Republic of Lebanon
Women’s Economic Empowerment
National Action Plan

January 2019
Lebanon: Closing gender gaps and promoting equality essential for putting every country on a path to inclusive growth and stability

• According to the WEF 2018 Gender Gap report, out of the 149 ranked countries, Lebanon ranked at the bottom (140th position). The low ranking of Lebanon in the Gender Gap results primarily from ranking at the bottom in the economic opportunity and participation sub-index (136th) and the political empowerment sub-index (147th). Lebanon fared relatively better on the education attainment sub-index (110th).

• Gaps in education enrollment are small in early years and widen at later years, starting from secondary-school age due to a higher drop out rate amongst boys. In tertiary education, women outnumber men—consisting of 57% (women) versus 43% (men) (CERD).

• Reducing gender gaps in economic activity leads to a myriad of macroeconomic benefits. Closing the gap in participation rates by 25% can boost GDP (PPP terms) by 9% in Lebanon (ILO).

• Improving access to jobs for women is also expected to generate positive externalities to the society.

• Innovation and technology-related economic activities remain at a small scale and limited.
Lebanon: A Lebanese labor market characterized by significant gender disparities

Women labor force participation is very low, especially for those aged 35-45. Women are more than 3 times less likely to participate in the labor force compared to men. Even when women do enter the labor force, they face challenges to advance and remain in the workforce.

Majority of women are wage-employed (83% compared to 57% amongst men). Only 17% of women are self-employed, compared to 43% amongst men, indicating low entrepreneurship amongst women.

Some positive developments can be highlighted - female labor force participation in Lebanon is on the rise, albeit at a slow rate. It is estimated to have increased from 21% to 23% between 2007 and 2017.

Source: World Bank Databank – based on ILO Modeled Estimates

**Lebanon:** Challenges to women’s economic empowerment are direct outcomes of structural obstacles including political, economic, and social. However, women face specific challenges. (1/2)

Limited enabling and gender-sensitive environment that attracts and retains women in the labor force, including policies and legal framework, financial services, safe transportation, safe work environment, and access to justice.

Limited gender-sensitive policies and strategies, especially in terms of job creation and equal gender economic opportunities.

Lack of updated gender-disaggregated reliable data, knowledge and evidence regarding solutions to increase women’s economic opportunities.

Insufficient awareness on potential economic role of women in light of the existing social constructs and stereotypes. Traditional views of gender responsibilities play a strong role in determining the division of labor within the Lebanese family. Women continue to have primary caretaking roles and responsibilities (child, chronically-ill family member, and elderly) that prevent them from being economically active.

(1/2)
Lebanon: Challenges to women’s economic empowerment are direct outcomes of structural obstacles including political, economic, and social. However, women face specific challenges. (2/2)

Poor labor market outcomes. Women are: twice as likely to be unemployed, have lower returns to work in terms of wages/profit, suffer from discriminatory working conditions (including stereotypical professions perpetuated by tradition, culture, and media), have high representation in informal activities, face low participation in specific sectors (e.g. innovation/high value added), and less likely to advance to leadership and decision-making roles.

Self-employed women face gender-based barriers to starting and expanding their business. Their access to finance is limited, their businesses are concentrated in low productivity, stereotypically “feminine” professional activities, and they lack access to good quality business development services.
Lebanon: Accomplishments in the past 5 years

At the legislative level: Several laws and amendments were promulgated in the past 5 years, including:

1. **Labor Law:** increase the maternity leave period in the private and public sectors to ten weeks with full salary rights
2. **Municipal Law:** Consecrating the right of married women, whose civil status register has been transferred to the register of their husband, i.e., to the jurisdiction of another municipality to present their candidature to be member in the local municipal council of their native place.
3. **NSSF:** equal access between husband and wife to family compensation for the spouse and the children. Entitlement to these family allowances shall be decided based on the higher rank of the civil servant, whether they are the husband or the wife.
4. **Violence related laws:** including domestic violence law and Penal Code

At the strategic level: Lebanon developed:

- Gender-mainstreamed National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism (endorsed)
- National Strategy for Gender Equality (2017-2030)
- First National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- Implementation of Prime Minister’s recommendation to increase women’s participation in leadership appointments by the Council of Ministers
Lebanon: What we are doing

At the legislative level: Several law proposals were submitted to the Parliament for promulgation. Those laws fall into the following three categories:

1. Violence against women: e.g. penalizing sexual harassment in public and private spaces, child marriage
2. Discriminatory laws: e.g. NSSF, bankruptcy, nationality,
3. Access to credit: Secured Transactions law and regulations, including the establishment of a movable assets registry
4. Gender sensitive labor laws: e.g. paternity leave, flexible time

At the strategic level: the following are being developed:

• First National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women and Girls in Lebanon
• National Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women and Girls in Lebanon (multi-sectoral services for GBV survivors)
• National Human Rights Commission
• National Gender Observatory
• National strategy for the implementation of the SDGs in accordance with the First Voluntary National Report (VNR)
Lebanon: In five years from now, this is where we want to be (2019-2024)

- Enabling environment to address constraints for women’s economic participation strengthened
- Knowledge & evidence on solutions to women’s economic opportunities increased
- Women’s access to economic opportunities improved

In five years, Lebanon aims to increase the labor force participation of women by at least 5 percentage points
Lebanon: This is how we’ll do it (1/2)

Increase the labor force participation of women by at least 5 percentage points

An enabling environment with increased capacity for stakeholders to address constraints for women’s economic participation strengthened

