



# UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

**CCA Report**

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## Acronyms

ATI	Access to Information
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CCIs	Cultural and Creative Industries
CEDRE	Conférence économique pour le développement, par les réformes et avec les entreprises
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CIP	Capital Investment Program
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EPI	Environmental Performance Index
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
ERA	Electricity Regulatory Authority
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FHHs	Female-headed Households
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GII	Global Innovation Index
GoL	Government of Lebanon
GRM	Grievances Redress Mechanism
HDPN	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IDRAAC	Institute for Development, Research, Advocacy and Applied Care
IMPACT	Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment Coordination and Tracking
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISWM	Integrated Solid Waste Management
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LFHLCS	Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey
LNOB	Leave No One behind
LFF	Lebanon Financing Facility
LRF	Lebanon Recovery Fund
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MHHs	Male-headed Households
MICS	Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoEW	Ministry of Energy and Water

Moi	Ministry of Interior & Municipalities
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
NACI	National Anti-Corruption Institute
NAS	National Agriculture Strategy for Lebanon
NAP WPS	National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
NPMPLT	National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory
NPTP	National Poverty Targeting Programme
NSS	National Statistical System
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
NWSS	National Water Sector Strategy
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCM	Presidency of the Council of Ministers
PHC	Primary Healthcare Centres
PMT	Programme Management Team
PWD	Persons With Disabilities
RACE II	Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RDNA	Rapid Damage Needs Assessment
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSCOL	United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UPR	Universal Period Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1. Executive Summary

## Lebanon in crisis

Multiple, compounding crises are causing severe hardship for everyone residing in Lebanon, particularly its most vulnerable. Losses in economic activity and fiscal revenues, coupled with high inflation and poverty rates, are exacerbating a range of political, social and environmental issues that are not only inflicting significant human suffering, but also increasing the risks of conflict and instability. The economic and financial crises are likely to rank within the top three most severe globally since the mid-nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>. The crises are expected to be prolonged, especially in the absence of a comprehensive macroeconomic and financial stabilization plan or a collective and integrated sustainable development plan. The Port of Beirut explosion in August 2020, which killed over 200 people and displaced approximately 300,000, had a considerable impact on the decline in Lebanon's GDP. The impact of COVID-19 and the restrictions introduced to contain the virus have further compounded economic and human suffering in this multi-faceted series of crises to hit the country.

Since mid-2019, the hollowing out of the economy has been severe. The cumulative inflation rate has increased by a staggering 735 per cent as of December 2021, compared to its level at the onset of the crisis in October 2019, causing massive losses in purchasing power of income and driving up poverty rates. Imports of food commodities, medicine and medical equipment and supplies are presently seriously hampered by a depreciating local currency, as well as the capital control - unlawfully imposed by the private banks - and the alarming depletion of the foreign currency base at the Central Bank and the National Treasury. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia presents additional significant challenges for food imports and prices, as well as food security in Lebanon. Preceding the latest crises, Lebanon's social protection system already suffered from large gaps in legal and effective coverage and was chronically underfunded, leaving large proportions of the population in Lebanon exposed to vulnerability.<sup>2</sup>

## Root causes preceding the recent crises

The recent crises have revealed the full extent of the underlying and systemic failures of Lebanon's economic and governance model that was forged in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). The war ended with the adoption of the Taif agreement which reinforced the principles of unity, democracy, equality and sovereignty, highlighted the disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militia, and rebalanced the country's sectarian power-sharing formula via a range of political reforms. Among others, it reduced the executive powers of the Presidency, which was transferred to the Cabinet, and created numerical equality between Christians and Muslims in the Parliament, Cabinet, and top-level civil service positions. Whereas on the one hand the Taif agreement enshrined political sectarianism, it also envisaged abolishing this system over time including by deconfessionalizing Parliament and the subsequent creation of a confessional-based Senate, merit-based appointments in the public sector, and administrative decentralization. However, these initiatives remain pending to date while sectarianism has entrenched and affected all state-building efforts. Political decision-making has frequently been beholden to sectarian vetoes, at times paralyzing the country until the key players arrive at a mutually acceptable deal, to the detriment of the public good. The excesses of sectarianism have undermined effective and efficient governance, the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, and weakened public service provision along non-sectarian lines.

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic Monitor: January 2022'

<sup>2</sup> ILO and UNICEF, 'Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon, Policy options and costs for core life-cycle social grants, Policy Note, Beirut', (2021).

As a result, at the root of Lebanon's fragility lies a power-sharing arrangement and governance practices and institutions that have been denounced for entailing uneven application of provisions of the Lebanese Constitution.<sup>3</sup> The perceived lack of political appetite to address the shortcomings of the country's governance system, combined with a historic dearth of capacity within public institutions<sup>4</sup> have further eroded the state's ability to deliver for the people of Lebanon. These issues have gradually been compounded by a political elite that has orchestrated a 'deliberate depression' resulting in a breakdown of governance that means that the state is increasingly incapable of undertaking core functions of government.<sup>5</sup>

Mutually entrenched interests between certain factions in the political and economic elites have led to the development of a political economy that is averse to reforms that would risk their position at the top of society. Public oversight institutions are mostly idle, while audit and internal control within institutions are mostly absent.<sup>6</sup> Weaknesses in the four key bodies responsible for financial and administrative performance of the public sector – the Civil Service Board, Central Inspection, the Court of Accounts, and the Higher Disciplinary Board – have severely hampered their functioning. Constraints related to the sectarian nature of representation in political and decision-making processes, as well as inside state institutions, have often come to the detriment of merit and competence, while access to justice remains constrained for many. Civil society in Lebanon plays an integral role in development given the lack of state leadership and engagement, though it continues to be affected by intimidation, judicial harassment and reprisals.<sup>7</sup> While some modest steps have been taken to include civil society in policy consultation, marginalized groups are often locked out of decision-making.

Even during phases of economic growth, Lebanon had record high income and wealth inequality.<sup>8</sup> Lebanon's very high inequality ranking of 115 has important implications for the performance of key social sectors, especially health and education. In parallel, the Lebanese economy has not generated sufficient and decent job opportunities in recent decades, serving as a low added-value service-based economy, externally oriented, and dependent on foreign capital, with most companies in Lebanon employing only one to five workers, mainly as informal laborers, and mostly in import and trade as well as services. Haphazard and growing urbanization, which has been largely left unplanned without proper urban governance, has contributed to increased inequalities, lack of access to adequate and affordable housing and basic urban services, proliferation of informal and disadvantaged urban pockets, deteriorating environmental problems, growing insecurities and social tensions, among others.<sup>9</sup>

## Severe economic, social and environmental deterioration

The impact of the crises on the people of Lebanon has been devastating. The economic crisis has plunged a large proportion of the population of Lebanon into poverty,<sup>10</sup> as 74 per cent of the Lebanese population had become income vulnerable by December 2020, representing approximately 2.86 million individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its lockdown and curfew measures, has further hampered economic activity, forcing many private sector businesses to shut down, either temporarily or permanently, with devastating impact on MSMEs which operate mainly in the informal sector and lack the required support.

The current economic crisis disproportionately affects groups in the Lebanese population that were already vulnerable before the crisis. For Syrian refugees, the crises pushed 89 per cent of the

<sup>3</sup> See for instance, Bassel F. Salloukh, 'Taif and the Lebanese State: The Political Economy of a Very Sectarian Public Sector', (April 2019)

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Rola Rizk Azour, 'Personnel Cost In the Central Government: An Analytical Review of the Past Decade', (May 2013)

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2021: The Great Denial', (24 January 2021)

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>7</sup> Chehayeb, K., 'Controlling the Narrative: Lebanon Compromises Free Speech in Crisis', Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, (2020)

<sup>8</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, 'Is now finally the time to discuss inequality in Lebanon?', (2021)

<sup>9</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, (2021)

<sup>10</sup> Numerous estimates exist for poverty in Lebanon including from UNESCWA through calculations of the multidimensional poverty rate, and the World Bank, with both figures being for 2021

population below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), compared to 55 per cent in 2019.<sup>11</sup> Of the more than 210,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon, almost all are now estimated to live below the poverty line, with virtually no opportunities for employment, not even as daily paid workers.<sup>12</sup> Out of an estimated 210,000 migrants in Lebanon - 76 per cent of whom are women who make up 99 per cent of migrant domestic workers<sup>13</sup> - over 86,000 are considered to be in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.<sup>14</sup>

Food insecurity has become significantly more acute and widespread in recent years due to increasing poverty and the decrease in consumers' purchasing power. As the country satisfies about 80 per cent of its basic food needs through imports, the staggering inflation and the continuous currency depreciation are risk factors affecting the availability and affordability of food items, with food imports (unloaded food weight in metric tons) through the Port of Beirut having decreased by 12 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020, and 27 per cent compared to 2019<sup>15</sup>. All of these factors are taking a toll on consumers, whose purchasing power has substantially dropped. A higher share of their expenditures is on food resulting in worrisome food insecurity levels among Syrian refugee families where 49 per cent were food insecure (VASyR 2021). This has dramatic consequences on nutritional intakes; consumption has been shifting to cheaper and less nutritious food items, leading to malnutrition, deterioration of diet diversity and higher exposure to food safety hazards.<sup>16</sup>

Missing policies in areas such as access to adequate housing and security of tenure, and a general lack of implementation of existing policies and legislation, continue to discriminate against the most vulnerable and at-risk population groups including older persons, refugees, migrants, women and girls, youth, children, and members of the LGBTQI+ community who are most affected by the dramatic socio-economic deterioration since 2019.

The compounding crises of 2020 and 2021 have heavily affected the health system in Lebanon, decreasing availability, affordability, accessibility, and quality of health care in general, and threatening a reversal of the gains of the past two decades.<sup>17</sup> They also deepened inequities in access to health services and added to social tension, including causing violence against health care workers. Due to the deterioration of health infrastructure and medical equipment,<sup>18</sup> as well as lack of financial resources, fuel and electricity, accelerated emigration of health care workers, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, most hospitals are currently operating at 50 per cent capacity; patients are often deprived of basic and, sometimes, lifesaving services; primary health care centers are forced to reduce opening hours; and hundreds of private pharmacies had to be temporarily closed.<sup>19</sup> The price of lifesaving and essential medicines has skyrocketed and almost all are in short supply, with a 60-80 per cent decrease in imported medications and medical supplies, and around 50 per cent drop in routine vaccination coverage.<sup>20</sup>

The government's prolonged low investment in important inputs for quality public education (i.e., infrastructure, equipment, and teacher's qualifications), especially at the lower levels<sup>21</sup> explains the lack of quality in public schools. This is a key issue as Lebanon already exhibits the widest education outcomes performance gap between students of the lowest and highest income quintiles among Arab countries.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the decreasing ability of some of the less affluent private institutions to

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<sup>11</sup> [Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon \(VASyR 2021\)](#), p. 99-101.

<sup>12</sup> UNRWA, 'Calls for Support for Palestine Refugees, Amongst the Most Vulnerable Communities in the Country', (press statement, 18 August 2021)

<sup>13</sup> UN Women/IOM/ILO/AiW, 'Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Gender Perspective', (2021)

<sup>14</sup> Lebanon Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, 2021

<sup>15</sup> WFP RAM Unit Food Security Sector Working Group Presentation – February 2022

<sup>16</sup> FAO, 'Lebanon Food System Assessment', Draft, Nov 2021 (Forthcoming publication).

<sup>17</sup> The Lancet, 'The toll of cascading crises on Lebanon's health workforce', (2021)

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00493-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00493-9/fulltext)

<sup>18</sup> The Lancet, 'The toll of cascading crises on Lebanon's health workforce', (2021)

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00493-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00493-9/fulltext)

<sup>19</sup> WHO Regional Director, Press briefing on Afghanistan and Lebanon (23 September 2021)

<sup>20</sup> WHO (2021)

<sup>21</sup> BankMed, 'Analysis of Lebanon's Education Sector', (2014)

<https://www.bankmed.com.lb/BOMedia/subservices/categories/News/20150515170635891.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF (2022)



sustain re-investment in quality inputs may eventually create a gap in performance between them and wealthier private schools. In addition to these structural challenges, the influx of Syrian refugees and the multiple crises since 2019 have put tremendous pressure on Lebanon's education system. As of 2021, Lebanon has been able to enroll 191,196 non-Lebanese children in public schools, based on an increase of public education system capacities, supported by international assistance, of 77 per cent in six years, with non-Lebanese students comprising 33 per cent of total students in the public system.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Lebanese Constitution grants women and men equal rights, and gender parity had been achieved at all educational levels before the Syria crisis, gender inequality is endemic in all aspects of life in Lebanon.<sup>24</sup> The Constitution, however, does not contain an article that defines discrimination on the basis of sex and gender and does not explicitly prohibit it. Gender discrimination continues to be codified in many aspects of Lebanon's legal system, underpinning gender inequalities across issues of personal status, employment, political participation, access to land and access to social protection. As a result, with a score of 0.599 Lebanon ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in regional and 145<sup>th</sup> out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index<sup>25</sup> in 2020.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas many of the biases and forms of discrimination are sanctioned socially, the Lebanese legal framework still includes numerous principles, provisions and procedures which discriminate against vulnerable population groups, whether in relation to their status in the country, their labor, and/or other aspects of their socialization. The constitution states that all citizens are equal before the law without any discrimination, though current legislation and legal provisions are not in compliance with that guarantee of non-discrimination. Moreover, national legislation does not include a provision that defines and prohibits racial discrimination in line with the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.<sup>27</sup> Numerous population groups routinely face biases, exclusion, or mistreatment based on one or more aspect of their identity, such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, class, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.<sup>28</sup> The Constitution and national laws do not provide a legal framework for stateless persons, for example, nor do they establish a statelessness determination procedure. Similarly, the situation of LGBTQI+ people is one that has been excluded; national legislation criminalizes homosexuality and does not provide adequate protection for LGBTQI+ people, who have been excluded and stigmatized.

Numerous environmental challenges including inadequate wastewater and solid waste management and related water and air pollution, reduction of forest coverage and corresponding biodiversity loss, an unregulated quarrying sector, high dependence on hydrocarbons for transport, heating and electricity production as well as an automobile-dependent society<sup>29</sup>, have been exacerbated since the crises.<sup>30</sup>

## Crises are exacerbating risks of conflict and instability

The crises have increased already significant threats to peace by raising sectarian tensions and deepening political polarization, increasing tensions among the Lebanese and refugees. The ability of

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<sup>23</sup> UNHCR (2022)

<sup>24</sup> UN Women Lebanon, 'Policy Brief Gender-Responsive Recovery in Lebanon Recommendations for Fiscal, Social and Labor Policy Reform', (2020) <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-responsive-recovery-in-lebanon>

<sup>25</sup> Global Gender Gap Index is a composite measure that assesses gender gaps in the following four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity; education attainment; health and survival; political empowerment. Each dimension has its own rank, and all four dimensions result in average ranking of the country. Each dimension has a breakdown to other indicators that are being measured and provide a basis for average ranking of every dimension. World Economic Forum (2020), Global Gender Gap Report 2020, p.8, available at: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Comparison with ranking in 2017 is challenging, because in 2017 only 144 countries were assessed and in 2020 the number of countries assessed was 153.

<sup>27</sup> CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24

<sup>28</sup> UNDP, 'Leave No One Behind; For an inclusive and just recovery process in post-blast Beirut', (2020)

<sup>29</sup> Presses de l'Ifpo/CNRS Liban, 'Atlas of Lebanon: Power and Energy: Dependency on Hydrocarbon, Pollution and Shortage', (2019) <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/13294?lang=en>; Also see UN Habitat, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy, (2021): <https://unhabitat.org/guide-for-mainstreaming-transport-and-mobility-in-lebanons-national-urban-policy>

<sup>30</sup> UNDP/CDR, 'Lebanon Millennium Development Goals Report 2013', (2013)

security forces to provide security and stability has been eroded due to the impact of the crisis, while the risk of (transnational) organized crime has increased as has violence against women, in addition to other forms of violence, especially those caused by hate speech and disinformation. In this context of deteriorating economic conditions, non-state armed groups continue to operate outside the control of the state and its security institutions. While many non-state armed groups were integrated into the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) after the Civil War<sup>31</sup>, some maintained their arms, while others formed into political parties. Hizbullah in particular maintained its arms and gradually enhanced its military capabilities under the “people, army, resistance” doctrine.

## Emerging opportunities for sustainable development

The adoption of a people-centered approach holds key opportunities to improve well-being and reduce poverty, in addition to strengthening protection systems to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), migrant exploitation, negative coping mechanisms, eviction risks, and all forms of violence, including violence against children. There is also a need to ensure equitable access to quality basic and social services, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized, including those with disabilities. Gender equality needs to be advanced and efforts have to be made to empower women and girls in political, social, and economic terms, including addressing underlying cultural norms, as well as gender-based violence, with a focus on the intersections of different LNOB components.

