

A black and white photograph of a stage event. In the foreground, the backs of several audience members' heads are visible as they sit in a large hall. The stage features a large projection screen displaying a woman in a white polo shirt. Above the screen, stage lighting rigs and equipment are visible. The overall atmosphere is professional and focused on the presentation.

# spark

## IGNITE Conference 2017

### Report



**IGNITE Conference 2017**  
*Rebuilding Futures*

7th December 2017  
Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

# 5<sup>th</sup> rebuilding IGNITE conference futures

On 7th December 2017, the 5th edition of the IGNITE Conference on 'Rebuilding Futures' took place at the Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam. SPARK organised the event with our partners; IFC, Al Fakhoora, the Knowledge Management Fund and the City of Amsterdam. The Young Advisory Group and Ink Strategy also brought the conference to life by partnering with us on key elements, such as the Rebuilding Futures Startup Competition and the visualisations of lessons learned throughout the day.

SPARK has developed this interactive platform over the last five years in order to better understand and share ideas on entrepreneurship development and higher education in fragile states, as well as involve the private sector in these fields. The goal is to develop better tools to support opportunities for students and entrepreneurs to empower them to lead their conflict-affected societies into prosperity. Moreover, it provides a platform for discussion of what the futures holds for these young and ambitious people once they have successfully completed their higher education or entrepreneurship training. For some it will mean contributing to their host communities, for others it will mean rebuilding their home countries.

This year's conference brought together the private sector, policy makers, NGO's, academics, entrepreneurs, refugees and practitioners. The day included keynotes, interactive workshops, masterclasses and interviews with inspiring guests. Speakers from all over the world shared personal stories and highlighted the need for continued higher education and employment opportunities for stability and eventual long-lasting peace in fragile states.



Watch the [IGNITE 2017 video](#) on and hear from experts, students and entrepreneurs working in fragile states about what is needed to rebuild futures.





## Keynote Speeches



**H.M. Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development**

H.M. the Queen delivered an inspiring opening speech addressing the urgent need for both higher education scholarships and entrepreneurship development in fragile states in light of the global refugee crisis. She discussed the skills and experiences of refugees and the need to “tap into this reservoir of human capital” for the benefit not only of themselves, but for hosting nations as well.



[Read the full speech here.](#)

**Farooq Burney, Executive Director of Al Fakhoora**

### Beyond Scholarships: Providing Holistic Opportunities for Refugee Youth

Burney's speech focused on the resilience of refugee youth who see education as their stepping stone to a brighter future. He suggested that more financial scholarship support is needed, as well as investment in civic leadership, psycho-support and entrepreneurship skills. We must empower students beyond academia in order to bridge the gap into employment, so that they become economically viable, engaged members of their host and home communities.



**Linda Kromjong, Secretary-General for International Organization of Employers**

### Rebuilding Societies and Economies: Role of Businesses

Kromjong discussed the general consensus among the international community today, that the private sector should be an integral part of the humanitarian intervention. She suggested that this contribution should focus on what “business does better than others: doing business”. She explored viable contributions that the private sector can make to help to rebuild lives, economies and societies in (post)-conflict environments.



**Martin Spicer, Director of Blended Finance at IFC**

### Investing in the Future: Innovative Private Sector Solutions for Fragile Situations

Spicer is well aware of the contribution the private sector can make to rebuilding fragile states, working for the IFC the world's largest development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets, including fragile states and recently refugee camps. His keynote discussed the large informal economies in these areas, which are often seen as too risky for the private sector to invest in. IFC provides data and tries to de-risk investments of the private sector and as such creating a market.







**Gerard Steeghs**, Ambassador, Netherlands Special Envoy for Syria at Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

#### The Politics of Reconstruction

Steeghs confirmed that reconstruction for Syria is dependent upon a political resolution. However, he encouraged all that intermediate forms of assistance, short of reconstruction aid, are needed to address the needs of the Syrian people. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs support higher education and entrepreneurship programmes for Syrian. However, he reminded attendees that this does not detract from the hard conditionality for reconstruction assistance.



