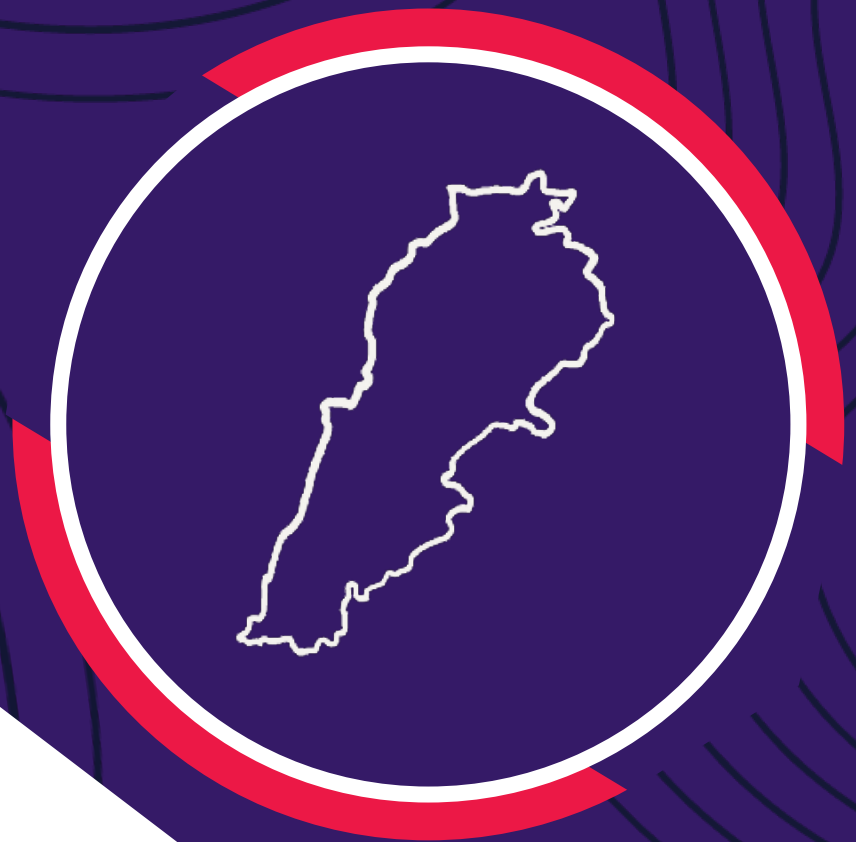


Mapping and Analysis of Peacebuilding Initiatives in Lebanon

2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary objective of this mapping is to provide a holistic view of the local contexts of Alay and Shouf and the existing peacebuilding initiatives in the two districts. In particular, the mapping seeks to recognize peace and security concerns in Mount Lebanon governorate, consider the roles of women and youth in crisis, and examine barriers and opportunities for women's participation in politics and peacebuilding processes. In addition, it seeks to explore and identify barriers to women's full and meaningful inclusion in socio-political affairs, and peace and security operations.

The findings from the mapping indicate that women lead and participate in several peacebuilding initiatives in both Qada'a¹ Alay and Qada'a Shouf. However, these initiatives are generally civil society-led, limited in scope and undocumented, and thus unable to holistically and adequately address Women, Peace and Security (WPS) issues in Mount Lebanon. These initiatives are often not directly correlated with the formal implementation of the WPS agenda in Lebanon, which is led by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW). Many are implemented by individual organizations or with limited coordination between several organizations. In fact, most peacebuilding initiatives are carried out by major women's civil society organizations (CSOs) or government bodies, while smaller and grassroots organizations have significantly less capacity to carry out peacebuilding work.

The mapping also found that while Lebanon has a National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS with a budget and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan, its implementation remains a challenge. There is a lack of communication and coordination both within the Lebanese government (for example, among ministries) and between the Lebanese government and CSOs. Many individuals within civil society and CSOs reported that they did not know who is responsible for, or carrying out the implementation of each pillar of the NAP on WPS. Many local authorities and CSOs who contribute to implementing aspects of the NAP remain unaware of its existence. Others are aware of the NAP's existence but have limited knowledge about what it entails, or how their work is relevant to it.

