

NatCen International Annual Report 2022 – 2023

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1 About NatCen International

Through rigorous research, training, advisory services and policy engagement, we work to empower societies to shape policy and practice globally.

We are a multidisciplinary team with expertise in a wide range of international development and social policy areas including peace, conflict and security, countering violent extremism and terrorism, migration, climate change, health, philanthropy, civic engagement, education, economic growth, gender, humanitarian policy and human rights. We have a successful track record in leading projects, large and small, and expertise in complex project and consortium management.

We produce robust social research and in-depth analysis to address opportunities and challenges for key stakeholders to be more responsive to local needs and priorities. Our work is global, and we work in partnership with local governments, organizations, universities and research centres to ensure that our research is rooted in the lived social, political and economic realities of the countries we engage in.

Supported by an eminent international advisory board, NatCen International draws on NatCen's 50 years of social research expertise and global outlook to work on a range of social policy issues including: gender equality and social inclusion; counter terrorism, violence and human rights; global health; education; governance and economic growth; and global Britain.

For the years **2022-2024**, our primary focus is on three cross-cutting thematic areas: **global health equity, migration, and climate change**.

We have four strategic objectives for 2022 – 2024 to expand our influence on key social policy issues and these include:

- **Becoming a hub for thought-provoking and stimulating conversations** on global social policy through a commitment to equitable global-local partnerships
- **Developing impactful and original research across the six workstreams** and increased research co-authored with southern partners
- **Becoming a go-to team for governments, multilateral and bilateral organizations for advisory support** and guidance on global social policy and practice in key countries where we have expertise
- **Developing a bespoke training offer for NatCen International** drawing on our core workstreams, partnerships and policy engagement

Our donors and partners enable us to influence change around the world. **Our key donors and collaborators for 2022 – 2023 are:** the Wellcome Trust, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the Home Office, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Swedish International Development Agency, Saferworld, the Geneva Graduate Institute, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the University of Naples, the American University in Cairo (AUC), the Sanaa Centre for Strategic Studies, Shabaka and the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) . We are also indebted to our academic partners including the University of Westminster, the University of Bath, the University of Bristol and Oxford University.

2 Welcome



I feel privileged to present NatCen International's **first annual report for 2022 – 2023**. This year has been busy with setting up the centre at NatCen, recruiting a capable research team, fundraising, delivering on projects, engaging in public events and establishing an international advisory board that includes social policy and international development experts from both sides of the Mediterranean. I am extremely proud of what we have achieved over this past year and where we are headed. I feel deeply indebted to the leadership of NatCen, especially Guy Goodwin, our Chief Executive, for his unwavering support and for enabling this centre to get off the ground so quickly. Special thanks are also due to NatCen International's extremely talented and dedicated team – Anh, Ini, Conor and Felicity. I am also very grateful to all the contributions we have received from across the organization and beyond. I am indebted to the European Social Survey and the International Social Survey Programme teams, our Centre for Evaluation and other programmes at NatCen that helped incubate international work within the organization, helping us expand our international footprint and paving the way for NatCen International to be born.

Since our establishment in December 2021, we have completed and launched several key research projects covering the Middle East and North Africa, Asia Pacific and the United Kingdom. This included an analysis of asylum seeker decision-making in journeys to the United Kingdom; the first study of its kind to apply behavioural insight methods to the asylum policy space. We also completed an analysis on multidimensional poverty in Yemen that helped guide donor engagement in development work in this country; a review of the United States Institute of Peace Conflict and Stabilization Framework (CSMF) in Iraq, and a study on climate justice and policy coherence for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific. We have also just embarked on the development of a bottom-up indicator for a dignified life in a Middle Eastern country, the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to all of this, we have published blogs and policy briefs on the intersection between climate change and health, migrant decision-making, livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa and conflict sensitivity beyond a tick-box exercise.

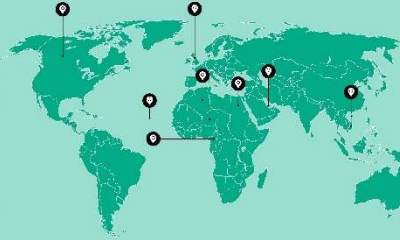
We hosted and spoke at 25 events in Africa, North America and the Middle East, including at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. In collaboration with our fantastic communications and public affairs team, we are planning more engagement events in Italy, the UK and the Gulf countries.

