

# NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR WOMEN IN LEBANON 2011-2021



Prepared by the National Commission for Lebanese Women in cooperation with the  
United Nations Fund for Population

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## PREFACE

*The National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs in Lebanon 2011-2021* is the result of the joint effort and commitment of the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), Government ministries responsible for women's issues, and feminist organizations and institutions engaged in the empowerment of women and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, with the assistance and support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

This collaborative document highlights the level of awareness and commitment of the Lebanese society to achieving full equality between men and women in human dignity, rights and opportunities, and in the equal participation of women in all fields. The challenge was to ensure constructive collaboration among all participating associations, organizations and institutions in order to achieve the objectives set out in the mission statement and mandate of this cooperative endeavour and action.

Thus, to the encouragement of all who aspire to live in a society which respects human rights, key stakeholders and related organizations can - by applying *the National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs in Lebanon* and the accompanying National Action Plan as templates - proceed to develop and execute programmes and activities that promote the state of law and full equality for all.

Women in Lebanon have courageously faced up to difficult situations and worked side by side with men to overcome challenges within the family, in economic activity and society at large, and in political and resistance movements in all their forms. They form a deserving target group for unrelenting efforts that address their concerns and salute their sacrifices.

Continued collaboration among stakeholders will ensure a better future for each and every individual in Lebanon.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women



The stakeholders that have participated to the validation meeting of the *National Ten-Year Strategy for women's Affairs in Lebanon* are the following:

Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering, Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Woman (Lecorvaw), National meeting for the elimination of discrimination against women, kafa (enough) violence and exploitation, Azm and Saade Association, National committee for the follow up on women's issues, Lebanese council of women, Safadi Foundation, YWCA Young women Christian Association, League of Working women in Lebanon, League for Lebanese women's rights, Lebanon family planning association for development and family empowerment (LFPADE), Caritas, CRTDA, Saint-Joseph University, Women Committee in Beirut Bar Association, Chamber of trade, industry and agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

**The gender focal points in the following ministries, public administrations and councils:**

ministry of Tourism, ministry of Defense, ministry of Finance, ministry of Energy and Water, ministry of Higher Education, ministry of Interior and Municipalities, ministry of Environment, ministry of Social Affairs, ministry of Foreign Affairs, ministry of Information , ministry of Displaced, ministry of Industry, ministry of Economy and Trade.

Economic and Social council, Council for development and reconstruction, Central administration of Statistics, Center for educational research and development, Presidency of Council of ministers, Civil defense.

**The representatives of the following regional and international organizations and agencies:**

ILO, UNODC, OHCHR, FAO, ESCWA, UNESCO, European Union, Italian Embassy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Unlike earlier communities, societies of today are characterized by a relative ability to control their present situation and, to some extent, also influence their future. That is achieved through a reliance on science, knowledge and information, as well as an enhanced capacity to predict what is to come. It enables contemporary societies to make choices which reflect and illustrate their aspirations. Generally speaking, those choices indicate also the extent of freedom which communities and people enjoy within such societies.

Additionally, present-day societies, unlike their forerunners, share a common global sphere and a set of collective human and universal principles and standards. The emergence of that set of shared values is the result of cooperation amongst those societies and communities. Consequently, the acceptance and embracement of such values by nations and peoples around the world have led to the drafting and ratification of international charters, treaties and laws. Such instruments, in turn, have bestowed upon those values measuring standards that allow for an appraisal of human development.

Lebanon of 2011 is the outcome of the preceding century. Following independence in 1943, the then newly-declared State was swift to adopt a Constitution which embraced equality for all citizens and guaranteed their fundamental rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of Lebanon assigned to the judiciary the authority and power to monitor State affairs and determine the relationship between State and civil society.

The ratification and passing-into-law of the 1990 Constitutional Amendments, as stipulated in the Ta'if Agreement of 1989, represents an important step for the Republic of Lebanon towards meeting the goals of equality and human rights for all its citizens. Indeed, the Agreement includes a paragraph emphasizing the commitment of Lebanon to the United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The paragraph in question also stresses the role of the State in embodying those principles in all fields and without exception.

In that respect, the Republic of Lebanon has ratified a number of international treaties and conventions. Among them are the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Convention on Child Labour. In 1997, Lebanon also endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), albeit with reservations to certain paragraphs of articles 9, 16 and 26.

As a result of such reservations and weak compliance with ratified treaties on human rights and gender equality, discrimination against women and denial of their equal rights to men in many areas have become an obstacle to development and progress in the country. That stands in sharp contrast to the position overall of the Republic of Lebanon towards its citizens and their rights and obligations - indeed, the State seeks to advance and promote the concepts of justice and human rights.

The procedure of revising and amending legislation and the process of societal change - i.e., social behaviour and attitudes - challenge cultural, traditional and, sometimes, regressive and stoic attitudes and mentalities. Left to its own devices, societal change requires time to unfold, develop and build momentum; hence, in order to address societal imbalance - in other words, discrimination against women - a determined, interventionist approach is in order.

In that regard, a revision and update of the 1996 National Strategy for Women's Affairs are imperative. There is also a need to determine clearly and precisely a set of strategic objectives which must align with, and underscore those embodied in the Constitution and the founding principles of the State.

Furthermore, the revised National Strategy must contain a clear definition of the target areas for possible intervention to remedy the prevailing situation. An amended and updated policy needs to include a national action plan to be developed, ratified and implemented, as well as a prioritization of projects to be realized.

All such measures and steps are necessary in order to enhance the disposition of the State and society to embrace modernity built on egalitarian principles which are aligned with international standards and instruments, and which have been endorsed collectively by many peoples and nations - including the Republic of Lebanon.

## a. Historical Background

Strategic thinking is a forward-looking approach, one that is based on a precise understanding of reality and derived from a societal orientation that has widespread popular support and relies heavily on principles, values and objectives endorsed collectively by the majority of the community.

In 1996, a national strategy for the development and promotion of women in society and their achievement of equality and full human rights was adopted. That was achieved as a result of the cooperation between two organizations: the National Committee in charge of monitoring implementation of resolutions signed at the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995; and the National Committee for the Follow-up on Women's Issues.

The adoption of the 1996 National Strategy for Women's Affairs was facilitated to a great extent by the concurring international trend of promoting gender equality and the development and advancement of women in all societies and nations across the world. In other words, there was a global movement for women to strive for a status of full and unconditional equality with their male counterparts in fundamental rights and freedoms. Subsequently, the National Strategy was followed by the approval of a number of strategic guidelines and directives for the years 2005-2008 concerning programmes and plans to promote and support the status of women, which had been brought forward by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW).

Taking into consideration the changes in society, especially with regard to the status and role of women during the intervening time period, it has become of utmost priority for Lebanon to develop, update and, to a certain extent, renew the National Strategy. In particular, the period since the arrival of the new millennium has witnessed countless significant developments in that respect. An example is an increased awareness regarding the vital role played by women in society and in organizational development which, in turn, has further underscored the importance of granting them their full human rights. In addition, of note is the improvement of the situation, status and general living conditions of women, as well as their very presence in every sphere of society. In the light of such striking development and change, it is necessary to redefine the strategic objectives embodied in the 1996 National Strategy.

Near the end of the twentieth century, several important developments took place. They were connected with the urgency on the local, regional and international levels to prepare for the 1995 Beijing Conference. As a result, international efforts and attention converged and generated an intense global dialogue on the status of women and related issues.

At that stage, there was no official entity in Lebanon assigned with a clear and direct mandate to address the issues and concerns of women. Moreover, data and statistics on the situation of women in the country were inaccurate and/or incomplete. There was no official assessment of the reality on the ground regarding the living conditions of women, and awareness regarding their position vis-à-vis national laws, official texts and legislation was also lacking. Additionally, societal awareness was insufficient in the mind, mentality and attitude of the population at large. Though there were numerous civil-society organizations with an interest in women's issues, they had overlapping membership and dimensions, and unclear mandates. In other words, there were many aspects to their work, ranging from organizations with a purely feminist orientation to those providing more charity-based activities. While there was a feminist dimension to all such women-only bodies, those providing aid and assistance tended to be concerned with human issues, in addition to social interests.

That led to the emergence of collective demands for change in the status quo being raised among female academics and women active in civil society. They proposed the setting-up of a semi-public, semi-private committee entrusted with the responsibility of preparing for the Beijing Conference, and also of attending and participating in its proceedings. The official response from the Government was positive; thus, a national committee was formed, headed by the first lady. An official delegation, divided equally between representatives of ministries and public-sector organizations concerned with women's issues, and spokespersons from civil-society associations, was sent to Beijing - marking the first attendance and active participation of the Republic of Lebanon in an international forum for close to twenty years.

The national committee prepared a report on the situation of women in Lebanon in accordance with the standards and parameters set by the Preparatory Committee of the Beijing Conference. Compiling that report was of extreme difficulty due to the scarcity of vital data in almost all fields as a result of the bloody



conflict that had raged in the country between 1975 and 1990, and the near-total destruction of official buildings and offices where data and records had been housed. The data available were obsolete and in need of updating. Furthermore, it was revealed that field research undertaken prior to the Beijing Conference lacked an essential component of success - that of a gender-based approach in the process of compiling data and reports in all fields in order to obtain sex-disaggregated statistics.

