**Mid-Term Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon 2021 – 2023**

UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund

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1. **Executive Summary**

Women and girls continue to be subject to structural discrimination in Lebanon. The law codifies gender inequalities across a range of issues including those related to personal status, employment, protection and nationality, and Lebanon maintains reservations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), despite efforts to repeal these reservations and align national legislation. Moreover, women’s marginalization across decision-making and elected political leadership positions, and equal access to the labour market and financial assets continues to be a challenge.

Since 2019, Lebanon has experienced compounded crises, encompassing economic, social, political and humanitarian challenges, eroding Lebanon’s developmental gains, increasing social tensions and imposing severe hardships on its residents. While both women and men have been deeply affected by the multiple crisis, female-headed households are more likely to be multi-dimensionally poor, and this gap has likely increased because of the crisis.[[1]](#footnote-1) The situation is worse for women refugees or those who lack legal residence,[[2]](#footnote-2) and women are more prone to be food insecure and to experience gender-based violence (GBV)[[3]](#footnote-3) throughout their lifetime.

Despite this challenging context, Lebanon has witnessed some noteworthy strides in bolstering equal rights for women and girls during the period covered by the mid-term review. In 2021, the Parliament passed the Sexual Harassment Law (Law No. 204). Subsequently, in 2023, the Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2022-2030) was launched, and Lebanon’s first National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was extended with one year. Additionally, the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) introduced Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Violence against Women (VAW) shelters, which in turn marked significant milestones in the fight against GBV.

Furthermore, the approval of new social and pension schemes in 2023 signifies a commitment to enhancing service delivery to vulnerable groups in Lebanon, including women. These initiatives underscore a commitment to addressing equal rights for women and girls in Lebanon, although the unprecedented and multifaceted crises, combined with a history of violence, weak state institutions and entrenched social inequality, is deepening gender inequalities in the country. This is evident in Lebanon’s ranking in the World Economic Forum’s 2023 Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR), which fell from 119 in 2022 to 132 out of 146 countries in 2023.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. **Methodology**

The report compared the types of recommendations received by Lebanon from the previous Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), issued on 7 April 2021, during the third UPR-cycle,[[5]](#footnote-5) and further highlighted the development in the recommended areas. The report provides an in-depth analysis, focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, across various sectors and the linkage with relevant UPR-recommendations.

The mid-term review methodology is primarily centered on compiling information from ongoing initiatives implemented by the two entities as they relate to hematic areas also addressed in UPR- recommendations. During the review process, UN Women and UNFPA proactively solicited input and engaged in consultations with programming teams and civil society partners. Information also has been collated from several UN-led inter-agency working groups that bring UN entities and civil society organizations together in Lebanon across sectors. These include the UN Gender Working Group, the UN LGBTIQ Taskforce, the Working Group on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health, as well as the Working Group on Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons.

This collaborative engagement ensured an inclusive approach, incorporating diverse viewpoints and expertise to enhance ownership of UPR-recommendations and to align progress and setbacks with broader goals of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

1. **Background and Situation Analysis**

The escalation of cross-border hostilities along the Blue Line starting in October 2023 is worsening Lebanon's vulnerability, already impacted by a convergence of challenges. As of 5 March 2024, 90,859 individuals (52% females) have been displaced from south Lebanon due to the ongoing hostilities.[[6]](#footnote-6) This situation is exacerbated by a prolonged political deadlock, leaving the country without a functioning government or president, which in turn is heightening political polarization and hampering Lebanon’s legislative efficiency.

This unfortunate combination is reversing the country’s development gains, exacerbating social tensions and causing severe hardship for all people residing in Lebanon. Lebanon’s economic crisis, described by the World Bank as a ‘deliberate disaster’, ranks among the top three economic crises since the mid-nineteenth century.[[7]](#footnote-7) In July 2022, the country was downgraded to a lower middle-income country for the first time in 25 years. By February 2023, annual inflation had soared to 190%, with food and energy inflation rising by 11,300% and 4,400%, respectively, since the onset of the economic crisis in October 2019.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Consequently, povertry is on the rise, and by the beginning of 2023, a total of 3.9 million people needed some form of humanitarian assistance. This figure includes vulnerable Lebanese, Syrian refugees, migrants, and Palestine refugees in Lebanon.[[9]](#footnote-9) Access to safe housing, clean water, reliable electricity, quality health care and education have become increasingly challenging for the population as government institutions struggle to function under the weight of the crisis. Divisive narratives, sectarian rhetoric and struggles around scarce resources are escalating risks, and there have been many incidents of localized clashes in a country where a shared understanding of the past, or vision of the future, continues to be illusive. Furthermore, there are growing concerns in the Lebanese population and among the political elite over hosting the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, which in turn is fueling sectarianism in the communities.

Gender inequality remains endemic in Lebanon, and women and girls are subject to multi-dimensional discrimination across civil, political, social, and economic rights.

