

Press Release
For immediate release

ASB AND UNHCR HOST FIRST GATHERING OF ACADEMIC MINDS ON REFUGEE STUDIES AND FORCED MIGRATION

18 July 2018

KUALA LUMPUR, 18 JULY 2018 - Asia School of Business (ASB) held its first research workshop on refugee studies and forced migration in Southeast Asia with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The research workshop was attended by 70 individuals including academics from Malaysia and Singapore who are involved in research surrounding forced migration, leaders of local NGOs who work with the refugee community, as well as members of the refugee community themselves. The main goal of the workshop is to serve as a platform to connect local academics in hopes of expanding the body of ethical, well-informed and evidence-based academic literature surrounding refugee studies and migration in Southeast Asia.

The workshop covered academic poster presentations and relevant issues such as navigating research ethics in diverse and dynamic refugee populations, as well as refugee healthcare.

Dr. Hartini Zainuddin, Child Activist and Founder of Yayasan Chow Kit and Voice of the Children, who spoke at the event expressed, “There is a huge gap at the grassroots level when it comes to proper documentation and research methods working towards advocacy and policy checking. Working with academics will contribute towards a solid evidence-based advocacy which will strengthen our lobbying for policy change.”

“Refugee children here may not have the access to formal education but there is still an opportunity to enjoy quality education. To improve refugee education, we have to start with teachers who are the strongest school-level predictor of student learning. An improvement in student learning creates educated and skilled refugees who will then become empowered to protect themselves, and to take care of their own needs during their stay here. Teachers are agents of change”, said Ida Hariati Hashim, General Manager of Muslim Aid Education Fund, who spoke about the need to train teachers who teach refugee children in Malaysia.

Melati Nungsari, Assistant Professor of Economics at ASB and the organiser of the event, highlighted the importance of producing high-quality research to support policy-making and the creation of impactful community interventions in this region. “The vast majority of academic work on refugee studies has been Euro-centric and has focused on the movements of refugees from the Middle East into Europe,” she stressed. “The documentation of socio-economic conditions, challenges faced, and proposed solutions for refugee problems in the Southeast Asian region has not been tackled to the same extent. In Malaysia alone, we have more than 150,000 refugees registered with UNHCR. It is extremely important that we understand this population by conducting rigorous and ethical research in order to ensure policy-making or advocacy work done is relevant.”

ASB and UNHCR hope that this research workshop will be the first in an annual series of workshops to promote the academic work done on forced migration. At ASB, making an impact on society goes beyond developing talent for the corporate world and this initiative demonstrates ASB's commitment to using its academic prowess to serve the community in need.

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About Asia School of Business

Asia School of Business (ASB) was established in 2015 by Bank Negara Malaysia in collaboration with MIT Sloan Management to be a premier global business school, a knowledge and learning hub infused with regional expertise, insights and perspectives of Asia and the emerging economies. ASB is committed to develop transformative and principled leaders who will contribute towards advancing the emerging world.

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