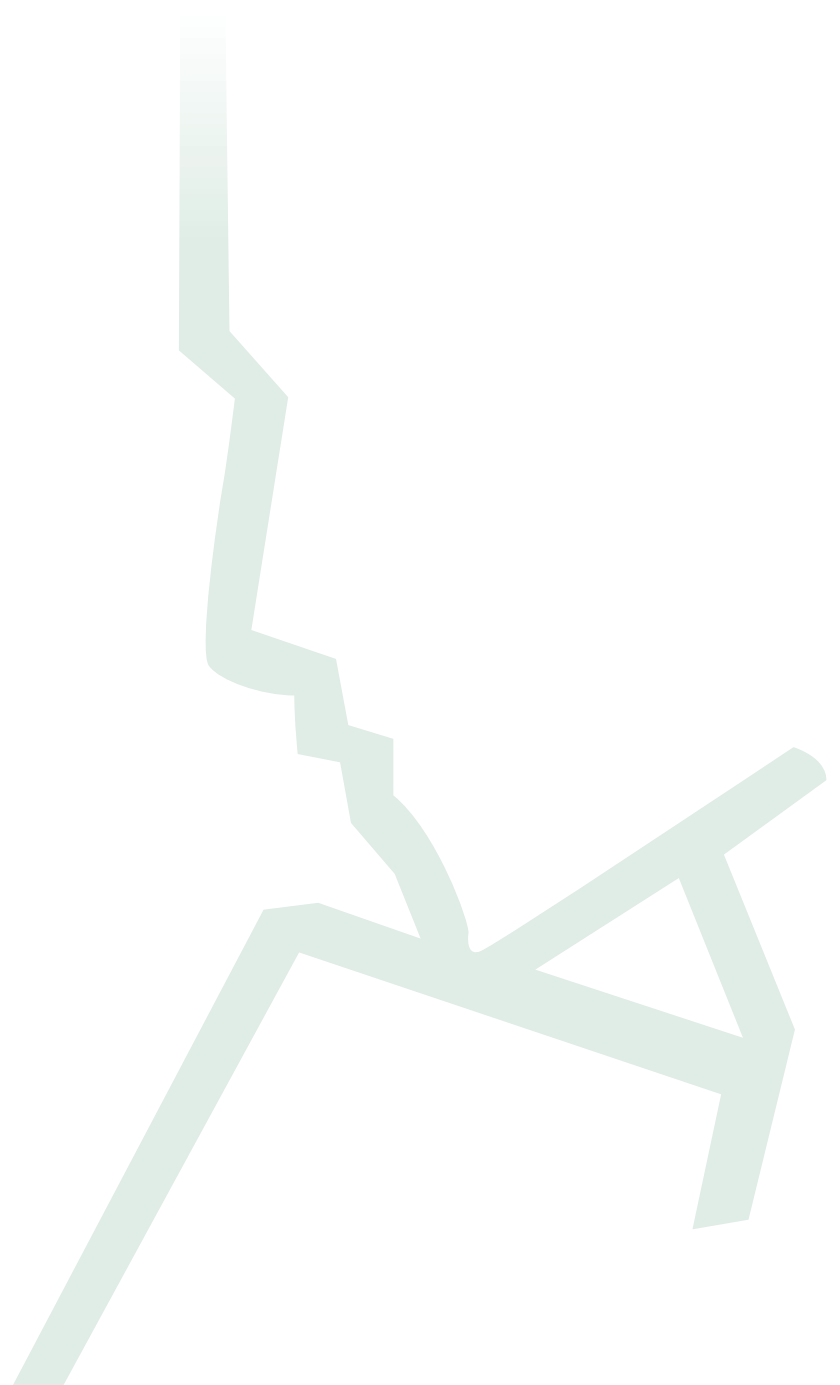
The Republic of Lebanon signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the delegates were eager to establish a national mechanism to monitor the implementation of those recommendations. The Government responded positively and offered cooperation; thus, in 1996, the Council of Ministers established the National Committee for Lebanese Women to that effect, headed by the first lady. NCLW immediately proceeded to work on its mandate, whilst being guided at each juncture by the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. The first step was to establish so-called 'gender focal points' at the concerned ministries and public organizations. In tandem, NCLW began drawing up a draft law to institutionalize a national mechanism dedicated specifically to issues and concerns of women.

That national mechanism was to become NCLW. With the ratification of Law 720/1998 on 16 November 1998, all national tasks and activities as regards women's issues were officially assigned to NCLW with a mandate to (a) advise the Government on women's issues; and (b) liaise and coordinate with concerned ministries, public institutions and civil-society organizations. The linking of programmes and activities with regional and international organizations, and the monitoring of related issues with such organizations also fell under the responsibility of NCLW.

Since its founding, NCLW has handled the monitoring of the gender focal points in collaboration with the concerned ministries and public institutions. Additionally, the Commission has lobbied the prime minister and concerned parties for a memorandum calling for the adoption of a much-needed gender approach in the collection of statistics.

Between 1999 and 2008, NCLW published three official reports on the implementation of CEDAW. They were presented and debated before the CEDAW Committee for the monitoring of the implementation of such provisions. In the light of the tasks entrusted by virtue

of Law 720/1998, NCLW has adopted a mechanism to renew, develop and update the 1996 National Strategy. One of the goals of the 2011-2021 National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs in Lebanon is to serve as a guiding principle to any official or civil-society initiative seeking to enhance the status of women in the country and, thus, enable them to reach full and unconditional equality with their male counterparts in rights and freedoms in all fields.



## b. Methodology

It was agreed and established that the updating and revision of the 1996 National Strategy would be a collaborative process. As such, the procedure would cut across the spectrum to involve all concerned entities and institutions from both the public and private sectors, in addition to civil-society associations and regional and international organizations with a focus on women's issues. They would assess the overall situation of women in Lebanon, including covering sensitive issues and priority concerns, as well as identifying challenges and difficulties faced by females of all ages in the country.

On a collaborative level among all the above-mentioned entities, the process also would include identifying the main objectives of the National Strategy itself and of the accompanying National Action Plan, as well as the mandate and goals of programmes to be implemented and adopted. The cumulative efforts at all those levels would assist greatly in enhancing the updating process, and would lead to many achievements relative to the advancement of women; specifically, the improvement of (a) their living conditions, (b) their position within the family, and (c) their role in society as a whole.

*The National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs 2011-2021* constitutes a public document of a consultative nature for all parties concerned with the improvement of the status of women in Lebanon, and with the advancement of human rights in general in the country. It is also a facilitating tool for the formation of a modern democratic state which seeks to apply good governance. In particular, the collaborative aspect of the actual updating process, in itself, is a favourable factor in that it serves as a catalyst for the emergence of a dynamic dialogue around the issues of women and their difficulties and challenges.

The adoption of a collaborative/consultative process is in harmony with the recommendations of international organizations and their respective mechanisms and standards relating to the concerns of women. Thus, the process enhances general awareness regarding such concerns, and seeks to foster conviction when proposing possible solutions. More specifically, by virtue of its collaborative and consultative nature, the process is a useful tool for verifying information and increasing the knowledge regarding women's issues. It is also an end in itself, as such partnerships serve to (a) increase cooperation among the concerned entities, and (b) join separate efforts into a unified consensus on the need to address positively the concerns of women, the issue

of citizenship, and the improvement of the life of every Lebanese.

From another perspective, the process to a considerable extent relies on regional and international cooperation and the exchange of experiences. Cooperation with Arab, regional and global parties and entities as regards the concerns and status of women is crucial, and brings a guaranteed added value when it comes to the improvement of their situation in Lebanon. As well, international conventions and agreements signed and ratified by the Republic of Lebanon, and also the Constitution - which stipulates full adherence by the State to all such treaties signed - serve to promote women's issues.

Additionally, CEDAW has put in place special mechanisms for monitoring implementation of the provisions of the Convention and for removing reservations to its articles. Through such mechanisms, Lebanon participates regularly in global forums on women's issues, reporting on the status of women in the country and discussing with other parties national strategies for the further advancement of their concerns. Lebanon is also a regular delegate to and participant in international conventions on human rights - of which the rights of women are an undeniable part. Participation takes place within the framework of the regular international review process enshrined by the United Nations Organization in an attempt to effectively ensure individual country compliance with human rights principles.

Such dynamic regional and global cooperation undoubtedly opens the door for a unique exchange of experiences and information with other nations and peoples; thus, benefiting the Lebanese population as a whole. The experiences of member countries of the Arab League, as well as those of the Arab Women Organization and other regional and international women's organizations, are valuable in that respect.

It is of utmost importance that the objectives identified in the 2011 National Strategy are presented and described clearly to the Council of ministers during a dedicated Cabinet meeting in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion which will result in an official endorsement by the Government - only then can the *National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs in Lebanon 2011-2021* become legitimate and operational.

## II. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the *National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs in Lebanon 2011-2021* are based on international conventions, covenants and agreements ratified by the Republic of Lebanon, on the 1989 Ta'if Agreement and, by extension, on the Constitution and its Amendments.

The instruments, entities and factors on which those objectives are based include the following:

- a. the Universal Declaration on Human Rights;
  - b. the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
  - c. the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
  - d. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and other accords relating to women's issues;
  - e. the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
  - f. the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
  - g. the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325/2000 and 1820/2008;
  - h. the 1989 Ta'if Agreement, or Document of National Accord, based on the principle of balanced socio-economic development through bridging differences, promoting citizenship and enhancing political participation;
  - i. the Constitution, recognizing equality in rights and duties among all citizens and guaranteeing their fundamental freedoms;
  - j. the preamble of the Constitution on commitment and adherence to all ratified international agreements and conventions;
  - k. the ministerial declarations of preceding Governments;
  - l. the prioritization of women's issues by civil society organizations and social movements, particularly women's associations;
  - m. the improved situation overall of women.
3. achieving full equality between men and women in health care through the provision of health services and care for girls and women, including reproductive-health care;
  4. combating poverty among women, and giving special attention to the eradication of poverty in general;
  5. promoting the participation of women in the economic sector;
  6. achieving full and unconditional equality between men and women in all fields and sectors and in decision-making positions;
  7. combating all forms of violence affecting girls and women in all areas;
  8. eradicating stereotyping of women in local culture and in such media forms as radio, television and advertising;
  9. enhancing the contribution of women to environmental protection;
  10. strengthening the capacity of institutions concerned with women's issues at the national level, and reinforcing the partnership between NCLW and public-sector departments and institutions, and with civil-society organizations;
  11. protecting girls and women in situations of emergency, armed conflict, war and natural disaster;
  12. introducing gender mainstreaming in all fields.