This mapping also offers recommendations for moving forward with the localization of the WPS agenda in Lebanon, in Mount Lebanon and beyond. The findings of the mapping suggest that WPS initiatives, human security initiatives and peacebuilding can benefit from greater synergy and improved communication and collaboration between actors. Based on the analysis conducted, the mapping recommends that the **Government of Lebanon, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, local and municipal governments, civil society organizations (including larger and national CSOs and local and grassroots organizations), international NGOs, international donors, and universities and academic institutions:**

¹Qada'a means "district" in Arabic

1. **Improve and support women's political participation at all levels of government**, including women's candidacy for office, support for women's political campaigns, and women's participation in elections as voters;
2. **Support women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding, and official and unofficial peace processes** using a multi-directional approach, including providing funding, improving local and grassroots participation in the implementation of the NAP, improving awareness of the WPS agenda, improving the inclusion of refugee, displaced and other marginalized women, and increasing visibility of existing peacebuilding initiatives; and
3. **Improve and expand women's economic participation in the context of Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis**, support for women-led economic initiatives, and document women's role in responding to the crisis.

METHODOLOGY

Detailed recommendations are available in Chapter 4 of this report.

The mapping employed qualitative research methods, using the following methods of data collection:

1. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with local populations, including women, youth, community leaders, CSOs, local and national authorities and security forces;

2. Key informant interviews (KII) with civil society leaders, representatives of national and local authorities, women politicians and political candidates and other relevant stakeholders in target districts; and
3. Desk research and review of relevant research and documentation on WPS and peacebuilding in Lebanon.

Participants of the FGDs and KIIs were selected to include women and men in diverse positions of public decision-making, peacebuilding and WPS. These included national authorities, local-level actors and activists, registered and unregistered civil society organizations, international actors (such as UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Vision), donors and funding partners, and women leaders in public service and the private sector. Participants in the mapping also included individuals who were active during different periods, including during the 2019 Revolution², the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the Beirut Port explosion of 2020. At the district level, the participants included: community activists, municipality members and mayors, district speakers, municipality police planners, women leaders and community-based organizations. At the national level, the informants included officials from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

² The revolution was sparked following the announcement of a tax on WhatsApp in the midst of the financial crash. However, the protests were not solely about this tax; instead, it was merely the tipping point that brought mass-protestors to the streets to demand economic and social justice and government accountability.

Participants were also chosen to represent diverse and intersectional backgrounds; respondents included elderly, rural, refugee, youth, disabled individuals, and individuals of various ethnicities, religions and socio-economic statuses. Seventy-five people took part in six community-level FGDs. The FGDs were separated by gender and age to ensure all participants felt safe and comfortable speaking. In addition, 15 KIIs were conducted outside of the FGDs.

THE LEBANESE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Thirty years after the signing of the Taif Accords³, Lebanon has yet to reach holistic or lasting peace. Ongoing conflicts, insecurity, and the overall lack of stability resulting from the devaluation of the currency and hyperinflation has contributed to the weakening of state institutions. The political confessional system, with stalemate in the political structure is another source of conflict.

The impact of the multiple and intersecting crises in Lebanon on women is devastating, and often disproportionate to the experiences of men. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, cases of domestic violence against women skyrocketed by 96% according to the Internal Security Forces (ISF) Gender-Based Violence (GBV) helpline assessment. The economic crisis

³ The Taif Accords are the agreement that ended the Lebanese Civil War that lasted from 1975-1990. The Accords moved power away from the Presidency and created the current confessional political system that consists of a cabinet that is equally divided between Christians and Muslims.

led to an increase in unemployment rates among women, and a lack of access to basic reproductive health items such as sanitary pads.⁴ A lack of access to education is leading to increasing child marriage rates. The toll of the crisis is even more significant for women with intersecting vulnerabilities: heightened security and safety concerns have been largely registered among refugees, migrant domestic workers, and women with disabilities.⁵

Shortly before the start of protests in 2019, the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) finalized the creation of the first NAP on WPS in Lebanon. The national government endorsed the plan shortly after its creation. In addition to the initial development of the NAP, the NCLW is also tasked with leading its implementation. National institutions are not the only bodies in Lebanon that are conducting important work on WPS. Civil society organizations play a central and significant role in designing and implementing initiatives that promote peace and security, even in cases where they are not aware of the WPS agenda or the NAP.⁶ Little documentation is available on such organizations, and

⁴ Zaazaa, B. (2021). Fighting the Spread of Lebanon's Silent Pandemic. Al Arabiya News. <https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2021/02/25/Lebanon-crisis-Fighting-Lebanon-s-silent-pandemic-Domestic-abuse>

⁵ UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNICEF. (2021). Lebanon: Gender-Based Violence Information Management System: Ongoing Impact of the Compounded Crisis (COVID-19, Financial and Economic Crisis) on the GBV, Mid-year - 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-gender-based-violence-information-management-system-ongoing-impact-compounded>

⁶ It has been found that many organizations across Lebanon are often not knowledgeable about the international WPS agenda. However, the work they are doing is still vital local work on WPS. This knowledge gap is something that needs to be overcome in order for even more nuanced and effective WPS implementation.

the existing peacebuilding initiatives in Lebanon.

