

# Gender Profile

## LEBANON



INSTITUTE FOR  
WOMEN'S STUDIES  
IN THE ARAB WORLD

## Table of Contents

	Lebanon: Quick Facts	2
1.	Background	2
2.	Gender Policies, Constitutional and Legal Framework	3
3.	Gender and Politics	4
4.	Gender and Economy	5
5.	Gender and Education	6
6.	Gender and Health	7
7.	Gender and Human Rights	8
8.	SOGIE – Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression	8
9.	Gender-Based Violence	9
10.	Gender and Infrastructure	9
11.	Gender and Agriculture	10
12.	Gender and Media	10
	Sources	12

# LEBANON: QUICK FACTS<sup>1</sup>

- Population size: 4.547 million
- Overall population sex ratio (male/female): 1.01
- GDP (US \$ billions): \$32.99
- Currency: Lebanese pound
- Religions: Muslims (Shiite, Sunni), Christians, Druze
- Languages: Arabic (Official), French, English, Armenian
- Life expectancy at birth: 82.3/ 78.1 years
- Fertility rate: 1.7 births per women
- Percentage of population under 15 years: 24%
- Mortality rate, under 5 (per 1,000 live births): 8 per 1000 live births
- Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births): 15 per 100,000 live births
- Gender Gap Index 2015 : 138 (out of 145)

## 1. BACKGROUND

The Republic of Lebanon is located along the eastern Mediterranean Sea, bordered by Syria to the North and East and Palestine to the South. The country is divided into six governorates or Mohaafazaat (Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh, South Lebanon, the Bekaa, and North Lebanon). Lebanon, originally home to the Phoenician people, has a rich multi-cultural and multi-religious history. This cultural pluralism, coupled with an excellent strategic location at the crossroads of three continents, turned Lebanon into a hub for commerce.

Though Lebanon is classified as an upper middle income country,<sup>2</sup> weak and deteriorating governance has resulted in a poor delivery of public services. The last official census in Lebanon was conducted in 1932. No census has been carried out since then, due to demographic shifts of populations and a lack of political agreement on power sharing.<sup>3</sup>

Since gaining independence from France in 1943, Lebanon has been a stage for two large scale civil wars among the various religious groups competing for power and control (1958 and 1975-1990), military occupation by Syria (1976-2005), and some large scale Israeli military aggressions (mainly in 1982 and 2006). Although the 1975-1990 civil wars ended in a more equitable power distribution among the warring factions, the war left its toll on

Lebanon's infrastructure, service delivery, institutions, environment and employment.

In 2005 the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri triggered the Cedar Revolution (a series of demonstrations), which demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. By mid-2005, Syria began withdrawing their forces and the soldiers returned to Syria.

One of the key issues facing Lebanon at present is the impact of the Syria Crisis. In 2011, the Syrian civil war spilled over into Lebanon, causing further incidents of sectarian violence and armed clashes between Sunnis and Alawites. In 2015, the number of registered Syrian refugees living in Lebanon was 1,846,150.<sup>4</sup> This does not take into account the numbers of unregistered refugees- Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi, etc. Accommodating the needs of both the Lebanese and the Syrian refugee population has placed a substantial burden on Lebanon's resources and infrastructure.

Each crisis that Lebanon has faced since independence has resulted in setting up barriers for achieving gender equality. Considerations for gender equality and human rights are not seen as integral concerns and are pushed back by the decision makers. Religious institutions and a patriarchal culture determine the political and social governance of people.



## 2. GENDER POLICIES, CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### National Policies and Programs

Women in Lebanon face discrimination at many levels, from social conservatism to inadequate public policies. The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) was formed in 1998 to promote women's rights, enhance gender mainstreaming, and also to oversee the implementation of the goals of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In July 2006, a newly formed Cabinet vowed in its Ministerial Statement to put in action all the commitments that Lebanon has made on women's issues in connection with the recommendations of the Beijing Conference in 1995 (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action). The subsequent Government of 2008 reiterated this commitment and emphasized that it will continue to pursue in the same efforts, to strengthen the participation of women in all financial, economic, social, and political areas. It also went one step further and confirmed the plan to implement all signed international conventions, especially CEDAW. However, no significant progress has been made towards executing the recommendations.