**Fadlo Khuri**, President of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon

#### The End of the Ivory Tower: Why Universities Should Lead the Rebuilding of Fragile States

Khuri noted that universities have isolated themselves from who they are supposed to educate and serve. He suggested that today's great challenges can only be tackled if the academic world pulls down its walls and engages in critical and constructive dialogue. In particular in fragile states where the opportunities to make a meaningful difference is urgent.



**Stefan Dercon**, Chief Economist of the UK Department of International Development

#### Can economic development offer a route out of state fragility?

Dercon, using examples from the Middle East and Africa, discussed how the nature of business is jeopardised in fragile states. He emphasised why and how economic development is one of the few credible ways to overcome this fragility because "if people have hope and want to invest in their own future, they will also have an interest in reducing the fragility of their own countries".

**Ange Muyubira**, Founder of Kaz'O'zah, Burundi

Muyubira told the inspiring story of her founding Kaz'O'zah in Burundi, a fashion brand that started out making ready to wear collections and accessories, which has blossomed into homeware and leather products too. She expressed how her company taps into the power of underserved communities to enable them to achieve self-sufficiency through fashion and social entrepreneurship. She strives to equip and reinforce capacities of young people, including refugees in Uganda, who lack income and exposure through her and art innovation business incubators.



[Watch all the speeches on YouTube](#)



## Talks of the Day



Host, Petra Stienen, interviewed two Syrian refugee students currently living in Gaziantep, studying for their Bachelors with the assistance of scholarships provided by the Dynamic Futures Scholarship Programme. The programme is supported by SPARK and AI Fakhoora, a programme of Education Above All Foundation.



Host, Petra Stienen, interviewed Emma Ursich (Generali), Buke Cuhadar (Global Entrepreneurship Network) and Kilian Kleinschmidt (Innovation and Planning Agency) about private sector solutions for the global refugee crisis.



## Rebuilding Futures Startup Competition



The Young Advisory Group and SPARK joined forces on the Rebuilding Futures Startup Competition to support one young entrepreneur in a conflict-affected or fragile state with a €10,000 startup grant. Three finalists - Besan from Palestine, Pandora from Liberia and Noël from Côte d'Ivoire - gave their pitches and the audience cast their votes. A jury decided the final winner - Noël N'guessan, with his bio-fertiliser business, LONO.



# Workshops

## Crash Course: Remaining Conflict-Sensitive in Business

Lara Shahin, Jordanian entrepreneur  
Mustafa El Saghezli, SESRIC  
Kadar Fayyat, SPARK

This workshop tackled a major obstacle faced by those doing business in fragile states - conflict-sensitivity. Entrepreneurs need the skills to allow them to be successful in these challenging environments. The case of one successful Syrian entrepreneur now living and working in Jordan, Lara Shahin, was presented for the participants. Lara runs a handicraft business selling products made by Syrian women.



By highlighting the obstacles Lara faces on a daily basis, the participants of the workshop were able to identify solutions. Firstly, it is not possible for refugee's in Jordan to register businesses unless through partnership with a Jordanian. Secondly, raw materials are expensive in Jordan, so producing products can be costly. Thirdly, there is a lack of security or institutions in place for businesses like Lara's.

The workshop participants discussed and debated, and decided that in order to grow the business, Lara needed a Jordanian business partner or business association, and continuous lobbying for a change in the law on refugee business registrations. Participants also suggested to train several women from the company in negotiation skills in order to bargain on raw materials. Finally, it was suggested that Lara could use co-working spaces to establish a network of entrepreneurs or partnerships between international companies. Participants also thought that the use of social media and mobile platforms for marketing, communications and/or money transfer would help Lara to boost her sales internationally.

## Debate: Education and Employment for Prosperity in Conflict-Affected States

Tilman Brück, ISDC  
Neil Ferguson, ISDC  
Fia van der Klugt, NL Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Marthe Paauwe, SPARK  
Maren Kroeger, UNHCR DAFI

This workshop investigated how education and/or employment can assist conflict-affected states in reaching prosperity and peace. The debate focused around whether it is more economical/effective to provide provide refugees and vulnerable host communities with access to education, or by helping them to become entrepreneurs, or both? A live Twitter debate took place using the hashtag #jobs4peace.



