



2016 Research Agenda

A project by project synopsis of the dynamic work that the Institute will be taking on across our pillars in 2016

Human Security

Countering Violent Extremism

While scholars have examined radicalisation with emphasis on foreign fighters from the West, empirical evidence on violent extremism in the WANA region remains weak. To bridge this gap, WANA Institute will implement a two-year research project designed to inform the development of policy and programmatic interventions in the WANA region towards more effective human security and counter-extremism approaches.

Labor Rights in Protracted Refugee Crises

The coordination framework that has evolved to respond to refugee crises is structured around a 'partnership' whereby host states (principally low and middle income countries) shelter the displaced people and donor states offset the associated costs through humanitarian funding. This framework is proving inadequate to deal with the scale and complexity of current displacement trends. In cooperation with Professors Sir Paul Collier (Blavatnik School of Governance) and Alexander Betts (Refugee Studies Centre), the Institute will undertake an empirical research project to track the economic and social cohesion outcomes of labour rights elaboration in the WANA region.

Conflict Resilience Model

Against clear global trends, conflict in the WANA region is intensifying. The first stage of this project was to examine the scholarship on conflict drivers to find possible explanations for this peace deficit. In 2016, the risk factors for civil conflict and instability identified will be tested empirically for statistical significance. This quantitative testing will form the basis of a Conflict Resilience Model.

Zakat for Development

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. The potential volume of annual zakat collection is enormous; a 2012 study estimated that USD200 billion-USD1 trillion are spent annually in zakat and voluntary charity across the Muslim world. This places zakat within the 10 highest donors with respect to Official Development Assistance, contributing up to 15 times more than global humanitarian aid contributions. Zakat's capacity to realise development aims has been severely limited by issues to do with uptake and distribution. To realise the broader potential of zakat, this project will elaborate a platform for zakat use and a viability assessment on zakat reform.

Green Economy

Water Decoupling

In Jordan and Palestine, water scarcity and food insecurity are increasingly understood as existential threats to human security and the natural environment. Country contexts which share a similar geography, have managed to increase agricultural production while reducing pressure on water resources through modifications to agricultural composition and practices. While appreciating the different political frameworks, access and availability of technology and resources, and relationships between the countries, this research will analyse how Jordan and Palestine can adapt, build on, and use such methods for enhanced food and water security.

An Arab Green Governance Charter

WANA's environmental challenges require urgent and comprehensive policy action. Innovations to negotiate these challenges require policies guided by environmental awareness. An Arab Green Charter (AGC) might be the mechanism for WANA states to develop a set of principles for green governance and environmental rights, helping to elaborate green governance by articulating a rationale for sound environmental policy-making.

Social Justice

Women's Legal Empowerment

In much of the region, the justice system does not afford equal opportunity and legal protection to large segments of the female population. The Legal Empowerment Coalition, chaired by the WANA Institute, elaborated a strategy to improve women's protection and access to just outcomes on the basis that the applicable law or customs that operate to deny rights are incompatible with Islamic principles. The project will examine the potential for law reform on the basis of ijtihaad, modalities to improve outcomes for outcomes for women at the Shari'ah courts, and eliminate cultural practices that marginalise women. The theory of change is that 'proper Islamic behavior' is a more effective motivator of behavioral change in duty bearers than appealing to the law or international rights doctrines.

Climate Change Vulnerability

While climate change is a large risk factor for Jordan, not all areas are equally vulnerable. This study seeks to identify the groups most vulnerable at the sub-national level and make relevant, practical and cost-efficient policy recommendations to address these groups' needs. Sensitivity to droughts, the dependency on affected resources and the political marginalisation of different groups will be specifically assessed. Research results will inform adaptation strategies that are better targeted toward the most vulnerable groups, thereby focusing resources and efforts on the most needy.

Best Practices in Al Hima

This study, which began in 2015, will continue to map different forms of al Hima implemented in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon and Oman. Specific indicators will be determined with stakeholders to assess the extent to which the preconditions are met to fulfill the accountability of natural resource governance at the local level.

Good Governance Model

There is a deep and urgent need for home-grown models for good governance in the WANA region. Efforts to achieve democratic change have had limited success precisely because they have failed to respond to the specificities of the WANA context. In response, this project aims to move beyond democracy and develop a model for good governance specifically tailored to the region. This comprises a set of interventions that jointly aim to strengthen the knowledge base required for governments to successfully transition towards a system that accommodates all levels of society and politics in WANA.