### Constitutional and Legal Framework

The Lebanese Constitution of 1926, Article 7, clearly states that, all Lebanese are equal before the law without any distinction among them. The Constitution also assigned to the judiciary the authority to monitor state affairs. According to Article 9 of the Constitution, religious communities have the right to apply their own laws especially in matters related to personal status. Islamic courts have jurisdiction over Islamic personal status laws for both Sunni and Shiite communities while the Christian communities have their own religious courts. Since Lebanon follows an overall framework of confessionality, power is divided proportionately between the 18 religious sects, each with its own family laws and religious courts.

The legal system in Lebanon is based on the French Civil Code with the exception of matters related

to personal status (succession, marriage, divorce, custody, etc.). There is no unified civil law in Lebanon. Lebanese citizens with no confessional affiliations, who contract civil marriages abroad, can register their marriages in Lebanon upon their return and the issues related to their marriages are settled in civil courts that recognize the marriage. In April 2013, the first civil marriage contracted on Lebanese soil was registered. However, in February 2015, the Interior Ministry of Lebanon announced that civil marriages held on Lebanese soil will no longer be registered due to a lack of official laws related to civil unions.

Considerable positive changes have been seen in recent years in favor of women's rights, on issues related to Labor Code, the Social Security Code, and State employment regulations.<sup>5</sup> In 2011, a law punishing the crime of trafficking in persons was adopted. Lebanon also welcomed the annulment of the Article 562 of the Criminal Code, which called for lesser punishment for crimes committed in the name of 'honor'. However, Article 252, states that if anyone commits a crime in a fit of rage provoked by an unlawful act committed by the victim they can benefit from a reduced sentence. This means that Article 252 can be used to counter the removal of Article 562.

When it comes to holding government posts, Article 12 of the Constitution clearly states that all Lebanese (male and female) have the right to hold public office without any inclinations except for merits and capabilities. The passing of the law in April 2014 that extended maternity leave from 49 to 79 days and the legislation that was passed on 1 April 2014 criminalizing domestic violence were seen as major achievements. However, the Domestic Violence Law fails to protect women from marital rape.

The Lebanese Labor Law, (decree issued in 1965) clearly states that men and women undertaking the same job receive the same remuneration, but this is far from being implemented. The absence of tangible laws and policies that support women in the labor force has further resulted in discrimination at workplaces, in the provision of social benefits, taxation, and medical services especially in the non-formal sector. Also, there are no laws in Lebanon which recognize paternity leave, accord support services for women (childcare services etc.) or prohibit sexual harassment.

## Gender Policy Framework

In the late 1990s, Lebanon adopted gender mainstreaming in the collection and analyses of gender statistics. However, most ministries and public agencies continue to overlook the gender dimensions in their work.

Lebanon further showed its commitment to help support and advance women's rights by developing the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011-2021). The strategy was a result of the joint effort between NCLW, relevant government ministries and feminist organizations, with the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The National Ten-Year Strategy for Women identifies 12 strategic objectives<sup>6</sup> based on international conventions and agreements and along with the National Action Plan it aims to support women in all aspects of life.

## Key Actors

### *The National Commission for Lebanese Women*

The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) is the main governmental body concerned with all duties related to the status of women and gender equality in Lebanon. NCLW is dependent on donor funding, due to very low funding provided by the government and has managed to build a strong network with academic and professional institutions. Coordination and facilitation of dialogue between public and private actors is a vital part of NCLW's role in enabling and supporting action on gender equality and women's empowerment. NCLW, along with the relevant Gender Focal Points (GFPs), is responsible to address issues related to gender. The activities carried out by NCLW are not very different from those carried out by other civil society organizations, since they have no direct authority to propose reforms.