The data surrounding this debate was presented by ISDC, whose research has found that investing in both education and employment can lead to stability. There is also a positive link between employment and peace, likely because jobs create opportunities, both economical and social. However, there is a negative link between education and peace, which could be due to the lack of opportunities available in fragile states once students have graduated, which could lead to radicalisation or violence.



The discussions amongst participants in groups led to several practical conclusions for education or employment programmes in fragile states to take away:

- Creating jobs during conflict is possible
- Education and employment programmes should be linked to the market needs - market analysis needed
- Bare the needs of the youth in mind, don't make assumptions
- Strengthen SME support environments - through incubators, coaching, co-working spaces, so less businesses fail
- Education should create 'business-minded' people, to create future jobs
- Employment is so successful at bringing stability because it also brings hope, self-esteem and pride
- Collaborate at local levels

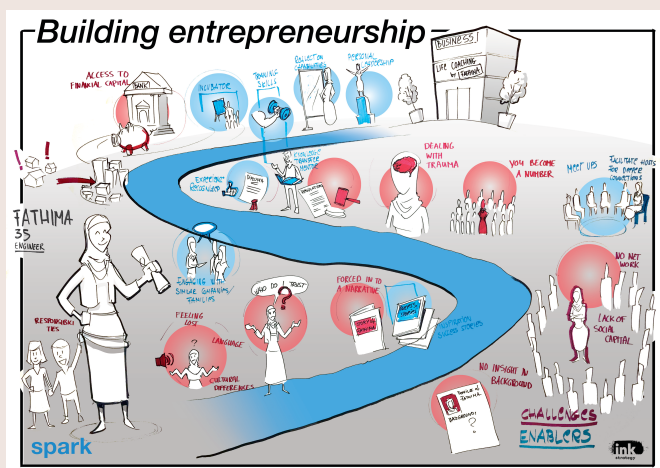


## Welcoming Newcomers: Creating New Opportunities in Europe

Arjen Berkvens, Foundation Max van der Stoel  
Hamze Ghalebi, Refugee Entrepreneur  
Alice Barbe, Singa France  
Anila Noor, City of Amsterdam  
Farid Hadi, Sayed Consultancy

The INK Strategy illustrator team was present in this workshop, which discussed how hosting communities in Europe can better welcome refugees so that access to society, social networks, professional networks, language acquisition and ultimately employment/entrepreneurship opportunities become easier to grasp? The workshop explored the NGO, public and private sector initiatives working towards this goal.

The illustration depicts the fictional entrepreneurship journey of Fathima, a 35 year old trained Engineer now living in Europe. The pink spots show the challenges Fathima faces in her road to entrepreneurship, and the blue spots show the positive scenarios that enable her to become a business woman.



Participants of the workshop discussed the possible solutions and resources that Fathima needs in order to succeed as a migrant/refugee entrepreneur in Europe.



See the Ink Strategy illustrations in full [here](#).

## Watch & Discuss: Global Migration Film Festival

Marian Lenshoek, IOM Netherlands  
Melis Kilavuz, IOM Turkey  
Ahmad Sufian Bayram, Techstars  
Mohammed Skaik, SPARK

This was a collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The workshop showcased the film 'Misafir: A Guest' by Egyptian filmmaker Mariam El Marakeshy. Misafir tells the story of three young refugees, from Syria, Afghanistan and Palestine, living in Istanbul and the challenges they face in their studies and entering the labour market. Their main obstacles include the language barrier, integration into their new, hosting community, as well as their perception from Turks - that they are 'misafir' meaning a guest that has come for a long stay, but who will one day return to their home.



Discussions within the workshop were sparked by speakers Ahmad Sufian Bayram, a Syrian entrepreneurship expert, Melis Kilavuz, IOM's Turkey expert, and Mohammed Skaik, SPARK's entrepreneurship expert in Turkey. They each suggested that while many Syrians wish to return to their home country to rebuild it and see it prosper once again, it is important to facilitate returning in a sustainable way. Both refugees and hosting communities should use the regional hub in their favour and young people from Syria should not miss out on the opportunity to be part of (and contribute to) life in Turkey at the expense of returning later to Syria.