1. **UPR Midterm Review 2021 - 2023**
2. **Civil and Political Rights**

Women’s under-representation in public and political life continues to be a challenge in Lebanon due to a myriad of factors, including the country’s challenging electoral framework, patriarchal political parties, the sectarian system, high cost of election campaigning, media bias and entrenched social norms, all which puts barriers on women to fully realize their potential to become political actors or leaders.[[10]](#footnote-10) In 2023, Lebanon ranked 144 of 146 countries on women’s political empowerment in the GGGR.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In the 2022 Parliamentary Election, eight women (of 128 total seats) were elected as Members of Parliament (MPs). This brought the proportion of women MPs to 6% and constituted a modest increase from the 2018 elections, where six women were elected. This increase, however, reflects some important changes – more women entering politics outside of male patronage systems, and women entering, who ran on an explicit feminist agenda. The 2022 Parliamentary Election also saw a record number of women candidates, with 118 women making it on to electoral lists, after 157 female candidates submitted their candidacy. In addition, the number of preferential votes allocated to women increased incrementally, from 5% to 7%.

The structural discrimination at the national level is mimicked at the local level, where women currently represent only 5% of the country’s municipal councilors and 2% of *mukhtar*s (elected community leaders).[[12]](#footnote-12) While municipal elections were scheduled to take place in May 2023, due to the political vacuum of the country, municipal elections is slated for May 2024. Currently, there is no women’s quota in parliament or in municipal councils to enhance women’s equal access to representation in elected offices, it is worth noting that in 2023, some political parties adopted voluntary quotas for women in their governance structures, and several (10) MPs have publicly endorsed a gender quota for women in Municipal Councils.

1. **National Frameworks for Advancing Gender Equality**

Lebanon received four recommendations[[13]](#footnote-13) related to strengthening national frameworks to promote gender equality in all spaces. To this end, Lebanon continues to prioritise gender equality, as guided by its four national frameworks – the Lebanon UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) on Women Peace and Security (2019-2023); the Mashreq Gender Facility Women’s Economic Empowerment Action Plan (2019-2024); the Strategic Plan on the Protection of Women and Children 2020-2026; and the Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2022-2030). While these frameworks demonstrate commitments to mainstream gender equality across sectors to promote sustainable development – including eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls, the enhancement of women’s leadership in politics, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, ensuring equality before the law; and women’s economic empowerment – they are overlapping, and some lack clear mechanisms for implementation, coordination, and funding.

**Recommendation**

1. Recognize and welcome the progress made by the Government of Lebanon since the third UPR-cycle, by adopting the Strategy for Women in 2023, and by extending the NAP on UNSCR 1325 through 2023.
2. Encourage the Government of Lebanon to establish robust coordination mechanisms and broad engagement across state institutions and civil society to accelerate implementation of commitments to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls, including mechanisms for monitoring and sufficient financial support.
3. **Lebanon’s UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**

Lebanon’s UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security prioritizes achieving gender equality by recognizing the impact of conflict on women and girls, and by amplifying women’s roles in decision-making on issues of peace and security, including protection of women survivors of gender-based violence.

As per a 2023 review of the NAP 2019-2023 by the NCLW, the coordinator of the NAP 2019-2023, supported by UN Women, Lebanon has made key progress in the implementation of the NAP 2019-2023, despite the unprecedented crisis spanning economic, political, and social dimensions. Notably, the enactment of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law (No. 105) in 2021[[14]](#footnote-14); positioning of more than 500 women peacebuilders to lead community and national level dialogues, reconciliation, and mediation efforts to build peace and sustainable development in Lebanon; and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is actively working to increase and retain women in their ranks to enhance women’s leadership in peace and security, evident in the establishment of a Gender Department in 2021 and the endorsement of a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in 2024.

Furthermore, the NAP 2019-2023 enabled the NCLW to appoint gender focal persons in most state entities. These focal points receive regular training and coordination from NCLW, supported by UN Women. Additionally, the NCLW has implemented an online monitoring and reporting system allowing timely access to data by state entities, to monitor progress and gaps of the NAP implementation.

**Recommendation:**

1. Recognize the leadership of NCLW in coordinating the implementation of the NAP 2019-2023, and the progress made so far in the implementation of the NAP 2029-2023, including the enactment of Law no. 105 on Sexual Harassment in 2021.
2. Encourage the NCLW to extend the NAP 1325 throughout 2024 and embark on inclusive consultations with key stakeholders – including women refugees and internally displaced persons – in the development of the second NAP on UNSCR 1325 to foster ownership, delineate responsibilities, and consider lessons learned aligned with needs and priorities of local actors to promote sustainable peace.
3. Reiterate Lebanon’s responsibilities under international treaty bodies, and that adoption of necessary legislation and decrees as well as other related steps, including sufficient financial support, is vital to end all discrimination against women and girls at all levels.
4. **Participation of Women in Political and Public Life**

Lebanon received six recommendations[[15]](#footnote-15) related to enhancing women’s equal and full participation in political leadership and public life, and progress is underway to address these recommendations by government institutions, civil society, members of parliament, and UN agencies alike. In the lead-up to the Parliamentary elections in 2022 and the municipal elections scheduled to take place in May 2024, UN Women, UNDP and UNSCOL have provided joint electoral assistance to national partners to mobilize and train women to run as political candidates, including advocacy to adopt temporary special measures to enable women’s representation in elected offices. While UN Women recognizes the progress made to enhance women’s participation in political and public life, progress is slow and legislative amendments in line with recommendations from member states and the expert group remains pending.