Across Lebanon, numerous peacebuilding initiatives are at the heart of WPS issues. Unfortunately, many remain unrecognized by the implementing organizations and their communities. The relationships between the local communities, municipalities, and national institutions often lack trust or good cooperation and collaboration.

In Lebanon, women have been at the frontlines of peacebuilding, and movements for social change, including in the 2019 protests. They mobilize to end existing conflicts and prevent future occurrences, particularly through activism that calls for state-building. In terms of women's participation in politics, Lebanon's latest parliamentary elections led to the election of two women in Mount Lebanon, for the first time in the region's history. Both women ran for office in the Alay-Shouf region. At the local government level, municipal elections are scheduled to be held in May 2023, and the region is witnessing numerous initiatives to enhance women's political participation on the local level.

1.1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN ALAY AND SHOUF

Alay and Shouf are two of the main districts in the Mount Lebanon region and are home to large numbers of Christian and Druze populations. The area suffered from severe violence during the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, particularly in 1982 when Druze and Christian militias participated in a prolonged and violent

standoff. After the civil war ended it was difficult for the religious populations in Alay and Shouf to move forward with a peaceful co-existence; Christians and Druze from the area needed more than a cessation of the war to move forward and substantial efforts for reconciliation and trust-building among communities were implemented.

This reconciliation is central to the efforts of the local governments and authorities in past and present years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis have significantly slowed down most efforts for reconciliation and reunification in Alay and Shouf.

Lebanon's longstanding political gridlock and economic meltdown have had catastrophic social consequences. A new bout of unrest is taking place almost 3 years after the October 2019 uprising. Unlike the peaceful mobilization of 2019, the recent turmoil is significantly more violent. This change is a reflection of increasing frustration with the country's political elite, corruption, and competition among political groups and between Lebanese and Syrian refugees for increasingly scarce resources.

The resurgence of unrest in Lebanon has raised new fears of a violent escalation in Alay and Shouf. This is compounded by the simultaneous occurrence of political and social crises and broader geopolitical tensions in the region.

Tensions in the area are also present between Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees. In the period between March and May 2023, hate speech towards refugee populations has escalated, and hundreds of Syrian refugees were forced

to leave the area. Many authorities and residents of Shouf and Alay, especially those in Alay, believe the Syrian war is over and thus Syrian refugees should return home. Additionally, there is anger from Lebanese host populations who view that refugees receive financial aid and healthcare services from international organizations, while Lebanese counterparts suffer without any help. These beliefs have led to increased resistance in accepting Syrian refugees in Alay and Shouf, and support for the forced return of Syrian refugees to their country.

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND SECURITY

2.1 OVERVIEW

Lebanon ranks 119th out of 156 countries in the most recent Global Gender Gap Index⁷ of the World Economic Forum (2022), 13 higher than its ranking in the previous year, indicating some progress in key areas related to gender rights. In 2022, Lebanon scored highest on the subindex of educational attainment and health and survival, and lowest on the subindexes of economic participation and opportunity, and political empowerment. Lebanon holds a similar position on the 2021 Women, Peace and Security Index⁸ which includes indicators

⁷ World Economic Forum. Global Gender Gap Index. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf

⁸ Georgetown Institute of Women, Peace and Security. (2022). Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/22. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/>

related to security, inclusion and justice, ranking 132nd out of 170 countries. It is highlighted as one of only 20 countries with a WPS index that has improved by 10 percent or more in the period from 2017 to 2021.

Lebanon is a signatory to, and has ratified, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is currently preparing its seventh periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Legal Landscape for Gender Equality

The Lebanese Constitution grants equality for all before the law but makes no specific reference to gender or sex. The Labour Code includes provisions prohibiting labour discrimination against women. In Lebanon, there is no singular civil code on personal status.⁹ Personal status laws have been created by 15 different religious communities and are administered by different religious courts. This arrangement has produced a legal landscape that is gender-discriminatory, granting fewer rights to women in marriage, divorce, and custody, both within and between individual personal status laws.¹⁰ Gender inequality remains embedded in various other realms of law. [The Lebanese Nationality Law](#) does not allow women to pass on Lebanese citizenship, except in cases where they

WPS-Index-2021.pdf

⁹ L'Argus de la Legislation Libanaise. Code of Labour. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/710/Labour%25252520Code%25252520o-f%2525252023%25252520September%252525201946%25252520as%25252520amended.Publication%252525202010.pdf>

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch (2010). Unequal and Unprotected: Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>

have married Lebanese men. This law is one of the longest-standing targets of feminist and civil society advocacy in Lebanon.