### *The Ministry of Social Affairs*

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) Women's Unit is responsible for evaluating women's needs across all sectors, and supporting Lebanese women's movements. The Unit recently developed programs that aim to provide protection services to the most vulnerable women, as well as young girls and boys. However, their work has also been undermined by

limited resources and lack of clear understanding of gender concepts.

### *Gender Focal Points*

Gender Focal Points (GFPs) are appointed in all ministries and public institutions to address issues related to gender and gender mainstreaming. However, due to weak organizational and communication channels, the GFPs have a long way to go in understanding their exact roles.

## Civil Society

Lebanon is home to a huge number of civil society organizations (CSOs). According to the Ministry of Interiors and Municipalities there are 8311 registered NGOs as of March 2011,<sup>7</sup> of which some have sectarian affiliations.

The Lebanese Women's Council (LWC) was established in 1953. The Council serves as an umbrella under which many women's and human rights organizations work.

Civil society plays a major role in working on women's issues and fills the gaps where the government lags behind. Since the Syrian crisis the number of international humanitarian organizations and aid agencies working in Lebanon has increased considerably. UN agencies and INGOs focus primarily on the implementation of policies related to refugees. However, they have made considerable efforts to include the vulnerable populations (women and children, elderly, disabled etc.) in Lebanon in order to mitigate conflict and decrease the burden on host populations.

## 3. GENDER AND POLITICS

Lebanon follows the model of political confessionalism, where the political power is divided according to religious sects. This model permeates into every aspect of the Lebanese society. Women of all sects are largely excluded from the political sphere regardless of their qualifications.

In 1953, Lebanon became one of the first countries in the Arab region to accord women equal rights

to participate fully in politics.<sup>8</sup> However, they were excluded from the Parliament until 1991 (with the exception of the 6 months tenure of Mirna Bustani in 1965). Since then only 3.1% women have occupied parliamentary seats. Women were absent from the Council of Ministers for a long time until two female appointments in 2004. Currently there is only one woman in the Council of Ministers and only four (out of 128) occupy seats in the Parliament.

Lack of secret voting in Lebanese elections also makes it harder for women and men to vote freely. During the early years, women were required to have elementary education before voting. This restriction was never implemented and was removed in 1957.<sup>9</sup>

To date there have been no female governors in Lebanon. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Lebanon is almost at the bottom of the table, ranking at 138 out of 144.<sup>10</sup> In 2009, females counted for 32% in the Executive Council of the Free Patriotic Movement, 20% of the Political Council of the Amal Movement, 14% of the members of the Executive Council of the Lebanese Forces and the Democratic Tajadod Party respectively, 9% of the members of the Political Bureau of the Phalangists Party, and 5% of the members of the Executive Committee of the Future Movement.<sup>11</sup>

Political familism is one of the major factors that affect the way women enter or participate in politics. Many successful female candidates enter the Parliament 'wearing black'. They are the close relatives or family members of the deceased male leaders. Further, women who are outside the close-knit political class system within the country are excluded. The elected women belong to certain sects that have a limited number of seats in the parliament. This extends to all appointments whether government, army or any other public institution. Women are trying to find some footing at the municipal level elections, as these elections are not tied to confessional quotas. Currently, more than a third of municipalities have at least one woman on the council.<sup>12</sup>

There are a high number of women in trade unions, but none at leadership positions. Lebanese women face significant hostility from their male counterparts in politics. They struggle with acquiring necessary funds for political campaigns and the confessional political

process tends to exclude women from decision-making posts. Community leaders generally tend to support male politicians. A particular challenge Lebanese women face is representation in local elections at their place of birth after marriage. Their names are removed from their place of origin and entered under the name of their husband, making them ineligible to contest for municipal seats at their place of birth.