**Recommendation**

1. Continue to invest in advocacy and technical assistance to promote affirmative action and temporary special measures to ensure women's equal access to representation in elected bodies, decision-making, and public life in line with recommendations.
2. Continue to encourage state institutions, political parties, civil society, and international actors alike to promote inclusive electoral and legislative processes in future elections to enhance participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups by increasing awareness and continued capacity building of candidates, voters, and citizens on the imperative of human rights and gender equality in political and public life to foster inclusive and sustainable democracy.
3. **Right to Peaceful Assembly**

Lebanon received eight recommendations[[16]](#footnote-16) related to protection of the right to peaceful assembly, and freedom of opinion and expression. Since the 2021 third cycle of the UPR of Lebanon, the space for human rights defenders has been shrinking significantly across the country[[17]](#footnote-17). UN Women notes with concern the rise in incidents of violence against women human rights defenders, feminist actors, peacebuilders and representatives identifying with LGBTQI community over the course of 2021-2023, both in online and offline spaces. This necessitates continued and substantial investment in protection services for female leaders and gender equality advocates, as well as to all survivors of gender-based violence. UN Women is supporting feminist actors and legislators to advocate for positive change and legislative reform, while at the same time strengthening reporting systems and access to protection services for women survivors of violence, including in political spaces online and offline.

**Recommendation**

1. Continue to call for the adoption of legislation to stop violence and provide equal protection of women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, and gender equality advocates, and to established survivor centered and inclusive multi-sectoral responses to gender-based violence.
2. Continued investments and increased funding allocated to strengthen reporting mechanisms and early warning systems to enhance accountabilities for all forms of gender-based violence.
3. **Economic Social and Cultural Rights**

Women continue to face additional barriers related to social norms, legal constraints, and market failures, including limited access to social protection and healthcare, affordable and adequate childcare, safe public transportation, harassment and violence, and equal access to the workplace in Lebanon. While gender discrimination is prevented in the Labour Law No. 53 (Article 26), women are prohibited from taking up work in several sectors, including the extractive industries, construction, and transportation (Article 27). Women are also restricted from working at night,23 and domestic and migrant workers are not protected under the Labour Law No. 53, as they are bound by the Kafala system of sponsorship.

The multiple crises that continued to impact Lebanon in 2023, alongside decreased funding and the cessation of activities by some organizations, significantly affected the health sector's ability to deliver essential primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare to targeted population groups. Vulnerability assessments reveal that cost remains a significant barrier to healthcare access.

The crippling socioeconomic situation has resulted in increased risks of exposure to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, sexual violence, child marriage, and intimate partner violence (IPV).

Although Lebanon’s social security system have been updated since the third cycle of UPR-reporting, it still includes explicit and implicit biases against women, which is contributing to institutionalized gender inequality and social exclusion.24 The Social Security Law No. 128 continues to exclude workers in the informal sector, where women are disproportionately represented, and maternity benefits are employer liability and not covered by the Social Security Law No. 128, which puts women at a greater risk of not being employed due to higher cost and perceived lower productivity during maternity compared to males.

1. **Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2022-2030)**

In November 2023, UNFPA in partnership with the NCLW and ABAAD – Resource Center for Gender Equality, launched the National Women Strategy (2022-2030). This Strategy will be the main strategic framework under which governmental and non-governmental entities, national and international NGOs working in Lebanon, will operate. In addition, a three-year national action was prepared and launched in 2023.

**Recommendations**

1. Strengthen collaboration and engagement with diverse stakeholders, including governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, international NGOs, and grassroots organizations, to ensure a comprehensive approach to implementing the strategy.
2. Develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress, measure impact, and identify areas that require adjustment or improvement throughout the implementation period.
3. Implement a system for the regular submission of progress reports by involved entities, fostering accountability in the implementation process.
4. Advocate for and integrate gender-responsive budgeting practices to ensure adequate financial resources are allocated to support the goals outlined in the National Women Strategy.
5. **Right to Work**

Lebanon received eight recommendations regarding labor rights, particularly the protection of migrant domestic workers, mostly women. Labor Law No. 53 discriminates against women in accessing the job market, lacks clarity on equal pay, and social protection. Women face restrictions in various sectors and are prohibited from night work. Migrant domestic workers, mainly women, are excluded from the protections of Labor Law No. 53 and are subject to the Kafala sponsorship system.

This system grants employer’s significant authority over working and living conditions, often intruding into workers' personal lives. UN Women is providing technical support to state institutions and civil society actors to enhance workers’ rights and access to labor market specifically targeting women. Additionally, UN Women is supporting employment schemes to increase women’s participation in the labor forces, including through gender analysis and technical assistance to establish inclusive social protection schemes, with equal access to benefits for women.

**Recommendation**:

1. Encourage Lebanon to amend Labour Law No. 53 to grant women equal access to the labour force and social protection schemes.
2. Abolish the Kafala system of sponsorship and update the Labor Law to include protection of domestic and migrant workers, including provision of access to effective legal remedies for domestic migrant workers and abolish the Kafala system.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights**

Lebanon received four types of recommendations regarding health including sexual and reproductive health[[18]](#footnote-18). They cover quality of health care services, right to health for migrants, refugees and the elderly, universal access to information and health care services and accessibility of health care services.

In 2023, maternal and child health indicators have suffered, with challenges in accessing maternal care services leading to increased prematurity, low birth weight, and newborn mortality. The economic crises have further jeopardized access to basic hygiene materials, potentially leading to underreported gynaecological infections. Additionally, access to family planning and cancer screening services have declined, and the prevalence of child marriage poses health risks for adolescent girls.