As the world continues to grapple with political and economic instability, the need for more robust evidence has never been greater. Societal priorities need to be heard and more importantly, understood. NatCen International's work will continue to elevate the voices of affected populations around the world, bridging the gap between policy and practice, international and local, all with the objective of *improving lives*.

Sherine El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, PhD
Director of NatCen International

3 Highlights of the Year

25 events
in 8 countries

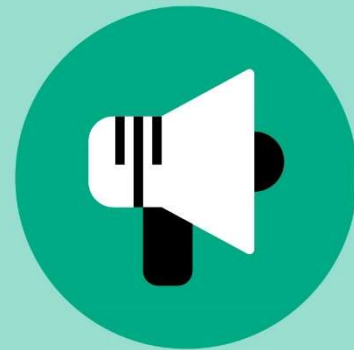


UK, Egypt, Niger, Cameroon,
Canada, Qatar, Vietnam,
Tunisia and online

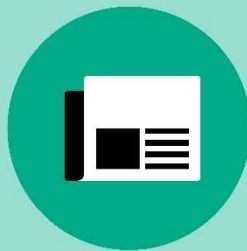
8
projects
delivered



22k
impressions
on Twitter



7
publications



6
blogs
published
online



4 Global Britain



We examine Britain's role in a changing world across policy areas such as humanitarian and development response, conflict, migration, health crises, persistent inequalities and climate change.

4.1 Key Projects

Asylum Seeker Decision-Making in Journeys to the United Kingdom (March 2022 – December 2022)

NatCen International, in collaboration with the University of Westminster, was commissioned by the Home Office to complete a project examining why asylum seekers decide to travel to the UK. This work was funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The project included an in-depth rapid evidence assessment (REA) of 200 documents and 29 in-depth stakeholder interviews with Home Office officials, academics, and civil society organisations in the UK, the Middle East, and North Africa.

The research is the first of its kind in applying behavioural insight methods to the asylum space. Findings from the study fed into the development of a multidimensional decision-making model based on the findings of the REA and interviews. This model considered the macro-, meso-, and micro-dimensions of asylum seeker decision-making and explored interdependencies between these different factors. The model adds to existing behavioural models such as COM-B and EAST to account for the complexity and fluidity of asylum seeker decision-making, supporting policy makers and analysts to design suitable interventions on these topics.

5 Counter Terrorism, Violence and Human Rights



We explore how violence is experienced and perpetrated, and how it can be prevented in a sustainable and effective way. We also examine pathways to promote and protect human rights and dignity.

5.1 Key Projects

Conflict Sensitivity and Rethinking Aid (August 2022)

In collaboration with Saferworld (UK) and ASAL Consulting in Mogadishu, Somalia, a series of two panel discussions and an article written for *Development in Practice* were developed to call for a more progressive approach to conflict sensitivity. This is to make sure that conflict sensitivity practices are less of a technical, box-ticking exercise, and more of a political effort to address structural inequalities in the aid system.

Review of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework (CSMF) in Iraq (December 2022)

The CSMF is a data collection tool that has been adapted to the Iraq context from USIP's Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments (MPICE) framework. Through a collaboration with USIP, this study presented an in-depth review of the CSMF as a data collection tool and a data source for analysts, policymakers and international and local civil society actors to act on reducing conflict and supporting peacebuilding efforts in Iraq. The study charted opportunities for the optimization of the CSMF as a data platform that seeks to influence peacebuilding policy and programming in Iraq.



Sherine El-Taraboulsi McCarthy speaking in Tunisia at USIP's annual Middle East and North Africa Regional Facilitators Forum, November 2021

Rethinking Liberal Peace through Southern Eyes (September 2021 – December 2022)

Funded by the British Academy and in collaboration with Cranfield University and Addis Ababa University, we held three writing workshops to engage with marginalised voices and narratives in the field of liberal peace. The objective of the workshops was to encourage “southern” early-career researchers to challenge existing theories in the field of peace and security, drawing on their lived experience as well as non-Western theoretical, methodological and epistemological domains.