There are twelve strategic objectives, which can be identified as follows:

1. achieving citizenship to its fullest potential on the basis of full and unconditional equality between men and women in rights and duties in legal texts, as well as in all fields of practice;
2. promoting opportunities for girls and women in the areas of education and training;



Presented as follows are detailed descriptions of each of the twelve strategic objectives:

#### Objective 1

##### ACHIEVING CITIZENSHIP TO ITS FULLEST POTENTIAL ON THE BASIS OF FULL AND UNCONDITIONAL EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN RIGHTS AND DUTIES IN LEGAL TEXTS, AS WELL AS IN ALL FIELDS OF PRACTICE

From a legal perspective, there remains great injustice and discrimination when it comes to the adherence to the principle of full and unconditional equality between men and women in various fields.

On the one hand, legislation remains incomplete so long as there is a distinction between the codes of law subject to civil and public areas, and those codes which are confined to laws and legislation relating to religious sects and sectarian denominations. On the other hand, the understanding and interpretation of many legal documents remain incomplete. As example, whilst the concept of 'citizenship' applies indiscriminately to both men and women, some argue 'citizen' is mentioned in reference to a male national only, hence depriving Lebanese women of the rights and freedoms embodied within a particular article or legal text. A similar interpretation was noted previously with regard to the labour law, whereby it was understood that the term 'employee' referred only to male staff. Such limited, restricted and exclusive interpretation of the legal text deprived female employees of their undeniable rights and benefits as compared to their male counterparts working in the same field.

As far as citizenship rights are concerned, the naturalization law discriminates clearly between male and female citizens. Indeed, the right to grant Lebanese citizenship is limited to male nationals. In other words, a female citizen cannot pass on her nationality to her husband and children, while a Lebanese husband can grant his wife and children citizenship.

Discrimination against women is two-fold: first, there is ample discrimination in the legal texts; second, such discrimination is accompanied by injustice occurring in practice. While of paramount importance, the eradication of all forms of discrimination in legal texts to achieve gender equality is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by a mechanism to monitor any violation of the practice of equality that may occur. What is equally lacking is the provision of a legal mechanism for the automatic review

of cases of discrimination against women, either in the interpretation of a legal text, or in its implementation. Such a legal mechanism should be mandated to impose sanctions against violators of the principle of full and unconditional equality.

#### Objective 2

##### PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Lebanon enjoys a high school-enrolment rate for both boys and girls; however, this is not indicative of learning due to two underlying problems obstructing the path of effective learning and knowledge.

The first centres on an earlier policy adopted by public schools of automatic promotion to the next grade/class of all pupils without effective assessment and examination. As a result, many school children advanced through primary education with little knowledge and learning in hand. By extension, girls, as well as boys, became victims of automatic promotion. The damage resulting from such a policy was deeply felt among the lower income groups in the capital, in other major cities and, particularly, in remote villages and rural areas, where most children attend public - rather than private - schools. Thus, that segment of the student population was the hardest hit. In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education replaced the policy with one of leniency in promoting pupils to a higher grade.

The second underlying problem is the high percentage of school drop-outs, again underscoring the fact that school enrolment rates are not indicative of learning. While statistics point to higher drop-out rates among boys in urban areas, a gender-based approach sets the record more accurately. In remote villages and rural areas, economic realities and family obligations often force girls to leave school, either to help in the home or to work with their mothers and relatives in agricultural cultivation and cattle breeding.

In the light of those two facts, caution must be exercised in assessing school enrolment rates and the status of girls and women in the fields of education and training. They raise concern regarding the educational realities in Lebanon in general, and those of female education in rural and remote areas in particular, with special attention to schooling in poverty belts and slums where social marginalization, extreme poverty and misery are predominant features of life.

Another aspect that requires attention is the educational orientation and choices made among male and female students. Successive studies have revealed a prevalent trend among females to enrol in the humanities, while males tend to opt for science and technology. That is the case across all educational institutions, including high schools, technical institutes and universities. Naturally, scientific orientations offer more avenues for work than literary studies, social sciences, arts and the humanities in general. That has led to a continuous widening of the gap in employment figures between males and females, since job offers are more numerous in science and technology majors, including applied sciences.

That raises the following questions:

- a. To what extent do young women view education as a useful preparatory tool to their joining the workforce?
- b. To what extent is society ready to reconsider traditional male and female roles and obligations? In the light of increasing female involvement in the economic life through employment - with working women spending a considerable part of the day outside the home - to what extent is society ready to relinquish traditional views regarding their responsibility within the home and family?
- c. To what extent do education and upbringing contribute in laying the foundation for an egalitarian society where men and women are equal, where people are progressive and forward-looking, and where most embrace change instead of reproducing traditional and conservative structures which maintain regressive social attitudes and trends?

The educational realities on the ground call for the need to review the existing programmes and curricula, since a closer inspection reveals they are not aligned with the general principles of the Constitution and its Amendments, or with the international obligations and commitments by virtue of covenants, treaties and agreements signed and ratified by the Republic of Lebanon. There is a clear need to align existing educational programmes and curricula with international provisions and standards.

An additional issue is illiteracy among the older section of the population. Statistical data reveal that the proportion of females to males among illiterate adults is two thirds; in other words, older women are twice as likely to be unable to read and write as older

men. That problem should be addressed in a way which also safeguards the chances of younger women finding employment in various fields, and which targets all types of illiteracy, including functional and information/computer illiteracy.

### Objective 3

#### ACHIEVING FULL EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN HEALTH CARE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES AND CARE FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN, INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE-HEALTH CARE

The right to good health, health benefits and health insurance - guaranteeing good health and access to health services and preventive care - are considered part and parcel of human rights. Nevertheless, since the right to good health is always a function of economic capacity, there is much discrimination against the right of women to health-care access.

Lebanon has made great strides in improving the health services it offers to its citizens, whether preventive medicine, medical treatment or hospitalization. It has also improved the health infrastructure of the country; hence, maximizing the utility of the public-health sector to the advantage of the majority of the population. That has been possible through expansion of the network of hospitals, public-health centres and clinics across all regions and districts, including rural areas. Such major improvement is the result of a partnership between the public and the private sectors that has allowed for the provision of a broad umbrella of medical and clinical services which benefit women.

Nonetheless, much remains to be done in terms of enhancing the effective operation of such health networks, and improving the quality of the medical services they offer. More importantly, two prevailing practices in the health sector which need critical attention involve (a) rationalizing expenditure; and (b) limiting the squandering of resources, especially when it comes to hospitalization.

Additionally, the provision of adequate health services remains largely a function of the policies provided by the social security system and private health-insurance companies, which are not readily extended to all segments of the population. To the contrary, neither the public health-insurance system nor the private insurance sector extends coverage to the poor who, as a result, resort to the limited services offered

by the Ministry of Public Health. The Ministry remains overwhelmed with numerous medical and health demands which it cannot meet, leaving many poor to rely on the largely inadequate and sporadic medical and health services offered by charitable non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Girls and women from poor social backgrounds are often excluded from the benefits of the social security system offered by the public sector, while they cannot afford to take up a private insurance plan. That situation raises concern and needs to be addressed, especially that scarcity of resources available for the poor segments of society leads to discrimination against girls and women in the provision of health care and medical services.

As regards reproductive health, it goes without saying that girls and women require special attention; consequently, there is a strong need for a concerted effort to secure such care. Recent studies show that Lebanon has achieved remarkable and manifest progress in the provision of reproductive-health services for girls and women. They have been classified as 'primary-health' services, which is a positive and constructive step as reproductive health is an integral part thereof, especially when it comes to pre- and post-natal services; however, maternal mortality rates remain relatively high and require attention.

Of rising concern is the great disparity that exists in the quality of reproductive-health services available in rural and remote areas, in the capital and in other major cities. There is also a large disparity in the type and nature of health contracts available to different segments of the population. While the provision of medical services by private-insurance contracts is continuous, the provision of such services under social-security service schemes and cooperative state-employee plans are less stable.

As for health services available to girls in rural areas and remote villages, in the poverty belts and slums surrounding the capital and in other major cities, they are a source of real concern and require a more aggressive approach. There needs to be a thorough investigation regarding the status of health services available to girls in those areas, followed by concerted efforts to expand the health networks, increase the number of medical and health services and, most importantly, enhance their overall quality. It is essential to allocate special attention and care to the issue of health-care availability to girls in order to make sure there is no discrimination in their rights, particularly in regions where preventive medical care and hospitalization services are irregular

and of uncertain quality.

In addition, attention should be devoted to the health care of teenage girls. It would be beneficial if proposed interventions would include intensifying efforts leading to the provision of all health services necessary to teenage girls; and involve raising awareness, improving health counselling and offering guidance in schools and institutes for vocational training and higher education to guarantee the overall health safety of teenage girls, and the reproductive health of young women in general. Furthermore, elderly women are not covered by any public-health or social-insurance scheme. Similarly, the provision of medical and social services to other marginalized women and vulnerable social groups is considered unacceptable.

#### Objective 4 COMBATING POVERTY AMONG WOMEN, AND GIVING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN GENERAL

Social and economic studies in all countries continuously indicate that poverty is more common among women than men. That socio-economic manifestation and the concept of 'feminization of poverty' apply to Lebanon as much as to other countries around the world, especially developing nations. Additionally, not only is poverty a concern in rural and remote areas, it extends also to the suburbs surrounding the capital and to some neighbourhoods in other major cities.

A common manifestation of modern societies - even in developed countries - is the existence of a sharp contrast within a city, whereby extremely poor neighbourhoods are in close vicinity of affluent areas. Slums, poverty belts, or islands of marginalization and social exclusion are areas of violence, lawlessness and poor or non-existent infrastructure, including lack of electricity, water and sanitation, roads, schools and health facilities. Studies of urban slums, as well as surveys of remote and rural areas, indicate that women and girls are more often than not the first, and most direct victims. They suffer acutely from the prevalent life conditions existing in those areas, including socio-economic deprivation, life stresses and social pressures, as well as violent practices.