The health system has been severely affected by the multiple compounded crises that hit Lebanon as of 2019 including civil unrest, COVID-19, economic crisis, cholera outbreak and the recent cross-border hostilities along the Blue Line as a result of the war in Gaza. The currency devaluation and banking restrictions have been causing detrimental impacts on the health sector that is currently under significant strain due to increased demand and scarcity of resources. With the launch of the 2023-2030 National Health Strategy by the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), health sector partners are working to strengthen the national system resilience through financing, support to human resources, governance, health information systems, medical products, and capacity development interventions.

Affordability, including direct and indirect costs of services, remains the primary challenge to accessing healthcare services. Barriers to access also include availability (*i.e*. shortage of some medication), geographic accessibility (*i.e.* remote areas), acceptability (*i.e.* social stigma), noting that quality of care could also be jeopardized in some areas because of the unavailability of skilled human resources linked to their migration. Key actors e.g., reproductive health actors like for example UN agencies, international organizations, local NGOs are increasing their efforts to remove access barriers including for subsidization of packages at primary care level and support to life saving hospitalization services.

In such a crisis context, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services can be heavily affected because families, namely mothers, will be prioritizing basic needs *i.e.* shelter and food, over their own health care. As such, pregnant women might skip their antenatal care services, skip meals and necessary health supplements which could eventually impact maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality. Family planning options and services can also be negatively impacted in times of crisis, with evidence indicating a decrease in access to and utilization of contraceptives during emergency, which can result in a higher number of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

UNFPA’s progress and contribution to the health sector over the past four years include the following:

1. Developing, and launching the National Strategy on Clinical Management of Rape (CMR), in partnership with MOPH and UNICEF, coupled with the development of national standards operational procedures on CMR that is key to contextualize the processes of care.
2. A series of training of trainers and training on clinical management of rape to care providers were conducted over the past two years, in partnership between MOPH and UNFPA.

**Recommendation**

1. promote enabling environment for disclosure of GBV and enhance access to quality CMR services.

In line with the National Mental Health Strategy for Lebanon, the National Mental Health Programme Lebanon - at MOPH - has jointly developed with UNFPA in Lebanon the Maternal Mental Health Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to promote the growth of a sustainable mental health practice that ensures access to high-quality mental health services to pregnant women in particular. It is also intended to serve as a guiding tool to professionals in the public health system with the sole purpose of supporting Maternal and Child Mental Health. A series of training of trainers and training on maternal mental health were delivered to health care providers over the past two years in with the support of UNFPA and in collaboration with the Social Workers Syndicate in Lebanon.

**Recommendation**

1. Ensure ongoing capacity development on maternal mental health to health care providers in contact with women in the perinatal phase.
2. Institutionalize screening for mental health disorders among pregnant women and mothers and integrate related indicators in the national information system.
3. Promote enabling environment for continuously seeking mental health support by pregnant and new mothers as needed.

UNFPA has developed guidelines on nutrition for pregnant and lactating women in partnership with MOPH and coordination with the inter-agency nutrition sector. The dietary guidelines aim at promoting healthy and diversified diets amongst pregnant and lactating women in Lebanon. A series of training of trainers and training on nutrition for pregnant and lactating women were conducted to health care providers over the past two years in partnership with MOPH, the Lebanese Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Lebanese Order of Dietitians.

**Recommendation**

1. Ensure continuous capacity development on nutrition guidelines for pregnant and lactating women to health care providers.
2. Integrate dietary assessment in the clinical checkup of pregnant lactating women.

Development of national guidelines to enhance quality of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, namely a) the inpatient and outpatient guidelines on COVID-19 and pregnancy as well as the COVID-19 and pregnancy vaccination guide, b) update/ revision of the national RH service delivery guidelines, and c) different models for integrating GBV in health care services, with the objective of providing a comprehensive package of services which enhances the wellbeing of women and girls. In addition, UNFPA supported the development of training packages on menstrual hygiene management, self-care, and older women's health at primary health care levels which also contributed to the promotion of a comprehensive SRH in the context of crisis.

**Recommendation**

1. Development of childbirth policy guidelines including standard operating procedures for near miss management to enhance maternal quality care services across all levels of care.
2. Support establishment of continuum of care for maternal newborn care which entails strengthening referral between primary and secondary care levels, strengthening information management system namely unique Identification to track pregnant women at the different levels of health care and support provision of services.

UNFPA supported the development of a framework to track progress on adolescents and youth. The aim of this tool is to guide various actors in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SRHR interventions.

**Recommendation**

1. Intensify advocacy efforts among all actors to use /report on the framework as guiding tool when developing and monitoring interventions targeting adolescents and youth.
2. Support to generation of evidence on SRH namely, a) assessment of the potential acceptability and utility of using reusable sanitary pads; 2) impact of Beirut blast on LGBTIQ community and assessment of up-taking Virtual Sexual and Reproductive Health Services by the LGBTQI-community in Lebanon.
3. Conduct assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and the economic crisis on women’s access to RH.
4. Conduct assessment of the impact of the economic situation on women’s access to SRH.

**Recommendation**

1. Intensify advocacy efforts among all actors to ensure utilization of study findings in SRH programs at policy, planning, implementation and coordination levels.
2. **Gender Based Violence**

Regarding gender-based violence, Lebanon received five types of recommendations. They cover strengthening national law regarding GBV, enhancing measures to prevent GBV, criminalizing domestic violence, marital rape and sexual harassment and developing national action plan to address the above topics. GBV can also be included in other recommendations, e.g., accessing to information and services.

