



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Beirut, August 14, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUB GHI and IOM MENA to Advance Joint Efforts on the Climate–Health–Migration Nexus in the Region

The Global Health Institute (GHI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), convened a forum titled *"Navigating the Climate–Health–Migration Nexus: A Forum for Bridging Policy, Research, and Action in MENA."* The event brought together academic institutions, UN agencies, humanitarian actors, and civil society organizations to address the urgent intersection of climate change, public health, and human mobility in one of the world's most vulnerable regions.

A key outcome of the forum was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between GHI and IOM, solidifying a long-term partnership focused on advancing research, policy, and joint action at the climate–health–migration nexus.

In his opening address, Dr. Shadi Saleh, founding director of AUB GHI, emphasized that climate change is one of the most pressing health threats of our time, particularly in fragile settings like many countries of MENA. He warned that health systems across the region are increasingly unable to absorb the compounded impacts of climate-related disease burdens, displacement, and social inequities. He noted that the Cli-Health Program (CHP) at GHI addresses this nexus by working across sectors with partners like the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) and the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at AUB, as well as IOM and others, to translate knowledge into actionable, equitable solutions. In parallel, Nour El Arnaout, associate director at AUB GHI, presented GHI's growing portfolio under the Cli-Health Program, which examines this nexus with a focus on justice, resilience, and vulnerable populations. She also announced the upcoming launch of an online, self-paced certificate on climate and health designed to equip learners with tools for addressing climate-related health challenges through practical, context-specific approaches.

Dr. Michela Martini, senior regional thematic specialist on migration health at IOM MENA, stated that the intersection of climate, health, and migration is a defining challenge of our time and remains significantly understudied, particularly in regional contexts. She highlighted that IOM's collaboration with academic institutions such as AUB is essential to generate evidence-based, gender-sensitive, and locally grounded responses that contribute to filling the gap. Along the same line, Masako Ueda, regional climate action and mobility specialist at IOM MENA, emphasized that climate change is a growing driver of both displacement and health risks,

American University of Beirut

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb

aub.edu.lb

disproportionately affecting migrants and displaced populations due to systemic vulnerabilities and inequitable exposure. She called for greater coordination, stronger policies, and continued leadership from institutions in the region.

Aside from the presentations, the forum featured two thematic panels. The first, moderated by Dr. Michela Martini, addressed evidence gaps and policy needs. Dr. Kenza Khomsi, climate and environmental health expert from Morocco, warned that extreme climate hazards now pose direct and escalating public health threats. Yara Mourad, director of programs at IFI at AUB, called for regional cooperation and the integration of inclusive, gender-sensitive climate-health-migration policies into national agendas. Roula Majdalani, senior advisor on sustainable development at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), underscored the role of disaggregated data in addressing displacement and climate-induced vulnerability in countries like Lebanon and Jordan. Dr. Lucia Barcellini, technical officer for refugee and migrant health at the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO), emphasized the need to integrate migrants and displaced populations into national health systems and planning processes, with a whole-of-government approach.

The second panel, moderated by Nour El Arnaout, focused on localizing the climate–health–migration nexus through community, civil society, and humanitarian action. Nora Achkar, chief of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Regional Office for Arab States, discussed the importance of inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies rooted in local realities. Kassem Chaalan, director of the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit at the Lebanese Red Cross, presented their nationwide community-based disease surveillance initiative, designed to detect outbreaks linked to climate-related risks. Abeer Abou Zaki, youth and adolescents development specialist at United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Lebanon, emphasized the leadership of youth in driving climate action, including youth-led policy proposals and advocacy efforts. Pamela DiCamillo, head of programs at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Lebanon, highlighted the gendered impacts of climate-driven displacement and the urgent need for mobile health services and gender-responsive policies. Fadi Dweik, climate resilience technical advisor at Save the Children International, focused on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children, and stressed the importance of child-centered climate finance, preventive action, and GIS-enabled early warning systems.

The event also featured a short video introducing the [“Voices on Climate Change and Health”](#) campaign, highlighting lived experiences and insights from experts and communities across the Global South.

To close the event, Mathieu Luciano, head of the International Organization for Migration in Lebanon, affirmed that the partnership between IOM and GHI represents more than an academic or technical exchange. “It is a step toward building resilient and inclusive systems that place migrants at the center of preparedness and response strategies. We must act now, work together, and center migrants in our response,” he stated.

More information on the Cli-Health Program at GHI is available at <https://ghi.aub.edu.lb/chp/>

About GHI

The Global Health Institute (GHI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) addresses global health challenges with a focus on context and sustainable impact by employing an interdisciplinary approach. GHI is structured into three divisions: The Programs Division, which leads research, policy, and advocacy efforts; the Academy Division, which provides capacity-building initiatives for diverse populations; and the ASSIST Division, which supports community-

American University of Beirut
PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb
ghi.aub.edu.lb

level actors, particularly non-governmental organizations, with a range of services and resources.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar, PhD

Executive Director of Communications
Lecturer – Political Studies and Public Administration Department
Founding Director – Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory
Fellow – Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
Member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Research, Innovation, and Creativity Hub

T +961 1 37 43 74 Ext: 2676 | **M** +961 3 42 70 24
sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 790 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 9000 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events.

aub.edu.lb | [Facebook](#) | [X](#)

American University of Beirut

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb
aub.edu.lb