Furthermore, repeated attempts to introduce a quota system for women in parliament have so far been unsuccessful. An example of such an initiative is "The Campaign in Support of the Women's Quota" that has been ongoing since 2008.

Women are more aware now of the importance of women's representation and political participation. Several NGOs are also undertaking focused campaigns. For example, the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (CCER) is a coalition of several NGOs working together since 2006 to advocate for the reform of electoral systems.

## 4. GENDER AND ECONOMY

The gender gap in Lebanon is very pronounced in the fields of economic participation and opportunity. Lebanon ranked 138th out of 145 according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2015 and Labor Force Participation sub-index.<sup>13</sup> Despite high literacy rates among women, their economic participation remains low.

However, it is important to note that Lebanese women have been quite successful with business. In 2012, on the request of the NCLW, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities issued a circular to allocate a portion of development funds to projects related to development of women. With the entry of UN agencies and international NGOs to support the refugees affected by the Syrian crisis, plenty of new jobs were created for the Lebanese locals.

### Employment

Women still suffer from gender inequality in the Lebanese economy as only 28% of the unemployed Lebanese population is women.<sup>14</sup> Gender-related

obstacles inhibit access to funding for women entrepreneurs. Labor force participation for women decreases with age.

## Informal Sector

Lebanon's informal sector is expanding rapidly. Self-employment and cheap labor provided by the huge influx of refugees are both major contributors to the informal sector. Illegal activities that contribute to the informal sector are prostitution, drug trafficking and money laundering.<sup>15</sup> To balance the needs of an overgrowing family and expenses, more Lebanese women are opting to work in the informal sector. Persons working in the informal sector are not included in the Labor Law, which also means they do not receive any social benefits. The wages are generally low and employment is often temporary. Women working in the informal sector are exposed to all forms of risks, associated with poor working conditions, violence, and increased risk of diseases.<sup>16</sup>

## Women-Owned Businesses

When compared to other Arab countries, the Lebanese legal system is fairly progressive and there are no legal restrictions limiting women in engaging in income-generating activities. However, the current patriarchal system places women at home rather than in the workforce and this affects the confidence of women when it comes to starting their own business. Nevertheless, the current economic situation of Lebanon has pushed an increasing number of women towards entrepreneurial work.

NCLW started a program where women can benefit from small loans to start their own businesses. Additionally, there are a plethora of organizations working to empower women economically through vocational trainings, income-generating activities, and loans for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

## Micro Finance

Lebanon is one of the top 5 micro-finance markets in the Arab region.<sup>17</sup> Women often face hurdles when trying to get collateral or a guarantor for loans, particularly in the rural areas.

The Lebanon Investment in Microfinance (LIM) Program (2009-2015) has awarded \$9.5 million in grants to Lebanon's microfinance institutions. This amount was then recycled to facilitate 14,000 loans.<sup>18</sup> Among these, 6000 went towards women-owned businesses. Of the 3000 new jobs created, women assumed 1900 of these and 9000 of the sustained jobs.<sup>19</sup> Currently there are many microfinance companies working within Lebanon. Many national programs and NGOs both international and local are working towards making it easier to provide finance to women for SMEs.

## 5. GENDER AND EDUCATION

Approximately two-thirds of Lebanese children attend private schools, and public schools have become the last recourse for families.<sup>20</sup> Despite the National Education Strategy Framework (2011-2015) being based on fundamental principles of freedom and equal educational opportunities for all Lebanese citizens, the quality and cost of private schooling in comparison to public alternatives is much higher, which has resulted in an immense gap regarding available standards of education. Education in Lebanon is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). According to the 2013 World Economic Forum report, Lebanon ranked 10th out of 144 countries in the overall quality of education.<sup>21</sup> According to, the Living Standard Survey 2007, 17.6% of the female population is illiterate compared to 9.3% of male population.