While there is no nationally representative prevalence data on GBV in Lebanon, the GBVIMS data of 2023 demonstrates that women and girls continue to constitute the majority (95%) of survivors of GBV. Female survivors disproportionately experience risks of GBV due to several contributing factors such as socioeconomic status, social and cultural norms, male patriarchy, nationality, education status, disability, and living or working conditions. In the GBV IMS report of 2023, for women and girls, physical assault and psychological/emotional abuse present the most reported types of GBV incidents, accounting for 28% and 27% respectively.

Forced and child marriage is the third most reported GBV type with 21%, followed by sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault, and denial of resources and opportunities, with 18% and 6% respectively. In 2023, incidents of online sexual harassment and cybercrimes, including extortion cases remained a significant concern, including for adolescent girls and boys.

Children in Lebanon are exposed to a range of protection concerns, including child labor, child marriage, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation and abuse. According to the gender findings of UNICEF’s recent report on multidimensional child poverty, adolescent girls, regardless of their nationality, have experienced harassment in public spaces and restriction of their mobility, preventing access to services. Moreover, 22% of Syrian girls between the ages of 15 and 18 are not attending school because of marriage.

In 2023, a negative gender discourse fueled further sentiments against gender equality, women empowerment and GBV prevention programs that impacted significantly on the safe implementation of programs and safety risks of staff.

Women and girls with disabilities are at a higher risk of exposure to violence, including GBV, exploitation, and abuse, and face additional significant challenges accessing GBV services. According to the 2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), 30% of Syrian and 22% of Lebanese households reported having at least one family member living with a disability. However, in 2022, the GBVIMS data shows that only 1% of the GBV-reported incidents were for persons living with a disability. Based on UNFPA’s situational analysis on GBV against women and girls with disabilities in Lebanon, several barriers limit access of GBV survivors living with disabilities from accessing services, including negative stereotyping and social stigmatization, inaccessibility to information, inaccessibility to facilities, and installation of rules and policies that render people with disabilities in a disadvantaged position.

Persons from the LGBTQI-community remain one of the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon that face disproportionate levels of GBV due to their gender identity while encountering barriers to accessing services.

On 21 December 2020, Lebanon passed the “Law to Criminalize Sexual Harassment and [for] Rehabilitation of Its Victims.” The law demonstrates critical progress by making sexual harassment a crime and outlining whistleblower protections. The Law criminalizes sexual harassment for the first time ever, with the most flagrant perpetrators facing up to four years in prison and fines of up to 50 times higher than the minimum wage. However, it falls short of the Violence and Harassment Convention, which stipulates that governments should address violence and harassment at work through an “inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach” including through labor laws, occupational safety and health laws, and equality and nondiscrimination laws, in addition to criminal law.

In order to ensure better protection for survivors of domestic violence and their children, the Parliament approved on 21 December 2020, a number of amendments to Law 293/2014 for the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence. These amendments were issued by Law No 204, on 30 December 2020. While the strengthened domestic violence law may provide increased protection, key gaps remain both in the law and in how it is applied.

Lebanon's Law No. 205, enacted in 2021, represents a significant step in combating sexual harassment in the Arab region. It criminalizes sexual harassment for the first time, imposing penalties of up to four years in prison and substantial fines for offenders. The law encompasses various forms of harassment, including speech, actions, and online means, defining it as acts involving psychological, moral, financial, or racist pressure for sexual gains. Notably, the law protects both victims and witnesses, establishing a specialized fund for support, rehabilitation, awareness, and compensation.

While UN Women and UNFPA welcome the important progress made with the enactment of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law (No. 205) in 2021, and steps to amend legislation to broaden the Domestic Violence Law and criminalize marital rape. Yet, concerns remain over persistent gaps in the legal framework hindering women’s equal access to protection of all forms of violence before the law, including protection of vulnerable groups such as domestic workers, migrants, and refugees. Adultery and abortion continue to be criminalized, and the law on human trafficking, largely affecting women, continues to deviate from international standards.[[19]](#footnote-19) There is no unified age of marriage, leaving girls vulnerable to early marriage, and reports suggest that at least one out of five Syrian refugee girls living in Lebanon are in early marriages. Some estimates suggest rates of domestic violence are as high as one in three of married women, and that one in every two persons know someone who has been subjected to domestic violence.

UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with other UN agencies, are advocating to end all forms of GBV, and is providing technical support to the National Commissions for Lebanese Women and civil society to respond to, and prevent, violence from in all spaces.

UNFPA collaborated with key entities, including the NCLW, the parliament, UNESCWA, and the World Bank, to advance the implementation of Law No. 205. Initiatives included standard operating procedures, guidelines for employers, a training manual for the Internal Security Forces, and workshops for legal professionals, social workers and young people. A media campaign reached hundreds of thousands of people through social media, and many more through videos on national TV. In addition, sensitization sessions for journalists aimed to raise awareness and encourage reporting on sexual harassment and the new law.

