

CIRS Hosts Talk on Tackling Refugee Crisis through Education

At a recent event at the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at Georgetown University in Qatar, Executive Director of Reach Out To Asia (ROTA), Essa Al-Mannai, delved into the complexities of providing education in the midst of the on-going regional humanitarian crisis.

Since its launch, ROTA has led numerous initiatives ranging from adult literacy trainings to youth leadership programs in Qatar and key countries in Asia. The Qatar-based non-profit organization aims to provide primary and secondary education and create safe learning environments in crisis-affected areas.

His talk at CIRS formed part of the research institute's Monthly Dialogue series, and focused on the organization's work with refugees in the Middle East. Speaking to an audience of researchers and invited guests, Al-Mannai explained how educating children can help with the rebuilding process and reduce the isolation caused by illiteracy.

"During emergencies, the most marginalized people are the youth and young children," said Al-Mannai. "Education is a must, and must be upheld as a first priority."

He explained how ROTA adopts a holistic approach, focusing on working with partners on the ground to build the capacity of school administrators, teachers, children, and parents, as well as that of local non-profit groups. The organization also uses non-traditional approaches to gather the funds needed for its work, a challenge since education does not usually account for a large portion of overall donations in emergency situations.

"At a time where there are multiple humanitarian crises unfolding across the Middle East and beyond, ROTA is having a significant impact in the lives of refugees in no less than thirteen countries," said CIRS Director Dr. Mehran Kamrava. "Through initiatives such as sponsorship of schools, youth sports, and adult literacy programs, ROTA is improving the lives of refugees not just today but for years to come."

In addition to his role at Reach Out To Asia, Al-Mannai has served on the steering committees of various international and local groups focused on development and social responsibility. He also recently represented the Qatari non-profit sector at a High Level Event on Refugees' Education in Emergency Situations hosted by the Permanent United Nations Missions of Portugal, Qatar, and Turkey.