In terms of the economy, of critical importance is to strengthen the role of MSMEs - which account for the majority of businesses and job creation in the country - by addressing institutional, operational, financial and governance challenges limiting their development. Unlocking the potential of the agricultural and industrial sectors by addressing structural and emerging challenges will be important in this regard, in addition to supporting the localization of essential value chains to decrease import dependence. Further, it will be important to formalize an increasingly informal labor market through measures that would help institutions regain trust in the system as well as see the value and importance of formality.

Policy and legislative reforms are required to promote decent work and reduce the risk of exploitation, including migrant exploitation, and to facilitate access to justice for those whose rights have been violated. Migrant workers, including migrant domestic workers, are routinely subjected to violence, exploitation and abuse, including human trafficking and forced labour. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by the Kafala (sponsorship) system and the fact that migrant workers are not protected by national labour legislation, namely migrant domestic workers.

On the governance side, reforming the tax system to both address economic inequality and allow needed tax incentives for companies to remain in country and grow will be important, while supporting the development of technology and its integration in the productive sectors. Increasing economic integration through a renegotiation of active FTAs and signing of new ones will allow Lebanese companies to exploit the full potential of expanding trade routes and access to new markets. There is a need to guide urbanization – through good, evidence-based urban management, planning and policymaking based on an area-based, multisectoral approach – in a way that has the potential to contribute to sustainable development.<sup>32</sup> This includes, among others, a better regulation of the housing market and enhancement of the transport system, which will be key to ensuring people’s equitable access to economic opportunities.

Most fundamentally, broader systemic change to governance in Lebanon is needed. There remains a need for a social contract to reinforce national unity. Combatting corruption by reforming the legislative, regulatory, and cultural norms that result in corruption is required, while ensuring the independence of the judiciary by undertaking the reforms needed to free the judiciary from political interference. Weaknesses of the post-war political order such as insufficient separation of powers

<sup>31</sup> See for instance: <https://lebanesestudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/c368be59.-The-demobilisation-of-the-Lebanese-Militias-Elizabeth-Picard.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, [State of the Lebanese Cities](#), 2021

within and between state institutions need addressing. At the same time, strengthening the capacity of key governance institutions, including at the subnational level, to promote more citizen engagement across policy areas, engaging all parts of society, particularly those that are often under-represented or marginalized, are also much needed. Underpinning these reforms, an integrated vision of a diverse yet unified Lebanon is required.

For the environment, the focus should be on developing and strengthening policies and interventions that promote climate resilience, resilient and green buildings, green infrastructure, sustainable public transport and mobility systems, sustainable food systems, climate-smart agriculture, circular economy, clean energy and technologies, integrated water resource management, good governance in natural resources management, sustainable forest management, open and green public spaces, effective solid waste management including at the municipal level, and increased investment in renewable energy sources. In addition, investing in capacity building for climate change adaptation and mitigation, climate change communication, research, and development and climate financing is required, while identifying and investing in innovative and “green” economic opportunities which strengthen both, environmental sustainability and economic growth (e.g. sustainable tourism, renewable energy solutions, etc.).

## Partnerships and strong national data to realise opportunities and achieve transformative change

National authorities are the critical player for advancing inclusive and sustainable development. The chronic absence of a long-term national development framework and national SDG targets, the lack of complete ownership and will to implement key structural and legal reforms, and the devastating impacts of the multiple crises have all hindered progress towards the SDGs in the last few years. Partnerships will need to be strengthened with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, academia, think tanks and research institutions to deliver innovative and sustainable programming. In addition, forging more partnerships with rights-based CSOs, while also expanding to regional and international collaboration and knowledge-sharing, will be important. Strengthening national and subnational institutional data/statistics capacities and systems to produce continuous, reliable, timely, coherent, multisectoral quality data will also be key.

These partnerships will need to be guided by an overarching strategy that considers immediate, medium and long-term needs, risks and vulnerabilities of all segments of the Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable. Programming will need to be in line with the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus - achieving sustainable development and the SDGs in Lebanon should be based on an integrated national sustainable development strategy and geared towards shared longer-term goals. This requires strengthening joint assessments and planning between humanitarian, development, political and security partners and increasing emphasis and implementation of the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability across the public and private sector. The inclusion of marginalized populations - including those who are stateless, refugees, IDPs, and migrants - in contributing to and benefitting from this agenda will be critical. Transformative legislative and institutional reforms are needed to ensure the voice of citizens and civil society is effectively included in policy-making processes. Finally, the effectiveness and sustainability of the necessary reforms, as well as socio-economic and political empowerment, requires significant and targeted investments in building and strengthening both institutional and human capacities, and generating inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities for accelerating attainment of the SDGs.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

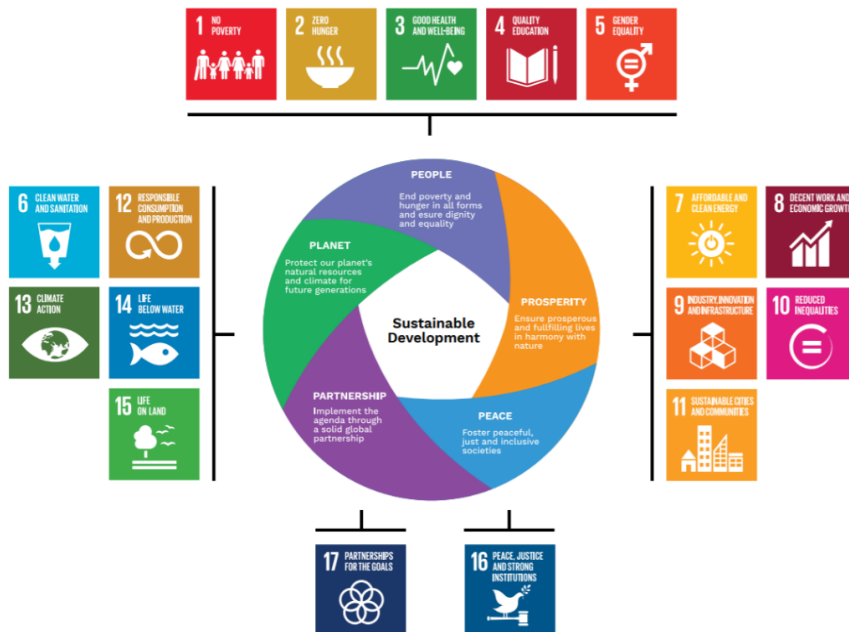
### 2.1 Objectives and Scope

The Lebanon Common Country Analysis (CCA) serves as the collective analytical foundation for the UN Country Team’s (UNCT) programmatic engagement under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2025. It is guided by the UN Secretary General’s reform agenda and vision to reposition the United Nations (UN) development system to deliver on the universal, integrated and transformational 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The CCA supports a renewed push for collective action and partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to realize the principle of “Leaving no one behind” (LNOB) and reach the furthest behind first.

As the UN system’s independent and collective description and analysis of the country situation, the CCA applies the latest UN programming guidance<sup>33</sup> to examine progress, gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks vis-à-vis Lebanon’s commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda, UN norms and standards, and the principles of the UN Charter. The UNCT will use the conclusions of the CCA to engage in a broad policy dialogue with government and other key stakeholders for advancing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and to develop the UNSDCF 2023-2025. In addition, the CCA will be used as a core analytical function of the UNCT to closely track situational developments and inform the UN system’s work on a continuous basis.

The CCA highlights key development challenges, underlying and structural causes, as well as opportunities to address them. Based on the five pillars (5 Ps) - People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships - of the 2030 Agenda (see figure 1 below), the CCA focuses on central themes and issues of the global SDG target and indicator framework that are of relevance to the context of Lebanon.

**Figure 1: 2030 Agenda – 5 Ps and primary linkages to the SDGs**



The CCA uses the UN Sustainable Development Group’s guiding principles “Leaving No One Behind” (LNOB), Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Group, UNSDCF Guidance, (June 2019). [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019\\_1.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf)

(GEWE), Resilience, Sustainability, and Accountability. It also applies the perspective of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) as a basis for integrated “whole-of-system” programming with all relevant national and international stakeholders in Lebanon.

Under the LNOB principle, the CCA uses a people-centered lens to assess the impact of the multiple crises affecting Lebanon with a dual focus on the population in general, and on the needs, risks and vulnerabilities of the most marginalized and at-risk groups. It identifies vulnerable population groups, inequalities and disparities as a basis for improved targeting of policies and programmes, as well as innovative and integrated programming approaches under the UNSDCF 2023-2025.

The CCA provides an overview of the status of national SDG-based development planning, the national human rights agenda, and the status and opportunities of development financing. It also provides a summary of multi-dimensional risks to achieving the SDGs in Lebanon and identifies priority challenges and opportunities as a basis for prioritizing UN system programmatic engagement in the 2023-2025 programming cycle.

## 2.2 Process and Methodology

The process for developing the CCA from December 2021 to March 2022 has been guided by the UNCT, with technical oversight from the Programme Management Team (PMT) and day-to-day facilitation from the UN Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).

The CCA development has been divided in two phases; 1) the collection and systematic desk review of the latest available evidence, including official national and international statistics, analyses, surveys and studies from within and outside the UN system, and 2) extensive consultations with all parts of the UN presence in Lebanon, and with a wide range of external stakeholders and partners, including government, civil society organizations, academia, private sector, think tanks and international donors. Whereas UN internal consultations focused primarily on identifying and confirming quality sources, data and statistics, consultations with external stakeholders - including representatives of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations - focused on underlying and structural challenges that are obstructing sustainable development, as well as potential opportunities and pathways towards addressing these challenges.

Given the complexities of the country context, data were analyzed and presented for different segments of the population including Lebanese citizens, Palestine refugees, Syrian refugees, migrants, stateless and refugees and asylum seekers of other nationalities. Within each of these segments, data were, to the extent possible, disaggregated not only by income, sex, geography and age, but also on other grounds of discrimination prohibited under international law such as disability, gender identity, legal status, statelessness and nationality. Social, cultural, economic, political, legislative, and other systemic drivers of exclusion were examined and described.

## 2.3 National development planning

The UN’s priorities in Lebanon are guided by national priorities, a wide range of needs assessments and international frameworks. They evolve in line with Lebanon’s rapidly changing context. This section looks at the state of national planning, especially in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, as well as the state and availability of timely and accurate data that inform planning.

### Status of SDG-based planning

Lebanon lacks a national development strategy. In the **absence of a ministry of planning and a comprehensive strategy**, various ministries have issued social, environmental, and economic policies

and implementation plans. While these can often be linked to important development issues and to the SDGs, they are not part of an integrated national sustainable development framework in line with the vision and approaches of the 2030 Agenda. Instead, these policies and plans predominantly have a local<sup>34</sup> or sectoral<sup>35</sup> and narrow focus on specific issues and population groups. In areas such as waste management and electricity, Lebanon focus mostly on symptoms rather than addressing the root causes of long-standing development challenges.<sup>36</sup>

In 2017, the Council of Ministers established a national committee to oversee and guide the roll-out of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in Lebanon, in order to enable a more holistic and coherent implementation of the vision of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Chaired by the Prime Minister, the Committee includes public officials from various ministries and state entities along with representatives of civil society and the private sector. The SDG Committee, with its Secretariat based at the Presidency of Council of Ministers, is mandated to act as a coordinating body; to raise awareness of, and integrate, the SDGs into national policies and programmes; to build a national database to assess achievement towards each of the goals; and to regularly review progress using the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process.

Following the first meeting of the Committee, five inter-ministerial sub-committees were created in March 2018 along the pillars of the SDGs, structured as follows: “Planet” Sub-Committee, coordinated by the Ministry of Environment; “People” Sub-Committee, coordinated by the Ministry of Public Health; “Prosperity” Sub-Committee, coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Trade; and “Peace” Sub-Committee, coordinated by the Office of Minister of State for Administrative Reforms. As for “Partnership” – the fifth ‘P’ of the SDGs’ pillars – “it was considered a cross-cutting issue in implementing and achieving the SDGs.” In addition, a fifth sub-committee, led by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), was formed to focus on data and statistics.

At the legislative level, a parliamentary sub-committee has also been formed to monitor and advance the SDGs within the Parliament, “with the plan to map existing legislation in order to identify and fill any gaps related to the SDGs.” Although the SDG Committee (and its sub-committees) has not been fully activated towards fulfilling its mandated role, in 2018 it nevertheless managed to organize the preparation and submission of the country’s first VNR. In this context, the UNCT in Lebanon has supported the government to accelerate its work on the 2030 Agenda, with different UN agencies providing technical support to relevant ministries and state entities (including for the preparation of the 2018 VNR). However, the national committee has since failed to develop a national database of indicators of the SDGs and national efforts in this regard ceased altogether after 2018.

Amid the country’s compounding economic, financial, social and health crises, the focus on SDGs continues to fade away. The national priorities articulated in the Lebanese Government Declaration on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 prioritize tackling the economic crisis by (1) continuing negotiations with the IMF, (2) restructuring the banking sector, (3) passing relevant laws (chief amongst which the capital control law), and (4) negotiating public debt, all in line with international frameworks supporting Lebanon and namely the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)<sup>37</sup>.

## Data and statistics in support of planning

In the absence of a national SDG plan and related indicators and targets, UN agencies, funds and programmes have provided technical and policy support in accelerating SDG-based planning and

<sup>34</sup> UN Habitat’s city profiles including for Beirut, Hamra, Old Saida, Tabbaneh, etc.

<sup>35</sup> Note for example the national water sector strategy of 2012, Draft reform plan for Lebanon electricity sector (<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/02/18/Draft-reform-plan-for-Lebanon-electricity-sector-sees-24-hour-power-by-2026>)

<sup>36</sup> Arab NGO Network for Development – ANND, ‘Lebanon: Structural challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda’, (2016)

<sup>37</sup> Ministerial declaration as accessed through

<http://www.pcm.gov.lb/Library/Files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%8B%20%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B0.pdf>



implementation to relevant ministries and state entities (including for the preparation of the 2018 VNR). In 2017-18, the UN also conducted a capacity assessment of the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) to produce accessible and timely quality data including that relating to SDG indicators, among others.

In recent years, with support from the UN and partners, CAS has implemented key surveys including the 2019 Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFH LCS) with the International Labour Organization, the 2016-2017 Census of Palestinian residents in Lebanon with the Lebanese - Palestinian Dialogue Committee and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the 2015 Child Labour Survey with the International Labour Organization, and others. A Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) with UNICEF was conducted for Syrian refugees in 2016-17.

However, these efforts cannot be a substitute for integrated and coherent data management by designated national statistics institutions. Strengthening national data and statistics capacities will also help to overcome different and contradicting conclusions on key parameters such as the national poverty rate which has not been officially assessed since 2004. Currently, the national statistical system also lacks accurate figures about the Syrian and Palestinian refugees in the country. The widespread dearth of data greatly affects transparency and accountability which, in turn, favors nepotism and corruption.<sup>38</sup>

In view of the importance of **access to information** for increasing transparency, accountability, and public awareness, and to strengthen participatory democracy, the adoption of the 2017 Access to Information Law marks important progress. It requires state administrations to publish financial and administrative data and allows citizens to request information from the state. It also helps to address the lack of digitization of Lebanon's state institutions, as most files and data continue to be managed and stored physically. That said, the law has considerable limitations such as the lack of enforcement mechanisms or penalties for violations.<sup>39</sup>

The formulation of many policies shows a **lack of participatory and inclusive approaches and of use of partnerships** in line with the 2030 Agenda.<sup>40</sup> Even when relevant policies do exist – such as the 2011 National Social Development Strategy with its focus on inequality, participation, workers' rights, and strengthening social protection – they tend to lack action plans for translating them into tangible and measurable results.<sup>41</sup>

In line with SDG 17, effective implementation of an SDG-based development agenda will depend on **strong implementation mechanisms** including capacity building, trade, policy coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships, data, monitoring and accountability, funding instruments as well as increased public awareness and involvement in the SDGs.

On the other hand, when existing national strategies, policies or programs are operational and functional, they seem to integrate a systematic use of favoritism and corruption to tailor themselves to the needs of relevant communities or groups. The **lack of a human rights-based approach** can be seen in policies such as the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP) which focuses only on the income of the poorest families while barely supporting the full realization of economic and social rights including access to health, education, housing, labor, clean water, etc.<sup>42</sup> A human rights-based vision will be a pre-requisite for an integrated national development agenda and the achievement of

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<sup>38</sup> Arab NGO Network for Development – ANND, 'Lebanon: Structural challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda', (2016)

<sup>39</sup> Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 'Access to Information in Lebanon 06/23/2021', (2021)

<sup>40</sup> Arab NGO Network for Development – ANND, 'Lebanon: Structural challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda', (2016)

<sup>41</sup> Arab NGO Network for Development – ANND, 'Lebanon: Structural challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda', (2016)

<sup>42</sup> Arab NGO Network for Development – ANND, 'Lebanon: Structural challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda', (2016)

the SDGs, including the formulation of coherent and complementary SDG-based policies for all sectors, and establishing linkages and synergies between them.