**Recommendation**

1. Encourage Lebanon to take necessary steps to amend the Domestic Violence Law 293/201 and repeal discriminatory articles of the Penal Code to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence and explicit criminalization of marital rape, ensuring perpetrators incur criminal responsibility without exception, irrespective of the sexual abuser or the victim's age.
2. Encourage State Institutions to enhance coordination with civil society and first responders to increase investment in reporting systems and multi-sectoral services and equal access to justice and accountability for women and girls who are victims of violence.
3. Conduct regular training programs for law enforcement, judicial personnel, employers, and employees to ensure a clear understanding of the SHL.
4. Develop specialized training for the Internal Security Forces (ISF) to effectively implement the law, including proper investigation procedures and victim support.
5. Establish Reporting Mechanisms for victims.
6. Roll out the Workplace SOPs/Policy and encourage employers to develop and enforce anti-sexual harassment policies in the workplace.

The Parliament passed Law No. 204, on 21 December 2020, amending the Law on the Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence (Law 293/2014) to enhance protection for victims and their children. Key amendments include broadening the definition of domestic violence to cover criminal practices during or because of marital life, recognizing economic violence as a punishable offense, and increasing the number of judges handling domestic violence cases.

The new law ensures victims are informed of their rights before the judiciary, extends protection orders to cover children aged 13 and under, and allows minors to request protection orders independently. Additionally, a special account in the Ministry of Social Affairs has been established to aid victims, funded by state contributions, donations, and fines imposed under the law, with tougher penalties for perpetrators of domestic violence crimes.

**Recommendation**

1. Launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign to inform the public about the amended law, emphasizing the expanded definition of domestic violence, the inclusion of economic violence, and the increased protection for victims and their children.
2. Conduct specialized training programs for judges, law enforcement officers, and legal professionals to ensure a thorough understanding of the amended law and its implications.
3. Collaborate with civil society organizations, community organizations, schools, and religious institutions to educate communities about the various forms of domestic violence, the new legal provisions, and available support services.
4. Strengthen the availability of legal aid for victims to facilitate their access to justice, including assistance in filing complaints and navigating legal processes.

In 2021, UNFPA led in collaboration with UN Women, UNESCWA, and UNDP, the revision/update of the national gender justice report (2018) and facilitated the consultation/validation process. The main objective of this intervention is to enhance national ownership of the Gender Justice in the Law in Lebanon’s Report through an inclusive validation process of the findings of the updated version. The report aims at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the legal frameworks related to gender-based violence in Lebanon.

The 2021 country report examine six areas of legislation, namely the general legal framework of the State; legal entitlement and public life; protection from VAW and girls in the public and private spheres; employment and economic benefits; personal matters and family life; and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Lebanon have introduced some positive legal reforms since 2018. The new UN country reports on Gender Justice and the Law including Lebanon were launched virtually in February 2023.

**Recommendation**

1. Adopt sex-disaggregated statistics and data, which are critical for evidence-based policymaking.
2. Support advocacy for introducing reforms personal status laws to grant equal rights for men and women within the family.

Furthermore, in 2023, UNFPA in partnership with the NCLW, the Ministry of Social Affairs and ABAAD – Resource Center for Gender Equality developed and validated the Violence against Women (VAW) shelters’ standard operating procedures (SOPs). This document represents a significant milestone in the efforts to combat violence against women and girls and to provide them with the protection, support, and dignity they deserve. They provide a roadmap for the effective operation of shelters, ensuring that survivors receive the comprehensive support they need across all shelters.

**Recommendation**

1. Intensify advocacy efforts among all actors to foresee the implementation and execution of the standard operating procedures among all certified VAW shelters in Lebanon.
2. **Right to Social Security**

Lebanon received seven recommendations[[20]](#footnote-20) to enhance its social security system to provide adequate and better social protection for all in Lebanon, out of which four recommendations suggest special measures to enhance women’s equal social rights. To this end, Lebanon continued to make progress in the implementation of commitments to provide full and equal protection for vulnerable populations, through the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) and the Emergency Social Safety Net Programme (ESSN). Gender-inclusive implementation of the NPTP is prioritized, with the support from UN Women and the World Food Programme, informed by comprehensive gender analysis and research.

Furthermore, in December 2023, the Council of Ministers adopted a National Social Protection Strategy, encompassing a comprehensive framework for social assistance and insurance, followed by the establishment of a social registry platform, DAEM[[21]](#footnote-21), to facilitate registration and assessment of citizens in need against eligibility criteria for cash-based social assistance. This aligns with the recommendations put forward by the UN Country Team in Lebanon in its report[[22]](#footnote-22) urging a transparent and socially acceptable targeting mechanism for vulnerable groups in Lebanon, as well as recommendations put forward by member states to ensure equal access to social protection.

The Parliament, through legislative action, has approved a new pension system for private-sector workers, which is envisioned to initiate a process to restructure the National Social Security Fund (NSSF).

UN Women notes the positive strides made towards an inclusive social security reform, such as the approval of the National Social Protection Strategy, the adoption of a new pension system for private sector workers, and improved safeguards for individuals with disabilities. However, the Social Security Law excludes workers in the informal sector, where women are disproportionately represented. Furthermore, entitlements to maternity benefits are employer liability and not covered by the Social Security Law No. 128, which puts women at a greater risk of not being employed due to higher cost and perceived lower productivity during maternity compared to males. The length of paid maternity leave, although increased from seven to ten weeks in 2014, is still not aligned with the ILO standards that recommends a leave period of 12 weeks minimum. There is also no paternity leave. Furthermore, domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers, are not eligible for social security. Additionally, there are concerns over the exclusion of women from the paid workforce and their lack of entitlement to monetary benefits for their children, attributed to discriminatory Articles (14, 15, 16) of the Social Security Law No. 128. The gender gap in access to disability and social benefits for Syrian refugee women adds an additional layer of concern.