Additionally, a significant proportion of women belonging to poor and underprivileged backgrounds is responsible for supporting the family and acts as the major breadwinner. Hence, it is very common for a socio-

economically deprived and destitute woman lacking the basic necessities of life - including education, vocational training and regular access to health services - to have to bear the burdens of the entire family. In most such cases, the male breadwinner is absent: either missing, divorced, unemployed, ill, disabled or deceased; held in prison or away as an economic migrant. That explains the number of girls and women begging on the streets of Lebanese cities, including the capital.

A second manifestation is the lack of proper statistics that take into account the levels of poverty affecting women who work in the agricultural sector; in fact, women constitute the majority of field labourers. They are poverty-stricken and considered belonging to a marginal economic sector - one that is not governed by the rules and regulations of the labour law. Those women are subject to extreme and unstable economic conditions, and their numbers are not documented by official statistics. Additionally, seasonal agricultural workers, of which women are the majority, do not benefit from the provision of social security services; hence, worsening their overall situation.

#### Objective 5 PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR

Supporting and enhancing the participation of women in the economic sector of the country is a strategic objective that has many advantages. First and foremost, their participation in the economy is beneficial to the women themselves in that it allows self-realization, enhances autonomy, and guarantees independence and personal freedoms. That is especially welcome when the family is not providing the woman with her needs. Second, women's participation in the economy is helpful for the family, for society as a whole, and for the national economy.

The prerequisites for the implementation of Objective 5 entail the need to adequately raise a young girl in view of providing her with appropriate education - be it vocational training or scholastic learning - in order to facilitate her entry into the labour market, and give her the same chances of finding a job as her male counterpart. Other prerequisites include the removal of the many social, economic and family barriers facing women who wish to join the workforce and engage in economically-productive work, as well as the elimination of all types of discrimination in the workplace.

Field studies have indicated that the relative increase in

the proportion of women participants in the economic sector of the country has not been matched by any change in the distribution of domestic and household tasks between men and women. Rather, the only change has been the introduction to the household of the migrant female domestic worker. It is crucial to note the lack of basic facilities and services that would otherwise support working women in their family roles. Moreover, women's work in the household is overlooked and, as a result not accounted for in gross domestic product (GDP) calculations.

#### Objective 6 ACHIEVING FULL EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN ALL FIELDS AND SECTORS AND IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

Objective 6 is included in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with the result that various international organizations adopted exceptional and temporary measures and procedures with the aim of its implementing at the earliest. Such measures were intended with States parties in mind, and it was believed that they would act as a catalyst to facilitate the prompt implementation of that goal. The overall designation for those measures is 'positive discrimination', which works towards accelerating the increased participation of women in political life and in decision-making positions in various fields.

In a similar vein, the CEDAW Committee, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, considers that objective a priority and has urged Lebanon to adopt exceptional measures, stressing that such initiatives would contribute towards bridging the existing gender gap and allowing the effective participation of women in decision-making positions and in top posts in the public sector and civil service, including in all administrative institutions.

There is a noticeable disparity in the participation of women in decision-making positions in the various fields and sectors. While women have reached high levels in the fields of economy and finance, education and social affairs, culture and technology - thus, occupying positions of power and authority in those sectors - female participation in the political arena, in constitutional bodies, and in high offices of the public sector and the public administration overall is minimal, or almost non-existent.

Interestingly, political figures have not demonstrated any

commitment - barring making rousing and politically-correct speeches - towards facilitating women participating in appointed or elected decision-making positions in public administration, despite the fact that the political system is largely democratic. Various interpretations ascribe that to the traditional rules governing the functioning of the political system, or as a result of the religious and sectarian division of power which, naturally, tends to attribute authority to males by virtue of their representing tribal and familial entities which are chiefly religious and sectarian. Additionally, the social structure is still largely patriarchal, though the abolition of the rules of communal and sectarian representation would not lead directly to increased participation of women in positions of political power. That is demonstrated by rising waves of religious extremism which embraces a reserved approach towards full gender equality, advocating instead the twin principles of equity and integration between men and women.

In contrast, the presence of women remains strong in civil society and related institutions. The apparent disparity between, on the one hand, the noticeable presence and active participation of women in the private sector and in civil society and, on the other hand, their near-absence from the political sphere should not be taken to mean that women are reluctant to engage in politics. Rather, it stems from an existing mentality in society that is matched by structural barriers and difficulties towards the advancement of women in that sphere - the rules of politics and politicking hindering their real participation in political life.

Furthermore, the opportunities available to women do not begin to compare with those at the disposal of men, resulting in a general sense of frustration among those who wish to engage more meaningfully in the political sphere. Results of the 2009 parliamentary elections reveal that the overall number of female candidates had fallen compared to earlier ballots, accompanied by a corresponding drop in the number of women in Parliament. Beyond any doubt, the religious distribution of political power and the sectarian process of allocating political seats both have critical and negative impacts when it comes to the effective participation of women in executive power.

Additionally, the lack of any gender-mainstreaming approach towards female participation in the political life has made it difficult for women to attain top-ranking positions in the various institutions of the public administration, and to be promoted to leadership posts

in the public sector overall. Any existing exceptions are to be treated as occasional variants to the norm, since they have not emerged from a new understanding of the principle of gender equality. Political parties and organizations have overlooked the need to enhance opportunities for increased female participation in the political sphere, and to contribute positively towards such radical societal transformation.

In the light of the existing gap between political practices and the official rhetoric/discourse, the commitment of both Parliament and the Government towards implementing the provisions of CEDAW is a central and pivotal issue. Additionally, it is important to refer to the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325/2000 and 1820/2008, which urge States Members to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in order to establish civil peace and reconstruction. For instance, Lebanon has engaged in a national dialogue a number of times since the 1980s - however, women have not been invited to participate.

#### Objective 7: COMBATING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AFFECTING GIRLS AND WOMEN IN ALL AREAS

Violence against women is widespread in various societal circles and environments, ranging from developing societies and more established ones, to advanced nations. Hence, such widespread violence is a serious societal manifestation that raises legitimate and genuine concern.

Violence against women and girls takes several forms. Symbolic violence carries within its title moral and psychological effects. That type of violence cannot be separated from the phenomenon of discrimination against women found in legal texts, as well as in such societal practices as biased words and stereotypes - all of which are abusive to women. Physical violence involves the beating of girls or women and abusing them physically and financially; hence, inflicting physical, moral and psychological harm.

Women and girls who live in war-torn regions or areas of armed conflict have to bear the burden of performing additional functions, as compared to those living in peaceful areas where there is social stability. In areas of conflict and civil strife, women have wider and more



demanding social roles compounding their situation, as they are also exposed to violence and cruelty. During the long years of armed conflict in Lebanon, women were victims of those wars and, particularly, of the successive Israeli attacks on its people, its land and its institutions. As a result, the lives of women in those circumstances came under great duress.

Since the end of the civil war in 1990, a rising awareness of gender issues has been noted among the Lebanese. That has been matched by an increased exposure to social studies that address the issue of women and armed conflict. Both developments enhanced the awareness of the Lebanese to the effects of the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, with much-needed attention being devoted to the ensuing consequences.

Several field studies allocated specific sections where women and girls spoke of the suffering they incurred as a result of the 2006 war. Other studies addressed the issues of forced migration and violence, and narrated the suffering of women compelled to flee their war-torn villages and reside in temporary, shared or overnight accommodation. Such shelters lacked the most basic rules of privacy and exposed the intimacy of women and girls; hence, leading to cases of abuse and violence against them. As a result, the intervention programmes adopted after the 2006 war addressed the social and mental disorders of girls and women in areas most directly hit by the aggression, and psychological and social relief programmes were offered to those identified as victims. Referring to the exposure of women and girls to war and armed conflict and their vulnerability in that regard requires addressing the wider context of violence in all the forms, including also societal and domestic violence.

Domestic violence is widespread and affects adult women, young females and girls alike. Such violence is difficult to monitor since it occurs within the family and inside the home, and victims may choose not to talk about it, fearing the repercussions of shame and scandal. Neighbours, close family and relations also may express reservations and refrain from interfering or avoid reporting the occurrence of violence or violent practices. In addition, such incidents tend to be overlooked by the authorities and law-enforcement agencies as being 'private issues' that do not fall within their jurisdiction.

The most extreme form of domestic violence is the so-called 'honour crimes'. Despite the decrease of such practice, further action is required. With the penal code

attributing acts of 'honour crime' and 'honour killing' as mitigating circumstances, laws and provisions must be amended and clauses introduced to act as a deterrent<sup>1</sup>. To eradicate such heinous practice by society, there should be widespread condemnation through specific measures and directives.

Domestic violence has been considered a taboo subject in Lebanese society; however, public social discourse is increasingly referring to such violence. An important initiative is a draft law combating domestic violence prepared by selected NGOs. Supported by a coalition of public-sector and civil-society organizations, the draft law on the protection of women from domestic violence was submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. After a number of amendments had been introduced, it was referred to Parliament for discussion and ratification.

Sexual violence and, particularly, sexual harassment are hidden forms of violence against girls and women which are surfacing in society and discussed in the media. As with domestic violence, victims rarely speak out due to fear of such repercussions as scandal and humiliation.

Violence against migrant female workers should also be noted. That is a prevailing and widespread practice, as revealed by international reports and the observations of the CEDAW Committee. It is noted that cruelty and violence are dominant characteristics of the whole process, starting from the mechanisms and procedures adopted in the recruiting of migrant domestic workers to Lebanon and the way such workers are treated by employment offices, to the conditions and terms of their contract and the difficult working conditions and unstable lifestyle they face in some homes. Furthermore, aspects of cruel and violent character extend also to the treatment such workers receive outside the household and in society, as well as to the way they are dismissed from service.

The authorities concerned are becoming aware of such practices. As a result, regulations governing labour migration of domestic workers have been developed, and a standardized employment contract adopted. In addition, employers must meet a stipulated guarantee and provide adequate working conditions. Moreover, local employment offices are being regulated to control their operation and limit their ability to exploit female

1. The law n° 162 published in the Official Journal of 17/8/2011 has canceled the article 562 of the Penal Code that used to attribute mitigating circumstances for the perpetrator of the crime called «honour crime».

domestic workers. As a result, such measures have provided an official and authorized framework for the employment of migrant female domestic workers and offered them legal protection; however, those regulations alone are not sufficient to prevent abuse and the occurrence of violent practices, including sexual harassment.