Integration facilitation, it was decided, is a key issue that should be addressed in Turkey. Intermediary players and organisations should now focus upon the welcoming and settling of refugees in order to better encourage employment acquisition, and subsequent stability of the region.

## How to rebuild universities in Syria and Iraq

Martijn Daalder, Strategy Facilitator

Obay Said Al-Dewachi, President University of Mosul

Yaseen Alkhalifah, Rector University of Aleppo

Sultan Brakat, University of York

Last year, in the first edition of the workshop, the challenges facing Iraqi universities, Mosul and ?? in conflict were addressed. This year, in the 2nd edition, the workshop dived into the post-IS universities, Raqqa and Mosul, to explore how to rebuild these institutions.



The issue of rebuilding buildings and infrastructure is of course a key element, but these higher education experts were more interested in engaging young people in the reconstruction of society by creating an ecosystem or mentality for rebuilding within universities.

***"If you want to rebuild Mosul University, we need to build up the society" - President of Mosul University.***

Key questions pervaded the discussion amongst students, experts and representatives from local and international universities:

1. What can be done and offered to students who have now returned to their classes.
2. How to customise curriculums to empower students to rebuild their country?
3. How to encourage student's enthusiasm and build their confidence?

The discussion surrounded civic leadership programmes, to engage students in improving their communities and taking responsibility for their own futures. Similarly, providing scholarships for studies centred around rebuilding needs, such as Engineering, Psychology, Teaching etc. It was felt by attendees of the workshop that it was important to have several students themselves partaking in the workshop discussions in order to give the youth a voice.

## Beating the Odds: Stories from Fragile States

Abdirizaq Abdullahi, Somali entrepreneur

Rebin Khailany, Iraqi Kurdistan entrepreneur

Enas El Bahri, Libyan entrepreneur

Richard van Hoolwerff, SPARK

This workshop centred around 4 entrepreneurs from fragile states - Ange Muyubira, Burundi, Abdirizaq Abdullahi, Somaliland, Rebin Said, Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Enas Elbahri, Libya. Participants of the workshop were tasked with finding solutions to the incredibly severe problems these entrepreneurs face in doing business.



Four groups of participants were created, who each heard a challenge facing one of the entrepreneurs and were given 30 minutes to brainstorm on solutions. Ange's main challenge in Burundi was access to development funding: "How can I be a partner in the development sector but still remain an enterprise?"

The challenge that Abdirizaq presented was related to the tourism in Somaliland. He said: "The government is not in a position to develop the tourism industry. How can we [tourism company] develop this in Somaliland so that it a) appeals to international clients; b) benefits the local community; and c) is eco-friendly and sustainable?"

The challenge Enas presented was the struggle she faces in attracting Libyan employees to work in a non-government sector.

Finally, Rebin noted that the unstable political climate in the Kurdistan Region was his biggest challenge. Although his product [renewable energy] is needed, as there is a huge lack of electricity in Kurdistan, investors are put off of investing large sums during turbulent political climates.

The room full of interesting and experienced participants currently working within FCAS came up with some thoughtful and sensitive solutions to the entrepreneur's problems, demonstrating the power of a 90 minute brainstorm session!







## Dynamic Futures: Creating the Next Generation of Leaders

Farooq Burney, Al Fakhoora

Fadlo Khuri, American University of Beirut

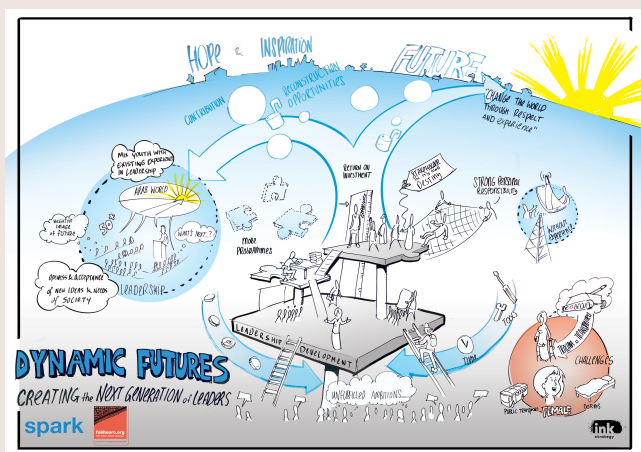
Yannick du Pont, SPARK

Gerard Steeghs, Netherlands Special Envoy for Syrian students from Gaziantep University

