Mohammed and Abdullah Ibrahim Al Subaie Charity Foundation-ARNOVA Arab Philanthropy and Nonprofit Research Award to

Ahmad Banamah

Ahmad Banamah was the committee’s choice for Al-Subaie-ARNOVA Arab Philanthropy Research 2019 Award for his proposal “The formalization of volunteering in Saudi Arabia: How does it affect the perceptions and experience of informal volunteer groups?”. His research aims to understand how informal volunteers’ perceptions and experience of volunteering change as they transfer to volunteering in formal organizational settings.

Currently, the vast proportion of volunteering efforts in Saudi Arabia take place in informal settings where groups of individuals plan and manage volunteering projects outside of any organizational context. However, there are many recent efforts in Saudi Arabia aiming to formalize volunteering through integrating these informal groups into current formal NPOs. The research assumes that this formalization process of volunteering will introduce NPOs as formal intermediary structures between the informal volunteers and the cause. This introduction may provoke a conflict over the purpose and the process of volunteering between the formal organization and the used-to-be informal volunteers.

The research questions are

1. What are the value and effects of formalizing volunteering in Saudi Arabia? How does it change the experience of informal volunteers’ and their perception of how and why they volunteer?
2. What potential conflicts may arise between informal volunteers and NPOs from this formalization process? How do they emerge? How are they resolved?
3. How can effort to formalize volunteering incorporate the advantages of informal and formal volunteering settings?

Banamah will collaborate with the team one of the major initiative to formalize volunteering in Saudi Arabia called Edama and a number of informal volunteering groups to conduct the study. After Banamah completes his literature review; he will conduct a series of individual interviews and focus groups with informal volunteers, formal volunteers, and volunteer managers. He will spend three to four months between 2019 and 2020 in Saudi Arabia to conduct the study.