The huge influx of refugees has increased the demand on the public education system and Lebanon has become dependent on the support of international donors to increase the capacity in the public schools. Recently, various educational reforms have been undertaken. However, compulsory free education is yet to be imposed. Traditional gender stereotyping still prevails within the school curricula. Women represent 75.2% of the total number of teachers in Lebanon at all levels of education.<sup>22</sup>

## Early Childhood Education

Lebanese children enter primary school for 3 years between the age of 3 or 4. Enrolment in one or other form of pre-school education is approximately the same among both sexes (63.2% of girls and 60.4% of boys).<sup>23</sup>

## Primary Education

Enrolment at the primary level was recorded at 106% in 2012.<sup>24</sup> The gender gap is reflected more in poor areas like Akkar and some parts in the North of Lebanon (75% of girls and 59% boys). During the 3 years spent at the intermediate level, more than 10% of pupils drop out. This could be because boys drop out of school to find work while girls stay in school.

## Secondary Education

At the secondary level the gender gap sees a positive trend with more female enrolment than male. Females' enrolment accounted for 55.8% while males accounted for 44.2% in 2011-2012.<sup>25</sup>

## Tertiary Education

Gross enrolment at the university level is around 50%, with a slightly higher proportion of females at this level compared to males. The only public university in the country is the Lebanese University (LU) that has to compete with a number of private high level universities.

## Non-formal Education

The non-formal education (NFE) sector in Lebanon has increased considerably in the last few years. In 2010, the National Adult Education Program in collaboration with Lebanon Young Women's Christian Association implemented literacy programs from which 800 women benefitted.

UNICEF and other NGOs are working on the provision of new ways to access NFE for refugees. Some of the identified non-formal education programs are the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), remedial, literacy and numeracy and recreational activities and afterschool homework clubs. Non-formal education does not have a set curriculum other than for ALP where the Center of Education Research and Development (CERD) along with the UN agencies developed a set curriculum for children between the ages of 9-18 who have missed more than two years of schooling. MEHE with the help of the UN, international donors and NGOs developed the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) strategy to ensure that vulnerable

school-aged children (refugees as well as Lebanese children) receive quality non-formal education.<sup>28</sup>

## 6. GENDER AND HEALTH

Lebanon's pledge to provide satisfactory health care to its population began with the ratification of the 1972 International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which enshrines health care as a fundamental human right. The health care system in Lebanon is pluralistic, highly fragmented and deregulated. It is financed by the social security system and private health insurance companies. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) is the main body responsible for health service policies and programs. In addition, there is a huge gap between the private and the public health sector. The public health sector suffers from numerous deficiencies including; poor quality of services, obsolete equipment, low funding.

### Access to Health Care Services

In recent years, Lebanon has made considerable efforts to improve the health services it offers its citizens. However, significant gaps still exist in the provision of these services. Generally, those most affected by limited and poor services are women and girls; this is especially true for those from poor social backgrounds or rural areas. The spillover from the Syrian conflict has placed considerable pressure on the health care system in Lebanon. Both national and international NGOs in Lebanon play a major role in the provision of health care services.<sup>29</sup>

Elderly women are not covered by any public insurance schemes. The National Strategy for Social Development drawn up by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2011 stressed the need to ensure health rights for all members of society.

### Maternal and Child Health

Reproductive health became a part of primary health care in 2003. Lebanon, in recent years has shown remarkable achievements in the delivery of reproductive health services. Women have the right to make their own decision regarding their reproductive rights. However, the quality of these services in remote areas is questionable. The maternal mortality rate in



Lebanon is low, at 16 per 100,000 live births.<sup>30</sup> There is no established child mortality surveillance system. The estimated infant mortality rate is 7 per 1000 live births and the under-five mortality rate is 8 per 1000 live births.<sup>31</sup>

## Communicable Diseases

Although remarkable progress has been seen in combatting communicable diseases in the last decade, the recent influx of the Syrian refugees has jeopardized this.