Some reforms to improve the legal landscape for gender equality have taken place over the last decade. For example, the country's penal code was reformed in 2011 to remove honor killings as a positive factor in reducing sentences.¹¹ In 2014, the parliament introduced a law on domestic violence, which despite several shortcomings, was the first legal instrument explicitly targeting domestic violence.¹² In 2020, a law was passed to further criminalize sexual harassment, including in the workplace.¹³

Gender Parity and Participation in Political Life

Women's participation in electoral politics in Lebanon has historically been limited. In the most recent parliamentary elections held in 2022, 118 women stood for election, of which eight were elected to the 128-seat parliament. Despite the low gender representation, the 6.25% rate is the highest ever for the country – a small increase from 4.7 per cent in the 2018 election.¹⁴ Of those

¹¹ Human Rights Watch (2011). Lebanon: Law Reform Targets 'Honor' Crimes. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/11/lebanon-law-reform-targets-honor-crimes>

¹² Civil Society Knowledge Center (2014). Issuance of Law no. 293 for the Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence. <https://civilsociety-centre.org/content/issuance-law-no-293-protection-women-and-family-members-domestic-violence>

¹³ American University of Beirut (2021). Lebanon's Anti-Sexual Harassment Law No. 205 Passes... Now What? <https://www.aub.edu.lb/cibl/news/Pages/LebanonAntiSexualHarassmentLawNo205PassesNowWhat.aspx>

¹⁴ Lopez-Thomas, A. (2022). Lebanon elects record number of women to parliament. Al-Monitor. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/06/lebanon-elects-record-number-women-parliament>

elected in 2022, only one was appointed to the cabinet as the Minister of State for Administrative Reform. The six women elected in 2018 were all appointed as ministers, including Zeina Akar, who served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense – both firsts for the region.¹⁵ In 2016, Lebanon introduced a Minister of State for Women's Affairs, and appointed Jean Ogaspian, a 62-year-old man, to the position. The formal costs of registering as a candidate, and additional campaign and publicity costs remain a major barrier to women's candidacy for political office in Lebanon.¹⁶

2.2 IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As of December 2022, Lebanon has reported over 1,200,000 cumulative confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 10,700 deaths.¹⁷ As captured by GNWP's COVID-19 and Women, Peace and Security Database, the pandemic had a significant impact on women and gender equality in Lebanon.¹⁸ Reports to governmental and civil society domestic violence support resources increased drastically at the onset of the pandemic, with calls to the Internal Security Forces (ISF) hotline for domestic violence doubled in 2020. Lockdowns and other pandemic mitigation measures

¹⁵ Abumaria, D. (2020). Lebanon presents new government with multiple female ministers. The Jerusalem Post. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/lebanon-presents-new-government-notable-for-its-gender-615025>

¹⁶ Mounzer, L. (2022). The Smallest of Silver Linings in Lebanon's Elections: Women Candidates. The Wilson Center. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/smallest-silver-linings-lebanons-elections-women-candidates>

¹⁷ World Health Organization. Lebanon Country Profile. <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/lb>

¹⁸ Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. COVID-19 and Women, Peace and Security Database. <https://gnwp.org/resources/covid-19-wps-database/>

reduced women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, particularly during the first phases of the pandemic. Increased unemployment related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis in Lebanon affects women disproportionately.¹⁹ Women have also faced increasing burdens of care in the household, which in many cases served as barriers to their return to formal employment. Women in precarious labour were also affected disproportionately. Domestic workers, including non-Lebanese workers, reported being unpaid, overworked and abused at the hand of employers. Despite women's significant role at the frontline of the pandemic response, they remain largely excluded from formal post-pandemic recovery efforts.