### 3. DEVELOPMENT TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter provides an integrated, people-centered overview of the main national development trends, challenges, root causes, and opportunities in close relation to the 17 SDGs and relevant SDG targets. The assessment integrates the key principles of the 2030 Agenda and UNSDCF programming guidance, including HRBA, GEWE, HDPN and LNOB. It also sheds light on relevant regional and cross-border dynamics, which impact on the national development situation. In addition to People, Planet and Prosperity, which cover the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development, the Peace section highlights national development challenges linked to social cohesion, as well as governance issues and the national human rights agenda. The section Partnership and Means of Implementation serves to cover issues related to partnerships, finance for development, technology and data.

#### 3.1 PEOPLE

*“We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.”<sup>43</sup>*

This section assesses central human development challenges and their main causes with a focus primarily on central themes and issues of SDGs 1-5 and relevant SDG 1-5 targets and indicators. It also highlights important interlinkages with the other pillars and SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, and concentrates on key human development themes including poverty, social protection, food security and nutrition, health, education, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

#### Demographic changes

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. Life expectancy at birth now stands at 79.3 years for Lebanese of both sexes combined,<sup>44</sup> and people over the age of 65 represent more than 11 per cent of Lebanon's population, the highest percentage in the Arab region and projected to increase to 14.0 per cent and 23.3 per cent by the year 2030 and 2050, respectively.<sup>45</sup> The Lebanese population has witnessed significant trends in terms of decline in nuptiality rate by 17.9 per cent, and a noteworthy fall of the crude birth rate by 16.2 per cent during the 2015-2019 period.<sup>46</sup>

Women have a higher life expectancy than men and outnumber men among older persons by five percentage points.<sup>47</sup> There is also a notable difference in widowhood, 11 percent of women are widows compared to 2 percent of men and many more women 65+ living alone, 38 per cent compared to 12 per cent.<sup>48</sup> By 2040, Lebanon will have more older people than children (figure 2). At the same time, Lebanon has a high per centage of youth, with 44 per cent of the population under the age of 24, which requires targeted policies for employment, social integration and economic development.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> General Assembly Resolution 70/1. ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, (2015)

<sup>44</sup> WHO 2020 data

<sup>45</sup> The National Strategy for Older Persons in Lebanon: 2020-2030, [https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/online\\_-\\_final\\_english\\_strategy\\_for\\_online\\_use.pdf](https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/online_-_final_english_strategy_for_online_use.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> International reporting figures from the National Directorate of Civil Status

<sup>47</sup> WDI 2019

<sup>48</sup> ILO, CAS, EU 2020

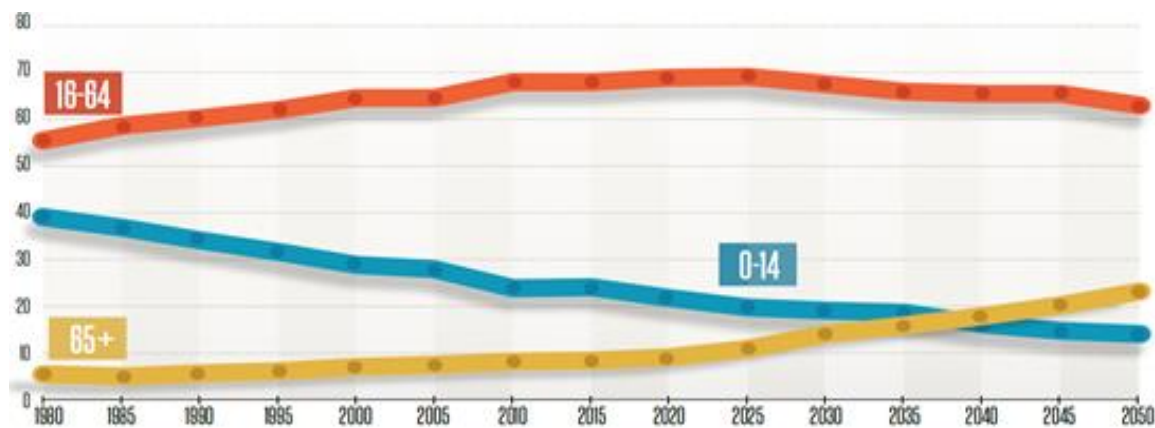
<sup>49</sup> <https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Adolescent-boys-and-youth-in-Lebanon.-A-review-of-the-evidence-.pdf>

Children, youth and young people are among the population groups that have been hit the most by the recent crises.

Youth and children have confronted enormous challenges including higher unemployment, social and economic exclusion, violence, psychological disorders and high-risk behaviours, and disillusionment with the political establishment. As basic social services collapse, so too do the social systems that protect children and youth, placing them at increased risks of violence, abuse and exploitation. IDRAAC (Institute for Development, Research, Advocacy and Applied Care), a psychological research center in Lebanon, reported recently that 1 in 20 people have contemplated suicide at least once, and 1 in 50 have attempted it.<sup>50</sup> Refugees and migrants are particularly young and thus vulnerable to the mentioned challenges.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, migration waves of young adults seeking better work opportunities elsewhere, as well as counter-waves of ‘return migration’ of workers post-retirement further contribute to increasing the proportion of older persons.<sup>52</sup>

**Figure 2: Per centage of population distribution by age groups in Lebanon (1980-2050)**



Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>.

These **structural and long-term demographic changes** and related issues need to be considered in addressing the sharp economic decline and other sustainable development challenges aggravated by the multiple crises since 2019. They have specific implications for the health sector due to increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases and mental health problems. They also require strengthening social protection systems to support families and ensure the wellbeing of older people. Although further research and studies will be required to determine whether the above changes are the early precursors of a perduring and structural demographic tendency, the increase in the percentage of older people (above 65 years old) has already been confirmed. This will have tremendous policy implications in terms of social protection, and the provision of affordable, quality and dignifying health care for older people. The Ministry of Social Affairs 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.<sup>53</sup> The Ministry also has a Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women and Children (2020-2026). However, much remains for these strategies to be fully implemented.

<sup>50</sup> <https://english.almayadeen.net/news/health/lebanon:-suicide-desperation-calls-up-from>

<sup>51</sup> MSNA 2021

<sup>52</sup> The National Strategy for Older Persons in Lebanon 2020-2030. UNFPA Lebanon, Ministry of Social Affairs, ESCWA, CSA; 14 June 2021

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs, The National Strategy for Older Persons in Lebanon 2020 -2030; <https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/2100336%20UNCT%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Lebanon%20-FINAL%20-%20WEB.pdf>;

In addition to the above, the combination of a massive influx of refugees over the last decade, with an estimated total of 1.5 million (including 839,788 registered with UNHCR as of the end of January 2022),<sup>54</sup> and an ongoing large-scale emigration which totaled 300,000 to 400,000 mostly young and skilled Lebanese by the late summer of 2021,<sup>55</sup> contribute to fundamental alterations of Lebanon's demography, with important effects on the intergenerational dynamics and demographic dividend, as well as across economic and social sectors.

## Poverty

The absence of detailed expenditure data has made it very difficult to assess the state of monetary poverty in Lebanon. The last Household Budget Survey was done in 2012. Currently there are various estimates on poverty all pointing to the direction of increasing poverty rates among the population with more and more households facing challenges in accessing food, healthcare, and other basic services.

The Lebanon Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2018 estimated the poverty rate at around 27 per cent of the population in 2011/2012, nearly unchanged from 2004/2005. However, in March 2020, the World Bank estimated the prevalence of poverty among the Lebanese population based both on an international poverty line (USD 5.50 per person per day) and a national poverty line (based on LBPs 457,000 per capita per month but adjusted for inflation) at 22 and 45 per cent respectively. In March 2021, the World Bank projected, for the Lebanese population, a further increase in the rate of extreme poverty (based on the international poverty line) of 13 per centage points by the end of 2020, and by 28 per centage points by end of 2021. The same study predicted a 33 per cent point increase in poverty by the end of 2020 and a 46 per centage points increase for the end of 2021. According to ESCWA, the unprecedented socioeconomic crises, and in particular the tremendous depreciation of the Lebanese pound, also greatly increased the multidimensional poverty rate in Lebanon which considers access to health, education and public utilities. Between 2019 and 2021 it has nearly doubled from 42 per cent to 82 per cent.<sup>56</sup>

The multiple interlinked crises and shocks since 2019 have put tremendous pressure on the value of the Lebanese pound causing severe currency depreciation and inflation, thus dramatically reducing households' purchasing power. The cumulative inflation rate has increased by a staggering 735 per cent as of December 2021, compared to its level at the onset of the crisis in October 2019 (Central Administration for Statistics Consumer Price Index). This has greatly contributed to rising poverty rates. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, "with 77 per cent of households reporting that they did not have enough food or enough money to buy food, and 60 per cent buying food on credit or borrowing money, many households have been forced to reduce the quantity of the food they consume".<sup>57</sup>

The 2021 ILO Vulnerability and Social Protection Gaps Assessment, based on the Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey 2018/19, reaches similar results, projecting that 74 per cent of the Lebanese population had become income vulnerable by December 2020, representing approximately 2.86 million individuals. The current economic crisis disproportionately affected groups in the Lebanese population that were already vulnerable before the crisis. Persons with disability and persons aged 65 and above were projected to face the largest increases in income vulnerability.

In parallel, according to the 2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), the economic and COVID-19 crises have pushed 89 per cent of the Syrian refugee population below the

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<sup>54</sup> [Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon \(VASyR 2021\)](#),

<sup>55</sup> Anadolu Agency, '230,000 Lebanese left Lebanon in 4 months: NGO', (2021) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/230-000-lebanese-left-lebanon-in-4-months-ngo/2395782>

<sup>56</sup> United Nations, 'Lebanon: Almost three quarters of the population living in poverty', (2021) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099102> (accessed 07/02/22)

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur>

Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), compared to 55 per cent in 2019.<sup>58</sup> Having risen dramatically between 2019 and 2020, the proportion of households under the SMEB (88 per cent) remained the same in 2021 with no difference between male headed households (MHH) and female headed households (FHH). In addition, the gap between extremely poor FHH and MHH narrowed in 2021; as MHH became more vulnerable during Lebanon's economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of the more than 210,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon, almost all are now estimated to live below the poverty line, with virtually no opportunities for employment, not even as daily paid workers.<sup>59</sup> Out of an estimated 210,000 migrants in Lebanon - 75 per cent of whom are women who make up 99 per cent of migrant domestic workers<sup>60</sup> - more than 86,000 are now in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. With a history of widespread documented employment abuse, limited access to humanitarian aid or national safety net programmes, lack of social protection and no familial support networks, they are extremely vulnerable.<sup>61</sup> The recent (Multi-Sector Needs Assessment) MSNA indicated that financial barriers are the main limitation for timely access to health care, and that around 20 per cent of households are using negative coping mechanisms to access health care.

According to several reports published in 2020 and 2021, sanitary pads' prices have increased by 500 per cent since 2019, and 66 per cent of girls residing in Lebanon are not able to afford sanitary pads. Despite volunteers' efforts to deliver menstrual and hygiene products to those in need,<sup>62</sup> increasing period poverty has tremendous effects on women and girls' access to education, employment and basic services in addition to negative repercussions on their mental health.<sup>63</sup>

## Social Protection

The national vision for social protection is articulated under the draft National Social Protection Strategy which also summarizes the current state of the national social protection system. The strategy's vision is reflected elsewhere, including in the UN Position on Social Protection, and the 3RF sector plan on social protection. According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, the adoption of a National Social Protection Strategy should be a top priority for the recovery of Lebanon, as it lacks a welfare system, unemployment insurance, child benefits, old-age or disability pensions, and sickness and maternity or paternity benefits.<sup>64</sup>

Preceding the latest crises, Lebanon's social protection system already suffered from large gaps in legal and effective coverage and was chronically underfunded, leaving large proportions of the population in Lebanon without support.<sup>65</sup> Significant segments of the Lebanese people remain excluded from any social protection interventions<sup>66</sup> with almost two-thirds (2/3) of the population living in households which receive no transfers at all (contributory or non-contributory)<sup>67</sup> (Figure 3)

<sup>58</sup> [Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon \(VASyR 2021\)](#), p. 99-101.

<sup>59</sup> UNRWA, 'Calls for Support for Palestine Refugees, Amongst the Most Vulnerable Communities in the Country' (press statement, 18 August 2021)

<sup>60</sup> UN Women/IOM/ILO/AiW, 'Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Gender Perspective', (2021).

<sup>61</sup> IOM, 'Over half of migrant workers in Lebanon need urgent humanitarian assistance: IOM' (press statement, 10 August 2021)

<sup>62</sup> UNV "Mapping Volunteer Initiatives During Covid-19 in Lebanon" (2021), p.13.

<sup>63</sup> Plan International and Fe-Male, 'Period Poverty in Lebanon, Research Study, (2021)

<sup>64</sup> Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to Lebanon, 1 – 12 November 2021

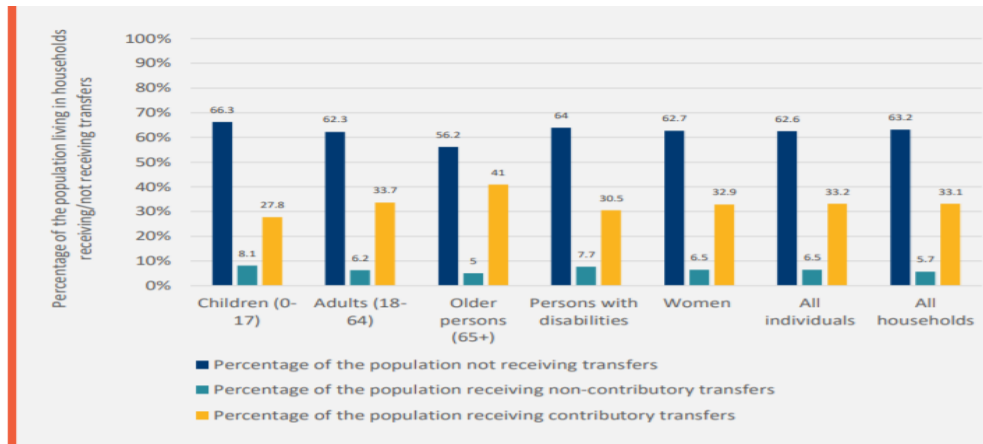
[https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftn69](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftn69)

<sup>65</sup> ILO and UNICEF, 'Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon, Policy options and costs for core life-cycle social grants', Policy Note, Beirut, (2021)

<sup>66</sup> According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, the adoption of a National Social Protection Strategy should be a top priority for the recovery of Lebanon, as it lacks a welfare system, unemployment insurance, child benefits, old-age or disability pensions, and sickness and maternity or paternity benefits (Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to Lebanon, 1 – 12 November 2021 [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftn69](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftn69))

<sup>67</sup> ILO (2021)

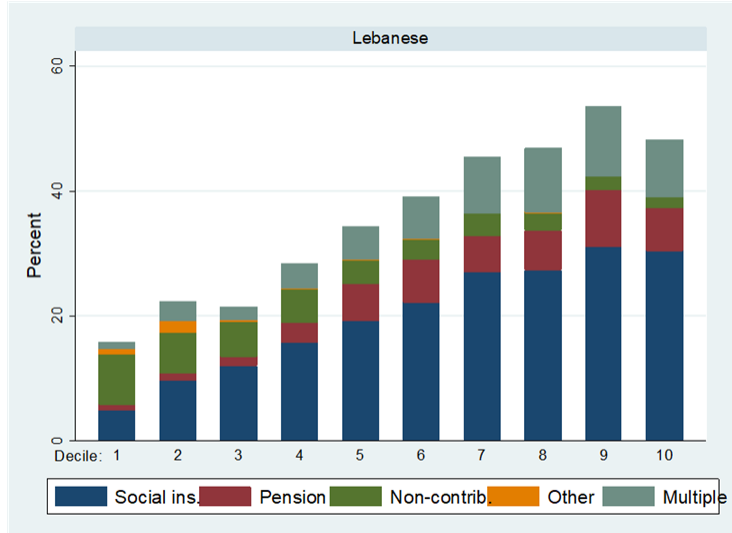
**Figure 3: Receipt of social transfers among Lebanese households, by population group, 2018**



Source: ILO, UNICEF (2021)

Recent assessments<sup>68</sup> highlight that the right to social insurance is closely linked to labor participation, which is a marker of low decommodification of the social security system (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Social protection coverage by income decile (Beneficiaries), Lebanese citizens**



Source: ILO (2021)

Social insurance (contributory) schemes are characterized by low coverage, fragmented interventions, financial fragility and inequality. The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) is the main social insurance institution of Lebanon. NSSF provides health insurance, family allowances and end-of-service indemnities but only to employees of the formal private sector which represent less than 50 per cent of the Lebanese labor force. However, in view of the current crisis, and the inability of the NSSF to adjust reimbursement schemes, beneficiaries of NSSF must pay out-of-pocket the difference accountable to the fluctuations in exchange rates, which is not possible for most NSSF beneficiaries, and hence, healthcare is delayed with potential increase in mortality and morbidity. Moreover, NSSF does not yet provide unemployment, disability, work accidents insurances or pension schemes.<sup>69</sup>

Public employees (civil servants and security services) which amount to 10 per cent of the labor force enjoy health and retirement coverage through the Cooperative of Public Sector Employees and the Social Services System of the army and the Internal Security Forces. However, these schemes are fiscally fragile as contributions collected are insufficient to cover liabilities, ultimately obliging the

<sup>68</sup> ILO (2021)

<sup>69</sup> WFP (2022)

state to use taxpayer's money to gap their structural deficit.<sup>70</sup> Also, it is worth noting that 32.9 per cent of overall social protection spending benefits military personnel (pensions, end-of-year indemnities, hospitalization, school allowances) and 12.8 per cent goes to civil and education personnel.<sup>71</sup>

In terms of social assistance, the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) or *Hayat* programme, is the government's largest social assistance programme. Launched in 2011, the NPTP initially comprised basic social services payment exemptions or fee waivers (public health and public schools) targeting extremely poor households selected through a proxy-means tests (PMT) methodology. Subsequently in 2014 with the compounding effects of the Syrian crisis, a food e-card, managed by MoSA, PCM and with the operational support of WFP, was introduced to the existing package of benefits where beneficiaries could buy food commodities in contracted shops. Prior to the crisis, the program covered a mere 1 per cent of the population, but due to the protracted economic crisis since 2019<sup>72</sup> coupled with the COVID-19, needs for expanding social assistance programmes have become more acute. This has led the government to expand the coverage of the NPTP food e-card (from 10,000 beneficiary households in 2019 to 36,000 in 2021 and 75,000 planned for April 2022) but also to shift NPTP food component benefits from food e-card to unconditional and unrestricted cash assistance redeemable in USD at certain ATMs (September 2021).