The risk and outbreak of cholera, measles, mumps, tuberculosis and other diarrheal diseases is ever-present and increases during the summer months, especially among vulnerable and displaced populations. Lebanon has a low prevalence of HIV with a prevalence rate estimated at 0.1%.<sup>32</sup>

The waste management crisis that started in Lebanon in July 2015 further increased the risk of communicable disease transmission. Zoonotic diseases such as Brucellosis and Rabies remain a major public health concern.<sup>33</sup>

## Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health

Despite changing social and cultural norms, young people are not regularly taught about sexuality and reproductive health. Therefore they are more affected than other groups of society by certain health risks such as reproductive health problems, sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, smoking, nutritional health and so on.

## 7. GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Constitutional amendments as specified in the Taif Agreement of 1989 represented an important step for Lebanon in achieving its goal of equality and human rights for all its citizens.<sup>34</sup> Lebanon has ratified six international treaties to date, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), International Labor Organization's Convention on Child Labor, and the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and international

organizations, adopted a six-year National Plan for Human Rights (2014-2019) with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights in Lebanon.

However, discriminatory provisions within the nationality law and the Penal Code combined with a strong patriarchal system generally put women at a disadvantage. For example; a Lebanese woman married to a foreigner cannot pass her nationality to her husband or children. According to the Personal Status Law, women face further difficulties in matters pertaining to divorce, marital rights, and child custody. Female migrant domestic workers also face exploitation and abuse.

Lebanon has a very active civil society. Several NGOs and women's rights groups are now working on raising awareness concerning these issues through media campaigns and demonstrations. They are also actively lobbying for changing the laws that put women at a disadvantage.

## 8. SOGIE – SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, AND EXPRESSION

Individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions (SOGIE) continue to experience discrimination and violence all over the world. In the Arab world, Lebanon hosts the most open and visible Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA) social scene. However, outside of Beirut, members of these communities are largely stigmatized and discriminated against and in many cases, lack protection and support from both the society and the family.

The state has perpetrated the majority of violations of the rights of LGBTQIA individuals in Lebanon. Raids in public spaces, such as nightclubs and bath houses, have been used by law enforcement to inflict a spectrum of human rights violations including anal examinations that allegedly prove one's homosexuality - or lack thereof. This specific technique has also been used within the military to weed out gay men upon enlistment.<sup>35</sup>

A poll conducted by the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center in 2015 indicated that 81.2% of Lebanese believed homosexuality was unnatural.<sup>36</sup> However, in recent years, two landmark achievements have led to a wider acceptance of LGBTQIA individuals. Firstly, the Lebanese

Psychiatric Society (LPS) released a statement in 2013 declassifying non-heterosexual sexual orientations as being a mental disorder in need of treatment.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, while Lebanese law does not explicitly criminalize homosexuality, Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code has traditionally been used to prosecute LGBTQIA individuals on the basis of “sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature.” Three landmark rulings by Lebanese judges have constituted notable exceptions to said Article.<sup>38</sup> During the Universal Periodic Review held in Geneva in November 2015, delegations from all over the world gave recommendations to revise Article 534 and to guarantee the protection of equal rights for all. However, the recommendations are far from being implemented.

Regarding freedom of speech and expression, the country has also given rise to the first Arab activist groups advocating for respecting SOGIE rights. Lebanon is the first Arab country to have its own LGBT periodical, entitled Barra (“Out” in Arabic). The International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHOT) has been largely celebrated within Lebanon. Existing activist organizations provide community, legal and medical support, psychological counseling, social events, and continue to advocate for social change, visibility, and acceptance.

## 9. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Lebanon can take many forms and occurs within both private and public spheres. In comparison to other Arab countries, Lebanon has made considerable progress in addressing GBV. The recent passing of the Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence in April 2014 is an example of this. However, it is full of shortcomings, a major one being its failure to recognize marital rape as an offence. The Domestic Violence Law also states that in case of any conflict between the two laws, the personal status law takes precedence over the new domestic law.<sup>39</sup> The country’s personal status law also contributes towards violence against women because of its discriminatory nature. Loopholes in the country’s Penal Code give latitude to perpetrators in cases of honor crimes or by getting the perpetrator of rape to marry the survivor. Still, Lebanon’s repeal of the Criminal Code provision which handed out lenient

sentences for so-called honor crimes can be seen as a positive step in addressing GBV.

