

For Immediate Release



## **Research study: Charities fail to link with war-affected communities in southern suburbs**

Beirut, Lebanon- 14/03/2012 - Charities working to rehabilitate south Beirut after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war failed to connect with affected communities, according to new research unveiled at the American University of Beirut.

Estella Carpi, a doctoral candidate from the University of Sydney's Department of Sociology and Social Policy, recently presented some of her fieldwork research on the interaction of inhabitants and NGOs in south Beirut in a lecture hosted by the Center for Behavioral Research (CBR) at AUB.

She explained how a lack of engagement between humanitarian organizations and beneficiaries had led to a dip in services available to local residents.

"Considering the massive amount of services provided by these organizations in the immediate aftermath of the war, there's wonder if these areas are not just war affected but project affected," Carpi said.

Carpi's research was inspired by her work at a UN agency in Cairo, where she witnessed a lack of communication and coordination between aid agencies, problematic distribution of funds, and how international reports hardly ever delved into the daily lives of local people.

She began conducting face-to-face interviews with various international and local NGOs in south Beirut, as well as inhabitants of various municipalities, to gain insight on how they saw the ways they were viewed and targeted by those organizations. Carpi observed the community relations of Lebanese Shiite, Palestinian, Iraqi and Sudanese refugees, and how local activism affected their perception of society and victimhood.

She found that international and some local NGOs had no direct contact with beneficiaries on a daily basis. Smaller organizations were found to have no qualitative evaluation of project impact; staff were often unaware of their own funding resources.

In addition, civilians were oblivious to NGO projects, prompting some to start small organizations to help their neighbors.

Carpi's research found that often inhabitants thought they benefitted from charitable services through a sense of moral redemption.

"With our petrol and our blood we indirectly overpaid for all these services, habibte," one Iraqi refugee told her.

One of the most important service providers in south Beirut was Hezbollah, Carpi said.

"The inhabitants of Beirut's southern suburbs - a sizable part of Lebanon - are highly neglected by the central state, but are privileged in Hezbollah's sub-nation group," she said, adding that politically active citizens often received a greater share of services from the party, compared to those who kept out of politics.

Carpi plans to explore challenges such as defining the role of community in the everyday life of participants, investigating the instability of the state and non-state actors, and answering questions about the relationship between humanitarian aid and those who receive it.

"I would like to explore how the daily experience of humanitarianism - of both the beneficiaries and organizations' members - is emotionally linked and how these projects indirectly change family and community relations," Carpi said.

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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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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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