Participants were located in the following countries: Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Libya, Yemen, West Bank, Iraq, Syria and Qatar.

6 Governance and Economic Growth



We examine the challenges and opportunities that states, communities and the private sector are facing in order to facilitate economic growth and poverty reduction.

6.1 Key Projects

A Study on Multidimensional Poverty in Yemen (March 2022 -May 2022)

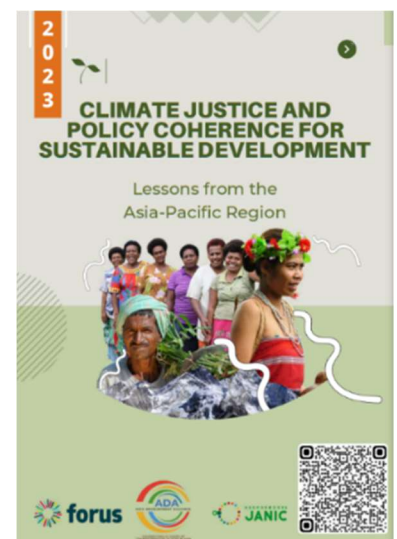
In collaboration with Saferworld, we developed an analysis of the intersection between poverty, politics and conflict in Yemen to inform the Swedish International Development Agency's (SIDA) development cooperation strategy in the country under the Regional MENA Strategy 2021 – 2025.

Climate Justice and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Asia-Pacific Region (May 2023)

We contributed to this [report](#) which analysed climate action and progress on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in 17 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. PCSD is a policy tool for integrating the environmental, social, economic and governance dimensions of sustainable development across all areas of policy making.

Inclusive Governance in the Context of Climate Change Impacts: A Case Study of the Mekong Delta Region (UNDP; Dragon-Mekong Institute) (June 2023 – September 2023)

This case study aims to shed light on the current vulnerability of populations in Mekong Delta region in the context of a specific climate change impact. It will also point out gaps in current national policy responses to this particular impact to ensure the protection of populations in the region.



A Bottom-up Indicator for a Dignified Life in a Middle Eastern Country (May 2023 – December 2023)

Supported by the local government and in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group (BCG), we are carrying out research to develop a bottom-up indicator for a dignified life in a country in the Middle East. Through a series of 34 focus group discussions, the project focuses on what is needed for a theoretical household for a dignified life. Participants will not be asked about what they find acceptable as an individual, but about what is acceptable in the context of society as a whole. This is the first project of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa and the methodology (used to qualitatively develop a country's Minimum Income Standard) has only been implemented in 4 countries in the world.

7 Global Health



We examine contextual opportunities and challenges for everyone to attain the highest level of health.

7.1 Key Projects

Climate Change-Intensified Water Impacts on Human Health in Vietnam

Funded by the Wellcome Trust in partnership with Newcastle University and Vietnam National Statistics Office, this short scoping project focuses on the damage to human health caused by the impacts of climate change on water-based ecosystems in South and South-East Asia (SSEA). Produced outputs to date include a report on damage to human health caused by the impact of climate change on freshwater ecosystems in Vietnam; a map of 'Climate Change-Water-Health' impact chain as well as a stakeholder workshop titled: "Climate Change, Freshwater Ecosystems, and Health: Understanding the Evidence from Local Perspectives, the Case of Vietnam" to be held at Vietnam's National Statistics Office in June 2023.

8 Events and Communications



A key strategic objective for NatCen International is to become a hub for thought-provoking and stimulating conversations on global social policy through a commitment to equitable global-local partnerships. Over the past year, we organized and spoke at 25 public engagement events on a wide range of issues including the impact of COVID-19 and health equity, livelihoods in Africa, gender inclusive climate action, Arab philanthropy, multidimensional poverty among others. Below are some examples from the past year.

COVID-19 and Reframing the Discourse on Global Health Equity

In February 2022 and in collaboration with the Graduate Institute in Geneva, NatCen International organized an in-depth discussion on COVID-19 and reframing the discourse on global health equity. Despite decades of policy engagement in championing the SDGs, the ongoing commitment to “leaving no one behind” and several other international frameworks that encouraged ceding power to local actors, there has been a failure to provide equal access to vaccines globally. What has changed in the discourse on global health equity since the outbreak of COVID-19? This discussion explored the challenges and opportunities in global health equity.