Ink Strategy illustrators were present in this workshop, conducted by our partner, **Al Fakhoora**, which sought to identify methods for better providing higher education to the thousands of Syrian refugees currently searching for it in the MENA region. Equally important was how to scale up scholarship programmes for Syrian refugees, and how to link entrepreneurship and civic leadership to these scholarship programmes to prepare students for next steps once they have finished their degree.



The illustration shows in the middle the leadership development of young Syrians through the Dynamic Futures programme. Through the time invested in them and the tools they got to grow they developed among other skills also a strong personal responsibility to give back to society and the feeling that they have a stake in their own destiny. By investing in these young people the society will get a return on their investment. These new young leaders want to create a hopeful and inspiring future by working together with the existing leaders and change the world with respect and the influence of own experiences.



## Refugee Driven Enterprises: Achieving Integration

Mansour Ben Fata, Islamic Development Bank

Rania Bikhazi, ILO Regional Office for Arab States

Ahmad Sufian Bayram, Techstars

Lev Plaves, Kiva

One of the main barriers affecting refugee-driven enterprises (RDEs) is integration into host economies. This workshop addressed possible solutions to improve conditions for RDEs.



The entrepreneurial case of Abdul-Karim Qtifan, a Palestinian business-owner in the UK, who gave his personal story of starting his RDE. At first Qtifan struggled to understand the value chain of his business and lacked information on business development services. However, with support he was able to better integrate his RDE and stressed to the participants how important it is to support RDEs, as they will become employers and positively impact the hosting economy. Mansour Ben Fata explained how hosting governments should look to RDEs as a great source of impact to their economies. For example, in Turkey, Syrians have started 6000+ companies, which has contributed over \$334m to local economies. Therefore, hosting nations should provide business services to RDEs, small businesses and entrepreneurs in order to capitalise on this growth.

However, another major challenge affecting RDEs is access to finance. Lev Plaves introduced Kiva - a nonprofit, crowdfunding network of lenders financing businesses to alleviate poverty. Kiva experiences a huge demand for access to finance services among refugee entrepreneurs. Plaves explained that different financing models could be implemented so that risk is reduced. Ahmad Sufian Bayram highlighted importance of creating a supportive ecosystem so that youth are able to start and grow their businesses through different entrepreneurship support models, such as business incubation, acceleration, and investment.



## Masterclass: The 4th Industrial Revolution

Abdigani Diriye, IBM Research Africa

David van Dijk, African Business Angel Network

Abdigani is a research scientist at IBM Research Africa and the co-founder of Innovate Ventures, a startup accelerator and tech fund in Somalia. He began the session by outlining how the 4th industrial revolution is different to previous revolutions; how it will primarily impact fragile states; as well as the current state of innovation in fragile/emerging markets.



Abdigani stressed that tech solutions are - and will continue to be - fundamental for creating opportunities and jobs in fragile markets. Higher skilled businesses in these regions working within AI, tech and software innovation will define the development of their countries. He gave the example of M-pesa, an African tech-based platform supporting the local economy by creating high GDP for Kenya, which has been exported worldwide as a financial transfer service.

Human interaction with machines will be more prevalent in the future, with automated public service processes, e.g. health care. Abdigani gave the example of a mobile app that detects eye infection. The app has made medical checks accessible for many marginalised communities. Automation can aid inclusion, increase efficiency and reduce costs for entrepreneurs in fragile states. It can also be a radical solution to fighting corruption since automated processes make data available and accessible.