Another form of violence that should be highlighted is that threatening women serving prison sentences. Within the framework of addressing all types of violence that touch upon women, that is an important aspect, particularly when it comes to females temporarily detained in prison pending trial or judgment. Among those, migrant domestic workers should be mentioned. Often, they are temporarily detained on charges of leaving the home of their employer without permission or in other ways violating the terms of their contract. In many cases, such workers have been subjected to violence in the household; hence, choosing to run away. In prison, they are often kept in isolation, with no contact with the outside world, while waiting hearing or deportation.

Other prime victims of violence fall into the category of vulnerable women, including those with special needs, single or divorced, widows and elderly women. In addition, there is a need to address the situation and living conditions of a particular category commonly referred to as 'artists'. The Internal Security Forces use this designation to describe migrant females employed in bars and nightclubs. They are subjected to all forms of violence, be it physical, sexual or symbolic. There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints of blackmail and deception being common features of the process of migrating to Lebanon for work, with some females threatened and/or forced into prostitution. The conditions of entry, employment and residence in Lebanon stipulated by the authorities have been amended and procedures developed to offer adequate protection to such migrant female workers to decrease the risk of blackmail, threat and extortion. In that regard, women's organizations and NCLW, as well as the female workers themselves, could assist Lebanese authorities in their efforts to further improve and upgrade the existing procedures.

**Objective 8:  
ERADICATING STEREOTYPING OF WOMEN IN  
LOCAL CULTURE AND IN SUCH MEDIA FORMS AS  
RADIO, TELEVISION AND ADVERTISING**

To eradicate stereotyping affecting women is particularly

important since it touches upon prevailing cultural traits and mentalities on the one hand, and social behaviour, on the other. To merely impose laws and regulations would not help in redressing how society views women and adjusting the distribution of social roles based on gender. What makes the situation more complicated is that women themselves contribute to the reproduction of the dominant culture which, in turn, reinforces stereotyping of both men and women - thus, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In order to achieve Objective 8, three sectors must be involved; education, legislation/judiciary and the media. It is not possible to determine the key sector that will affect the other two. Some consider that education is the key link in that relationship, since the process of raising children involves, to a great extent, established cultural values which, in turn, affect media sources and outlets. On the other hand, the media produce and publish stereotypes that, in turn, influence the drafting of laws, thus reflecting prevailing values; while others argue that the laws lay down the rules, and so lead to the emergence of various forms of discrimination that mould social behaviour. A third group believes that media reflect prevailing cultural values, hence forming patterns for both males and females that are in line with the traditional social roles. In fact, the three sectors interact and complement each other, producing and reproducing traditional mentalities.

The most crucial sector may be education, since the contents of curricula and school textbooks contribute in reproducing and disseminating gender stereotypes. That was recognized during the re-evaluation and review process of educational curricula in Lebanon in the mid-1990s. Officials took note, and a number of workshops were organized on the image of women in curricula and in books. Special effort was invested in the preparation of textbooks and several field studies undertaken; however, results showed that flaws still existed in spite of the genuine attempt to avoid the reproduction of stereotypes. It is of note that this realization was not followed up with the redrafting of texts and educational material in a way that took into account the issue of gender and attempted to rectify the stereotyping of women.

The main effort was concentrated on avoiding negative stereotypes. As a result, the curriculum remains neutral on the subject of gender and does not reveal any commitment to the principle of socialization on the basis of gender equality. In that regard, a 'positively neutral' attitude is not sufficient, as it leaves a void that

can be re-filled by traditional social structures. What is required is a clear and direct reference in textbooks to gender equality and stereotypical roles, followed by a move from 'positive neutrality' to outright 'positive discrimination'.

The high percentage of women in the media sector is striking, particularly that of young women employed in various media outlets. Then again, men occupy the major decision-making positions in media, which places them at the top of the pyramid. Additionally, many women in the sector conform to the typical portrayal of females as 'objects', adjusting to and/or accepting the conditions instead of trying to change the situation.

The image of women is linked in a major way to a traditional social role. Advertising uses the display of a woman's charms to attract attention, while negative stereotypes affecting women are dominant in soap operas and in romantic fiction. Those are the images that affect the thinking and mentality of the young generation, being engraved in their minds and helping to reproduce and replicate the stereotypical roles of women and men. That, in turn, affects public opinion, which adjusts and becomes accustomed to such images to the extent of considering them acceptable, thus losing the ability for critical assessment.

Legislation and the judiciary contribute in replicating stereotypes and concern the laws in place, as well as all other regulations that govern relations between individuals and groups. In that respect, it remains to be seen whether the Constitution and national legislation will re-address the term 'citizen' in a gender-sensitive manner - moving from the traditional reference of "the male citizen" to a more comprehensive and inclusive "male and female citizens".

Legislators have interpreted the concept of 'citizen', 'employee' and 'civil servant' in a narrow and exclusive manner; i.e., the reference taken to mean 'male' and, thus, depriving women of many rights and benefits due to them. Some change has been bought about as a result of numerous cases and requests for reviews submitted to the judiciary, particularly concerning legal actions within the civil service and public sector. As a result, certain practices that discriminate unjustly against women are being re-adjusted and inequalities are being redressed. In addition, the CEDAW Committee has called for the adoption of a combined formula in the Constitution and in laws, legislation and various regulations which would address male and female citizens alike; thus, dispelling any confusion in that field.

### Objective 9: ENHANCING THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The 2011-2021 *National Strategy* does not seek merely the advancement of women: rather, it is looking to their advancement by the women themselves. That entails that women carry out their responsibilities towards society and towards the environment they are an undeniable part of. Climate change and the scarcity of natural resources - due to misuse and mismanagement on the one hand, and the adoption of social behaviour that causes severe damage to nature, on the other - are real risks that should be taken seriously and, more importantly, are the responsibility of men and women alike.

Women are particularly well-placed to advocate such issues as environmental protection and the sustainability of resources, and to contribute in establishing environmentally-friendly social behaviour. That is the case because women often manage the family budget and put in place the tasks required for the proper functioning of the household. Women also raise the children and, indirectly, disseminate such cultural values and behaviour that they see fit. Therefore, by virtue of the place they occupy in the household, women hold a particularly privileged position and role when it comes to spreading environmentally-friendly values set by the authorities and adopted by the community.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action lists the heading "women and the environment" as one of the most important in the twelve points of action, recommending national Governments, inter-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies award it highest priority and calls for the adoption of special programmes in that regard.

In Lebanon, women and the environment ranked high on the agenda of programmes implemented by NCLW, which is assigned responsibility for the follow-up of the implementation of resolutions taken in Beijing. NCLW has organized a number of workshops in rural villages and remote areas, as well as in the capital and other major cities, with an aim to increase the awareness of women and strengthen their commitment to environmentally-friendly practices. On the other hand, such awareness and commitment cannot be entirely effective if they are not directly linked to a strategy of sustainable development, and if they do not link the interest of women in the environment with national attention to that issue.

In other words, Objective 9 is directly associated with the need to coordinate between women's organizations and NCLW on the one hand, and the relevant authorities, on the other. Those authorities have been entrusted with drafting a national strategy for environmental protection and the rationalization of expenditure on water and energy, as well as the sound management of all categories of waste. Objective 9 also calls for the need to adopt an environmentally-friendly national policy before it is too late, as well as developing a 'women-friendly' national environmental policy. The implementation of that target within the framework of women activism will increase awareness and interest in the issue of environmental protection at the national level.

**Objective 10:  
STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF  
INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED WITH WOMEN'S  
ISSUES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, AND  
REINFORCING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN  
NCLW AND PUBLIC DEPARTMENTS AND  
INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS WITH CIVIL-SOCIETY  
ORGANIZATIONS**

It has become necessary to base activism centred on women's issues and carried out on a national level on a set of transparent and solid principles to enhance the effectiveness of existing mechanisms concerned with the advancement of such issues. That would result in improving their functioning and serve the cause of the advancement of women in a more comprehensive way.

On a national and official level, the political elite displays little commitment towards improving the concerns of women, despite the fact that awareness regarding the need to progress and change is high. Equally, the awareness regarding the status and situation of women is significant, as is the level of consciousness concerning the discrimination and prejudice they face. On the other hand, those in power - i.e., who hold elected seats - are uncertain what stance to adopt and, often, their support does not extend beyond that of rhetoric. Rather than adopting a clear position regarding discrimination in legislation and personal status codes, and concerning the low participation of women in political life, among other issues, the political elite remains unsure.

As a result of such apathy, many among the political elite initially were reluctant to establish national mechanisms to monitor women's issues and, once such mechanisms had been established, they and the

authorities provided little or no support to enhance their effectiveness. That proved a common feature among all officials, irrespective of religious background or sectarian identity.

The founding in 1998 of NCLW, through Law 720/1998, is a major breakthrough in the sense that it institutionalized the need to address women's issues, and identified a national entity entrusted with the responsibility and task to follow up on such concerns. NCLW, by virtue of its formation, acts as a national reference on women's issues and, together with the adoption of gender focal points in public departments and institutions, marks a starting point of gender mainstreaming in official bodies.

There are certain remaining ambiguities which need clarification; however, once addressed, those aspects will strengthen the foundations of NCLW and enhance its capabilities. The ambiguity stems from NCLW not being a ministry. It does not operate through an official public administration, but rather cooperates with various official bodies and public institutions. Equally, NCLW is not an NGO; it is a semi-public institution whose members are appointed by the Government, and whose president is nominated by the Head of State. That intermediary status allows NCLW to liaise and coordinate on a national level with both public-sector agencies and civil-society organizations, which are private initiatives, while maintaining independence and without obligation to adopt the stance of either. Able to avoid duplication of its efforts, NCLW is at a distance both from official ministries and from NGOs; it represents itself only, and does not seek to replace any other entity in the country.