Islamic Protest, Terrorism and Security in Africa

In June 2022, NatCen International participated in a conference at the Cameroonian capital city of Yaoundé to discuss the implications of the Boko Haram conflict in the Lake Chad Axis region.

Roundtable Discussion on Strengthening Gender-Inclusive Climate Action in Intersecting Crises

In July 2022 and in partnership with Keble College at the University of Oxford and the Weidenfeld-Hoffman Trust, NatCen International organized a roundtable discussion that explored the opportunities and challenges of strengthening gender-inclusive climate action within the context of intersecting crises in Africa. This expert roundtable resulted in the report “Strengthening Gender-Inclusive Climate Action in Intersecting Crises: A Roundtable Discussion”.



Image: Tanya Smith (Weidenfeld-Hoffman Trust), Dr Sherine El Taraboulsi-McCarthy (NatCen International), Dr Irina Fedorenko-Aula (Vlinder Climate), Dr Lauren Fletcher (BetaEarth.global) and Ini Dele-Adedeji (NatCen International) pictured after the roundtable discussion at Keble College on 'Strengthening Gender-Inclusive Climate Action in Intersecting Crises'.

Webinar on Cannabis and Livelihoods in Africa

In July 2022 and in collaboration with the University of Bristol, NatCen International organized a webinar on the impact of cannabis criminalisation legislation on livelihoods in Africa. The discussion provoked questions on the implications of the policy changes for ordinary citizens and asked in what ways the reforms can ensure broad-based agrarian transformation.

Gender and Climate Action in the MENA Region: Priorities for COP27

In November 2022 and in collaboration with the American University in Cairo, NatCen International organized a roundtable discussion in Cairo on gender and climate action in the Middle East and North Africa. The MENA region will be one of the world's regions hit hardest by climate change in the 21st century and the effects of the changing climate are problems compounded by socioeconomic inequalities and conflict in the region. The event highlighted the need to understand the gendered dimensions of climate change and climate mitigation and adaptation strategies in this region.

COP27: Climate Risks in the MENA Region and Impact on SMEs Plenary

In November 2022, NatCen International participated in a multi-stakeholder panel discussion at COP27 on the impact of climate change on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the MENA region, coping strategies and scope for complementarity between international and domestic climate action to enhance the resilience of SMEs in this region.

Arab Foundations Forum: Report Launch, Building towards an Enabling Arab Civic Space: Resilience, Growth and Sustainability

In December 2022, NatCen International participated in an event to mark the publishing of the report “An Enabling Arab Civic Space for Resilience, Growth and Sustainability” and included discussions about the shrinking of the Arab civic space, the role of international donors and complementarity between local and international actors, and a discussion on localisation and what it means in practice, in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

Comparing Gulf and European Donor Engagement in Yemen

In March 2023, NatCen International participated in a workshop at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies on Gulf and EU donors in Yemen. The discussion included a comparative analysis of EU and Gulf aid modalities in Yemen. The session also explored how to enhance mutual understanding of aid practices between Gulf and EU donors, such as through data collection, information sharing, publication of research and analytical outputs, and joint action via sectoral and non-sectoral working groups.

Delta Expert Dialogue Series – Locally-led Adaptation: Is it a Way Forward to Achieving Delta Sustainability? Barriers, Challenges, and Opportunities

Hosted by UKRI GCRF Living Deltas, NatCen International spoke at this event to discuss how locally led adaptation can deliver democratic, equitable, and context-specific solutions. The discussion posed questions about the barriers and challenges that locally led adaptation and development will face, and the opportunities it will bring in the river deltas’ context as well as in the context of the SDGs’ commitment to ‘leave no one behind’.

NatCen International also published several blogs and opinion pieces including the following listed below.

“Climate change is outrunning us”: COP27 and the urgency to reaffirm equity and inclusivity in climate action (November 2022)

This blog called for the affirmation of equity and inclusivity at the heart of climate action, calls specifically for local agency in a gender responsive and inclusive way, the addressing of power inequities between northern and southern actors and the strengthening of data infrastructure on climate change in LMICs.