Government has envisaged two emergency safety nets to offset the impact of the crisis on poorest households, namely the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and the Ration Card for which households can apply via the same e-platform 'DAEM'. The ESSN, funded through a World Bank loan worth USD 247 million, will provide cash transfers to 147,000 extremely poor households as a temporary expansion of the NPTP. Households not selected for the ESSN and not previously excluded by the DAEM platform are supposed to benefit from Ration Card cash assistance - a programme which to date has not yet confirmed sufficient funding. NPTP and ESSN combined are expected to cover 25 per cent of the Lebanese population, scaled up from the current coverage of 3.6 per cent of the population.

Overall, social assistance remains mainly dependent on international contributions (100 per cent of NPTP financial commitments are covered by donors), poverty-targeting faces multiple challenges, and significant population groups experiencing lifecycle vulnerabilities remain excluded from coverage, including persons with disabilities, families with children, older persons, informal workers, women heads of households, unemployed.

Besides, the existing social protection governance system does not enable accountability as it does not provide clear roles and responsibilities or coordination mechanisms amongst different actors.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the current social protection infrastructure remains underdeveloped with public entities having limited institutional capacity for service delivery.

As emphasized by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>74</sup>, in recent research,<sup>75</sup> - and outlined in the forthcoming strategy - there is a **need to establish a human rights-based and lifecycle-**

<sup>70</sup> WFP (2022)

<sup>71</sup> Institut des Finances, 'Social Protection Spending in Lebanon', (2021), [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_819422.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_819422.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> The World Bank (2020). A World Bank study estimates that 150,000 households were pushed under the poverty line in 2020. See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/04/21/targeting-poor-households-in-lebanon>

<sup>73</sup> National Social Protection Strategy for Lebanon

<sup>74</sup> OHCHR (2022). In 2016, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expressed concerns that "only an inadequate proportion of the State party's population receives social security benefits over the life cycle and that the social security system is fragmented, providing coverage for a limited number of social risks."<sup>14</sup> The CESCR subsequently recommended the State to "establish a social protection floor comprising basic social security guarantees, over the life cycle, thus ensuring access to health care and basic income security to as many residents as possible."

<https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4slQ6QSmIBEDzFEovLCuW%2bq19EVGtH59rb%2f5qYCKL9EJN1b6cd380Vay5v9yoUJhyrQK06cMlJwD15gpkbzviRlrOYI2CrCaFiz1cOLXSmsc2%2bQhz0DzttVRFaDGnCSa>

<sup>75</sup> ILO and UNICEF (2021) 'Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon, Policy options and costs for core life-cycle social grants', Policy Note, Beirut



**based social protection ‘floor’** or system which 1) establishes a set of tax-financed core lifecycle benefits including child benefits, disability benefits and old age social pensions,<sup>76</sup> sitting alongside the existing poverty programme and 2) reforms to the social security system, especially the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), including the long-awaited reform of the End-of-Service Indemnity (EOSI) system to move toward payment of regular, predictable monthly pensions; extending coverage to workers in the informal economy; improving the adequacy of benefits, and introducing contributory social insurance schemes in case of maternity, unemployment and employment injury. - for which the government, with the support of its partners, have taken recent steps.

MoSA, with the support of ILO and UNICEF and the financial commitment of the EU, are currently designing and piloting a package of core lifecycle grants, starting with a National Disability Allowance to cover the additional cost of disability. In addition, MoSA is currently developing an in-house grievance and redress mechanisms system (GRM, ongoing) and is inclined to further mainstream gender and protection within its interventions thanks to support of specialized partners.<sup>77</sup>

Since 2019, Lebanon has been developing a National Social Protection Strategy under the auspices of the Inter-Ministerial committee on Social Policy and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Now complete and submitted for endorsement by the government, this strategy defends human rights-based social protection for Lebanon and provides a clear vision, guiding principles and priority areas of investment for the next ten years. This document also intends to be a vehicle for a social contract between citizens and the state aiming at establishing social protection as a human right for all people on its territory, leaving no one behind.<sup>78 79</sup>

## Food Security and Nutrition

**Food insecurity** has become significantly more acute and widespread in recent years due to increasing poverty and the decrease in consumers’ purchasing power. In an August 2020 press release urging the international community to support Lebanon to avert a hunger crisis, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights stated on the right to food that “Lebanon’s food system has always been fragile because it relies on imports for 85 per cent of its food.”<sup>80</sup>

As the country imports most of its food needs, the staggering inflation and the continuous currency depreciation are risk factors affecting the availability of food items, with food imports (unloaded food weight in metric tons) through the Port of Beirut having decreased by 12 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020, and 27 per cent compared to 2019<sup>81</sup>. In addition, Lebanon relies heavily on wheat imports from both Russia and Ukraine, if the conflict is prolonged, food imports and prices, especially wheat, could be in jeopardy leading to further food availability and affordability issues. All these factors take a toll on consumers, both nationals and non-nationals, whose purchasing power has substantially dropped, and a higher share of their expenditures is on food. This has dramatic consequences on nutritional intakes, whereby consumption has shifted to cheaper and less nutritious food items, leading to malnutrition, deterioration of diet diversity and higher exposure to food safety hazards.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The new EU Social Grants program being implemented by ILO and UNICEF aims to design and pilot a package of core lifecycle social grants. Disability Allowance is currently being launched, in collaboration with MOSA, and discussions around design of Social Pension are underway with government stakeholders.

<sup>77</sup> UN Women (2022)

<sup>78</sup> ILO and UNICEF (2022)

<sup>79</sup> OHCHR (2022). On 12 November 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, concluding an official visit to Lebanon, stressed that the adoption of a National Social Protection Strategy should be a top priority for recovery as the country lacks a welfare system, unemployment insurance, child benefits, old-age or disability pensions, and sickness and maternity or paternity benefits.” [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftn58](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#_ftn58)

<sup>80</sup> OHCHR. (28 August 2020). International community must support Lebanon and international agencies to avert hunger crisis, says UN human rights expert. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26194&LangID=E>

<sup>81</sup> WFP RAM Unit Food Security Sector Working Group Presentation – February 2022

<sup>82</sup> FAO, ‘Lebanon Food System Assessment’, (Draft, Nov 2021 Forthcoming publication).

Lebanon was added, starting March 2021, to the WFP/FAO Hunger Hotspot early warnings on acute food insecurity report<sup>83</sup>. In the latest report published in January 2022, the repercussions of the unprecedented economic meltdown in Lebanon are expected to further deteriorate food security for both Lebanese citizens and the refugee population<sup>84</sup>. 46 per cent of Lebanese were found to be food insecure during the second half of 2021.

Between August and December 2021, 89 per cent of the Lebanese population reported switching to less expensive foods; 63 per cent restricted their overall consumption; 60 per cent limited portion size; 40 per cent reduced the number of meals, and 32 per cent borrowed food. By December 2021, 64 per cent of families reduced expenditures on health and education, while 47 per cent purchased food on credit and 49 per cent borrowed cash to be able to access food.<sup>85</sup>

Refugees, migrants and other vulnerable populations such as female headed households, pregnant and lactating women and children are particularly impacted by food insecurity. For Syrian refugees, half of the population was found to be food insecure in June 2021, with 46 per cent having inadequate food intake, 51 per cent reporting a medium to very high food expenditure share, 64 per cent employing coping mechanisms that affect resilience and future capacity to generate income, such as selling family assets, and 65 per cent having to limit portion size or reduce the number of meals consumed per day<sup>86</sup>. Food insecurity for Syrian refugees remained at worrisome levels (49 per cent) in June 2021, similar to 2020. The average number of meals consumed by Syrian refugees fell from 2.2 in 2019 to 1.9 in 2020 (and from 2.8 to 2.5 for children). In 2021, women and FHHs remained more food insecure and dependent on humanitarian assistance: 55 per cent of FHH were food insecure, compared to 48 per cent of MHH, and 68 per cent of FHH were using coping strategies categorized as “crisis level or emergency level”, compared to 13 per cent of MHH.<sup>87</sup> Almost 1 out of 4 (24 per cent) migrant households’ food consumption scores were classified as poor. In addition, 12 per cent of migrant households reported moderate (10 per cent) or severe (2 per cent) hunger. In Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates the percentage of migrant households experiencing severe hunger reached 4 per cent.<sup>88</sup>

For the first time, cases of child malnutrition are becoming visible in Lebanon.<sup>89</sup> Preliminary results of the 2021 Nutrition SMART Survey in Lebanon showed that at the national level, 41.3 per cent of children (6-59 months) suffered from a degree of child anaemia. Therefore, nutrition support for children under five and pregnant and lactating women is becoming increasingly critical.<sup>90</sup> The figures for **stunting among children** under 5 reached as high as 16.5 per cent.<sup>91</sup> In addition, malnutrition rates have once more risen since 2016 from 6 per cent to around 10 per cent in 2018/20, following a decrease from 15 per cent to 6 per cent between 2013 and 2016 (see Figure 5).

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<sup>83</sup> Hunger Hotspots FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity – March to July 2021 outlook

<sup>84</sup> Hunger Hotspots FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity – February to May 2022 outlook

<sup>85</sup> WFP (2021)

<sup>86</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>87</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>88</sup> Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), 2021.

<sup>89</sup> The National News, ‘Children missing meals in majority of Lebanese families, UN says’, (2021)

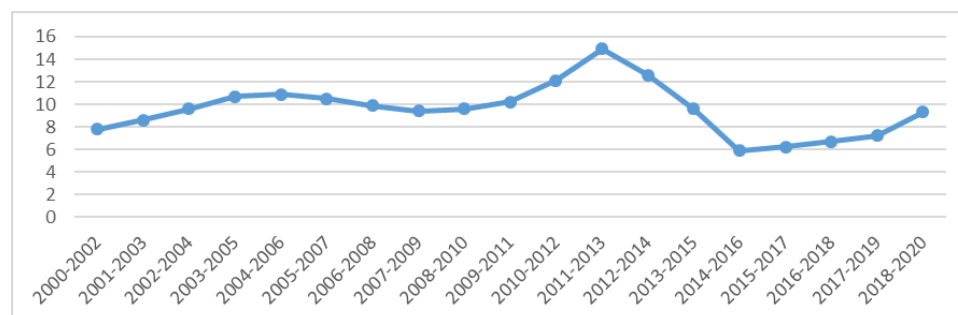
<https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2021/11/23/children-missing-meals-in-majority-of-lebanese-families-un-says/>

<sup>90</sup> MoSA/UN, ‘Update of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan - (LCRP 2017-2021)’, (2021)

<sup>91</sup> <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/western-asia/lebanon/>



**Figure 5: Prevalence of undernourishment (in percentage terms – 3-year average) – FAOSTAT**



Source: FAOSTAT 2021

A 2021 study that looks at the impact of the economic crisis and COVID-19 on women’s access to sexual and reproductive health services<sup>92</sup> reveals that at least 50 per cent of Lebanese and Syrian refugees’ pregnant women could not secure their daily requirements of meat, dairy products, and fruits and vegetables. It also highlights that, during pregnancy, only 47 per cent of women participating in the study reported taking folic acid, and that most mothers visiting health care centers showed signs of severe anaemia, calcium and iron deficiencies, as well as other issues related to malnutrition. The same study shows that 92.5 per cent of participating women reported fearing the inability to secure food needs primarily due to the economic crisis, and 78.1 per cent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lebanon has only shown limited progress towards achieving **diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD)** targets,<sup>93</sup> and no progress towards reducing **obesity**. Dietary changes have resulted in the high incidence of obesity in both rural and urban areas, now afflicting 32 per cent of adults, with an estimated 37 per cent of adult women (aged 18 years and over) and 27.4 per cent of adult men. Lebanon’s obesity prevalence is higher than the regional average for both men and women. In addition, there is a high prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years).<sup>94</sup>

While Lebanon cannot be self-sufficient in food and nutrition in the foreseeable future, it certainly can become more food sovereign if mechanisms and policies related to food and nutrition security are institutionalized, applied, and monitored. Therefore, Lebanon needs a clear, comprehensive, multi-stakeholder Food and Nutrition Security Strategy which defines the parameters of response for the growing food insecurity and malnutrition challenges.

## Agriculture and Food Systems

Although Lebanon has the **highest proportion of cultivable land** per capita in the Arab world, and a significant number of citizens outside Greater Beirut rely on agriculture and related industries for some form of household income, it **imports approximately 80 per cent of its food needs**. In 2018, Lebanon imported 83 per cent of its consumption of cereals – a high proportion considering that cereals represent the products most consumed by the population (42 per cent of their daily diet).<sup>95</sup>

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, if prolonged in time, is likely to further increase food prices and reduce food availability. In 2020, Lebanon imported 80 per cent of its wheat from Ukraine and 15 per cent from Russia. The stability of both supply sources being threaten by the conflict. While Lebanon’s food insecurity is rapidly growing, monitoring of performance in this sector is left to UN agencies, the World Bank and NGOs.

<sup>92</sup> UNFPA and Beirut Arab University, ‘Assessing unmet reproductive health needs and access services among vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee women in Lebanon’ (unpublished), (2021).

<sup>93</sup> FAO, ‘Lebanon Food System Assessment’, Draft, (2021 Forthcoming publication).

<sup>94</sup> FAO, ‘Lebanon Food System Assessment’, Draft, (2021 Forthcoming publication).

<sup>95</sup> FAOSTAT

Whereas the stark rise in food insecurity can be directly attributed to the multiple crises since 2019, key factors hindering development of the agricultural sector in Lebanon are **deeply rooted in an inequitable system**, where a small number of influential people control access to resources and opportunities. The factors are considered primarily socio-political and only secondarily related to agricultural infrastructure and technical issues. Major impediments include 1) informality of the agricultural sector, with a share of informal employment of around 90 per cent amongst Lebanese, and almost 100 per cent amongst Syrians, 2) inadequate land tenure and lack of access to land, 3) lack of access to finance, 4) lack of post-harvest services, 5) inadequate governance of local markets as a barrier to improving local agricultural value chains, and 6) a weak cooperative sector.<sup>96 97</sup>

The **National Agriculture Strategy for Lebanon (NAS) 2020-2025** addresses a set of strategic issues with more depth and analysis, including, for the first time, food security.<sup>98</sup> Despite the ambitious and relevant goals of the NAS 2020-2025, the jump in costs of agricultural inputs due to the ongoing economic and financial crises constitutes a risk of further deepening the gap between small holder farmers and large export-oriented enterprises, thus pushing more people into poverty, and potentially accelerating land accumulation.<sup>99</sup> In addition to effective implementation of the NAS 2020-2025, fundamental legislative and institutional reforms are therefore urgently required to achieve genuine transformation of the agricultural sector as a key contributor to employment, economic development, environmental sustainability, cultural identity, as well as national security and peace.