NCLW is legally mandated to draft a public policy for women, and acts as a consultant to the Government in the field of women's issues. Being shielded from the restrictions of the political, religious and sectarian arena ensures that the way women's issues are being addressed is not a function of such considerations. Thus, it prevents women's issues from being looked at through a sectarian lens and ensures they remain the focal point of the work of NCLW, as well as preventing deadlock in cases where there is difficulty in reaching consensus.

While the advantages are obvious, there are a number of limitations and weak points that should be mentioned. First, NCLW lacks access to executive power. It is not represented in the Council of Ministers; hence, it is unable to keep up with the work of the Council in a direct and interactive way, and to express an opinion from a

gender perspective. That puts NCLW more or less on the receiving end. As a result, when women's issues are being discussed in the Council, NCLW often seeks unofficial representation through one of the ministries acting as a platform to voice its opinions.

Second, due to the lack of such executive power, there remains some confusion as regards official representation of Lebanese women in international and regional institutions, as well as in bilateral relations with other nations. It is important to note that Law 720/1998 clearly and unequivocally grants NCLW the mandate to officially represent Lebanon. In order to address the issue of formal representation, this can be done by targeting the causes of that situation, including implementing mechanisms which maximize cooperation between NCLW and government departments and concerned public institutions. In addition, it is vital to strengthen the institutional capacity of NCLW for it to perform its duties to its full potential.

Third, NCLW is excluded from the annual budget debates in Parliament. In contrast, all ministries and public agencies are called to attend such sessions in order to explain and justify their draft-budget requests, even when such funds are drawn directly from the budget allocated to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. As such, NCLW lacks an important platform to voice its financial needs and to demand greater access to budgetary resources.

Fourth, a major challenge has to do with the ability of NCLW to communicate both on the official level with ministries and public agencies, and also on grassroots level with concerned parties in remote areas and rural villages. That difficulty is related to the procedural and institutional aspects of NCLW, which can be overcome by the identifying of the appropriate formula to enable continuous and effective communication flows with the concerned entities.

NCLW has adopted a policy of cooperation with civil-society organizations and signed agreements with several institutions and associations. As a follow-up, greater involvement is needed to turn such cooperation into a real partnership, especially as civil-society organizations are the platform where all societal issues are debated, including those of women. Communication between NCLW and such entities must become institutionalized through the adoption of a number of permanent mechanisms. Such cooperation should involve a wide array of institutions, especially those that operate in the private sector. Some NGOs adopt 'women-

friendly' approaches, others are concerned with human rights and a variety of other social issues, while a few are solely women's associations often active in villages, rural towns and remote areas. The implementation of such a partnership requires the mapping of a national framework for cooperation that rests on regulatory texts and clear mechanisms which respect the privacy and freedom of each of party to the agreement. Hence, NCLW should develop a programme of joint action that is collectively implemented.

The establishing of NCLW is in harmony with Lebanese traditions that respect the freedom to engage in private social and civil-society work. Such traditions have contributed towards creating a positive environment and a fertile ground for the existence of a vibrant and dynamic civil society that allows defending the cause of women and their issues.

Additionally, NCLW is a flexible national institution able to cooperate with the private sector and with civil society. Its mandate does not impose any obligations on civil-society organizations, nor restricts their scope, freedom of work or ability to take initiatives. Women's issues are a focal cause and a 'people movement'; as such, any civil-society agency seeking to defend such concerns should be granted the space and ability to act, struggle, protest, and take initiative.

To keep abreast, NCLW must continue updating its database and promoting its library and resources. NCLW is a major source of literature on women's issues and is well-placed to provide information on their status, in addition to preparing national reports that monitor the progress of women in all areas.

#### Objective 11: PROTECTING GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SITUATIONS OF EMERGENCY, ARMED CONFLICT, WAR AND NATURAL DISASTER

Numerous research and social studies agree that girls and women are greatly vulnerable to, and often victims of all types of emergencies, armed conflicts and wars, as well as natural disasters. Women are the hardest hit and most affected in such instances, and incur more damage than their male counterparts. Women and girls are often unprepared, or may be unaware of the damages that may occur as a result of such situations; hence, making them more vulnerable in a broader sense. Since prevention of damage and emergency-relief plans and assistance do not take into account the need to adopt a gender

approach, that often leads to a decline in the proportion of women and girls who benefit efficiently from rescue operations, relief services and assistance. Additionally, women and girls assume partial responsibility in cases of emergency situations, and in contributing to avoiding and reducing damage to themselves and their families, to their immediate surroundings, and to society as a whole.

Since year 2000, the issue of the status of women and girls in situations of war and armed conflict has ranked high on the global agenda of activists concerned with the protection of human rights. Such high awareness is matched by extensive media coverage of tragic situations from which women and girls suffer, including the worst forms of violence as physical, moral, and psychological abuse, as well as systematic rape by warring armies and armed militias in areas of conflict. Global attention and media exposure have alerted the international community to the dangers of such situations. As a result, decisions have been taken at the highest level to avoid the occurrence of such violations of human rights, and to emphasize the importance of the twin principles of (a) assistance to women and girls, and (b) punishment of abusers. The adoption of international resolutions which stress the need for women to participate in settlement negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction has followed. In that context, a number of resolutions have been adopted by the United Nations Security Council, including numbers 1325/2000 and 1820/2008, as well as operational procedures for their proper implementation. Additionally, a special budget has been allocated towards that end on a global level.

As far as Lebanon is concerned, the country has witnessed a series of wars and armed conflicts. As a result, the unstable situation has inflicted great suffering and abuse on women and girls in particular. An example reflecting increasing societal and governmental awareness of that sensitive issue is the Program of Support of Lebanese Women, a psychological and economic assistance project that was implemented in areas exposed to the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon. Since then, many field studies undertaken in those areas have focused on documenting the damage incurred by women and girls in particular as a result of that event. Those studies point to the importance of setting a strategic goal of special protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and war.

There has been a marked increase in global efforts to establish mechanisms and targeted programmes for the management of natural disasters and risk reduction, especially considering the documented

climate change. Such interest was reflected through the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which aimed to encourage all countries to institutionalize a national action programme to cope with natural disasters and reduce their damage. The principle of the adoption of a gender approach was introduced to those national plans, as well as to all studies and other documents issued in the context of their implementation.

In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government has adopted a special programme to develop existing national plans to manage natural disasters and reduce the damages they cause. That programme aims to (a) strengthen the capacity of the national institutions concerned with monitoring the advents of natural disaster, preventing their occurrence, or limiting their effects; (b) develop clear mechanisms to perform such functions in a collaborative manner within the society as a whole; and (c) introduce the gender dimension to its activities in order to reflect gender equality and take into account the needs and concerns of women at various critical stages, including during the study and the monitoring of national disasters, as well as during the preparation of relief and assistance programmes. Additionally, such an approach allows women to assume a greater margin of responsibility if natural disasters occur, and teaches them how to avoid or limit their impact.

#### Objective 12: INTRODUCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ALL FIELDS

Intervention programmes aimed at improving the situation of women - as well as comparisons of gender status based on social realities - have provided an incomplete outlook and failed to address comprehensively their needs. Hence, a holistic approach is required to redress the existing inequities. In that regard, the adoption of a gender perspective in dealing with women's issues is an essential objective. The integration of a gender dimension in assessing the situation of women and, particularly, their needs is a crucial component in order for intervention programmes and plans of action to succeed in their mission.

The gender perspective is an important dimension for an accurate depiction of societal issues. Statistical data used not to take into account gender mainstreaming, neither in the process of monitoring social realities, nor in the collection of data to

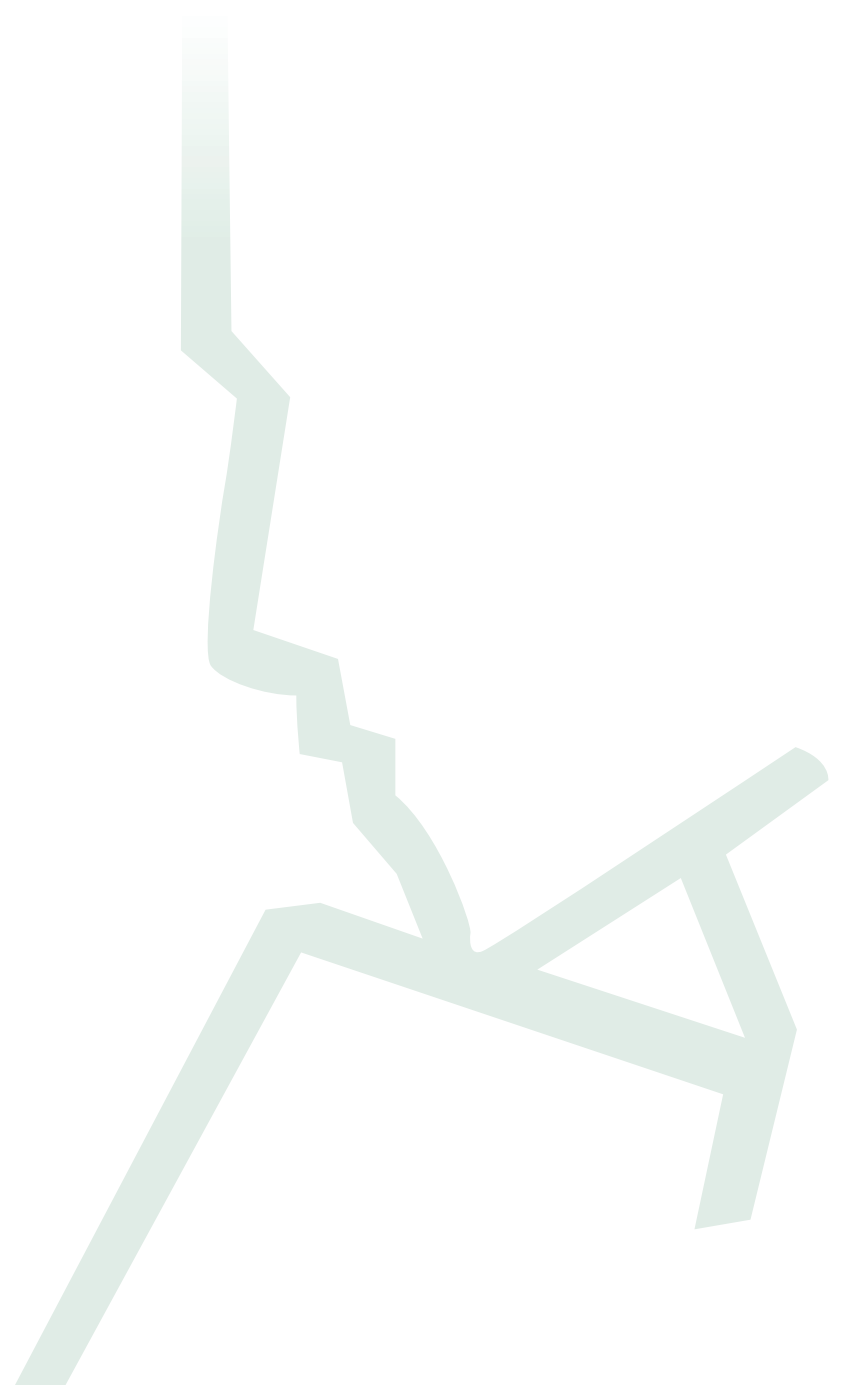
generate such statistics. As a result, analyses based on non sex-disaggregated statistics revealed a fundamental discrepancy, leading to women's issues in various domains being addressed inadequately. Needless to say, a complete and realistic assessment of the situation of women in society is not possible without the integration of gender mainstreaming to the process of data collection, compilation and analysis. So long as such a dimension is missing, any suggestions offered to improve the situation of women will only be partial solutions that fail to consider all the issues they face.