Women’s access to economic opportunities improved

1.1. Legal environment improved by issuing and amending laws impacting women economic participation in public and private sector

1.2. Capacity of government agencies to identify & address constraints to women’s economic empowerment & participation enhanced

1.3. Women’s participation in socioeconomic integration enhanced

2. Knowledge & evidence regarding solutions to women’s economic opportunities increased

3.1. Women employment and retention in private sector increased

3.2. Women-led SMEs facilitated

1.1.1 Adoption by Parliament of key laws, legislations, and execution decrees to remove discrimination against women and to support their participation and protection in the economic life (sexual harassment, NSSF, Pay Gap law, trade law, incentives to facilitate care provision for men and women, flexible working arrangements, breastfeeding hours, paternity and maternity leaves, sectoral job discrimination in the labor law (choice of professions, and night work))

1.2.1. Build capacity of Government of Lebanon (GoL) to mainstream gender in the public sectoral strategies, policy, and budgets (e.g. gender audits, strengthen Gender Focal Points / Units in ministries and agencies)

1.3.1. Develop incentive mechanism & measures to include and advance more women in leadership positions in the private sector (e.g. women quota on boards of directors of listed companies, gender label)

1.3.2. Develop programs to facilitate vulnerable women’s employment and protection in Lebanon (rural women, special needs, informal workers, etc.)

2.2.1. Build capacity of the Government of Lebanon (GoL) to generate, and publish reliable gender-disaggregated data

2.2.2. Enhance knowledge in Lebanon, through research, on specific gender gaps topics and develop programs to address those gaps, based on international experience and best practices (e.g. access to care, access to technology, earnings, etc.).

3.1.1. Implement a comprehensive and multi-sectoral advocacy campaign to address stereotyped images in the workforce

3.1.2. Develop a strategy and plan to create jobs opportunities in the care economy that would have the double objectives of: (i) easing the burden on women to care for dependent (children, elderly and people with disabilities); and (ii) creating more job opportunities for men and women.

3.1.3. Develop a strategy and programs to support returning mother to the workforce
**Lebanon: This is how we’ll do it (1/2)**

### ULTIMATE OUTCOME

**Increase the labor force participation of women by at least 5 percentage points**

1. An enabling environment with increased capacity for stakeholders to address constraints for women’s economic participation strengthened

2. Women’s access to economic opportunities improved

### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

1.1. Legal environment improved by issuing and amending laws impacting women economic participation in public and private sector

1.2. Capacity of government agencies to identify & address constraints to women’s economic empowerment & participation enhanced

1.3. Women’s participation in socio-economic integration enhanced

2. Knowledge & evidence regarding solutions to women’s economic opportunities increased

3.1. Women employment and retention in private sector increased

3.2. Women-led SMEs facilitated

### IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

1.1.2. Adoption by Parliament of a law and issuing of execution decrees to mainstream gender in the public sector’s strategies, policy, budget and structure

1.2. Knowledge & evidence regarding solutions to women’s economic opportunities increased

1.3.3. Develop education programs in areas that provide women and men (especially youth) with market-relevant skills, including vocational and lifelong learning opportunities

1.3.4. Develop programs to expand access to affordable and high-quality care provision to women so they can be economically active (children, elderly, people with disabilities), including setting the legal /regulatory framework and licensing regime, defining implementation arrangements, providing incentives when relevant and subsidies to those in need, implementing an advocacy campaign

3.2.1. Support more (adult & young) women employment in STEAM field, including in entrepreneurship (awareness campaign, capacity building, incentives, network of business (women and men) incubators/ mentors & mentees / role models, career orientations and counseling services at schools and universities, online platform to share experience and market product and services.

3.2.2. Support programs for women’s entrepreneurship, including access to finance and credit as well as access to markets (e.g. connections to local and global value chains).
Lebanon: The broader commitment going forward

Achieving this Plan requires joint efforts and partnerships with multiple stakeholders. The following key partners will be identified for commitment and active involvement in achieving this change:

- **Government**: Parliament, Council of Ministers, and members of the multi-sectoral ministerial committee on women’s affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister
- **Public-Private Partnerships**
- **Private sector**, including but not limited to: chambers of commerce and syndicates, banks and financial associations, private sector firms/companies
- **Civil Society Organizations**
- **Academia**
- **Media**
- **International community and donors**
Lebanon: Potential risks and how we will deal with them

The following risks and proposed mitigation measures have been identified in achieving the results proposed in the Plan

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<th>Risks</th>
<th>Proposed mitigation measures</th>
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<td>Gender equality agenda is not ranked as a top priority anymore at the national and leadership levels</td>
<td>• Ensure high-level political adoption and activation of the national gender plans</td>
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<td>• Foster the role of private sector in enforcing gender equality in the workplace</td>
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<td>• Accelerate the role of the National Women Machineries (including NCLW) and CSOs in coordination with other stakeholders</td>
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<td>Limited, lack, and misallocation of funding</td>
<td>• Lobby and secure funding targeted to the national priorities of the gender strategies and plans</td>
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<td>• Establish a coordination mechanism in line with national strategies and plans to ensure proper channeling and rationalization in the use of funds</td>
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<td>Instability due to geo-political risks</td>
<td>• Design programs (e.g. entrepreneurship) for better connection to global and international value chains and markets, in collaboration with relevant governmental entities</td>
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<td>• Capitalize on dynamic and resilient private sector and CSOs</td>
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<td>Limited institutional capacity in implementation of gender mainstreaming</td>
<td>• Develop capacity to support government entities in conducting participatory gender audits and gender responsive budgeting</td>
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