## Health

Lebanon has a highly fragmented **health care system**, with the government and public sector playing a bigger role as a regulator and purchaser, and the private sector providing most of the services. Provision of health care in the public sector is mainly channelled through primary healthcare (PHC) centers and dispensaries; this is in addition to non-individual preventive and promotive care which is channelled through health education and screening campaigns.<sup>100</sup> The health care system includes multiple delivery channels and funding sources to achieve universal health coverage. Before the recent crises, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) covered around one fourth of the population. In addition, coverage was available to public sector employees (such as the civil servants' cooperative) and to those in national military and security forces. Less than 10 per cent of Lebanese relied on private health insurance, which provides financial cover with variable levels of patient co-pay. For the other non-covered Lebanese, equivalent to around half of the population, the MoPH covered primary care and hospitalization at public and private institutions.<sup>101</sup>

Despite the overall effectiveness of Lebanon's health system, the **impact of the Syria crisis** has exposed the fragile nature of the pre-existing public health system, resulting in declining overall health sector indicators during the first years of the refugee crisis, essentially attributed to suboptimal access to care of Syrian refugees. As of 2017, the data indicate that the neonatal mortality rate has increased

<sup>96</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, 'Lebanon's Food Insecurity and the Path Toward Agricultural Reform', (2020)

<https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/11/13/lebanon-s-food-insecurity-and-path-toward-agricultural-reform-pub-83224>

<sup>97</sup> OHCHR. (28 August 2020). According to the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, "[t]he long-term solution for Lebanon's food system must be anchored in human rights," which includes "increasing national agricultural production in a way that enhances peasants' and rural workers' rights, improving local food producers' connection to local and regional markets, increasing biodiversity, and meeting local cultural and nutritional needs

International community must support Lebanon and international agencies to avert hunger crisis, says UN human rights expert.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26194&LangID=E>

<sup>98</sup> FAO/WFP (2021). The five NAS pillars support the long-term goal of a more resilient, inclusive, competitive, and sustainable agrifood system, in close linkage to relevant SDG 2 targets – though going beyond SDG 2: 1. Restoring the livelihoods and productive capacity of farmers and producers (SDG 2.3; SDG 2.1. and 2.2 indirectly; SDG 2.A); 2. Increasing agricultural production and productivity (SDG 2.3; SDG 2.1. and 2.2 indirectly; and SDG 2.A); 3. Enhancing efficiency and competitiveness of agrifood value chains (SDG 2.3; SDG 2.1. and 2.2 indirectly; SDG 2.A; SDG 2.B; and SDG 2.C); 4. Improving climate change adaptation and sustainable natural resources management (SDG 2.4); 5. Strengthening the enabling institutional environment.

<sup>99</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, 'Lebanon's Food Insecurity and the Path Toward Agricultural Reform', (2020)

<https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/11/13/lebanon-s-food-insecurity-and-path-toward-agricultural-reform-pub-83224>

<sup>100</sup> UNCT, 'Socio-economic impact assessment', (2020)

<sup>101</sup> Lebanon Voluntary National Review 2018

from 3.4 per 1,000 in 2012 to 4.9 per 1,000, with the rate among displaced Syrians (7 per 10,000) almost double that among Lebanese (3.7 per 10,000). Maternal mortality in Lebanon indicated a rate of 15/100,000 in 2015 which was the lowest MMR in the region. However, this rate has increased to 17 and 44 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020 and 2021, respectively, where half the cases in 2021 were associated with COVID.<sup>102</sup>

After the first years of the Syrian refugee crisis, key indicators of health system performance improved again, with maternal mortality decreasing from 21 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016 to 13.8 in 2019, and infant mortality declining from 8.5 in 2016 to 7.2 per 1000 births in 2019.<sup>103</sup> This can be partially attributed to significant improvements with UN support in vaccination coverage for children, and improved access to care for the Syrian refugees. Lebanon has also been spared from the reintroduction of outbreaks of main communicable diseases as vaccinations in general were intensified, although outbreaks of measles and mumps and waterborne diarrhea were still observed, mainly in areas with the highest concentration of refugees.<sup>104</sup>

The compounding **crises of 2020 and 2021 have heavily affected the health system** in Lebanon, decreasing availability, affordability, accessibility, and quality of health care in general, and threatening a reversal of the gains of the past two decades.<sup>105</sup> They also deepened inequities in access to health services and added to social tension, including causing violence against health care workers (see also section 3.4).

Due to the deterioration of health infrastructure, weak health preparedness and response capacities<sup>106</sup> and medical equipment,<sup>107</sup> as well as lack of financial resources, fuel and electricity, accelerated emigration of health care workers, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, **most hospitals are currently operating at 50 per cent capacity**; patients are often deprived of basic and, sometimes, lifesaving services; primary health care centers are forced to reduce opening hours; and hundreds of private pharmacies had to be temporarily closed.<sup>108</sup> The price of lifesaving and essential medicines has skyrocketed and almost all are in short supply, with a **60-80 per cent decrease in imported medications and medical supplies**, and around 50 per cent drop in routine vaccination coverage.<sup>109</sup> Even though, by March 2022, 84.95 per cent of the population had received at least one vaccine dose against COVID 19,<sup>110</sup> earlier assessments expressed concern that the vaccination program risks leaving behind marginalized communities, including refugees, migrant workers and stateless persons.<sup>111 112</sup>

Some regions such as Akkar, Bekaa, North Lebanon and Baalbeck, experienced a significant decline in antenatal care, a noticeable increase in maternal mortality, a decrease in access to family planning and contraceptives, an increase in unintended and unwanted pregnancies, a severe deterioration in

<sup>102</sup> UNFPA (2022). Referring to MOPH data i.e. Vital Observatory Data, 2020 report

<sup>103</sup> MOPH-VDO (2019)

<sup>104</sup> WHO, 'Remarks by the WHO Representative in Lebanon at WHO's press briefing on Lebanon and Afghanistan', (2021) <http://www.emro.who.int/lbn/lebanon-news/remarks-by-whos-representative-in-lebanon-at-whos-press-briefing-on-lebanon-and-afghanistan.html>

<sup>105</sup> The Lancet, 'The toll of cascading crises on Lebanon's health workforce', (2021) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00493-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00493-9/fulltext)

<sup>106</sup> IOM (2022). The challenges of implementing international health regulations and weak health preparedness and response capacities at Port of Entry are documented by IOM-MOH POE assessments.

<sup>107</sup> The Lancet, 'The toll of cascading crises on Lebanon's health workforce', (2021) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00493-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00493-9/fulltext)

<sup>108</sup> WHO, 'Remarks by the WHO Representative in Lebanon at WHO's press briefing on Lebanon and Afghanistan', (2021) <http://www.emro.who.int/lbn/lebanon-news/remarks-by-whos-representative-in-lebanon-at-whos-press-briefing-on-lebanon-and-afghanistan.html>

<sup>109</sup> WHO, 'Remarks by the WHO Representative in Lebanon at WHO's press briefing on Lebanon and Afghanistan', (2021) <http://www.emro.who.int/lbn/lebanon-news/remarks-by-whos-representative-in-lebanon-at-whos-press-briefing-on-lebanon-and-afghanistan.html>

<sup>110</sup> <https://data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/accessibility/>

<sup>111</sup> Human Rights Watch. (28 January 2021). Lebanon: Gaps Remain in Vaccine Program Planning. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/28/lebanon-gaps-remain-vaccine-program-planning>

<sup>112</sup> According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, stateless persons are not able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, because they remain unregistered and do not have an identity. [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftn25](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftn25)

sanitation conditions and period poverty for women and adolescent girls, and an upsurge in sexual and gender-based violence that affects not only women but also other members of the family, including children and infants.<sup>113</sup> Excessive poverty, the collapse of health services and the COVID-19 pandemic (with low vaccination coverage and access to services for vulnerable populations such as undocumented migrants) have prompted a significant change in health seeking behavior, particularly among adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, prompting them to drop seeking appropriate and timely care, thus incurring heightened health risks and life-threatening complications. 93 per cent of respondents to a recent survey<sup>114</sup> described the main barrier to healthcare as being the inability to afford the costs of medication and consultations. This constitutes a five-percentage point increase from just one month earlier. Women were more likely to report 'going untreated' as a coping strategy compared to their male counterparts.

Moreover, the fuel crisis and poor maintenance are affecting the water and sanitation infrastructure, preventing large parts of the population to access safe drinking water and increasing risks of water borne diseases and consumption of unsafe food. High ambient air pollution (three times more than the WHO maximum standard) is increasing the risk of NCDs.<sup>115</sup> With poverty afflicting the majority of the population, many patients with chronic diseases cannot access treatment and are facing high risks of medical complications.<sup>116</sup> **Refugee households have been particularly affected**, with almost half of persons with disabilities (PWD) and older persons unable to pay for healthcare, compared to around a quarter of the rest of the population.<sup>117</sup> Whereas mental health issues have long been prevalent amongst Syrian refugees, they are now strongly increasing amongst the Lebanese population, with rising prevalence amongst women,<sup>118</sup> and 32 per cent of Lebanese children provided with psychosocial support at the beginning of 2021 compared to only 10 per cent in 2020.<sup>119</sup>

Recent data<sup>120</sup> show that more than two-thirds of Lebanese, Palestine refugees and migrant households reported the cost of treatment as the main reason that prevented them from accessing health care services. About 87 per cent of Lebanese households reported having experienced barriers that prevented them from accessing medication in the three months prior to the assessment. The main copying strategies adopted by these households included going to the pharmacy instead of the doctor or clinic, delaying or cancelling doctor's visits, or resorting to other treatments.<sup>121</sup> Stateless individuals may not be admitted to public hospitals on the grounds that they lack legal identification, and an exceptional authorization must be granted by the MoPH to this end.<sup>122</sup>

In the first half of 2021, an estimated 2,500 doctors and nurses left the country.<sup>123</sup> The continuing **contraction of the health workforce** results in increased demand and concentration of services in relatively better resourced urban centers and private institutions. This situation further exacerbates shortages in semi-urban and rural areas, and in publicly funded health-care facilities,<sup>124</sup> although both private and public institutions are affected, and some services like pediatric cardio-surgery are no longer available.<sup>125</sup> More than 40 formal volunteer-involving organizations (VIOs), as well as numerous

<sup>113</sup> UNFPA and Beirut Arab University (2021). "Assessing unmet reproductive health needs and access services among vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee women in Lebanon" (unpublished)

<sup>114</sup> IRC report (December 2021)

<sup>115</sup> WHO, 'Remarks by the WHO Representative in Lebanon at WHO's press briefing on Lebanon and Afghanistan', (2021) <http://www.emro.who.int/lbn/lebanon-news/remarks-by-whos-representative-in-lebanon-at-whos-press-briefing-on-lebanon-and-afghanistan.html>

<sup>116</sup> WHO, 'Remarks by the WHO Representative in Lebanon at WHO's press briefing on Lebanon and Afghanistan', (2021) <http://www.emro.who.int/lbn/lebanon-news/remarks-by-whos-representative-in-lebanon-at-whos-press-briefing-on-lebanon-and-afghanistan.html>

<sup>117</sup> LCRP Situation Update (Jan-May 2021)

<sup>118</sup> UNFPA (2022)

<sup>119</sup> LCRP Situation Update (Jan-May 2021)

<sup>120</sup> Multi Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted between October and December 2021

<sup>121</sup> Multi Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted between October and December 2021

<sup>122</sup> OHCHR (2022). [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref58](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref58)

<sup>123</sup> VASyR (2021)

<sup>124</sup> The Lancet, 'The toll of cascading crises on Lebanon's health workforce', (2021) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00493-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00493-9/fulltext)

<sup>125</sup> IOM (2022)

informal volunteering initiatives, have been trying to fill this gap by actively providing healthcare services in coordination with humanitarian actors, and supporting the government in its strategies to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>126</sup> A study by The Volunteer Circle (2020) found that volunteers impacted approximately 74,000 beneficiaries through their work during the national lockdown from March to June 2020 alone.<sup>127</sup> For instance, in response to the shortage of respiratory devices in hospitals across the country, volunteers with the “Breather for Lebanon” initiative involved 270 experts in the production of artificial respiration ventilators.<sup>128</sup>

Similar to other countries in the MENA region, Lebanon has a **low-prevalence of HIV in the general population** (less than 0.1 per cent) with approximately 2,700 People Living with HIV.<sup>129</sup> The epidemic is concentrated among men who have sex with men (MSM) with a prevalence of 12 per cent.<sup>130</sup> As for HIV/AIDS testing and treatment targets, Lebanon is partially on track with global targets with 97 per cent of people living with HIV knowing their status, but only 68 per cent on antiretroviral treatment and 63 per cent of people living with HIV with suppressed viral loads.<sup>131</sup>

The HIV response in Lebanon is led by the National AIDS Programme (NAP) at the Ministry of Health and in collaboration with various thematic non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The NAP has promoted a multi-sectorial approach in the national response as per the National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2016-2020 and continued to engage with various thematic NGOs, academia, UN agencies and other stakeholders. The Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has, through the Middle East Response initiative, provided the main support to the implementation of this NSP. The AIDS response in Lebanon struggles with limited domestic investment, stigma and discrimination against the most at-risk population, and with inadequate strategic information systems to understand the magnitude and the determinants of the epidemic, especially among key affected populations. Civil society in Lebanon has played a very important role in the HIV response, especially in terms of services and community programming, mostly relying on international donors. The government provides free treatment for all Lebanese and for Syrian refugees; however, medical tests are not covered and represent a financial burden for many of the affected populations, especially in light of the ongoing economic crisis in Lebanon.

At present, the **MoPH needs to cover health care for at least 70 per cent of the population**, compared to 48 per cent prior to the current crisis, as unemployment and poverty keep rising.<sup>132</sup> The government's fiscal and financial constraints and large-scale emigration of health workers are threatening the sustainability of public and private health services. At the time of writing this report, the Lebanese health system is at the brink of collapse. With little internal capacity left, it is unlikely to endure without urgent strategic transformation which directs towards human resources for health retention strategy, exploring task-shifting, leveraging technology, as well as the support of the strong and influential Lebanese health workforce in the diaspora, which is well positioned to lobby aid organizations, professional societies, and governments to accelerate the distribution of funding, expand training capacity, and provide remote decision support.<sup>133</sup>

In the case of public hospitals too, stateless individuals may not be admitted on the grounds that they lack legal identification, and an exceptional authorization must be granted by the MoPH to this end.

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<sup>126</sup> Data was taken from the two National Mappings of Volunteer-Involving Organizations (VIOs) in Lebanon, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Beirut Blast.

<sup>127</sup> UNV “Mapping Volunteer Initiatives During Covid-19 in Lebanon” (2021), p.5

<sup>128</sup> UNV “Mapping Volunteer Initiatives During Covid-19 in Lebanon” (2021), p.4/5

<sup>129</sup> UNAIDS. Global AIDS Update 2021. Geneva: UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS

<sup>130</sup> Lebanon IBBS 2019

<sup>131</sup> UNAIDS fact sheet <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/lebanon>.

<sup>132</sup> WHO, ‘Remarks by the WHO Representative in Lebanon at WHO’s press briefing on Lebanon and Afghanistan’, (2021)

<http://www.emro.who.int/lbn/lebanon-news/remarks-by-whos-representative-in-lebanon-at-whos-press-briefing-on-lebanon-and-afghanistan.html>

<sup>133</sup> The Lancet, ‘The toll of cascading crises on Lebanon’s health workforce’, (2021)

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00493-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00493-9/fulltext)



The 1951 Personal Status Law should be amended without further delay to facilitate registration, even beyond the first year following birth.<sup>134</sup>

## Education

The Taif reconciliation agreement ratified in 1989 sought to leverage education as a medium for strengthening national identity and social cohesion among all Lebanese citizens. The 1994 Plan for Education Reform and the 1997 Curriculum, developed in line with the aspirations of the Taif agreement, are still in effect today.

After the end of the Civil War in 1991, Lebanon's education system made some commendable progress. By 2013, it had achieved nearly full enrolment in primary education and a high literacy rate among youth for both males and females. The distribution of students by gender shows an approximately equivalent proportion of males and females at early stages of education, while female students exceed male students in higher education levels.<sup>135</sup> This, however, was highly reliant on private schools. For example, that same year, only 31 per cent of the primary education level students were in public schools, 66 per cent were in private or semi-private institutions, and 3 per cent were in UNRWA schools.<sup>136</sup>

While the increase in access in the 1990s is commendable, it did not directly address the issues of quality education and inequality that have increasingly affected the overall performance of the national education system for many years.

Seven countries in the MENA region participated in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment<sup>137</sup>. These countries performed poorly (55 per cent of students were below the basic proficiency line) and Lebanon continues to be the region's poorest performer. This is consistent with the 2003 results from the assessment Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) where Lebanon performed poorly overall, although in mathematics was not the lowest for the region.<sup>138</sup> Public sector students' levels tend to be lower than those of their counterparts in the private sector<sup>139</sup>. Lebanon's national level rank was relatively lower than what is expected for a country in its same level of development.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, whereas literacy rates in Lebanon were above average in the MENA region, they lagged other economies with similar levels of development.<sup>141</sup> A recent study from USAID conducted in 120 public schools in 2021 shows **that students of grades 2 and 3 are reading well below their expected grade levels**. In oral reading fluency, only 3 per cent of students are achieving the benchmark of reading 28 and 42 words in a minute, respectively, while every student at that age is normally expected to reach this internationally recognized benchmark. Many factors contribute to these results. For example, the heterogeneity of the student population, the language of the test in reference to the language of instruction and the mother language of pupils, and the effectiveness of the education investments in relation to the level of investment.