According to a report by the US Department of State, Lebanon is a source and destination for human trafficking and forced labor. The group most at risk from trafficking and exploitation are female migrant domestic workers. The law in Lebanon (Law no. 164) punishing the crime of human trafficking can be further strengthened to include an integrated legal system for the protection of victims of trafficking. Additionally, the trend of child marriages is growing at an alarming rate among the refugee population in Lebanon.<sup>40</sup> Currently, no law exists that prohibits early marriage in Lebanon. However, recently NCLW presented to the Parliament a draft law to regulate marriage among minors.<sup>41</sup>

Lebanon has no legislation in place for sexual exploitation and harassment within the work place. The only advantage a victim has is that she is allowed to leave her workplace without having to give notice. Many civil society organizations are working towards GBV prevention and response, lobbying for policies and procedural changes to recognize the seriousness of violence against women. This is one of the primary objectives addressed by the National Strategy for Women 2011-2021. Unfortunately, the Lebanese legal system does not provide any tools for monitoring violations of gender equality. Special centers exist in Lebanon that admit GBV survivors and provide a range of primary health care services and counseling. These centers are run by local NGOs with the help of governmental and international organizations.

## 10. GENDER AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The different ways in which women and men use infrastructural services has important consequences for sector and investment policies, and program design. The major burden of poor infrastructure falls on the shoulder of women and girls due to gender inequalities in everyday maintenance and caretaking responsibilities.

### Transport

Transportation varies greatly in Lebanon. Both private

and public transport is available. Public transport is inexpensive and covers all the major areas. Compared to other Arab nations, women in Lebanon can travel without restrictions. However, women and girls, especially in rural areas, face certain risks when accessing public transportation including; increased risk of harassment, sexual assault, and other forms of GBV.

## Households

The cost of housing in Lebanon has traditionally been high and the recent influx of refugees has only exacerbated this problem. Many of the households headed by females are struggling. According to the Living Standards Survey 2007 the proportion of Lebanese households headed by females is 15.5%, and most of them have low levels of education or are illiterate. Some of the female-headed households are better off than others, especially those where the male members of the family send remittance from abroad (Gulf, Africa and Eastern Europe).

## Water and Sanitation

In Lebanon, there is a real threat of severe water shortage. It is very important to understand and acknowledge the critical role women can play in water-related initiatives, and the risks women face when water is scarce. However, the tendency in the country has been to disregard women when it comes to water sector developments. Women are traditionally in charge of cleaning and rationing water which puts extra stress on their daily lives. The garbage crisis of 2015 has exacerbated these concerns and contaminated water is now a greater problem.

## 11. GENDER AND AGRICULTURE

As no new official census has been carried out since 1932, it is difficult to obtain the exact information on the status of women in agriculture. However, it is undisputed that rural women are major contributors to this sector. Women in agriculture are estimated to comprise 40% of the labor force, with an income gap between men and women of 21.0%.<sup>4243</sup>

Many rural women are not aware of their basic rights. In addition, since most work part-time, they are not

protected by laws related to working hours, maternity leave, and health measures.

The refugee crisis has further affected rural workers, with many agribusiness owners preferring to hire refugees for cheaper labor. The establishment of the National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas (NOWARA) in 2008, probably the first of its kind in the Arab World, is seen as a big step in recognizing and promoting the role of women in agriculture, rural products, and agro-food. NOWARA also works on updating legislation and eliminating discrimination against rural women.