2.3 THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISES IN LEBANON

Lebanon is in the midst of a long-term financial crisis, which has worsened exponentially since the 2019 outburst of protests in the country. The economic situation of Lebanon was worsened by the two-fold crises of 2020: the COVID-19 pandemic and the shrinking of the country's service-based economy, and the Port of Beirut explosion of 2020, which had major impacts on women-headed households in the blast radius.²⁰

¹⁹ Salti, N and Mezher, N. (2020). Women on the Verge of an Economic Breakdown: Assessing the differential impacts of the economic crisis on women in Lebanon. UN Women. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/Lebanons%20Economic%20Report%20Updated%201110%20FH.pdf>

²⁰ Assi, Y, Darwazeh, N. and Eldannawi N. et al. (2020). Rapid Gender Analysis of the August 2020 Beirut Port Explosion: An Intersectional Examination. UN Women, CARE, UN ESCWA, ABAAD and UNFPA. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/RGA%20%20Beirut%20Explosion%20October%2028%202020.pdf>

The country's GDP fell from USD \$54.9B in 2019 to \$23.13B in 2021; its currency losing over 9 per cent of its value over the last four years.²¹ Over 80% of the country's population lives in poverty, with 37 per cent facing acute food insecurity as of January 2023.²² The economic crisis has disproportionate gendered impacts, including major reductions in women's labour force participation and employment, women carrying the burden of men's lost jobs within the household, loss of access to quality education for girls, and increased vulnerability for senior and retiree women.

WOMEN'S INITIATIVES AND PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS

3.1 DEALING WITH THE PAST

The memory and lived experiences of the Lebanese Civil War continue to affect Lebanon in a myriad of ways. Many of the current challenges (including the collapse of the economic system and the government's dysfunction) can be traced back to systems that were put in place in the Taif Accord. Specifically, the Ta'if Accord had little to no checks and balances mechanisms or institutional control instruments; those that were created were controlled by politicians. The lack of accountability instruments resulted in a post-war environment that was abused by warlords for their own gain

²¹ Chehayeb, K. (2023). Lebanon sets a new exchange rate, dramatically devalues pound. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/inflation-international-monetary-fund-beirut-lebanon-business-6f7fb7e8bfa93ca23e6caaf47a61f8d7>

²² Human Rights Watch (2022). Lebanon: Events of 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/lebanon>

and produced significant bias, uneven application of rules and corruption.²³ Furthermore, political elites exploited the reconstruction period; the pockets of warlords and other political elites were lined while Lebanese national debt skyrocketed.²⁴

A lack of social cohesion, especially between religious groups, remains highly present. There are several organizations, both women-led and with significant women's participation, working on post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation. Permanent Peace Movement (PPM), a non-governmental organization (NGO), which was central to conducting inter-communal peace dialogues during the War, continues work on numerous activities related to war and post-war situations. This has included hosting webinars, and the production of books and other educational materials. Tawilat al Hiwar (The Dialogue Table) similarly conducts dialogues for community building and supporting local civil society. In the realm of mediation, the Mediation Network, a joint project from UN Women, aims to bring together women mediators to work on gender-sensitive early warning systems and train more community mediators. Another key actor in this effort is the Fighters for Peace, an NGO made up of ex-combatants who now advocate for peace and raise awareness on the destructiveness of war.

A key challenge in the aftermath of the Civil War is the lack of a unified history. The history curriculum in Lebanese

²³ Adwan, C. (2004). "Corruption in Reconstruction: The Cost of National Consensus in Post-War Lebanon." Center for International Private Enterprise

²⁴ Ibid.

schools has not been updated since the 1960s, due to the inability of government officials from differing sects to decide on an "acceptable version" of history to be taught to students. The Lebanese Association for History (LAH) is working on a unified vision of Lebanese history, and improving the teaching techniques and strategies of history instructors. They have also collaborated with families of the missing and forcibly disappeared in truth and storytelling processes. Also collaborating with families of the disappeared is the organization Act for the Disappeared. The NGO's mission is to raise awareness of the thousands of individuals who disappeared in Lebanon during the War, and mobilize families of the disappeared to pressure the government to clarify the fate of their relatives.

3.2 CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN SECURITY

Women and young women peacebuilders have always been at the forefront of peacebuilding work, especially at the grassroots level. However, the role that women play in peacebuilding at the national level should also be emphasized, particularly their role in the 2019 protests. The public protests spurred in 2019 following a newly proposed tax on WhatsApp calls, economic fallout and longstanding disapproval with government corruption.²⁵ Women and feminist actors across Lebanon mobilized and led national civic engagement, and contributed heavily to ongoing de-

²⁵ Wilson, Z. and Dore-Weeks, R. (2019). Understanding the Role of Women and Feminist Actors in Lebanon's 2019 Protests. UN Women, 4. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2019/12/Gendering%20Lebanons%202019%20Protests.pdf>

escalation and mediation efforts to keep the protests peaceful.²⁶

After June 2021, the economic, political, and social crises that have plagued Lebanon since October 2019 became much more severe. The inability of Lebanese households to satisfy basic human security needs was exacerbated by the lifting of state subsidies on the costs of fuel and medicine, the devaluation of the Lebanese Lira by over 90 per cent, extended inflation and rising international prices. Since the beginning of these crises, Lebanon has gone over 30 months without a fully operational government.