Why health matters for climate justice: reflections on low- and middle-income countries (February 2023)

This was a NatCen International collaboration with Newcastle University, addressing the knowledge gaps in the current understanding of the damage to human health caused by the impacts of climate change on water-based ecosystems in South and South-East Asia (SSEA). This blog demonstrates the way that climate change is a public health challenge in LMICs, and has under researched effects on mental health, that there is a need to reinforce national data infrastructure, and the way forward is to recognise the inextricable bond between health and climate justice.

9 Our Strategic Advisory Work

NatCen International provides strategic expert advisory support to governments, UN agencies and civil society organizations to help advance its mission to shape global social policy and practice. Below are some examples from the past year:

The Switchboard

NatCen International has served on the expert advisory board for the Switchboard, a pilot and innovative project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Shabaka, a values-driven, diaspora-led consulting and research organisation focused on diaspora humanitarian preparedness, and response. Switchboard is a project designed by and for the diaspora.

‘Leave No One Behind’ Coalition in Vietnam and the regional Asia Development Alliance on the SDGs and Voluntary National Review

NatCen International has provided technical advice for the Leave No One Behind Coalition in Vietnam on the Sustainable Development Goals and is advising on the development of a toolkit on citizen-generated data.

10 Our Publications

10.1 Reports and Working Papers

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine, Lilian Miles, Sebastian Ille and Felicity Kersting (2023) “When the Water is Safer than the Land: Complexity of Choice in Asylum Seeker Decision-Making” United Nations University Policy Brief.

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine, Conor O’Shea and Ini Dele Adedeji (2023) “Case Study: Review of the Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework (CSMF) in Iraq” (United States Institute of Peace)

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine, Lilian Miles, Serena Masino, Sebastian Ille, Gayle Munro, Felicity Kersting, Ini Dele-Adedeji and Conor O’Shea (2022) “Asylum seeker decision making in journeys to the United Kingdom” (UK Home Office)

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine (2022) “Whose Risk? Bank De-risking and the Local Political Economy of the Counter-Terrorism in Conflict-Affected Countries.” *International Review of the Red Cross*. Ed. Bruno Demeyere. Vol. 103 (916-917), pp. 747-762.

O’Shea, Conor and Ini Dele-Adedeji (2022) “Strengthening Gender-Inclusive Climate Action in Intersecting Crises: A Roundtable Discussion” NatCen Report. Available through: <https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/strengthening-gender-inclusive-climate-action-in-intersecting-crises.pdf>

Midgely, Tim, Sherine El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Rahma Ahmed and Alastair Carr (2022) “Beyond Box-Ticking: Taking Conflict Sensitivity back to its Roots.” *Development in Practice*.

Vu, Anh et al. (2023) “Climate Justice and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Asia-Pacific Region” Available through: <https://www.forus-international.org/pt/pdf-detail/97879-climate-justice-and-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development-lessons-from-the-asia-pacific-region>

10.2 Blogs

Dele-Adedeji, Ini (2022) “Navigating Research on Migrant Transportation in Niger” NatCen [internal] blog.

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine, Anh Vu and Irina Federenko-Aula (2022) “COP27 and the Path Ahead: Is the ‘Loss and Damage’ Fund a Win for the Global South?” United Nations University (UNU). [Available via UNU website.](#)

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine and Anh Vu (2022) ““Climate change is outrunning us”: COP27 and the urgency to reaffirm equity and inclusivity in climate action” NatCen Blog. [Available via the NatCen website.](#)

El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, Sherine, Tim Midgley, Rahma Ahmed and Alastair Carr (2022) “25 Years of Conflict Sensitivity: Time for Structural Change in a Dysfunctional Aid System” Saferworld. [Available via Saferworld.](#)

Vu, Anh and Conor O’Shea (2023) “Why health matters for climate justice: reflections on low- and middle-income countries” NatCen blog. [Available via the NatCen website.](#)