It is difficult to project accurately on the involvement of women in agricultural activities, in terms of both number and type of work. But some FAO and UNDP estimates indicate that in certain labor intensive agricultural sectors (e.g. Tobacco plantation) and household-based productions women actually constitute the absolute majority. They are typically not included in national statistics.

## Gendered Division of Labor

Women perform a large share of the agricultural work (seeding, weeding, harvesting etc.). All decision-making regarding farming activities is carried out by men. While women might not have a significant role in the decision making process, the allocation of water for livestock is a women's job. In recent years, multiple programs were implemented to promote women's access to agricultural resources and some NGOs provide credit to small-scale enterprises.

## 12. GENDER AND MEDIA

Media in Lebanon plays a central role in gender stereotyping. The objectification of women and valuing them only for their beauty is common practice in Lebanon media. Compared to neighboring countries, Lebanon has a high number of female journalists, and the number of women within the media industry has been on the rise. Despite these positive developments, major decision-making positions in the media and the production of entertainment programs are still dominated by men.

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### Dr. Nida Latif

Dr. Latif is a dentist by training and has a Postgraduate Degree in Public Health. She has extensive experience working with various UN agencies, local NGO's and with refugees and displaced populations in a variety of settings. Her work focuses on gender, gender-based violence and public health. She was also a part of peer reviewers of the national curriculum on GBV Case Management, Lebanon.

## COUNTRY EXPERT REVIEWER

### Dr. Marguerite Helou

Professor El-Helou holds a PhD degree in Political Science from Syracuse University, USA. She has 35 years of teaching experience at four major universities in Lebanon (Lebanese University, American University of Beirut, Notre Dame University and Haigazian), over 12 years' experience as a gender consultant for international organizations (UNDP, UNFPA, IFES, IRI, USAID, and WFD), and over 15 years of experience as a senior research analyst at Statistics Lebanon. Professor El-Helou is the author of two books (Turkish-Israeli Relations, and Islam in Turkish Politics) and has contributed to over 17 books (joint authorship) on issues of gender, governance and democracy in Lebanon and the Arab World.

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\* The content of this profile does not reflect the official opinion of the Lebanese American University or IWSAW, nor does it reflect the official opinion of any person acting on their behalf. Responsibility for the information expressed in the profiles lies entirely with the sources consulted and from which the information was gathered.



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6. Legal amendments approved recently by parliamentary committees, include the following: Criminal laws, annulment of article 562, which used to allow for lesser punishment in the case of 'crimes of honor'; Income tax laws (article 9), acknowledged gender parity on tax reduction; Transportation fees (article 9), acknowledged gender parity on tax reduction; National defense (par. 8 of article 94), extended benefits of retirement pension to both husband and wife (source: [www.nclw.org.lb](http://www.nclw.org.lb)). Another major gain took place in 2009 when Lebanese women were finally granted the legal right to open bank accounts for their minor children. Until then only fathers had this right under the pretext of minors' guardianship. (Kanaan, 2009).
7. <http://www.genderclearinghouse.org/upload/Assets/Documents/pdf/National%20Strategy%20for%20Women%20in%20Lebanon.pdf>. The 12 strategic objectives are: achieving citizenship to its fullest, promoting education and training, equality in health care, combating poverty, economic participation, participation in decision-making processes, combating all forms of violence, eradicating gender stereotyping, environmental participation, strengthening the capacity of women institutions, protecting women in conflict and gender mainstreaming in all fields.
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[http://gate.unwomen.org/resources/docs/genderequality/229\\_UN%20Women\\_Evaluation%20Report%20UNIFEM%20Arab%20Women%20Parliamentarian%20Project.Arab%20States\\_2009.pdf](http://gate.unwomen.org/resources/docs/genderequality/229_UN%20Women_Evaluation%20Report%20UNIFEM%20Arab%20Women%20Parliamentarian%20Project.Arab%20States_2009.pdf)
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21. <https://www.usaid.gov/lebanon/education>
22. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GITR\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GITR_Report_2013.pdf)
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