Thus, in the late 1990s, the Government adopted gender mainstreaming in the collection and analysis of general statistics; however, that initiative should be aligned with other much-needed measures given the reality that most ministries and public agencies continue to ignore or overlook the gender dimension in their work and agendas or programmes.

There is also very little effort to prepare ministerial budgets that take into account the gender dimension. That is an essential step as gender budgeting would allow channelling the required resources to meet specifically the needs of women, particularly in the light of the sharp disparity in opportunities between them and their male counterparts in all fields. Ignoring and omitting to address women's issues will result in the open and deliberate discrimination against women - a manifestation society is currently condemning and fighting.

It is therefore necessary to adopt a gender approach when preparing ministerial budgets. An evaluation of the results of such an approach should follow. The evaluation should be gender-based - i.e., assess the results from a gender perspective. The adoption of a gender approach also should be mainstreamed across the spectrum of concerned institutions; in other words, the work procedure of civil-society organizations in various fields should be aligned along a gender perspective.

Although such an approach provides better opportunities for women to benefit from public policy, their participation in decision-making positions is still not sufficiently committed to the gender dimension. Often, they are trapped in traditional and typical roles that neither take into account women's issues in a holistic way, nor contribute to finding solutions to such concerns in a direct way.



### III. AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Based on the twelve strategic objectives presented in chapter II, there are twelve areas of possible intervention. Of note is that some proposed areas of intervention may serve several strategic objectives, and a number of different programmes can help achieving one goal. Equally, each strategic objective may be realized through many areas of intervention, while a single programme may serve the implementation of several goals.

Below follows a detailed presentation of each of the twelve proposed areas of implementation.

#### 1. LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

A cursory look at the international charters, covenants and conventions of which the Republic of Lebanon is a signatory will point to the urgent need for continuous intervention to eliminate all forms of discrimination persisting in national legislation and in laws and legal codes pertaining to women.

In that context, CEDAW takes unprecedented importance for several reasons. First, the Convention specifies an international mechanism to monitor the implementation of its provisions by the State signatory. Second, it constitutes a reference and a general framework for women activism within the State.

Like many other State signatories, Lebanon has met a number of times with the CEDAW Committee to discuss reports and assessments pertaining to the situation of women in the country. Such reports include both those prepared by concerned public-sector institutions and shadow reports published by other entities. In that respect, it should be noted that the CEDAW Committee has reiterated that the Government put in place a unified personal status law for all citizens irrespective of their religious and sectarian backgrounds. The Committee also recommends the withdrawal of reservations placed by the Republic of Lebanon on certain articles and paragraphs of the Convention, and the elimination of all remaining discriminatory clauses in national laws and legislation, in addition to special consideration be allocated to the issue of domestic violence. In that context, the issue of the lifting of reservations takes unprecedented priority.

The elimination of remaining forms of discrimination against women in legislation occupies an important dimension; likewise, the need for a unified set of personal status codes for all Lebanese is paramount. As regards the draft law on the protection of women from domestic violence, submitted by the National Coalition for the Legislation on the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence, that represents a major qualitative step towards meeting the commitments of CEDAW. On the other hand, further effort is required in terms of continued support and advocacy work for the draft law to be approved and ratified, and for its provisions to be effectively implemented.

Finally, it should be noted that the Ta'if Agreement calls for implementation of electoral reforms to ensure fair representation of all sections and groups of the population, including women. The Government plans to reform the electoral law before the 2013 Parliamentary elections. In that respect, special attention must be devoted to the draft law.

#### 2. EDUCATION

For girls and women to enjoy equal access as their male counterparts to opportunities in education, intervention is required at many levels, including the following actions:

- a. implementation of the legislation on free and compulsory primary education through the issuing of a decree enacting the law on education, and through the development of specific mechanisms for implementation, enforcement and penalty for breach of that law;
- b. eradication of illiteracy among female adults in order to bridge the existing gap between women and men in that respect, and to protect the rights granted by the Constitution to women as citizens of Lebanon - especially their right to paid work and to effective participation in politics;
- c. attention and intervention targeting school drop-out prevention among girls in rural and remote areas, and in the slums and poverty belts around the capital and other major cities;



- d. provision of counselling and guidance programmes designed and offered to girls and young women at various educational stages in order to increase their awareness of vocational training and the opportunities and potentials it presents - as a result, they need not comply with gender stereotyping forcing them into specific educational options, but are presented with alternatives that match labour-market requirements and demands;
- e. revision and updating of educational curricula to reflect gender equality and achievements attained as stipulated in international conventions relating to the advancement of girls and women, and integration of health, gender and legal development in public education;
- f. revision and updating of curricula pertaining to tertiary education, as existing syllabuses and university programmes tend to orient female students towards literary subjects and the humanities in general;
- g. attention and intervention targeting girls with special needs with the objective of promoting their integration in basic schooling, vocational training and, when feasible, higher education.

### 3. HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Health care includes preventive-health services, as well as medical treatment and hospitalization. The provision of some of those services is related to the type of work/employment, and to the somewhat limited benefits offered by the social security system. Given the gender disparity in access to such services, there is a need to reconsider the current provision of health services in order to redress the inherent inequity.

With the majority of women in paid employment being unskilled and/or seasonal workers in the agricultural sector, and in the handicrafts and other marginal economic sectors - thus, directly affected by the lack of comprehensive health care - there is a need to expand the circle of health protection to include those categories and sectors. In addition, domestic work - including that performed by migrant domestic workers - should be covered by the social security system. Such coverage should be specified in employment contracts and include treatment at health clinics, hospitalization, and the provision of preventive medical services.

There is a need to improve the availability of medical resources in general, and to boost efforts to enhance existing reproductive-health care to women. General services should include school and nutritional health, as well as mental and psychological health, and should target females of all ages, from childhood, through adolescence and adulthood, to old age.

Particular attention must be devoted to vulnerable groups that include women deprived of their basic rights; for example, single women and female breadwinners, women with special needs and/or living with chronic or terminal illness, and migrant female workers and other marginalized women. In that context, it is important to mention that many costly and terminal diseases - as example, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis - can be detected early on and, thus, receive prompt treatment. Moreover, the provision of health services across a network of clinics, including mobile clinics in remote villages and towns, and in slums and poor neighbourhoods within major cities, remains a pressing need.

### 4. POVERTY ERADICATION

The abilities of poor women must be enhanced in such a way as to enable them to work and earn an income; however, many tend to be illiterate or professionally ill-equipped. As a result, they often lack the required qualifications to take up jobs which could provide a certain degree of economic security. In that regard, programmes focusing on rehabilitation, vocational training and empowerment are crucial initial steps of intervention. Subsequent action involves the provision of developmental support programmes that allow women to engage in an economic activity.

Programmes providing so-called 'soft loans' are effective and beneficial in that they contribute towards supporting marginalized women to overcome poverty and destitution, and to engage in jobs that allow them to afford the costs of subsistence to their family and themselves. Of note is that poor women cannot qualify for such loans outside the framework of developmental programmes specifically targeting that group. Thus, more such programmes directed at underprivileged women should be made available, especially in rural districts and in heavily-populated areas, including the capital and urban slums around other major cities.

## 5. ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

As regards areas of possible intervention in the economic field, a starting point would be the adoption of a general 'women-friendly' recruitment policy among commercial enterprises and business firms. Big companies employing a large number of staff, including female employees, should be encouraged to provide nursery and day-care services for children of employees. Whenever the number of employees, irrespective of gender, exceeds one hundred, the provision of nursery services should be mandatory. In addition, developing other incentives for business enterprises to encourage employment of women also would be useful.

Institutional practices should be monitored in order to detect discrimination against women in terms of pay; in other words, the remuneration received by women should be equal to that received by men for the completion of the same assignment/job. Similarly, discriminatory practices in career promotion and in the provision of social benefits and medical services should be monitored and redressed, with penalties imposed on companies that exercise discriminatory practices against women.

Generally speaking, the ability of women to become productive components in society should be encouraged. The ratio of female-to-male participation in the economic sphere standing at less than one quarter should be doubled, especially among younger women - a task which represents an identifiable goal to aim for in forthcoming planning.