11 Public Engagement



Cameroon

Islamic Protest, Terrorism and Security in Africa

University of Maroua, June 2022

Canada

Researching Transnational Crime

In collaboration with the University of Bristol, December 2022

Egypt

Climate Risks in the MENA Region and Impact on SMEs Plenary

COP27, Sharm El Sheikh, November 2022

Gender and Climate Action in the MENA Region: Priorities for COP27

American University in Cairo, November 2022

Niger

Series of Workshops on the Criminalisation of the Transportation of Migrants across the Sahara

Hosted by the Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL) and Alternative Espaces Citoyens (AEC), November 2022

Qatar

Comparing Gulf and European Donor Engagement in Yemen

Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, March 2023

Tunisia

Role of Diplomacy in Peacebuilding, A Conversation with Ambassador Faysal Gouia

Hosted by the United States Institute of Peace MENA Programme, November 2021

Annual Middle East and North Africa Regional Facilitators Forum

Hosted by the United States Institute of Peace MENA Programme, November 2022

United Kingdom

The Politics of Global Solidarity in the Age of COVID-19

Keble College, University of Oxford, February 2022

Environmental Displacement and Migration: Drivers, Impacts, Solutions

Hosted by Cambridge Zero, Cambridge University, March 2022

Strengthening Gender-Inclusive Climate Action in Intersecting Crises

Keble College, University of Oxford, July 2022

UKICE/Migration Observatory conference: Immigration After Brexit

Hosted by King's College London, March 2023

Vietnam

Climate Change, Freshwater Ecosystems, and Health: Understanding Evidence from Local Perspectives

To be hosted at Vietnam's National Statistics Office in early June 2023

Online webinars

Three Roundtable Discussions on Rethinking Liberal Peace from a Southern Perspective

In collaboration with Cranfield University and Addis Ababa University, December 2021

COVID-19 and Reframing the Discourse on Global Health Equity

In collaboration with the Graduate Institute in Geneva, February 2022

Solidarity and Fragmentation in Libya's Civic Space

Hosted by the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, March 2022

Cannabis and Livelihoods in Africa

In collaboration with the University of Bristol, July 2022

The Future of Yemen: Reimagining Humanitarian Engagement

Hosted by the Middle East and North Africa Social Policy Network (MENASP) at the University of Bath, October 2022

Building towards an Enabling Arab Civic Space: Resilience, growth and Sustainability

Hosted by the Arab Foundations Forum, December 2022

Delta Expert Dialogue Series - Locally-led adaptation: Is it a way forward to achieving delta sustainability? Barriers, Challenges, and Opportunities

Hosted by UKRI-GCRF, February 2023

Three Roundtable Discussions on Localizing Methodologies in Research and Evaluation in Peace and Security

In collaboration with USIP, April 2023

"Despite being newly formed, we have witnessed NatCen International's remarkable contributions to advancing knowledge and improving lives. Through rigorous research, training, and engagements with diverse groups and networks, they inspire and innovate in all their thematic areas of work. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with them."

Bashair Ahmed, CEO, Shabaka

"I have worked with Sherine and her team since March 2022, notably, on completing a project for the Home Office (Asylum Seeker Decision Making to the UK). What has made a deep impression on me is Sherine's strong leadership in steering the research, her team's timeliness in delivering targets and the confidence with which any difficulties are addressed. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Sherine and her team and look forward to many more successes together."

Dr Lilian Miles, Westminster Business School

12 NatCen International Advisory Board



Elie Abouaoun
Director, Middle East and North
Africa Programs, USIP



Dr Akwasi Aidoo
Senior Fellow,
Humanity United



Dr Ali Awni
Director,
American University in Cairo



Dr Aida Essaid
Managing Director, Taawon
(Welfare Association)



Dr Catherine Fieschi
Director, Counterpoint



Professor Rory Fitzgerald
Director,
European Social Survey



**Professor Sir
Michael G. Marmot**
Professor of Epidemiology,
University College London

13 NatCen International Staff



Dr Sherine El-Taraboulsi McCarthy
Director



Dr Anh Ngoc Vu
Research Director



Felicity Kersting
Senior Researcher



Conor O'Shea
Researcher



Dr Diane Abdullah
Research Director
(from July 2023)



Dr Ini Dele-Adedeji
Senior Researcher