However, the 4th industrial revolution will continue to present challenges for entrepreneurs, e.g. regulations/checks/balances aren't as mature in most fragile regions, which can result in exaggerated interest rates and market monopolies. Abdigani outlined his own startup failures and how he utilised his learnt lessons in order to support new startups in Africa. Namely:

*"Staying in business is only conditional to staying relevant to end customers and addressing community needs."*

## Masterclass: Kilian Kleinschmidt

Kilian Kleinschmidt, Innovation and Planning Agency

In this session Kleinschmidt provided his unconventional views around issues of migration and the provision of shelter. According to Kleinschmidt, the government and international community should acknowledge that camps have become permanent fixture not a temporary thing. They are, in his terms, the cities of tomorrow:

*"We have to get away from the concept that, because you have that status – migrant, refugee, martian, alien, whatever – you're not allowed to be like everybody else".*



When he was asked to run a newly established refugee camp back in 2013, he was able to translate these ideas into practice. He organised the camp as a city rather than a temporary settlement. He consulted with urban designers from Amsterdam and disregarded procurement standards by hiring private companies to install, for example, water systems. The Za'atari camp in Jordan, one of the biggest refugee camps in the world, is gradually assimilating within its wider setting and shows little signs of impermanence.

Kleinschmidt is outspoken about his opinions and candid about his actions. He explained how he was harassed during his nightly camp strolls by children throwing rocks at him. He ended up hiring the most aggressive boy to be his personal bodyguard. Whether you agree with him or not, Kleinschmidt is able to convey his views and experiences in a gripping manner, resulting in a session in which traditional ways of thinking about (humanitarian) aid provision and financing mechanisms were markedly challenged.

The primary outcome of Kilian Kleinschmidt's masterclass was his advice to all attendees - NGOs, government representatives, private sector, academics - to think outside the box.

## Doing Agribusiness in Conflict

Emmanuelle Ntakiributimana, Burundian entrepreneur  
Firas Deeb, SPARK  
Johan te Velde, Double Loop Advisors  
Mariel Mensink, MAVC  
Nadia Nintunze, SPARK  
Pyt Douma, Independent Researcher



The workshop focused on NGO employment support during conflict, particularly agri-business, which is often a sustainable economic driver in FCAS. It is important to recognise the different contexts and challenges related to particular regions. The workshop highlighted the cases of Burundi, Yemen and South Sudan.

In Burundi, entrepreneurship is a growing trend, not much seen before the conflict. Hearing the success story of a young, successful entrepreneur, Emmanuelle, helped to personify the reality of doing business there. He stated that since the 2015 conflict an export ban, a ban on foreign investors, an oppressive government, lack of fuel and high interest on micro-finance loans has hampered his agri-business.

In Yemen, the greatest challenges have been food insecurity and finding local staff to implement employment programmes. Firas outlined how SPARK has tried to include women within new value chains (VCs) where in traditional VCs (coffee and dates) they were excluded. In responding to food insecurity, SPARK added dairy, fish, eggs and vegetable VCs, focusing on income-generating projects, as well as enterprises.

Nadia from SPARK Burundi detailed how SPARK has focused on cooperatives in order to maximise investments. SPARK adapted to the lack of access to finance by developing new financing mechanisms and VCs that are better connected to local markets, such as cassava, honey and pineapples (high potential).

The importance of working with local organisations with the local knowledge, conflict-sensitivity and working with finance institutions were highlighted as

employment support in FCAS. Mariel outlined the need to sensitise micro-finance institutions on sustainability and advocate for access and lower interest rates. Martin Spicer, from the IFC, notified the participants on how the IFC invests in private companies, such as small farmers, to take risks that otherwise would be avoided. The risk is then reduced, building up a history, creating a more self-sustainable model.

## Selling the 'Fragile State' Story

Shaun Matsheza, RNW Media  
David Wheeler, Editor Al-Fanar Media  
Hans Docter, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Lennart Hofman, War & Conflict Journalist

The fragile state story is a difficult one to sell, because people generally prefer happy stories. However, when crafted in a particular way, people can be made to pay attention. With media experts specialised in telling the stories from conflict-affected and fragile states leading the workshop, alongside Director of Sustainable Economic Development and Ambassador Private Sector & Development Cooperation at the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands](#), Hans Docter, the session was a lesson in storytelling. The elements of a great story were initially explored - how to portray real people, convey empathy and showcase protagonists as well-rounded characters. Then Lennart Hofman introduced the difficulty of covering 'forgotten' conflicts in the mainstream media and gave workshop participants tips on staying relevant in the eyes of an otherwise detached audience.