There are slightly more boys than girls enrolled in kindergarten and primary education and up to grade 6, independent of nationality. However, from grade 7 onwards there are more girls enrolled than boys. Overall, there are slightly more girls than boys enrolled: girls represented 51.2 per cent of total enrolment from K1 to G 12 in 2020/21. At upper secondary level, girls constituted 60.4 per cent of

<sup>134</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref58](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref58)

<sup>135</sup> Lebanon MDG Report 2014

<sup>136</sup> CERD statistics

<sup>137</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon: Program for International Student Assessment- PISA 2018', (2020)

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-program-for-international-student-assessment---pisa-2018>

<sup>138</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, 'Highlights from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2003, (2004) <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005005.pdf>

<sup>139</sup> Lebanon MDG Report 2014

<sup>140</sup> TIMSS and PIRLS website: <http://timss.bc.edu/>.

<sup>141</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon Education Public Expenditure Review', (2017)

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/513651529680033141/pdf/127517-REVISED-Public-Expenditure-Review-Lebanon-2017-publish.pdf>

enrolment. This indicates that boys tend to drop out earlier than girls, particularly boys from the poorest families who start looking for possible work as from the age of 13.<sup>142</sup> These enrolment trends seem favorable to girls. However, the level of quality of education to which most of these students are exposed and the continued imbalance in favor of boys in other sectors of society indicate that, overall, gender inequities persist in Lebanon, and that education needs to move beyond issues of access to address learning opportunities and quality of services.<sup>143</sup>

Gender inequality in school systems can be detected in gender and age disaggregated enrolment data, as well as in classroom practices and school curricula. The current curriculum still represents women and girls in gendered roles as mothers/ wives and care takers. In contrast, men are viewed as breadwinners and active members of society.<sup>144</sup>

There is significant room to improve education services in Lebanon, starting with better funding. Even before the financial collapse in 2019, the level of **public expenditures on education in Lebanon was only 1.8 per cent of GDP**,<sup>145</sup> which is very low compared to international benchmarks, low compared to other MENA countries and well below the average of 4.4 per cent for member countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>146</sup> This could partially be explained by the high rates of children attending private education and the high level of private households' out-of-pocket spending. However, the degree to which this is the explanation for the low public spending in education opens the question of the degree of responsibility of the state for the education of the people living in the country. This contrasts with other countries with similar levels of GDP, for example Tunisia which spends approximately 6 per cent of its GDP on education.<sup>147</sup>

Enrolment trends in the past 15 years showed a steady increase of Lebanese students in private schools at the expense of public schools.<sup>148</sup> Most Lebanese households do not benefit from any tuition support either by public or by private sources. Lebanese families with children enrolled in public schools have been benefitting from international community support since the 2015-2016 school year.<sup>149</sup> Even then, the system does not offer the necessary conditions to promote equitable quality education.

Assessments on the degree of investment become even less favorable considering that the proportion of children enrolled in the private sector recently declined by about 10 per cent. Even with this decrease, the private sector dominates the provision of the education service with a proportion of about 60 per cent.<sup>150</sup> Out of all Lebanese students, 57 per cent were enrolled in paid private schools; 14 per cent in free private schools (receiving direct subsidies from the government), and 29 per cent in public schools. Students who were no longer able to pay for the fees of private education started migrating to the public sector. Meanwhile, the funding received by private institutions leaves smaller margins for re-investment in inputs that promote quality.

According to the Lebanese Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for 2021/2022, there is an anticipated increase of 100,000 to 120,000 students transferring from private to public schools from 2019/2020

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<sup>142</sup> UNESCO (2022)

<sup>143</sup> OHCHR (2022). Refer also to CEDAW recommendation: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), was concerned about the low number of boys enrolled in the formal education system compared to girls, with boys forced to work because of the economic crisis or allegedly following their fathers in business and politics, and its potential impact on the value accorded to girls' education and employment prospects. The Committee recommended that the State party put in place a specific strategy and conduct large-scale public campaigns for women and men at all levels of society, in order to reaffirm that education is key to open up opportunities and allow individuals to achieve better opportunities in career, and promote positive images of women as active participants in economic, social and political life.

<sup>144</sup> Chaarani, A. K., & Charafeddine, F. 'Discrimination in the Arabic and Civic Education textbooks'. *National Commission for Lebanese Women*, 7-164. (2008)

<sup>145</sup> World Bank, 'Political Economy of Education in Lebanon', (2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604398.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> World Bank, 'Foundations for BUILDING FORWARD BETTER', 2021

<sup>147</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon Education Public Expenditure Review', (2017)

<sup>148</sup> World Bank, 'Political Economy of Education in Lebanon', (2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604398.pdf>

<sup>149</sup> UNHCR (2022)

<sup>150</sup> UNESCO (2022)

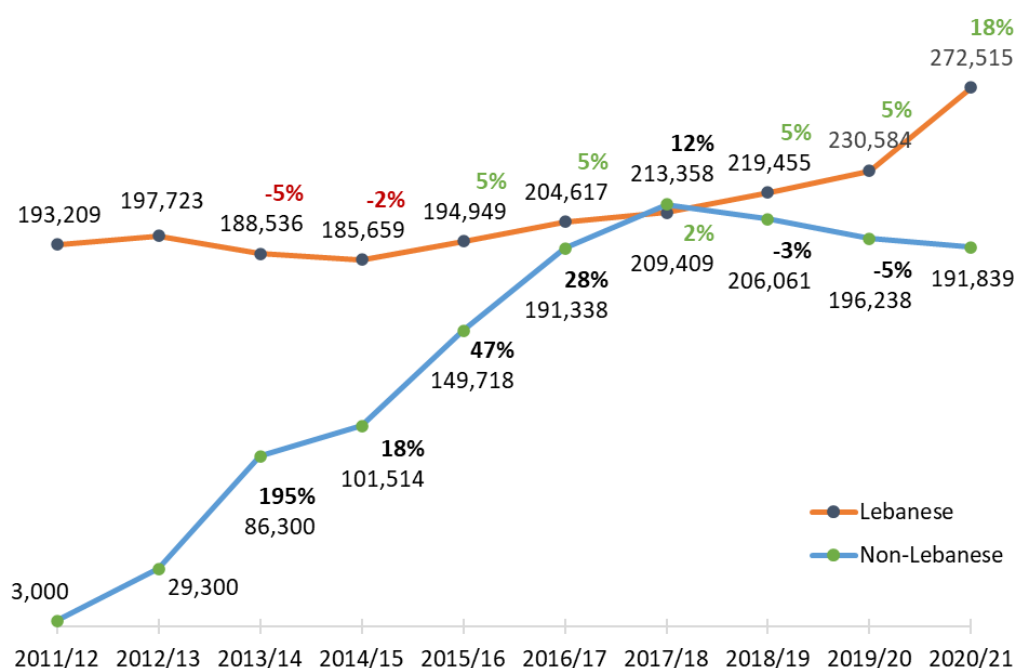
to 2021/2022. While 68 per cent of Lebanese students were enrolled in private schools in the scholastic year 2019/2020, 62 per cent were during 2020/2021. With around 336,000 Lebanese students enrolled in public schools in 2020/2021, MEHE anticipates around 390,000 to be enrolled in 2021/2022 (forecasts on enrolment for 2021/2022 shared by CERD in August 2021). These anticipated increased figures include secondary education students and reflect all grades from KG to Grade 12. This increase adds additional strain to a public education system already in crisis.

Figure 6 below depicts the enrolment of Lebanese and non-Lebanese students in public schools (KG to G9) for the last four scholastic years clearly showing the rise in Lebanese enrolment and the decrease in non-Lebanese. Similarly, Figure 7 shows the enrolment trends prior to the Syrian refugee crisis and until the last scholastic year.

**Figure 6: Enrolment trends in public schools from KG to G9.**

Scholastic Year	Lebanese (KG to G9)	Non-Lebanese (KG to G9)	
		AM	PM
2017/2018	209,409	59,149	154,209
2018/2019	219,455	52,775	153,286
2019/2020	230,584	47,847	148,391
2020/2021	272,515	40,778	150,620

**Figure 7: Analysis of enrolment trends into Lebanese public schools (KG to G9).**



The government’s prolonged low investment in important inputs for quality education (i.e., infrastructure, equipment, and teacher’s qualifications), especially at the lower levels<sup>151</sup> partially explains the **growing gap in learning outcomes** between students from private versus public schools. Furthermore, the decreasing ability of some of the less affluent private institutions to sustain re-investment in quality inputs may eventually create a gap in performance between them and wealthier private schools. This would worsen the current situation in which Lebanon already exhibits the widest

<sup>151</sup> BankMed, ‘Analysis of Lebanon’s Education Sector’, (2014)  
<https://www.bankmed.com.lb/BOMedia/subservices/categories/News/20150515170635891.pdf>



education outcomes performance gap between students of the lowest and highest income quintiles among Arab countries.<sup>152</sup>

In addition to these structural challenges, the influx of Syrian refugees and the multiple crises since 2019 have put tremendous pressure on Lebanon's education system. As of 2021, Lebanon has been able to enroll 191,196 non-Lebanese children in public schools, based on an increase of public education system capacities of 77 per cent in 6 years, with non-Lebanese students comprising 33 per cent of total students in the public system.<sup>153</sup> Whereas the government's policy did not include an engagement with the private sector for provision of education to refugee children, private schools in 2018 hosted approximately 17 per cent of Syrian students.<sup>154</sup> While some of the costs for absorbing this enormous increase in the number of non-Lebanese children have been covered by international donors and partners, the overall running of an overburdened system has contributed to the fiscal stress of the national education system.<sup>155</sup>

The effect of fiscal stress has been compounded by several disruptions that have undermined the resilience of the education system. For example, the recent macroeconomic collapse and general economic crisis have severely deepened pre-existing systemic challenges to access and quality of education, caused sharp tuition fee hikes, and contributed to rising unemployment for education administrators and teachers. In 2020, extended school closures due to COVID-19 interrupted the education for over 1.2 million school aged children from public, private and UNRWA schools.<sup>156</sup> The Port of Beirut explosion damaged more than 160 schools in Beirut, thus affecting around 85,000 school-<sup>157</sup>

Like other public service sectors, the national education system is strongly affected by the fuel and electricity shortages. Overall, it is at risk of total collapse, accentuating stark inequalities between the few children whose parents can still afford a quality education and the many who cannot. Many children dropped out of education altogether, with some being forced to work as financial pressures on their families became overwhelming. Those who did not drop out of school reported that the quality of learning had significantly deteriorated. Students mainly attributed this decline to teachers struggling to effectively teach online, difficulty using the online programme or device, and an unsuitable learning environment at home. With insufficient access to inclusive distance learning tools or low-tech alternatives, students have been out of meaningful learning for more than two academic years.<sup>158</sup>

Due to high poverty rates, unemployment, and lack of basic services, more boys and girls are resorting to child labor and other negative coping mechanisms, including child marriage for girls. In a survey from October 2022, 12 per cent of families questioned said they send at least one child out to work, up from 9 per cent six months previously. The number of Lebanese households questioned who are sending their children to work had increased by seven times within the same period.<sup>159</sup> Children with disabilities are also strongly affected as specialized disability institutions had to shift to online education modalities, while their parents often lack time and resources to support them. Children with disabilities continue to face considerable barriers accessing formal education despite existing legislation and their right for integration in society and schools.<sup>160</sup> With regards to Syrian refugee

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<sup>152</sup> UNICEF (2022)

<sup>153</sup> UNHCR (2022)

<sup>154</sup> World Bank, 'Political Economy of Education in Lebanon', (2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604398.pdf>

<sup>155</sup> World Bank, 'Political Economy of Education in Lebanon', (2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604398.pdf>

<sup>156</sup> LCRP Situation Update (Jan-May 2021)

<sup>157</sup> UNICEF, 'Rehabilitating Schools, Restarting Classroom Learning', (2021) <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/rehabilitating-schools-restarting-classroom-learning> (accessed 19/12/2021)

<sup>158</sup> UNICEF, 'Lebanon: Children's Future on the Line', (2021)

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon\\_childrens\\_future\\_on\\_the\\_line\\_EN.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon_childrens_future_on_the_line_EN.pdf)

<sup>159</sup> UNICEF, 'Child-Focused Rapid Assessment Round II', (2021)

<sup>160</sup> LCRP Situation Update (Jan-May 2021)

children, it is estimated that 47 per cent of primary age (6-14), and 73 per cent of secondary age children (15-17) are out of school.<sup>161 162</sup>

More non-Lebanese students drop out before finishing the 9-year basic education. Distance to schools, various schooling costs including transportation, textbooks, and uniforms, and the need to make a living are the greatest barriers for vulnerable children from disadvantaged socio-economic groups to continue their studies. Non-Lebanese pupils show attendance rates at the primary level that have dropped by over 20 per cent from 2020 to 2021. 30 per cent of school-aged refugee children (ages 6-17) have never been to school.<sup>163</sup> The limited learning achieved in an inefficient and inequitable education sector and recent crises have translated into a mismatch of skills and labor market needs, thus contributing to rising unemployment rates (see also section 3.3).<sup>164</sup>

Stateless persons face additional obstacles in accessing education. Although an annual circular of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education regulates the enrolment of stateless children of Lebanese origin and/or born to a Lebanese mother, public schools can deny entrance to non-Lebanese students without an ID or a Civil Status Extract. Moreover, such decision can be overturned and does not secure proper education for all. The Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights highlighted in his report that stateless children and families with whom he met reported either not being admitted or, if they attended non-formal educational establishments run by registered NGOs, not being able to obtain valid certificates to continue their education in public schools.<sup>165</sup>

In view of the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis, the MEHE initiated efforts in 2018 to combine its humanitarian response with a visionary longer-term education strategy that would address some of the long-standing weaknesses of the education sector and benefit both Lebanese and non-Lebanese children. In 2021, the MEHE launched **the Five-Year General Education Plan** which forms part of a government-wide effort to transform Lebanon, with a focus on improving a) enrolment and retention of vulnerable groups; b) early childhood education; c) learning environment; d) quality of teaching and learning; d) curriculum and assessment; e) school management and school leadership; and f) programs towards a positive and safe educational ecosystem. These goals reflect a qualitatively different perspective in the way they regard priorities in terms of vulnerabilities rather than migration status or nationality.

The institutions charged with the administration of the sector are not fully equipped to implement the type of responsive actions needed to improve the resilience of schools. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is dependent on international cooperation for the funding of many essential positions. This is in part due to the lack of structural presence of some of these functions within the Ministry. For example, there is no formal unit dedicated to planning, monitoring, evaluation and research of school performance in MEHE, and the management information system is fractured across different units. While MEHE is working on addressing these gaps, they affect the responsiveness to emerging crises.

In conclusion, the overall picture of the education sector in Lebanon reveals a weakened system overwhelmed by shifting trends in its population, the decreasing capacity of the population to subsidize their own education, a trend of decreasing achievement results and an increasing demand to adapt to alternate delivery methods (e.g., low- and high-tech distance learning solutions). Gradually, this is eroding the capacity of the sector to be resilient in the face of coming shocks. Since most of these negative trends disproportionately affect the poor and most vulnerable, the gaps in

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<sup>161</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>162</sup> According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, “[a]t least 27,825 Syrian refugee children [are] currently engaged in various forms of child labour, according to the VaSyR data.” [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref11](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref11)

<sup>163</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>164</sup> World Bank, ‘Political Economy of Education in Lebanon’, (2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604398.pdf>

<sup>165</sup> OHCHR (2022). [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref58](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref58)

achievement and opportunities continue to widen. The new Five-Year General Education Plan offers a new vision, but this vision will have to be reconciled with the current capacities of the Ministry and the financial, political and logistic pressures.<sup>166</sup> Significant efforts will be required to address the structural challenges and urgent needs of the education sector to ensure Lebanon is on track to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, in line with SDG4.

## Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls

Although the Lebanese Constitution grants women and men equal rights, and gender parity had been achieved at all educational levels before the Syria crisis, gender inequality is endemic in all aspects of life in Lebanon.<sup>167</sup> Gender discrimination continues to be codified in many aspects of Lebanon's legal system, underpinning gender inequalities across issues of personal status, employment, political participation, access to land and access to social protection. The most prominent areas of discrimination<sup>168</sup> include:

**-Nationality law:** Lebanese women still do not have the right to pass on their citizenship to their children or spouse (Decree No. 15 on Lebanese Nationality January 19, 1925). Lebanese women not being able to transfer nationality to their children is conflicting with Lebanon's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ensuring every child's right to acquire a nationality without discrimination of any kind. Lebanon maintains a reservation to article 9(2) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, preventing women the right to confer nationality on children. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), recommended that the State party repeal Decree No. 15 of 1925 on Lebanese Nationality and adopt legislation to ensure equal rights of women and men to confer their nationality to their foreign spouses and children

**-Civil registry:** Wives and children are registered under their family census records. A man (husband, father) is always at the head/ lead of the registry. When married to a Lebanese, the woman is removed from her father's registry and follows her husband's registry, confirming that a Lebanese woman needs to have a Lebanese male guardian. In the case of divorce, daughters depend on their father's registry.

