

For Immediate Release



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## **K2P Center at AUB: Preventing preterm deliveries and reducing mortalities among Syrian Refugees in Lebanon**

As the Syrian crisis enters its seventh year, the hardships of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the region remain on the rise, especially among its most vulnerable population, women and children. 61% of mortalities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are children under one, with preterm deliveries being the highest contributor to those deaths (26%).

The Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center at the Faculty of Health Sciences, at the American University of Beirut (AUB), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) in Lebanon, organized a K2P Policy Dialogue to tackle the issue of preventable preterm deliveries among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, on April 6th, 2017 at Rotana Gefinor, Beirut.

“The leading cause of deaths amongst Syrian refugees is from complications in the newborn period,” said UNHCR’s senior health officer, Dr. Michael Woodman, “evidence-informed decisions are urgently needed to address this together with all partners.”

K2P Dialogue table convened key stakeholders: Director General of MOPH, Dr. Walid Ammar, health representative of UNHCR in Lebanon, Dr. Michael Woodman, the director of the National Collaborative Perinatal Neonatal Network (NCPNN), Dr. Khaled Younis, the president of Federation of Arab Obstetrics and Gynecology Societies, Dr. Faysal El Kak, the head of the Order of Midwives, Nayla Doughane, the head of the Order of Nurses, Dr. Nuha Dumit, board member of Lebanese Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. Rabih Chahine, as well as representatives from local and international NGOs such as Makhzoumi Foundation, Amel Association, International Medical Corps, Médecins Sans Frontiers, and WHO, in addition to directors of hospitals, primary health care centers, physicians, researchers, and students.

Prior to the dialogue, K2P Policy Brief was circulated to all related policymakers and stakeholders. During the development of the brief, a K2P Evidence Lead conducted litmus testing interviews with policymakers in order to adequately frame the problem within the

Lebanese context. These interviews, in addition to the Policy Dialogue, can trigger context-specific action.

K2P Director, Dr. Fadi El Jardali, highlighted that the current situation is putting heavy burden on the Syrian refugees and on the healthcare system in Lebanon. "Carrying the refugee plan to Brussels Conference on Syria is very important, however, we hope that the outcomes of this conference will not only be limited to financial support, but to share the burden of refugees and to politically commit to resolve the crisis, at the level of the international community," he added.

Dialogue participants deliberated over 4 evidence-based elements of a solution presented in the policy brief: Strengthening accessibility to antenatal and postnatal care; Improving the quality of services delivered in health care centers by accrediting primary healthcare centers and integrating evidence-based guidelines; Integrating task shifting (from physician to nurse or midwife) into antenatal care in primary healthcare centers; Enhancing outreach community-based interventions on family planning and antenatal care through awareness and education sessions and community mobilization activities.

Participants highlighted barriers, at the professional, organizational and system levels, which should be taken into consideration whilst implementing the solutions especially with the complexity of the Syrian cultural background and situation.

K2P Policy Dialogue sparked insights and triggered action to inform future plans by MOPH, UN agencies, NGOs and other Lebanese healthcare and refugee organizations: "The deliberations linked scientific evidence and data to the applicability of decisions in Lebanon" according to Dr. Walid Ammar: "The dialogue divided tasks between all stakeholders."

**ENDS**

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**Note to Editors**

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of

about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 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 420-bed hospital.

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