The necessity of such stories, of staying relevant, were echoed by Hans Docter, who reminded attendees that when policy makers receive powerful stories on which to base their decision making, it makes it easier for them to make such decisions. Highlighting the importance of emotive and accurate storytelling for advocacy. The workshop participants were given a hands-on story-making exercise, which sharpened their storytelling techniques.





## Private Sector Solutions to the Global Refugee Crisis

Annelies Withofs, IKEA Foundation  
Scarlet Cronin, Tent Foundation  
Emma Ursich, Generali  
Raouf Mazou, UNHCR  
Michel Botzung, IFC

The IFC invests in emerging economies including most challenging markets such as fragile and conflict-affected situations. As the largest investor in challenging markets, IFC is also looking into private sector solutions for refugees and host communities. Generali started a project - The Human Safety Net, on which SPARK partners - providing refugees with the skills, resources and tools to become entrepreneurs in Europe. The Tent Foundation is bringing private sector initiatives together and tries to involve more companies in providing solutions for the global humanitarian crisis.



The discussion and expertise in the room focused around several key points. Firstly, that there is a need to shift away from short-term CSR pledges and focus on longer term initiatives and interventions. Secondly, companies suggest little information on private sector engagement in refugee space is being shared. Further efforts on knowledge sharing, including better understanding of the impact would be beneficial to help larger companies operationalise their own programmes. Thirdly, businesses can use their leverage to push for regulatory framework reform with governments, e.g. to push for the right to work and the right to start a business. Companies, because of their financial impact, can sometimes be more effective than NGOs in this regard. Finally, local private sector solutions from within refugee and host communities can give back independence to refugees. The current humanitarian paradigm provides a lot of free goods, but eventually this humanitarian investment dries up. By providing more unconditional cash assistance, refugees could use the money as they deem fit, potentially investing it in entrepreneurship, benefiting and supporting local economies.

## Rebuilding the MENA Region through Entrepreneurship

Simone Zeh Atanasovski, EBRD  
Ahmed Ben Mussa, Tatweer Entrepreneurship Campus  
Buke Cuhadar, Global Entrepreneurship Network  
Rebin Khailany, Iraqi entrepreneur  
Marc de Klerk, Oxfam Novib

In many places throughout the MENA region, entrepreneurship has risen out of necessity, as a tool for survival. However, the experts of the workshop argued that now entrepreneurship can be used as a tool for rebuilding. The panelists presented the private sector (EBRD), public sector (Tatweer Entrepreneurship Campus, Libya), NGO (Global Entrepreneurship Network & Oxfam Novib) and beneficiary (Rebin Khailany) perspectives, in order to address all angles surrounding building up entrepreneurship ecosystems.




Various countries/regions were also presented, from Libya to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Discussions made clear that contexts are too different to compare. However, it was agreed that the value of local networks, including peer support opportunities, is a key success factor in all contexts. Support projects can play an essential role in building entrepreneurship opportunities.

A huge challenge for entrepreneurs in the MENA region is access to finance due to narrow markets, lacking rule of law and political instability. Apart from sharks, access to finance is limited. High risk-taking financing projects (such as the IFC) are needed to provide opportunities for startups.

Similarly, the role of youth in recovery and resilience, through entrepreneurship, is important as they bring new market ideas, international linkages, brain-gain etc. for rebuilding post-conflict environments and providing new opportunities for society to recover. Many examples were named by workshop participants of successful, youth-led startups in post-conflict contexts. Entrepreneurship development NGOs are essential support mechanisms for these ventures.



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# 5<sup>th</sup> rebuilding IGNITE futures conference

**Thank you** to all who participated  
and **huge thanks** to our partners:



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 [See the Ink Strategy illustrations in full here.](#)