**Recommendation**:

1. Continue to encourage concerted efforts by legislators and state institutions to amend Articles 14,15,16 in the Social Security Law No. 128, and promoting gender-inclusive policies ensuring equal access to social protection and services to all vulnerable groups, including diverse women, based in human rights.
2. Consider extending the maternity leave from 10 to 12 weeks through social security coverage.
3. Consider adopting parental leave and flexible working hours to improve women’s return to work and promote greater intra-household sharing of care responsibilities.
4. **Groups at Risk**
5. **Women and Girls**

Lebanon received twenty recommendations[[23]](#footnote-23) to lift reservations on the CEDAW regarding nationality (Article 9(2)), and personal status (Article 16(1)). Lebanon’s nationality law which prevents women from passing nationality to their children (Decree 15/ 1925), and its multiple personal status laws[[24]](#footnote-24) continues to enshrine gender inequality. Some progress is underway, including proposed amendments to address discrimination in the nationality law, which have been developed by legislators, civil society and the NCLW. Suggested amendments include lifting reservations to the CEDAW (Law No. 572). This is supported by UN Women leveraging its triple mandate spanning operational, advocacy and UN coordination. The proposed amendments to the Nationality Law are pending submission to the Parliament[[25]](#footnote-25).

**Recommendation**

1. Continue to call upon lawmakers to withdraw reservations to Article 9 on nationality and Article 16(1) on personal status of CEDAW and amend the Nationality Law (Decree 15/ 1925) to allow women to pass the citizenship onto their children; and unify a civil personal status law to regulate marriage, divorce, guardianship, custody, and inheritance.
2. **LGBTIQ**

Lebanon received six types of recommendations relating to legal reform to ensure LGBTIQ community enjoy the equality, non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. LGBTIQ issues are cross cutting, and they are embedded in many other recommendations such as leaving no one behind and protection of vulnerable groups.

Same-sex relations continue to be prohibited by law (Article 534 & Article 521 of the Penal Code) in Lebanon. While noting efforts by civil society and some legislators to address this issue, there are growing concerns over increased level of vulnerabilities and high humanitarian needs in these communities since June 2023. Individuals identifying as LGBTIQ are subjected to increased abuse and violence, intensifying social insecurity, vulnerability, and a lack of access to jobs, protection services and safe spaces. Civil society reports concerns over roll-back by national authorities to provide equal protection for individuals identifying as LGBTIQ due to the absence of unified gender terminology and narrow interpretation of gender in a binary manner by public authorities.

Discrimination, hate speech and harassment against LGBTIQ communities persist. This in turn is leading to marginalization and violence, discrimination, and exclusion by individuals identifying with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.

**Recommendation**

1. Encourage Lebanon to promote the full realization of the human rights and equality of LGBTQI, and repeal discriminatory articles of the Penal Code.
2. Raise awareness on equality before the law for LGBTQI community and decision-makers.
3. **Persons with Disabilities**

Lebanon received four types of recommendations regarding persons with disabilities covering accessing to sexual and reproductive health, supporting child caregivers, leaving no one behind, and non-discrimination. Persons with disabilities can also be included in other recommendations relating to protection of vulnerable groups.

Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in February 2023. This has been a big progress for promoting disability rights in Lebanon. It also offered an opportunity to reform the national Law 220/2000 in line with international standards. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) of Lebanon is also working on a national disability strategy to support the implementation of the law and promote inclusion of Persons with Disabilities across all spheres.  In addition, at the request of MoSA, UNFPA in collaboration with ESCWA is supporting the formulation of the national strategy for persons with disabilities through a wide consultative process.

MoSA is running two projects to improve the services for persons with disabilities: the disability card (Rights and Access Program) and national disability allowance. The disability card has been issued based on a medical approach to disability classification which is not in line with the human rights-based approach. Due to budget constraints, the disability card grants services including primary, secondary and few rehabilitation services to a limited number of registered persons with disabilities. The disability allowance is targeting persons with disabilities between the age of 18 and 28. The MoSA is planning to expand the age scope (expected 15 to 30 years old). Community-based rehabilitation services are still inadequate compared to the need.

UNFPA has committed to promote disability inclusion internally and externally. For example, in October 2023, UNFPA has organized two series of trainings on disability inclusion respectively for UNFPA staff and its implementing partners, namely for service providers. Both training programs included disability inclusion general topics, disability inclusion in project cycle, disability inclusion in GBV services, disability inclusion in SRH services and disability inclusion in emergencies. The trainings have contributed to the understanding of disability core concepts and key considerations of disability inclusion in GBV and SRH services. It also addressed stigma and discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities in accessing GBV and SRH services in both emergency and non-emergency contexts.

