maps that located water points in different states and worked on compiling them to produce a Sudan National Water Atlas which will be a ready reference for government institutions in order to plan and implement projects such as the construction of water yards, which will benefit people in need of potable water.

As a result of her training, one of the participants, an IT specialist named Tawheeda, had the opportunity to take a course at UNESCO-IHE in the Netherlands on GPS and remote sensing under the TRQN project. She has since been able to transfer the knowledge gained on the course to her colleagues.

*Right: Salwa interacts with one of the trainees in her water management training*



## To Palestine and beyond: one professor's work connects expatriates across continents

Manal A. Jamal is an associate professor of political science at James Madison University.



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

My family is from a small Palestinian town near Ramallah, Deir Dibwan. My father immigrated to Brazil in 1953, and then made his way to the US in 1962. He married my mother in Palestine in 1970, and they then settled in San Francisco California, a then popular home-base for Palestinian immigrants to the US. In 1981, we moved back to Palestine. My father kept his business in the US, and he would visit us frequently. After graduating from high school, I returned to California to begin university. Since then, I have been back and forth, and although I am now based in Washington DC, I am in and out of the region on a regular basis. In the US, I am quite integrated in the Palestinian community, and the Arab-American community more broadly.

### **What was your trajectory for success? Did being a member of the diaspora contribute?**

Being equally at home in any Palestinian village, as well as in a number of US metropolitan centers—two entirely different societies, cultures, and contexts- as well as being bilingual gave me and my siblings access and the ability to navigate these societies in ways we would not have been able to otherwise. My late father worked tirelessly to ensure that his children would receive the type of education that would equip them with the needed skills to facilitate this access. This background has definitely informed my career trajectory, and I believe it was this background that has given me an edge in terms of my research.

In my first book project, *Democracy Promotion in Distorted Times*, which draws from my PhD dissertation for which I won the best fieldwork award of the Comparative Democratization section of the American Political Science Association, I conducted a comparative examination of how donor assistance impacted civil society in the Palestinian territories and El Salvador. I conducted over 150 interviews in both contexts, in Arabic, English, and Spanish, many sensitive in nature. My background as a journalist definitely helped me, but the ease with which I could navigate these different societies was also critical. My comfort level and sensitivity to different contexts, helps me to be deeply engaged in the societies where I live; I take my civic engagement seriously.

### **Have you been involved in any successful projects, current projects, or initiatives in MENA?**

Yes. I remain engaged with the region through my work and family. During the late 1990s, I worked as journalist and researcher for the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center based in Jerusalem. One of the important projects in which I was involved was on donor assistance to Palestine. We played an important role at the time beginning a discussion/dialogue between various foreign donors, civil society actors and PA officials about the aid effort to Palestine. In 2008, I contributed to the feasibility studies that led to the establishment of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences. Between 2010 and 2015, I was a member of the Middle East Studies Association for Academic Freedom, and specifically worked on monitoring infringements on academic freedom in MENA. More recently, I remain engaged with the region through my research. One of the important projects to which I contributed was organized and funded by the Center for International and Regional Studies in Georgetown-Qatar on Arab expatriate communities in the Gulf. My research project, soon to be published in an edited volume entitled *Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC*, was on Palestinians in the UAE. Through all my research I hope I am contributing to more nuanced understanding of these societies and the challenges they face, especially to Western audiences.

### **What are your views for the future in terms of how the diaspora can meaningfully engage with countries of origin?**

There is ample room for more meaningful engagement between those in the diaspora and their countries of their origin. On the part of those living in the diaspora and wanting to meaningfully engage their countries of origin, sometimes there is a need for more nuanced and sensitive understanding of these societies. Too often, many think that their Western training gives them some kind of insight into these societies which can often be misleading. On the other hand, those in countries of origin also need to appreciate the unique qualifications that 'bi-cultural' often possess; too often their skills are equated with those who do not have their unique experience, not allowing for these exchanges to reach their full potential.

## **Announcements**

- February: IOM Egypt will begin a unique pilot project which marks IOM's first engagement with "gamification". The project involves the development of a real-life social game designed to bring persons from migrant and Egyptian host communities together to interact and collaborate for mutual benefit. The project will also include a social media campaign to promote harmonious relations between migrant and host communities;
- February 15: World Bank and UNHCR will launch a joint report on *The Welfare of Syrian Refugees: Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon* at a full day event in Paris;
- March 7-13, 2016: U.S. Department of State, in collaboration with Concordia, USAID, and Peace Tech Lab, will organize its annual Global Partnerships Week (GPW) celebration, under the theme "Leveraging Innovation in Partnerships" in recognition of the critical role public-private partnerships play in promoting diplomacy and development worldwide.



## Lebanese Ladies Society of Nigeria: thinking global and acting local

The Lebanese Ladies Society (LLS) of Nigeria was founded in 1970 by May el-Khalil, a noted activist in Lebanon and long-time resident of Nigeria. Its mandate is to work within Nigeria to meet the needs of less privileged Nigerians.

Membership is largely composed of wives of expatriate businessmen. Nigeria, as other East African countries, has a significant Lebanese expatriate population. There are over 30,000 Lebanese people currently living in Nigeria, many second or third generation and holding dual nationality. There have been Lebanese immigrants in Nigeria since the end of the 1800s when the area was first tapped as an area for business expansion.

The LLS carries out a variety of activities. One area of particular focus is education. In addition to rebuilding schools and providing support to infrastructural projects, the LLS provides scholarships for Nigerian students.

Last year, that LLS was able to provide a scholarship of 8 million Lebanese lira to a worthy student.

“This is one of the best parts of our work. We have students who we started supporting as children who are now getting ready to graduate high school,” says current president Marie-Louise Igbinedion.

Education is not the only area of focus. LLS also is heavily involved in hospital renovations.

Hosted out of the Lebanese Embassy in Lagos, LLS undertakes a variety of fundraising campaigns including a bazaar and gala dinner in order to finance its projects.

Activities in 2015 were somewhat curtailed as a result of the ongoing Ebola virus crisis, but the group hopes that 2016 will be more active.



### Submit to the next issue

Submissions accepted for the following sections:

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

The next newsletter will be released at the end of April.

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



## What's new at IOM?

• Early December: IOM Rabat, in collaboration with the Ecole Nationale d'Administration of Morocco, delivered a three-day training on International Migration & Development for government officials and ENA professors.

• Early December: IOM delivered a two-day basic training on International Migration & Development to officials of the Government of Egypt, looking at opportunities to better engage Egyptian expatriates in the country's development.

• December 18th: IOM celebrated International Migrants Day (see photos below) and remembered those migrants who lost their lives during their journey with a candlelight vigil; 2015 saw 5,393 migrants die during their journey including 3,772 in the Mediterranean alone. IOM's offices organized events ranging from cultural performances (Egypt and Sudan), to a media training (Morocco), to candlelight vigils (Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait) to a football tournament (Libya).

• January 14th: IOM and ESCWA launched the first [Situation Report](#) on International Migration in the MENA region in English and Arabic. The report, the result of multi-agency collaboration, provides a comprehensive overview of migration trends in the MENA region.