



International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR)

MENA Newsletter | Issue 2, June 2026

Editor's Note:

This issue of the newsletter is being published in the aftermath of and an ongoing, turbulent period between February and June 2026, marked by escalating conflicts, political uncertainty, humanitarian crises, and growing insecurity across several countries in the MENA region. In such contexts, producing knowledge, documenting experiences, generating evidence, and sustaining critical dialogue are not merely academic exercises; they are acts of resilience and resistance.

As governments often struggle to respond adequately to ongoing crises, civil society organizations, activists, researchers, and communities continue to step in, providing support, advocating for rights, and imagining more just futures. Their persistence reminds us that knowledge production, collective action, and solidarity remain essential tools for confronting uncertainty and defending civic space.

We hope this issue contributes to these ongoing efforts and offers insights that inform, inspire, and strengthen our collective work.

- **Sarah Al Bouery, Editor-in-Chief**
Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut

Publications:

1. **Springer Journal: Karageozian, N. Time in refugee studies: a conceptual literature review and prospects from a social theory lens. *Int J Humanitarian Action* 11, 16 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-026-00196-1>.**
Description: The paper argues that time is an important but underexplored dimension in refugee studies. It reviews how different temporal aspects, such as timing, sequence, rhythm, speed, duration, and past–present–future relations, shape forced displacement across individual, organizational, and policy levels.
2. **VOLUNTAS: Schmidt S de S, da Silva ED, Romeo M. Gender Diversity in Cooperative Boards: Favoring and Hindering Factors in a Scoping Review. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. 2026;37(1):38-72. doi:10.1017/S0957876526000100**

Description: This article synthesizes 25 peer-reviewed empirical studies using a PRISMA-ScR approach to examine factors that enable or hinder women's participation in cooperative governance. Findings show that individual factors such as qualifications, prior performance, and collaborative leadership support women's access, while stereotypes, higher performance expectations, and internalized bias limit their legitimacy.

3. **VOLUNTAS: AbouAssi K, Upoma S, Walls C. Mirror, Mirror: Congruence of Intersectional Identity and Volunteering in Membership Associations. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. 2026;37(1):73-85. doi:10.1017/S0957876526000124**

Description: This study examines how intersectional identity congruence between leaders and members of associations shapes volunteering behaviors and outcomes. Drawing on the American Society of Association Executives' *Decision to Volunteer* survey and using the intersection of gender and race identities, we find that board-member congruence is associated with more time volunteered, whereas executive director-member congruence shows limited association.

4. **Book: Monshipouri, M. (2026). *Climate change, environmental refugees, and human rights in the Middle East* (1st ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.**

Description: In this book, Mahmood Monshipouri examines the growing impact of climate change across the Middle East and North Africa, highlighting its links to displacement, migration, food insecurity, and human rights challenges. Drawing on country case studies and key international frameworks, the book explores how environmental crises intersect with social, political, and legal dynamics, offering a comprehensive analysis of climate-related vulnerabilities and governance in the region.

5. **Journal Article: Daher, M., Chabane, S., Al-Masri, M., & Shehabi, A. (2025). *Decolonising deliberation: Citizens' assemblies as a claimed space for forging bottom-up democracy in Lebanon and Tunisia. *Politics and Governance*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.10672>***

Description: Examining citizens' assemblies in Lebanon and Tunisia, the authors assess how participatory democratic practices can create new avenues for citizen engagement and alternative governance models in contexts marked by institutional fragility, democratic decline, and public distrust. [Publication link](#)

6. **Book: Chandra, P. (2026). *Postcoloniality and statehood: The case of Egypt* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003648451>**

Description: This book traces the evolution of the postcolonial state and the social contract in Egypt. It problematises two of the most ubiquitous and contentious terms: democratisation and development, within the context of Egypt and the larger Global South. It also subverts western-centric ideas of global politics to examine why certain aspects of Egypt's history and policies have received more attention than others.

7. **Journal Article: Sigillò, E. (2026). Salafis' hybrid trajectories of socio-political engagement in Tunisia and Algeria. A social movement perspective. *Mediterranean Politics*, 31(2), 298–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2024.2410123>**

Description: This study examines the evolving nature of Salafism in Tunisia and Algeria, challenging simplified classifications by highlighting the movement's internal diversity and "hybridization" with other social and political repertoires. Drawing on a social movement approach and field-based research, it explores how Salafi actors adapt and extend their engagement beyond the religious sphere during periods of constraint.

8. **Journal Article: Hachelaf, A. A. (2026). Blurred lines for Middle Eastern civil society: a practitioner's take on purpose, identity, and donor pressures. *Development in Practice*, 36(4), 800–806. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2026.2663377>**

Description: This paper examines how civil society organisations in the MENA region are increasingly shaped by donor dependency, short-term funding, and political constraints amid growing geopolitical and financial pressures. Drawing on long-term field experience, it highlights key challenges including weakened advocacy, shallow localisation, and emerging technological and labour shifts. It proposes a "strategic idealist-pragmatism" approach to help organisations maintain core values while adapting to a constrained and rapidly changing environment.

9. **Journal Article: قرامي، آمال، و بلغوثي، منيرة. (2026). قراءة في تحولات الثقافة المدنية والفعل المدني في تونس من خلال نشاطية النساء والشبان (2011–2024). (إضافات: المجلة العربية لعلم الاجتماع, 2026 (68–69), 96–118, مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية.**

ملخص: يهدف هذا المقال إلى رصد مسار تكون مفهوم المدنية في السياق التاريخي التونسي وبيان كيفية تطوره عبر الزمن وإعادة بنائه في مرحلة الانتقال الديمقراطي، وكذلك اختبار مدى ترسخ الثقافة المدنية في البنى الذهنية وفي السلوك والخطابات.