It should be noted that the percentage of women in paid employment is significantly higher in the category 18-30 years old; however, the ratio declines rapidly for those aged 30 and above. That may be attributed to family obligations, including having children and parenting. Women would be more willing to consider returning to work if the family burdens placed upon them were alleviated; hence, that possibility should be investigated, in addition to the provision of education and skills training. That is particularly helpful for women who are facing family hardships at a particular stage of their life. Moreover, it is imperative to standardize the duration of maternity leave for both the private and public sectors. In order to encourage women to engage in economic activities and paid employment, occupational certificate/diploma courses and vocational training - also for those who already hold educational and other qualifications - have proved essential criteria for the implementation of that objective. Moreover, such courses serve as

rehabilitation programmes for women after maternity and parenting leave, or interruption due to other family circumstances, by increasing their knowledge and skills and, thus, maximizing their chances of finding work and returning to productive paid employment.

In that context, there is a need to reactivate the role of the National Employment Office for guidance and support in that area. It is also imperative to introduce legislation prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace, including identifying mechanisms to punish offenders. A first measure would be for the Government to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention regarding that matter.

## 6. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It is imperative to adopt specific and exceptional measures to guarantee a greater participation of women in the political sphere at all levels. Such participation may take many forms; from affiliation and membership in political parties and organizations, where female involvement remains weak, to women candidates standing in parliamentary and municipal elections. Pressure must be exercised for the adoption of a temporary quota system in electoral seats in Parliament and municipalities and in the formation of the Cabinet, as well as in appointments to administrative positions in government and the civil service.

All women, irrespective of opinion, political view, religious background, sectarian affiliation or position in society, should be made aware that their participation in the political life of the country is of strategic value to them. The issue of political participation is a cause shared by every woman in Lebanon; thus, all should rally around this concern.

Accordingly, a draft document requesting the adoption of a temporary quota in the electoral system is required, in addition to identifying the most appropriate vehicle for its implementation. Women lobby groups are well placed to advocate for the adoption and implementation of such a system - in that respect, all women organizations should support such a request.

## 7. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women has long been regarded as

taboo and a topic not to be raised, especially when such aggression takes place in the family or within the home. Women's associations have progressed greatly with regard to the issue of combating such violence; however, efforts should be enhanced and further light shed on violent practices against women.

Imposing a gradual change in existing social behaviour requires bold initiatives. Those include breaking the silence on aggressive practices, condemning violence in the harshest of terms, and meting out punishment against offenders. Punishment - or the threat of such a measure - is the most effective method to prevent the practice of violence against women, also within the family. Enforcing harsh penalties on those who murder women in so-called 'honour crimes' and on those who practice any form of violence against women and girls is key to combating such aggression.

The initial step, however, is reviewing existing legal texts, including the penal code, and eliminating every mention and clause which in any way condones the use and practice of violence against women and girls. It is also imperative to review legal and legislative verdicts and judgments pertaining to religious courts of justice, as well as to examine how the provisions of such verdicts and judgments relate to the practice of violence. Moreover, it is equally important to spread awareness regarding the situation on the ground in order to initiate more responsible attitudes towards such violent practices.

On the other hand, the abilities of victims of violence must be enhanced in order for them to report abuse and aggression. Helpful initiatives would include the setting-up of independent, women-dedicated, female-run organizations where victims and survivors of violence can report and follow up on cases of aggression and sexual harassment. There is also a need to provide legal advisory services, as well psychological support and in-kind donations to women and girls who are victims of violence. In that context, it is vital that Parliament approves Draft Law 4116/2010 on the protection of women from domestic violence, approved by the Council of Ministers on 6 April 2010. Thus, there is an urgent need to promote alliances among concerned stakeholders and parties for its approval in Parliament and immediate implementation.

The implementation of awareness programmes in rural and remote areas on the issues of sexual harassment and so-called 'honour crimes' is essential. Also needed are programmes to educate and train the staff of

agencies offering services to women victims of violence. They include personnel and officers in such law-enforcement agencies as the police and the Internal Security Forces who interact with women and girls in cases of harassment, violence, rape and so-called 'honour crime'.

## 8. MEDIA AND CULTURE

Activists who work towards the achievement of gender equality collide with traditional mindsets that perpetuate inequality between men and women, and reproduce stereotypical male and female roles in society. Such stereotypes are no longer valid or appropriate because of the changing realities on the ground.

Culture functions as an incubating field for the processing of ideas and beliefs; hence, it is a key component to anyone who wishes to change the prevailing tradition, mindset and mentality. In that particular context, male and female intellectuals and thinkers convinced of the need to combat the social division of roles along gender lines should become more vocal and express their views more frequently in as many forums as possible. That would have a positive impact on public opinion. Indeed, the production, publication and wide dissemination of a culture of gender equality would guide public opinion away from stereotypes and towards a more equitable vision of society.

The status of women in practice has gone beyond the stereotypical roles and images that traditional society assigned to them. Women work and contribute financially towards the subsistence of the family. In some cases, women bear alone the burdens of the family. In social circles, women display a noticeable sense of patriotism and social responsibility, which is reflected in volunteering in social and humanitarian work, as well as in participation in public demonstrations and protest movements. Equally, women are politically vocal. They have political opinions and views which they express as forcefully as their male counterparts on various public and private platforms, bearing in mind that the doors to political participation and of partaking in national and public decision-making have not as yet been opened to them. Against such background, it is necessary to renew social thought and update cultural trends. The dissemination of a set of new values is important in that context.

When it comes to media outlets, they play a special

role in the production and circulation of images of women. Additionally, a high proportion of women work in the media sector. As a result, one can capitalize on that situation by using the media as a platform for social change, rather than the reproduction of existing mindsets and mentalities.

Both culture and media produce and reproduce traditional images; hence, awareness regarding the serious dangers posed by that fact should be enhanced. In that respect, critical thinking and analytical review of the content of media and cultural programmes, as well as of school and university curricula and textbooks, are necessary. To achieve that set of goals, the critical review should be done from a gender perspective.

Workers in the field of media, including journalists and media personalities, could also benefit from training sessions that serve to raise their awareness of the importance of human rights and women's rights, as well as of discrimination and stereotypical thinking. It is important to dismantle such prevailing social impediments through the organization of collective training sessions and continuous dialogue.

## 9. ENVIRONMENT

The area of intervention concerning environmental resources and eco-friendly practices is vital in that it has a direct impact on both the women themselves and the environment they live in. Women live in quasi-direct and continuous contact with nature; and they are often concerned directly with the most basic and daily practices that affect negatively the nature and the environment surrounding them. Thus, women can play a progressive role in the propagation of eco-friendly practices among the younger generation whilst parenting - provided that they themselves implement environmentally-sound values.

Seeing that women make up between three quarters and two thirds of all teachers in the educational sector, it is obvious that their positive role can extend beyond the family and household to reach the whole community through educating children and youth on the importance of adopting responsible and eco-friendly patterns of behaviour. For all those reasons, working with women on that issue is a natural process.

On the other hand, women's needs and particularities should be taken into consideration when it comes to

the management of natural resources, and during the process of planning for environmental protection. That is particularly relevant since women contribute in an effective and natural way in all of the above.

## 10. INSTITUTION-BUILDING

Building institutions and strengthening the capacity of both public- and private-sector entities concerned with the promotion of women's issues are fundamental necessities. Indeed, the status of women and related issues depend on the trajectory adopted in that regard. The institutional mechanisms to be adopted would also greatly influence the process of work.

It is necessary to initiate a discussion on the importance of building relevant institutions, and on the need to enhance existing capabilities relating to that effort in both the public and private sectors. It is important to link the effectiveness of women activism in selected areas to the existence of an institutional framework of operation, and to practices of good governance in organizations working on women's issues. The results of such debates should be widely disseminated across relevant national and governmental institutions, as well as civil-society organizations and NGOs; with the process of sharing results allowing all relevant parties to benefit from findings and experiences. In that context, NCLW will play a key role in initiating such debates, follow up and disseminate the results, and also support the actual implementation of the recommendations.

Additionally, NCLW should support public administrations and institutions, as well as civil-society organizations, in their efforts to update their institutional structures and, particularly, in their attempts to develop their human and professional resources. Partnerships should also be formed for the implementation of special programmes that promote women's awareness and enhance their professional qualifications and abilities. Such partnerships should be extended to include the mobilizing of support in instances when there are demands which require negotiation in order to be met. It is important that such demands are echoed across all relevant organizations and institutions, since that allows progress in various fields pertaining to the advancement of women and related issues.

Moreover, joint action was essential during the process of preparing and drafting the *National Ten-Year Strategy for Women's Affairs*. Similarly, that partnership should

extend during the stages of implementation of the accompanying National Action Plan to guarantee that the awareness programmes are effective and comprehensive, as well as maximizing opportunities for the implementation of follow-up programmes on empowerment and rehabilitation. Such partnership also would bring added bargaining power and influence during the negotiation process with the concerned authorities.

#### **11. SITUATIONS OF EMERGENCY, ARMED CONFLICT, WAR AND NATURAL DISASTER**

In order to offer protection in various extreme circumstances, the field of intervention calls for a reassessment of the status of girls and women in such vulnerable situations. As a result, there is a need to organize awareness programmes and campaigns to enhance the abilities of women and girls to cope under such circumstances, to mitigate their risks, and to avoid the ensuing damages. On the other hand, it is necessary to put in place specific mechanisms for relief, rescue and assistance operations which target girls and women and respond to their needs in situations of emergency, armed conflict, war and natural disaster.

#### **12. GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

There is an urgent need to enhance the capabilities of the gender focal points in government departments and institutions. It is also necessary to train public-sector officials responsible for the budget preparation of all public organizations and institutions. The importance of adopting a gender approach when preparing such budgets, and when setting the parameters for their preparation, should be emphasized - in other words, gender budgeting should be introduced.

Furthermore, a plan should be put in place to evaluate research, studies and statistics from a gender perspective. That should be followed by the introduction of a culture of gender mainstreaming with an aim of becoming an integral part of the social standards adopted in all research and in all fields.

It is also vital to introduce a plan to support the review of educational curricula in order for schools and universities to include specialized gender studies in all fields and at all stages of education.