**-Criminal law:** While Article 522 in the Penal Code was repealed in 2017 (the Article prevented a man from prosecution for rape if he married the victim), criminal law does not provide legal protection for women in case of marital rape and adultery, and does not allow abortion, including for rape survivors. Furthermore, the Anti-Trafficking Law No. 164 of 2011 bans human trafficking but does not specify prevention or protective measures for victims. Article 523 of the Penal Code criminalizes 'facilitation or engagement in prostitution' and is often used against women victims of human trafficking.

**-Legal restrictions with regards to inheritance, access to assets, divorce and child custody:** In most instances, these restrictions to women in Lebanon depend on religious affiliation.<sup>169</sup> Lebanon's 15 religious Personal Status Laws codify gender inequalities, institutionalizing women's status as secondary to men across a range of matters, including divorce, marriage, custody, inheritance, etc.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> OHCHR (2022). At the 2021 UPR review, Lebanon received and accepted many recommendations to improve the education system and attain inclusive and equitable quality education for all children, including the most vulnerable groups (A/HRC/47/5)

<sup>167</sup> UN Women Lebanon, 'Policy Brief Gender-Responsive Recovery in Lebanon Recommendations for Fiscal, Social and Labor Policy Reform', (2020), <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-responsive-recovery-in-lebanon>

<sup>168</sup> UN Women (2022).

<sup>169</sup> WBL 2020d

<sup>170</sup> UN Women Lebanon, "European Union sector specific gender analysis: an in-depth sectoral examination of feminist and women's rights issues in Lebanon", (2021), <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2021/10/2021-00537-UN-WOMEN-EU-LebanonFINAL-WEB.pdf>

The processes for applying for divorce and child custody rights depend on the religion one belongs to, which, overall, tend to favor male spouse.<sup>171</sup>

With a score of 0.599 Lebanon ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in regional and 145<sup>th</sup> out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index<sup>172</sup> in 2020.<sup>173</sup> Scores are particularly low in economic (139) and political empowerment rankings (149).<sup>174</sup> In the education attainment, Lebanon ranks 111 of 153 countries due to high ranks in enrolment to secondary and tertiary education (where Lebanon ranks first of 153 countries).<sup>175</sup> Lebanon has a low fertility rate (2.1 births per woman),<sup>176</sup> but high life expectancy (79.8 years) and low maternal (15 per 100,000 live births) and child mortality (7.8 per 1000 lives) rates.<sup>177</sup> Women's representation in public space is low, representing only 4.7 per cent of women in the Parliament,<sup>178</sup> 5.4 per cent of the country's municipal councillors, 1.9 per cent of mukhtars and 1.9 per cent of mayors.<sup>179</sup> Women make up 4 per cent of the current cabinet, which is 1 person out of 24.<sup>180</sup> Out of 77 Lebanese governments formed since 1943, only nine cabinets have included women; Amongst the barriers for political participation, women report an uncondusive electoral framework, patriarchal political parties, the high cost of election campaigning, media bias and social norms which tend not to view women as leaders.<sup>181</sup> At the same time, there is increasing demand from the civil society sector to have women occupy decision-making positions in the political sphere.<sup>182</sup>

According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, Lebanon "has one of the lowest rates of women's labour market participation in the world - in terms of labor force participation rate."<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> OHCHR (2022). Refer to CEDAW recommendation: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), noted with concern the applicability of multiple religious personal status laws containing discriminatory provisions on marriage, divorce and custody of children. The Committee recommended that the State party adopt a unified civil personal status code, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination and the right to choose one's religious affiliation, in order to ensure equal rights to women and men in marriage and family relations.

<sup>172</sup> Global Gender Gap Index is a composite measure that assesses gender gaps in the following four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity; education attainment; health and survival; political empowerment. Each dimension has its own rank, and all four dimensions result in average ranking of the country. Each dimension has a breakdown to other indicators that are being measured and provide a basis for average ranking of every dimension. World Economic Forum (2020), Global Gender Gap Report 2020, p.8, available at: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>173</sup> Comparison with ranking in 2017 is challenging, because in 2017 only 144 countries were assessed and in 2020 the number of countries assessed was 153.

<sup>174</sup> World Economic Forum, 'Global Gender Gap Report', (2020),://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\_GGGR\_2020.pdf

<sup>175</sup> World Economic Forum, 'Global Gender Gap Report', (2020),://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\_GGGR\_2020.pdf

<sup>176</sup> World Development Indicators, Lebanon Country Profile, available at:

[https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=LBN](https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=LBN)

<sup>177</sup> Lebanon Human Development Indicators 2019, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBN>

<sup>178</sup> IPU Parline, 'Data on Women' [https://data.ipu.org/node/94/data-on-women?chamber\\_id=13446](https://data.ipu.org/node/94/data-on-women?chamber_id=13446)

<sup>179</sup> UNDP, 'Women in Municipal Elections – Key Results 2016', (2016)

[https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/Women-in-Municipal-Elections-216.html](https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/democratic_governance/Women-in-Municipal-Elections-216.html)

<sup>180</sup> <http://pcm.gov.lb/arabic/subpg.aspx?pageid=13587>

<sup>181</sup> UN Women, 'Pursuing Equality in Rights and Representation – Women's experiences Running for Parliament in Lebanon's 2018 Elections', (2019)

<sup>182</sup> <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2033596/middle-east>

<sup>183</sup> OHCHR (2022). Refer to CEDAW recommendation: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), noted that the State party has not adopted any temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as education, employment and health care. The Committee recommended that the State party urgently adopt the draft laws introducing a minimum quota for the inclusion of women as candidates on political parties' electoral lists for parliamentary and municipal elections, as well as sanctions for non-compliance; and adopt relevant temporary special measures to promote the participation of women in all areas under the Convention where they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular political participation, education, employment and health care, with time-bound targets and benchmarks, accompanied by sanctions for non-compliance, to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men, especially in decision-making positions. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), noted with concern that women only represent 4.7 per cent of parliamentarians and are still underrepresented in ministerial positions, municipal councils, in leadership positions within political parties and at the decision-making level in the civil service. The Committee was further concerned at reports that 78 per cent of women candidates for the legislative elections of 2018 experienced violence including threats, online violence, beatings and property damage, harassment, sexual harassment, assaults and invasive language of a sexual nature. The Committee urged the State party, in view of the upcoming legislative elections of May 2022, to adopt amendments to establish a minimum quota of 30% for women candidates on the electoral lists of political parties and require equal media coverage to promote women's equal participation in political life; and adopt a law on violence against women in politics, including online violence, and enhance the protection of women candidates, including through public awareness-raising campaigns, prosecute political violence against women candidates and provide effective redress for victims.

[https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref11](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref11)

Social protection structures, a critical tool for addressing gender inequalities, are weak and some actively discriminate against women.<sup>184</sup> The complex governance structure of Lebanon based on confessional division of powers across legislative, executive, and judicial branches<sup>185</sup> entrenches gender inequalities and poses a challenge for effective and expedited policy making on gender equality and the implementation of CEDAW. Sectarian power sharing also creates a significant obstacle to advancing policy reforms and economic development of the country. UN ESCWA estimates job losses of 1.7 million in 2020 across the Arab region, nearly 700,000 of those are women.<sup>186</sup> UN Women estimates that by the end of 2020 women's labor market participation rates will have fallen between 14-19 per cent.<sup>187</sup> With nine out of ten employed in the service sector, women experience a significant pay gap, and have shorter and flatter career paths.<sup>188</sup>

Only 3 per cent of bank loans go to female entrepreneurs,<sup>189</sup> indicating a **gendered banking industry**. Overall access to financial accounts in Lebanon is like the MENA average, but lower than middle- and upper-middle-income countries. In general, women have a much lower likelihood of having financial accounts, debit or credit cards than men.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, women are more likely to depend on another family member for access to financial services. These figures are likely affected by the 2019 banking crisis, given that people are unable to take out money from their accounts or open new ones. Despite evidence pointing to the benefits of gender diversity, only 10 per cent of Lebanese firms have women among their owners compared to the MENA average of 19 per cent. Only 5 per cent is majority female owned.<sup>191</sup> The proportion of women in management is also limited, with only 6 per cent of firms having a female top manager; this is significantly lower than the world average of 18 per cent.<sup>192</sup> These figures are in line with findings from the recent LFHLCs 2018- 2019, which reveals that, on average, only 11 per cent of women are self-employed 'entrepreneurs', compared to 25 per cent of men. Based on the 2010 Agriculture Census, only 9 per cent of farms were owned by women, and only 5 per cent were cultivated by them.<sup>193</sup>

Violence against women (VAW) rates has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>194</sup> and there is emerging data that is very concerning around issues of sexual exploitation and abuse in accessing government and UN/I/NGO services.<sup>195</sup> Although there is no nationally representative prevalence data on **gender-based violence** (GBV) in Lebanon, numerous studies have shown that GBV is common, particularly domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV). Also, data collected during the COVID-19 crisis on GBV and VAW are extremely worrying.<sup>196</sup>

According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and based on findings from meetings organized in shelters and safe places for women and girls, the current economic crisis has led to a significant rise in GBV. The Special Rapporteur indicates that "data show the per centage of Lebanese

<sup>184</sup> UN Women, 'Gender-Responsive Recovery in Lebanon: Recommendations for Fiscal, Social and Labor Policy Reform', 2020 [https://www.un.org.lb/library/assets/PolicyBrief\\_Eng\\_Macro%20economic%20policy%20recommendations\\_13July20-045931.pdf](https://www.un.org.lb/library/assets/PolicyBrief_Eng_Macro%20economic%20policy%20recommendations_13July20-045931.pdf)

<sup>185</sup> A power sharing system codified by the post-Civil War agreement

<sup>186</sup> UN ESCWA, 'COVID-19: Economic Cost to the Arab Region', (2020) <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/escwa-covid-19-economic-cost-arab-region-en.pdf>

<sup>187</sup> UN Women, 'Gender-Responsive Recovery in Lebanon: Recommendations for Fiscal, Social and Labor Policy Reform', (2020) [https://www.un.org.lb/library/assets/PolicyBrief\\_Eng\\_Macro%20economic%20policy%20recommendations\\_13July20-045931.pdf](https://www.un.org.lb/library/assets/PolicyBrief_Eng_Macro%20economic%20policy%20recommendations_13July20-045931.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> CAS and UNDP, 'The life of women and men in Lebanon', (2021)

<sup>189</sup> IFC, 2012

<sup>190</sup> Global Findex 2017

<sup>191</sup> IFC 2019

<sup>192</sup> World Bank Enterprise Survey 2019

<sup>193</sup> FAO 2021

<sup>194</sup> NCLW, WHO, UNFPA, UN Women, 'Gender Alert on COVID-19 Lebanon, Issue 3', (2020) <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/gender-alert-on-covid-19-lebanon>; as well as <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/03/country-brief-lebanon-violence-against-women-in-the-time-of-covid19>

<sup>195</sup> Transparency International (2019), Global Corruption Barometer, Middle East North Africa 2019 Citizens' Views and Opinions of Corruption, available at: [https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019\\_GCB\\_MENA\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019_GCB_MENA_Report_EN.pdf); The George Washington Institute, CARE (2020), Empowered Aid: Transforming Gender and Power Dynamics in the Delivery of Humanitarian Aid, available at: <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1356/f/downloads/GWI-CARE-EmpoweredAid-Lebanon-Results%20Report-remed.pdf>

<sup>196</sup> UNFPA (2021). [https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/english\\_report\\_23-02-2021\\_vaw\\_in\\_covid-19.pdf](https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/english_report_23-02-2021_vaw_in_covid-19.pdf)



seeking GBV services rose from 21 per cent in 2018 to 26 per cent in 2019 and to 35 per cent in 2020,” of which the vast majority, are women.<sup>197</sup>

Although CEDAW has been raising the issue of GBV in Lebanon for many years, very limited progress could be observed, despite the existence of a national strategy and action plan to Combat Violence against Women and Girls endorsed by the government. Some estimates suggest rates of domestic violence are as high as one in three married women,<sup>198</sup> and an estimated one in every two people know someone who has been subjected to domestic violence.<sup>199</sup>

Informal tented settlements and camps where disproportionate numbers of Syrian refugee reside have some of the highest reported levels of violence against women.<sup>200</sup> However, the proportion of Lebanese women and girls who are seeking services for gender-based violence has risen from 21 per cent of all cases in 2018 to 35 per cent in 2021.<sup>201</sup> Based on the Images Study from 2018, at least one in five men approve of violence towards women, agreeing with the statement “there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten”. More than a quarter of men and one in five women believe that women should tolerate violence at home. Concerningly, 7 per cent of men reported that they forced their wives to have sex with them when their wives did not want to, and 15 per cent of women surveyed had been raped by their husbands.

Compounding this, and perpetuating immunity for violence against them, women face various challenges in their attempts to seek justice<sup>202</sup> due to a lack of awareness/ knowledge of their rights under their family laws; lack of social capital or financial means (limited affordability of legal services and litigation for women); and deeply entrenched patriarchal values that are predominant at the community and court level.<sup>203</sup> There is a social stigma against women who independently attempt to file lawsuits, especially in relation to personal status and/or violence. This is compounded by a lack of trust in the judicial system, which is perceived as corrupt.<sup>204</sup> Finally, some research suggests that the cost of access to justice for personal status cases extends to life after divorce, with women more likely to sink into deeper poverty.<sup>205</sup> Women’s access to justice significantly decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic began.<sup>206</sup>

According to the VASyR 2021, **female refugees** continue to be the most food insecure within the refugee population and are less likely to have legal documentation. As such, they are likely to be the furthest left behind. Women who lack residency are also less likely to approach police or justice mechanisms to report incidents of harassment or violence. This means a lack of legal recourse and justice for gender-based violence against Syrian women, which is highly prevalent. Young refugee women remained largely inactive in employment, education, and training. Consistent with previous years, 80 per cent of young refugee women aged 15-24 in 2021 were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) compared to 52 per cent of young refugee men.<sup>207</sup> About one fifth of refugee girls

<sup>197</sup> OHCHR (2022). [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref11](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref11) The original source is: OCHA, Lebanon Emergency Response Plan 2021 – 2022, p.13

<sup>198</sup> UN Women 2017

<sup>199</sup> UNFPA 2017

<sup>200</sup> UN Women 2021c

<sup>201</sup> Inter-Agency SGBV Task Force Lebanon, ‘The Impact of Lebanon’s Fuel and Electricity Crisis on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Programming, SGBV Task Force, Lebanon’, (2021)

<sup>202</sup> OHCHR (2022). Refer to CEDAW recommendation: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), noted with concern the long delays in establishing specialized gender-based violence courts and a special fund to support women victims of gender-based violence, and the lack of victim support services, including the limited number of adequate shelters in the State party. The Committee recommended that the State party establish, without delay, specialized gender-based violence courts and the special fund to support women victims of violence; and strengthen support services for victims of gender-based violence against women to match demand, including by ensuring an adequate number of shelters, and allocate sufficient funding to ensure their sustainability.