**Recommendation**

1. Advocate for amending Law 220/2000 on Persons with Disabilities in line with the CRPD.
2. Ensure the finalized and endorsed national strategy for Persons with Disabilities and Inclusion is adopted by all actors and stakeholders and mainstreamed in all development and humanitarian response plans.
3. Improve the social protection system for persons with disabilities especially women and adolescent girls.
4. Raise awareness of disability inclusion among varies actors including the educational institutions, government, NGOs, service providers and international community etc.
5. Invest in comprehensive capacity development programs on disability inclusion to a wider scope of stakeholders including NGO, government, international organizations, persons with disabilities etc. with particular attention to SRH and GBV.
6. **Older Persons**

Lebanon received two types of recommendations regarding older persons covering health and social services and social protection. Older persons can also be included in other recommendations relating to leaving no one behind and protection of vulnerable groups.

Decreased fertility and successes in reducing child mortality and infectious diseases have resulted in improved overall survival rates and an increase in the number and proportion of older persons in Lebanon. Women have a higher life expectancy than men and outnumber men among older persons by five per centage points. By 2040, Lebanon will have more older people (above 65 years old) than children. The increase in the percentage of older people will have significant policy implications in terms of social protection, and the provision of affordable, quality, and dignifying health care for older people.

Older people are still suffering from discrimination at various levels, including access to basic services, protection, and legislatives, etc.

With the support of UNFPA and UNESCWA, MoSA has formulated the National Strategy for Older Persons (2020-2030) to ensure a decent life that preserves the rights and human dignity of older persons across the country.

**Recommendation**

1. Advocate for strengthening social protection systems to support families and ensure the wellbeing of older people in line with the recently approved National Social Protection Strategy.

1. [World Bank and Central Administration for Statistics. 2022. Multi-Dimensional](http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PDFs/Poverty/Lebanon%20MPI%202019%20Report%20%20EN.pdf) [Poverty Index](http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PDFs/Poverty/Lebanon%20MPI%202019%20Report%20%20EN.pdf)[.](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/06/Macro%20Economic%20Policy%20Recommendations%20_Final%20English%20Design.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [European Union, UN Women. 2021. European Union Sector Specific Gender](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/10/the-european-union-sector-specific-gender-analysis-an-in-depth-sectoral-examination) [Analysis: An In-Depth Sectoral Examination of Feminist and Women’s Rights in Lebanon.](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/10/the-european-union-sector-specific-gender-analysis-an-in-depth-sectoral-examination) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UN Women. 2021. Gender-Responsive Recovery in Lebanon: Recommendations for fiscal, social and labour policy reform. Online: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/06/Macro%20Economic%20Policy%20Recommendations%20_Final%20English%20Design.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [UPR](https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g21/081/45/pdf/g2108145.pdf?token=MHSv3JEw73GMyJNzrm&fe=true) review, Lebanon, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/lb-index> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). 2024. “[Lebanon: Flash Update #10 – Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon](https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-10-escalation-hostilities-south-lebanon-24-january-2024).” 24 January. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The World Bank. Spring 2021 Lebanon Economic Monitor. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-economic-monitor-spring-2021-lebanon-sinking-to-the-top-3> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lebanon Emergency Response Plan 2023, <https://lebanon.un.org/en/230731-lebanon-emergency-response-plan-2023>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. UN Women, 2019,Pursuing Equality in Rights and Representation – Women’s experiences Running for Parliament in Lebanon’s 2018 Elections. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [World Economic Forum. 2022. Global Gender Gap Report. 2022.](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [UNDP, European Union. 2016. Women’s Guide to Municipal and Mukhtar](https://lebanon.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/10/ec-undp-jft-lebanon-resources-publications-introduction-to-municipal-council-en.pdf)

    [Council. P.15.](https://lebanon.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/10/ec-undp-jft-lebanon-resources-publications-introduction-to-municipal-council-en.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [Matric of thematic Recommendations](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Matrice-Recommendations-Lebanon.docx). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 150.80 Adopt the draft law criminalizing sexual harassment and develop a national action plan to prevent sexual harassment both within and outside the workplace (Iceland); [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [Matric of thematic Recommendations](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Matrice-Recommendations-Lebanon.docx). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Documenting the Experiences of Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon with Resistance and Backlash on Gender Equality (January 2022 – April 2023), UN Women 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. UNFPA counted the types of recommendations rather than the total number of recommendations because some overlapping recommendations belong to the same type which means they refer to the same issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Law 293/201; Law 164/2011; Articles 503-504, 539-546, 534 and 521 of the Penal Code. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. [Matric of thematic Recommendations](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Matrice-Recommendations-Lebanon.docx). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. <https://www.impact.gov.lb/home>. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [A/HRC/WG.6/37/LBN/2.](https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g20/308/07/pdf/g2030807.pdf?token=RBdsEdd99SXHQUFOCh&fe=true) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. [Matric of thematic Recommendations](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Matrice-Recommendations-Lebanon.docx). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Personal status is regulated by 15 confessional systems. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. On 8 June 2018, MPs Taymour Jumblatt, Marwan Hamade, Akram Chihayeb, Faysal al Sayegh, Hadi Abou al Hussen and Bilal Abudalla submitted a proposal of law relating to the Lebanese citizenship, and on 8 August 2018 it was referred to the Administration and Justice Committee by the Council of Ministers. On 29 September 2021 these amendments were referred to the Women and Children Committee. On 15 May 2019, MP Roula Al Tabesh submitted a proposal of law to amend the law of nationality to the Council of Ministers. The proposed law was referred to the Administrative and Justice Committee on 20 September 2021 for review. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)