In light of the multilevel crises and paralyzed state institutions, civil society actors have become the primary responders to the needs of their communities, and women's roles in crisis response are changing for the better. Women are increasingly involved in humanitarian assistance and relief through civil society and volunteer organizations, and their strong responses to crisis relief have contributed to strengthening trust between local communities and local authorities, especially for women. The following section outlines past and ongoing initiatives in the Mount Lebanon region by women and male gender-equality allies that contribute to improving all aspects of human security.

Food Security

Ra'idat al Reef (Country Women) is a coalition that pushed to establish agricultural cooperatives in villages across Mount Lebanon. The objective was to support rural women in finding

sustainable work opportunities. One example is the establishment of a cooperative in Ain Zhalta led by 11 women and three men that work on the production of honey, soap and fibers for yarn.

"At first we (the women) were undermined based on our gender but we did work that the men were not even able to do..., then we got respect and support." - Woman KII from Ain Zhalta

Another initiative focusing on food security is the Chouf Cedar Reserve. It played an important role in agriculture and production projects, and in maintaining food and economic security during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Reserve provided and encouraged residents to plant tomato crops that were historically grown in the area, which generated income for local communities as factories for tomato paste opened. Some initiatives were carried out by individuals or families rather than organizations. For example, Mazen and Roula Halawani conducted a series of Zoom trainings on agriculture and self-sufficiency farming in order to curb food insecurity. The training was free and available to all in Mount Lebanon.

Economic Security

Shouf Highland is a family business that was launched during the COVID-19 lockdown. It is a rural initiative with bar and lodging services combining agritourism and entertainment in the region of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve. What characterizes this initiative is its aim to create income-generating opportunities for women out of what traditionally constituted the care economy. Cakes and pastries are produced by women in the region, and the delivery and

²⁶ Ibid, 4.

cleaning tasks created jobs for male youth. Not only did the project create job opportunities, but it also inspired women in the region to start their own small or micro-businesses. One woman who used to make manakish (a savory pastry) for Shouf Highland decided to open her own manakish bakery in 2022. The woman had lost her husband, and widows are traditionally expected to stay home and be as reserved as possible. Yet, she challenged the social norm and was supported by Shouf Highland, and her small business successfully opened and gained popularity in the region. It is important to note that no refugee communities were the beneficiaries of this initiative. Other organizations working on agricultural economic security include Mashghal Badghan, a small enterprise that produces tomato paste using locally-grown tomatoes, Ekerda, which produces bread from lupini beans instead of wheat,²⁷ and Mashtal Initiatives, which focuses on generating local honey production in Shouf.

A women-led organization titled the Threads of Love initiative began with supplying women in the region who crochet with the required materials and social media to sell their products. The initiative inspired many women in multiple rural areas to start modernizing crochet and opening their own online shops. Another women-focused initiative is the Sayedat el Shouf Jizzine (Women of Shouf and Jizzine). This initiative is unique due to its efforts to bring Druze and Christian women together, and it

²⁷ This was especially important due to the slowdown in Ukrainian wheat exports following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, where Lebanon received a significant portion of wheat and barley.

represents how economic cooperation can be an effective peacebuilding tool and contribute to building social cohesion.

A significant economic difficulty in Lebanon is the burden felt by teachers. Teachers are vastly underpaid and unable to support themselves and their families, leading to a mass exodus of individuals from the profession. The Ministry of Education was continuously unable to counter the teacher shortage, leading to a lack of education services and opportunities for children across the country. The Campaign to Reopen School in Niha was led by women who endeavored to reopen the school in the town of Niha in Shouf, which was closed due to political reasons and teacher shortages. The school was successfully reopened thanks to these women's advocacy, but the teacher shortage remained a substantial challenge. Another organization, the Brotherhood Association responded to this challenge and collected donations in order to recruit teachers to teach in the school and pay their salaries.