Description (translated): This article aims to trace the development of the concept of civiness within the Tunisian historical context, demonstrating its evolution and reconstruction during the democratic transition.

Furthermore, it examines the extent to which civic culture has become embedded in mental frameworks, behaviors, and discourse.

10. **Journal Article: Zougagh, B. (Mar 2026). The Decline of Arab Network Activism Amid Digital Authoritarianism or Self-Restraint. *Hikama*, 6 (12), 37-59. <https://doi.org/10.31430/JFLC4249>**

Description: The study examines whether the decline of Arab network activism is driven by the rise of digital authoritarianism through which regimes have reasserted control over online spaces or by increasing self-restraint among users shaped by fears of surveillance.

11. **Journal Article: Dahraji, Y. (Mar 2026). From a Public Right to an Economic Commodity: Water Policy Transformations in Jordan and Morocco. *Hikama*, 6 (12), 60-86. <https://doi.org/10.31430/FXVF4891>**

Description: This study examines water management policies in Jordan and Morocco through the lens of public policy analysis, moving beyond purely technical and environmental accounts of water scarcity to highlight its political and social dimensions. It argues that water policies were not neutral; rather, since independence, they have

functioned as a strategic instrument for territorial control and for reinforcing the stability and continuity of political authority.

- 12. Journal Article: Aljaramani, A. (May 2025). Critique of Community Reconstruction Institutions and Organizations: The Unseen Consequences of War. *Hikama*, 5 (10), 9-32. <https://doi.org/10.31430/OHFC1304>**

Description: This study examines how the Syrian conflict has affected family life, with particular attention to long-term changes in gender roles, parenting, and household dynamics. It argues that while humanitarian responses have largely focused on immediate material needs, they often overlook deeper social and relational impacts of war.

- 13. Journal Article: Abou-Habib, L. (2026). From the GADU Pack to Gender & Development issue 100. *Gender & Development*, 34(1), 273–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2026.2652682>**

Description: This article traces the evolution of feminist development praxis from the 1980s Oxfam "GADU Pack" to the 100th issue of *Gender & Development*, highlighting a transition toward decolonial, intersectional approaches. The 100th issue reflects on this journey from grassroots resource kits to a professionalized, global platform for critical feminist discourse.

- 14. Commentary in Periodical: Haddad, T. N., & Sakr, T. (2026, June 10). *Disaster reconstruction: Rebuilding trust in fragile states. Buildings and Cities*.**

Description: This article explains that effective disaster reconstruction requires not only resources but also strong governance, coordination, and public trust. Using the 2020 Beirut Port explosion as a case study, the authors show how fragmented institutions and weak coordination hindered recovery efforts and argue for institutional reforms that strengthen state capacity, accountability, and collaboration with civil society. [Link](#)

Call for Papers and Conferences:

- 1) **Call for papers:** Comparative Policy Responses in Hot and Arid Climates: Resilience & Adaptation
at Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Call for abstracts for a workshop and special issue on comparative policy responses in climate-stressed environments, focusing on governance, resilience, and adaptation across sectors.

Deadlines

- Abstracts: 24 June 2026
- Workshop: 13 October 2026

- Special issue submission: 1 April 2027

Contact for more information: lcochrane@hbku.edu.qa

Link: [Call for Papers](#)

2) Seventeenth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) from July 14-17, 2026

Imagining the Next Generation: Strengthening the Foundations of the Third Sector

Registration is still open to attend the Seventeenth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research, which will convene scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to reflect on the future of the third sector and explore innovative pathways for strengthening its foundations. The conference will take place at Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa in Lisbon, Portugal. [Registration link to attend](#).

Training opportunities:

1) Nelson Mandela Global Academy for Social Change Leadership (Online)

A global leadership program focused on governance, human rights, sustainable development, and SDGs, designed to strengthen social change agency and reduce inequality and polarization. Delivered by the Nelson Mandela Foundation in partnership with international universities through the Nelson Mandela Project for Social Change.

The program is grounded in Mandela's leadership values of resilience, humility, and unity, aiming to support leaders working toward peace and sustainable development.

Key Information

- Format: Online
- Fee: USD 2,000
- Application deadline: 13 September 2026

Link: [Application](#)

2) Call for Applications – Political Citizenship for Social Change Program

A joint initiative by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society & Citizenship and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Lebanon

This program supports young activists in Lebanon to strengthen political engagement and develop advocacy campaigns through training, mentoring, and a final public showcase.

Duration: September – December 2026

Format: Hybrid (in-person & online)

Apply by: 3 July 2026 (rolling selection)

Focus Areas

- Active citizenship & social justice
- Democratic participation & governance
- Strategic advocacy & campaigning
- Communication and messaging

Who should apply: Youth (18–30) with activism or civic engagement experience and an advocacy idea.

Contact: Yasmine El Berjawi — ye35@aub.edu.lb

Link: [Application](#)

Op-Ed

“Beyond Capital: How Structured Volunteering Builds Impact Investment Capacity” by Majid Abunahyyah, National Center for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector (NCNP), Saudi Arabia.

“What happens when capital flows into the non-profit sector faster than the capability to absorb it? Across emerging markets, non-profit organizations face a familiar pattern: funding is growing, yet many lack the governance, technical expertise, and operational systems required to translate that funding into sustained outcomes...” [Read full article.](#)

ISTR News and Opportunities

Stay updated with the latest announcements, funding calls, publications, and sector news from the International Society for Third Sector Research.

News & Press: [Link](#)

Calendar of Events: [Link](#)