

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI)

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Inaugurated in 2006, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. It aims to initiate and develop policy relevant research in and about the Arab region. The institute is committed to expanding and deepening knowledge production and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society actors, and policy makers.

IFI's research programs are:

Arab and International Affairs

The Arab and International Affairs (AIA) program analyzes general trends of world politics from the perspective of their influence on Arab realities. More specifically, it examines

the impact of policies designed by major states and international actors on policies in Arab countries. In addition to analyzing the impact of foreign policies on the Arab world, the program contributes to informing policy-making through research as well as correspondences with diplomatic communities and other concerned actors.

Civil Society Actors and Policy-Making

The Civil Society and Policy-Making program examines a wide spectrum of civil society actors and analyzes their role in policy-making. The program also studies advocacy coalitions of civil society actors and the ways through which such policy networks influence processes and outcomes. In addition to the role of policy research institutes and their contribution to the translation of knowledge into policies, the program explores the media's expanding role in being a catalyzer of protests and revolutions in the Arab world.

Climate Change and Environment

The Climate Change and Environment program aims to initiate and enhance research in both fields of applied and social sciences. To activate the link between research and policy-making, the program strives to improve scientific discourse and produce appropriate policy recommendations on issues related to climate change and sustainable development, as well as influence national and regional debates on international negotiations affecting policy-making.

Education and Youth Policy

The Education and Youth Policy Research program aims to inform educational policy and improve educational practices. Through an all-encompassing exploration of education based issues in the Arab world, the program assesses the impact on children and youth in the region through engaging in applied and policy relevant research. Consequently, the program serves as a resource for government agencies and other concerned institutions to help shape the education and youth policy debate in Lebanon and the region.

Energy Policy and Security

The Energy Policy and Security program is an interdisciplinary platform that seeks to examine, inform, and impact regional and global energy sectors as well as security policies within the Middle East. Moreover, it closely monitors the challenges and opportunities of the shift towards alternative energy sources. With a seed grant support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the program investigates the prospects of nuclear power in the Middle East and its potential to promote regional cooperation to address security concerns associated with the spread of nuclear power.

Governance and Policy Lab (IFI GovLab)

In light of the growing need for countries to adapt their governance mechanisms to meet the demands of an increasingly complex, globalized, and technology driven world, IFI GovLab aims to undertake innovative policy research and activities that address some of the most pressing policy issues and public sector challenges faced in Lebanon and the region. Furthermore, the IFI GovLab's goal is to strengthen the ability of local and regional actors to enhance governance mechanisms and to integrate innovation within organizations, particularly those in the public sector, by providing them with the right tools and evidence to address national priorities, to the ultimate benefit of the public good. The IFI GovLab also aims to conduct policy research affecting digital policies and internet governance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with the aim to advance knowledge creation and existing evidence on inclusive institutions and good governance in the region.

Refugee Research and Policy

Lebanon and the Arab region are facing one of the largest refugee crises spawning serious public policy challenges. Given this context, the Refugee Research and Policy program generates refugee related/policy oriented research that addresses an existing knowledge gap in the field of refugee studies. Moreover, the program seeks to enrich the quality of debate among scholars, officials, international organizations, and civil society actors, with the aim to inform policy-making relating to refugees in the Middle East and beyond.

Social Justice and the City

By establishing a partnership between scholars, policymakers, and activists in Lebanon and beyond, the Social Justice and the City program seeks to formulate an agenda for research aiming towards more inclusive cities. The program acts as a platform where concerned parties share their experiences and strategies to document and analyze ongoing urban processes affecting the organization and life of the city. Furthermore, the program seeks to share and validate research with activists, affected communities, and other social groups interested in sharing both the acquired competence and the pool of research tactics to bring about change through debates, media, publications, and advocacy.

Internship Program

The institute offers internships for local and international students seeking first-hand experience in the fields of public policy, international affairs, and communications. Each year dozens of students have an opportunity to intern with IFI's various programs and gain research and administrative skills that pave the way for a successful career in their fields of interest.

Affiliate Program

Out of IFI's commitment to expanding and deepening knowledge production and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society actors, and policymakers, the Institute established an affiliation program divided into four different categories, Visiting Scholar, AUB Faculty Fellow, Senior Policy Fellow, and Distinguished Senior Fellow. The affiliates contribute in their areas of expertise to IFI's research programs and participate in the intellectual life of the institute. The specific requirements, interactions, and contributions made by intellectual life of the institute. The specific requirements, interactions, and contributions made by affiliates, differ depending on the specific needs of each research program.