Health Security

In response to the health and economic crises of 2019 and 2020, a group of women established an initiative called Reem and the Medicine Bank, to collect medicine and give it to those in need without material compensation. The initiative targeted different nationalities, religious sects and regions of Lebanon. Through a WhatsApp group and word of mouth, people would coordinate what medication was needed where and proceed with delivery services.²⁸

²⁸ Delivery of medication was an important aspect of the

Similarly, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, women of the Kaifoun Charitable Association created residence centers to receive critical cases of COVID-19. The initiative was able to distribute a substantial quantity of sanitizers, provide free medical examinations and send food rations through free home delivery. It should be noted that this initiative provided specific assistance to refugees, who have suffered disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic, and consistently received inadequate health care, and in many cases had no access to healthcare services. The initiative also provided support and relief following the Beirut Port explosion. Now, the thematic work of the association has shifted towards enhancing women's political participation and protecting the environment. Several initiatives were born in the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion. One example is Khaddit Beirut (the Shake of Beirut), a grassroots initiative dedicated to improving health and education systems in Lebanon. Most organizations that came together following the blast prioritized health care and humanitarian relief.

Mental health is another underserved area of activities in Lebanon, due to social and cultural stigmas about mental illness, and lack of access to services caused by the limited number of providers and high costs. Some organizations have begun work to close this gap. One such organization is Houdou' NGO, a local, youth-led organization for psycho-social support. They largely focus on the development of campaigns and sessions

initiative due to the high price of gas in Lebanon, which meant that many families could not afford the cost of personal transportation.

on mental health for their communities, with a special focus on young people.

Environmental Security

Efforts towards advancing environmental security are a growing field in Lebanon. One leader in this area is The Environment Academy, which engages local communities in rural areas to pursue sustainable environmental solutions. The project has so far been implemented in 12 villages. One such effort took place in the town of Barja in Shouf, where a reforestation initiative took place. It is important to note that while refugees were among the beneficiaries, none were included in project planning. The Academy has been highly publicized on TV, social media, and by word of mouth.

A number of organizations are now focused on recycling and waste management. One prominent initiative was from Ain Zhalta Women's Association and titled Let's Recycle Let's Laugh. The project was a cooperative of women and youth who came together with the objective to learn more about recycling and then train others. Through fun community activities, games and music, they taught families to sort their waste. As a result of their efforts, recycling in the community increased by 20 per cent.

Several environmental campaigns have been organized and conducted by women and youth. One is the Marj Bisri Dam campaign, which revolved around efforts to stop the construction of a dam in Marj Bisri. The dam's location would have caused a high risk of seismic activity and contributed heavily to environmental degradation. Through letters sent to the World Bank and Lebanese government

officials and extensive lobbying, the project was successfully stopped. Another such campaign was against the establishment and operation of a sewage treatment plant, in the Nabe'a Al-Safa. The campaign was led by Salwa Kais, a local woman peacebuilder, who petitioned the Ministry of Environment and rallied community support. Ultimately, the project was halted pending additional consultations analyzing its negative environmental impact.

Political Security and Women's Political Participation

Lebanon has one of the lowest rates of women's representation in leadership worldwide. Women in Lebanon have repeatedly faced repression of their human rights and freedoms, including the ability to protest and vote. There are several organizations in Lebanon combating these trends. Women and male gender-equality allies in Iqlim al-Kharoub organized to provide pro bono legal defense for women who were arrested during the 2019 protests. The initiative largely met the needs of young people in defending them and preventing their arrest. sixty-five percent of lawyers participating in this initiative were women.

Other organizations, such as FiftyFifty, work to support female political candidates, raise awareness on gender quotas, work with media to combat pervasive negative reporting of women in politics, and lobby for the change of national laws that discriminate against women.²⁹ Organizations that focus on

²⁹ Discriminatory laws in Lebanon include the Personal Status Law, the inability of women to pass nationality to their children, and poor protection from sexual harassment and domestic violence.

this topic are working against harmful gender stereotypes. In the words of one KII, there is "a negative connotation of women gathering with no real impact." Stigmas and social norms that women belong in domestic spaces and in childcare duties persist widely, with some individuals of the opinion that they would rather vote for a man, no matter how qualified the woman candidate is.

Nevertheless, women continue pushing for change in the political sphere. The ongoing crises have opened new civic spaces and as elections approach across the country, women are mobilizing to be active participants and have more female candidates. There has been a new push to establish educational awareness projects concerned with women's rights, as well as giving them the guidance and opportunity to participate in municipal election campaigns and run for office. Interestingly, the KIIs and FGDs uncovered that women running for national positions did not intend to run for municipal positions. This is largely due to the role and responsibility held by municipalities. The lack of decentralization and political instability in Lebanon means that municipal governments generally have no money, no training for elected officials and limited abilities to create new legislation or policies. In Alay and Shouf, the number of women elected to the municipal government is very small. Municipalities that do include women in positions of authority have one or two women elected officials, at most.

