



PRESS RELEASE

#ShelsResilient: Young Women Entrepreneurs from MENA Build the Resilience of their Cities

Marseille, France 11 September, 2015 –Three female-led teams from Beirut and Cairo were awarded today in Marseille at the Grand Finale of the “Women for Resilient Cities Start-up Competition” organized by the World Bank and the Center for Mediterranean Integration.

The event brought together seven finalist teams along with business incubators, local stakeholders from across the MENA region in addition to World Bank partners: finalists pitched their business proposals in front of the selection committee who selected the best ventures supporting urban resilience and offered winning teams year-long business support services

The Women for Resilience (W4R) is an initiative conducted by the World Bank in partnership with the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the IE Business School, and the Center for Mediterranean Integration. It aims at supporting female entrepreneurs in tackling urban risk and building resilience, while providing innovative solutions to cities and empowering women across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. To frame and facilitate the right conversations on disaster risk management while injecting innovation perspective into policy making, the W4R initiative provides technical assistance in resilience to (i) early-stage female-run startups and (ii) other members of the entrepreneurship ecosystem. It also strives to engage and build capacity of the existing private sector actors in the gender-informed resilience agenda.

The competition contributes to unlocking the potential for self-employment opportunities of women in MENA, of whom only 25% participate in the labor market, and 40% are unemployed. This is particularly relevant in a region where 62% of the population live in cities, and where the region’s rapid urbanization increases the exposure of people and economic assets to disaster events. Indeed the “competition provides an invaluable opportunity for female leaders to transform city risk into sustainable, profitable, and long-lasting business ventures” confirms Andrea Zanon, Task Team Leader, at the World Bank.

The Hashtag #ShelsResilient used during the Finale reflects the commitment of the finalists in bringing home innovative women-led resilience solutions and reaffirming the role of women in all fields.

Since it started in 2015, the competition received more than two hundred start-up proposals from the three participating cities: Beirut, Cairo and Djibouti. After careful due diligence and selection, thirteen semifinalists’ teams qualified for the semifinal. Semifinalists were matched with mentors who supported them in refining their business plans.

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More here: <http://cmimarseille.org/programs/women-resilient-cities>

The Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) is a space where development agencies, Governments, local authorities and civil society from around the Mediterranean convene in order to exchange knowledge, discuss public policies, and identify the solutions needed to address key challenges facing the Mediterranean region. Members of CMI are Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, the City of Marseille, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region, the European Investment Bank and the World Bank Group.