This peacebuilding mapping report provides an overview of peacebuilding initiatives in the two districts of Alay and Shouf in Mount Lebanon. These

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

initiatives are a sample of a significant number of local and grassroots initiatives working to progress peacebuilding and the implementation of the WPS agenda across Lebanon. Organizations, initiatives and projects led and developed by women and youth are especially crucial in this space, and often stand at the frontlines of addressing communities' needs. In many cases, organizations contributing to peacebuilding or the local implementation of the WPS agenda are not aware of the agenda, or how their work is connected to it. This section provides a set of recommendations to support and expand such peacebuilding initiatives, and amplify their impacts and success.

1. Improve and support women's political participation at all levels of government, including women's candidacy for office, support for women's political campaigns, and women's participation in elections as voters.

1.1. Civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should dedicate resources to supporting, amplifying, and increasing the visibility of local and grassroots initiatives for improving women's participation in political life.

1.2. The Government of Lebanon, and all levels of local government, should dedicate resources to improving transparency and communication with the public, particularly for

governmental efforts related to gender equality, peace, and security.

1.3. Civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should support initiatives to reduce barriers to women's participation in politics, including initiatives that support women candidates by reducing the financial costs of the official registration and political campaigns.

1.4. Civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should support initiatives to reduce barriers to women's participation in municipal politics, and encourage their election and participation at the municipal level.

2. Support women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding, and official and unofficial peace processes using a multi-directional approach, including providing funding, improving local and grassroots participation in the implementation of the NAP, improving awareness of the WPS agenda, improving the inclusion of refugee, displaced and other marginalized women, and increasing visibility of existing peacebuilding initiatives

2.1. The Government of Lebanon, local governments, and international donors should increase support for informal and civil society-led peacebuilding organizations, including capacity-building and financial support in the form of flexible and core funding.

2.2. The Government of Lebanon

and its relevant ministries should increase and improve internal collaboration and coordination for the implementation of the NAP on WPS, and communicate regularly and clearly with civil society actors, based on each ministry's mandate and role in the implementation of the NAP.

2.3. The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), in partnership with larger women's CSOs, civil society and women-led organizations working on peacebuilding and WPS, should create avenues for connection and collaboration with, and among, grassroots and local civil society organizations.

2.4. The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), in partnership with larger women's CSOs, civil society and women-led organizations working on peacebuilding and WPS, should create mechanisms for ongoing consultations with grassroots and local civil society organizations, including monitoring the implementation of the NAP on WPS.

2.5. Civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should support the education of women and youth, as well as men and boys, on the WPS agenda.

2.6. Civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should support the sensitization of key local actors, including mayors, councilors, and other local leaders, with the WPS agenda.

2.7. Civil society organizations,

including larger and national CSOs, should carry out relationship-building and advocacy with local governments, with the goal of encouraging the localization of the WPS agenda.

2.8. International NGOs and civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should support grassroots and local organizations' projects and programs that include refugee and displaced women, as co-creators rather than just beneficiaries.

2.9. International NGOs and civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should create and support initiatives focused on gender-sensitive reporting on peace and conflict in the media.

2.10. Local governments should dedicate financial and human resources to efforts toward the localization of the WPS agenda, and to supporting existing women-led initiatives for the implementation of the WPS agenda at the local level.

3. Improve and expand women's economic participation in the context of Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, support for women-led economic initiatives, and document women's role in responding to the crisis.

3.1. The Government of Lebanon should improve opportunities for the formal participation of women in the design and monitoring of the Government's strategies and plans for a post-COVID-19 recovery.

3.2. The Government of Lebanon

should improve efforts at gathering gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of the economic crisis, including unemployment and poverty rates, including data on these impacts in refugee, rural, or other marginalized communities.

3.3. International NGOs and civil society organizations, including larger and national CSOs, should support women's economic empowerment through targeted initiatives, including economic capacity building and training, and providing financing and support for women-led small and local businesses.

3.4. International NGOs and international donors should provide financial support and capacity-building for civil-society initiatives

3.5. Universities and academic institutions should, in collaboration with national and local CSOs, conduct information-gathering on the gendered impacts of Lebanon's economic crisis and women's role in responding to it.

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