<sup>203</sup> Lombardini et al. 2019

<sup>204</sup> Lombardini et al. 2019

<sup>205</sup> ESCWA 2014

<sup>206</sup> Okoro and Prettitore 2020

<sup>207</sup> VASyR (2021)

and women aged 15 to 19 are married, whereas for males in the same age group it is less than 1 per cent.<sup>208</sup>

**Migrant workers**, especially domestic workers who are almost exclusively women, and their children, have been particularly affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>209</sup> With more employers at home because of confinement, many migrant workers' workloads and working hours are increasing significantly. Organisations working with migrant communities have long warned of prevalent and severe mental health needs among domestic workers, including very high rates of suicides, long preceding but since exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>210</sup> Several alleged suicides of migrants were reported during the lockdown. There are ongoing investigations to conclude whether these deaths were suicides or whether domestic workers experiences abuse or violence prior to their death.<sup>211</sup> Exploitative working conditions for migrant workers are exacerbated by the *kafala* system, a system of sponsorship for migrant workers, and the fact that the majority of migrant workers, namely migrant domestic workers, are not protected by national labour legislation. During COVID-19 pandemic, many families abandoned domestic workers, mostly women in their employment, effectively terminating their legal residency and often without paying their wages.<sup>212 213</sup>

**LGBTQI+ people** continue to be particularly affected by Lebanon's crises, particularly in terms of their access to basic services, resources, and safe spaces. The situation of LGBTQI+ people is fundamentally a gendered and feminist issue: these communities are being discriminated against for transgressing patriarchal norms around sexuality and gender. How they define and actualize gender is seen as a threat precisely because they break away from accepted social norms around heteronormativity. Analysis of the wider LGBTQI+ communities in Lebanon are expounded upon in Chapter 4. However, within SDG 5 in Lebanon, there is a critical need to address the gender discrimination specific to lesbian, bisexual, queer, and trans women and gender non-conforming individuals due to patriarchal structures, within society, women's rights spaces and within the LGBTQI+ community. Although there is a dearth of information, research, and statistics specifically on lesbian, bisexual, queer, and trans women and non-binary women in Lebanon, this segment of society has been excluded and made invisible. Overall, global trends of patriarchal power structures in LGBTQI+ communities mirror the context in Lebanon, where lesbian, bisexual, queer, and trans women and gender non-conforming individuals face more gender-related barriers and discrimination than gay and queer cis men. Consequently, they confront even more challenges in terms of accessing public life, acceptance, exposure to violence, and political participation than their male counterparts. HIV prevalence among men having sex with men in Lebanon is very high (12 per cent) compared with less than 0.1 per cent among the general population and the prevalence of at least one symptom of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) is 34.9 per cent.<sup>214</sup> This underscores a deeply rooted HIV vulnerability among LGBTQI+ that results from a complex array of challenges in accessing legal and health services.

**Women and girls in rural communities** – especially from the Bekaa, North, and South Governorates - are left behind, with data showing them far less likely to be educated or in the labour market.<sup>215</sup>

Although the deeply rooted challenges of 1) **patriarchal structures** in Lebanese families and the sectarian system which, together, define and shape every aspect of Lebanese private and public life,

<sup>208</sup> VASyR (2021).

<sup>209</sup> Amnesty International, 'Lebanon: Abandoned migrant domestic workers must be protected', (2020)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/lebanon-abandoned-migrant-domestic-workers-must-be-protected/>

<sup>210</sup> Amnesty International, 'Lebanon: Abandoned migrant domestic workers must be protected', (2020)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/lebanon-abandoned-migrant-domestic-workers-must-be-protected/>

<sup>211</sup> Amnesty International, 'Lebanon: Abandoned migrant domestic workers must be protected', (2020)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/lebanon-abandoned-migrant-domestic-workers-must-be-protected/>

<sup>212</sup> Wilson, C, Zabaneh, J, Dore-Weeks, R, 'Understanding the Role of Women and Feminist Actors in Lebanon's 2019 Protest'. (2019)

<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/12/gendering-lebanons-2019-protests>

<sup>213</sup> OHCHR (2022). These concerns were also raised by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which remained concerned about the excessive control exercised by employers over migrant domestic workers, the exposure of migrant workers to abusive working conditions, and their exclusion from the protection guaranteed by the Labour Code (CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24).

<sup>214</sup> <https://srh.bmj.com/content/familyplanning/47/2/152.full.pdf>

<sup>215</sup> EU SSGA (2021)

2) the **strong influence of religious institutions and laws** which discriminate between Lebanese women and impede their coalition, and 3) an **educational system and media** which often reinforce gender stereotypes, have been known for a long time,<sup>216</sup> the 2021 Sustainable Development Report shows that Lebanon is still underperforming when it comes to SDG 5.<sup>217</sup> **All four SDG 5 indicators with available data are either stagnating or continue to have challenges** as follows:

Indicator	Value and Year	Rating
Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods (% of females aged 15 to 49)	60.6% (2020)	Significant challenges
Ratio of female-to-male mean years of education received	95.5% (2021)	Challenges remain
Ratio of female-to-male labor force participation rate	32% (2019)	Major challenges
Seats held by women in national parliament	4.7% (2020)	Major challenges

Data for other SDG 5 indicators are not available. As of December 2020, only 25.5 per cent of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available, with gaps in key areas, in particular: violence against women, unpaid care and domestic work, and information and communications technology skills. In addition, many areas – such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women’s access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment – lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring. Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments in Lebanon.<sup>218</sup>

Lebanon is a **state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** and a signatory to the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. However, Lebanon continues to hold two sets of reservations to CEDAW, and despite repeated calls by the CEDAW Committee, many aspects under CEDAW are not yet implemented. Reservations remain on the right of women to pass on their nationality, as well as on the personal status law and settlement of disputes,<sup>219</sup> both still largely under the prerogative of religious courts.

Whereas Lebanon currently applies **four national frameworks to promote gender equality** - the Lebanon National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325;<sup>220</sup> the National Strategy for Women 2011-2021; the Mashreq Gender Facility Women’s Economic Empowerment Action Plan; and the Strategic Plan on the Protection of Women and Children 2020-2026 - they are overlapping, and, except for the NAP, lack clear mechanisms for implementation, coordination, and funding. While some frameworks reference the inclusion of refugee women, they do not explicitly mention other vulnerable women groups such as migrants, LGBTQI people, PWD, and older persons.

With the closure of a Ministry dedicated to women’s rights and gender equality in 2019, the **National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW)** remains the only official gender equality body in the country. Despite efforts by NCLW and the **Ministry of Social Affairs** to coordinate and mainstream GEWE, the government has acknowledged that enforcement of women’s rights is facing challenges in

<sup>216</sup> Lebanon MDG Report 2014

<sup>217</sup> <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/static/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2021-lebanon.pdf>

<sup>218</sup> <https://data.unwomen.org/country/lebanon>

<sup>219</sup> UN Women, Lebanon country brief

<sup>220</sup> UN Women (2022). Lebanon was among the first Arab countries to express its interest and commitment to implementing UNSCR 1325. In 2017, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers requested from the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the government body for women’s issues in Lebanon, to develop a national action plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325. Since the implementation of the Resolution requires the involvement of a multiplicity of governmental and non-governmental organizations, the National Commission for Lebanon Women adopted a participatory approach in its mission of developing a 1325 NAP and formed for this purpose a Steering Committee with representatives of ministries and civil society. UN agencies provided the technical assistance and support to the work of this steering committee.

<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2019/10/Lebanon-NAP-1325-UNSCR-WPS-Summary.pdf>



financing and implementation, as well as monitoring and reporting. The absence of any gender responsive budgeting in public finance shows the limited fiscal commitment to GEWE.<sup>221</sup>

Overall, the main challenges to GEWE include 1) discriminatory legislation paired with a weak judicial system; 2) Lebanon's confessional system that reinforces regressive social norms and male dominance and leadership, and stymies personal status reform; and 3) limited financing and infrastructure to address social inequalities. In view of the persisting crisis, immediate decisive and targeted action is needed to prevent further deepening of the gender equality gap. Maximizing the economic, social and political potential of women will be central to ensuring Lebanon's effective recovery and reforms, and a sustainable and stable future.

## Persons with Disabilities

The total number of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in Lebanon is estimated at 900,000. Disability in Lebanon remains under-researched and under-reported.<sup>222</sup> According to the most recent national survey an estimated 4.1 per cent of females and 3.9 per cent of males live with some form of disability. One reason for this relatively low prevalence rate is that Lebanon's official statistics body uses a medical model of disability, instead of a social one.<sup>223</sup>

According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to poverty and they are largely excluded from the labour market.<sup>224</sup>

Unemployment is increasingly high and severe for persons with disabilities in Lebanon, with a recent study pointing out that over 86 per cent of persons with disabilities in Lebanon are unemployed.<sup>225</sup> In addition, the stigmatization and segregation of persons with disabilities has led to a built environment which is inaccessible, with 95 per cent of buildings and facilities in Beirut not having adequate disability accessibility measures.<sup>226</sup>

Women with disabilities have an extremely low labor force participation rate of 5.5 per cent and remain at high risk of sexual violence and sexual exploitation.<sup>227</sup>

Children with disabilities are estimated at 150,000 given the international expected benchmark disability rate of 2.5 per cent.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that 5 per cent of children below the age of 14 have a disability,<sup>228</sup> which is far higher than the figures under the Lebanese State's registration system. Children with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in Lebanon. Although the Law 220/2000 on Rights of Persons with Disabilities addresses the rights of PWD to access proper education, rehabilitation services, employment, medical services, sports and public transport, and stresses the right to political participation, most of its provisions are not being implemented.<sup>229</sup> Lebanon has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>230</sup>

According to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, "[t]he poverty experienced by people with disabilities in Lebanon is exacerbated by the lack of comprehensive social protection programs and inadequate access to medical care. Family allowances and assistance, while real on paper, are not

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<sup>221</sup> National Commission on Lebanese Women, 'Official report on progress in the implementation and identification of challenges to implement the Beijing Platform of Action, Lebanese Republic', (2019)

<sup>222</sup> UN Women (2022)

<sup>223</sup> UN Women (2022)

<sup>224</sup> OHCHR (2022). [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref22](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref22)

<sup>225</sup> ESCWA (2020)

<sup>226</sup> UNESCO (2013)

<sup>227</sup> UN Women (2022)

<sup>228</sup> UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank (2022)

<sup>229</sup> UNICEF (2022)

<sup>230</sup> OHCHR (2022). [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=96&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=96&Lang=EN)

made available to a large portion of the population with disabilities.<sup>231</sup> Yet, households with a member with a disability spend on average an additional 16.5 per cent to reach the same standard of living as other households, and this per centage is doubled within the lowest 20 per cent income-earners.”<sup>232</sup>

The absence of disability inclusion structures, and lack of access of persons and children with disabilities to inclusive basic services, are primary reasons for the increased marginalization and vulnerability of PWD in Lebanon. Inclusion of children with disabilities is also hindered by discriminatory attitudes and behaviors prevalent in Lebanese society. Whereas 70 per cent of respondents to a survey conducted in 2017 felt that children with physical disability should be integrated into society and participate in the life of the community, the ratio for children with intellectual disability was only 25 per cent.<sup>233</sup> This shows that negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with intellectual disability are particularly widespread.

The multiple crises since 2019 have further increased the vulnerabilities of PWD.<sup>234</sup> The loss of purchasing power due to the economic crisis impacted their ability to provide for the extra cost of disability, whereas lockdowns increased the barriers for children with disabilities to access learning and needed rehabilitation services. Being a refugee with disability residing in Lebanon is an additional layer of vulnerability as refugees do not have access to already decreasing services that MOSA provides to Lebanese citizens.<sup>235</sup>

## 3.2 PLANET

*“We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.”<sup>236</sup>*

This section focuses on key environmental themes and issues related to SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15 and their linkages to the social, economic and peace dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on water and sanitation, sustainable consumption and production, climate action and climate security, biodiversity, as well as air and soil pollution. It also assesses aspects of SDGs 2, 3, 7 and 11, which are closely linked to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

### Pre-crisis environmental challenges

Many of the environmental sustainability challenges Lebanon is facing today are linked to structural issues preceding the Syria crisis. Since the early 1990s, Lebanon has made significant improvements to its public infrastructure, communications, commercial estates, and middle to high-income housing. At the same time, the environment and environmental governance remained only a secondary priority, characterized by an incomplete legal and institutional framework, as well as by ineffective policies to address the challenges and political constraints to deliver reforms. Disregard for environmental issues and weak environmental governance led to degradation amounting to USD 560 million in 2000 or 3.4 per cent of GDP,<sup>237</sup> and to pressures on natural resources caused by a lack of wastewater treatment, persistent problems with municipal solid waste disposal, as well as growing

<sup>231</sup> OHCHR (2022). [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftn46](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#_ftn46) Original source: Emilie Combaz, Situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon, K4D, July 15, 2018, p. 19;

<sup>232</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftn46](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-Nations-special-rapporteur#_ftn46) Original source: ILO, Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon, 2021, p.12.

<sup>233</sup> UNICEF, ‘Knowledge Attitude and Practices Survey’, (2017)

<sup>234</sup> A situation analysis around Persons with Disabilities was developed in 2020-2021 and a national strategy around persons with Disabilities was initiated in 2022 by MOSA in collaboration with ESCWA and UNFPA.

<sup>235</sup> UNICEF (2022)

<sup>236</sup> General Assembly Resolution 70/1. ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, (2015)

<sup>237</sup> World Bank, ‘Republic of Lebanon Country Environmental Analysis’, (2011)

urban pressure on the Lebanese coastline, agricultural land, and natural heritage sites.<sup>238</sup> By 2010, Lebanon's available water resources had dropped below the 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>/capita/year threshold that defines water stress.<sup>239</sup>

In addition, air pollution hot spots, especially in urban areas, were noted as environmental challenges. Unplanned urbanization and the unmanaged densification of urban areas due to population growth had dire environmental externalities, particularly due to the lack of national strategies to manage land use sustainably, housing supply<sup>240</sup> and transportation systems,<sup>241</sup> highlighting the need for an integrated, multisectoral approach to look at urban issues.<sup>242</sup> Although the **National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory**, enacted in 2009, was meant to provide a framework for a better managed urbanization process that preserves the environment, it was not properly implemented and needs updating to reflect the urban, demographic and environmental needs of today. Pre-crisis assessments highlighted additional environmental challenges, including the cement-fertilizer industries and uncontrolled quarrying, and growing concerns about the increased intensity and frequency of the effects of the natural disaster-climate change continuum with higher temperatures and an intensification of droughts and forest fires.<sup>243</sup>

Shortly before the Syria crisis, the lack of environmental sustainability had been confirmed as one of Lebanon's two major development challenges, together with the persistent poverty rates in peripheral areas of the country.<sup>244</sup> Whereas the large-scale influx of Syrian refugees from 2012 onwards required a special short-term focus on upgrading and expanding water and sanitation, assessments at the time confirmed that numerous environmental challenges including solid waste disposal and related water and air pollution, reduction of forest coverage and corresponding biodiversity loss, an unregulated quarrying sector, predominant use of hydrocarbons for transport, heating and electricity production, as well as an automobile-dependent society<sup>245</sup> would need to be prioritized longer-term and during the post-2015 period.<sup>246</sup> In responding to these multiple challenges, the key role of women<sup>247</sup> at the forefront of natural resources management, including their responsibilities for domestic aspects of energy and waste management, will need to be fully considered to achieve the required transformative changes towards environmental sustainability and a stable climate.

## Environmental governance and overall performance

In response to the numerous environmental challenges, the last ten years have seen remarkable progress in advancing environmental strategies, policies and plans, such as the adoption of a National Strategy for Air Quality Management, a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, a new National Water Sector Strategy, a Policy for the Integrated Management of the Quarrying Sector, a Policy for Integrated Management of Solid Waste, a Sustainable Consumption and Production National Action Plan for the Industrial Sector, an update of the Policy Paper for the Electricity Sector, and a National Implementation Plan for Persistent Organic Pollutants, as well as the signing of the Paris Agreement

<sup>238</sup> World Bank, 'Republic of Lebanon Country Environmental Analysis', (2011)

<sup>239</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>240</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Housing in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>241</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>242</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities' (2021)

<sup>243</sup> World Bank, 'Republic of Lebanon Country Environmental Analysis', (2011)

<sup>244</sup> UNDP/CDR, 'Lebanon Millennium Development Goals Report', (2013)

<sup>245</sup> Presses de l'Ifpo/CNRS Liban, 'Atlas of Lebanon: Power and Energy: Dependency on Hydrocarbon, Pollution and Shortage', (2019)  
<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/13294?lang=en>

<sup>246</sup> UNDP/CDR, 'Lebanon Millennium Development Goals Report 2013', (2013)

<sup>247</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF (2022). The above challenges are specifically impacting women and girls in refugee camps, who are strongly impacted by the lack of adequate, accessible, safe and private spaces, also referred to as 'menstrual facilities' which they require during menstruation. Toilets and latrine facilities are often shared between several households and are usually located away from the tents. Women and girls often only use the bathrooms at night in order to avoid male encounters; this becomes even more problematic for them during their periods, and increases the prevalence and risks of GBV. See also: [https://wrc.washcluster.net/sites/default/files/2020-10/Majed Menstrual Hygiene Management Among Syrian Refugee Women In the Bekaa 2020.pdf](https://wrc.washcluster.net/sites/default/files/2020-10/Majed%20Menstrual%20Hygiene%20Management%20Among%20Syrian%20Refugee%20Women%20In%20the%20Bekaa%202020.pdf)

in 2016, etc.<sup>248</sup> The last decade also saw the adoption of important laws and decrees, including a law<sup>249</sup> and sectoral laws for water, air quality and solid waste, as well the protected areas framework law. Draft laws were prepared for integrated coastal zone management and for organizing the quarrying sector. Three safeguard decrees were adopted addressing strategic environmental assessment, environmental impact assessment, and environmental auditing. The National Council for the Environment, established by decree in 2012, continued to meet regularly until the mass protests in October 2019.<sup>250</sup> Overall, environmental governance at the level of institutions, monitoring, research and development, information and data, access to funding, advocacy and public participation, as well as incentives for environmental protection, have witnessed progress and contributed to increased public awareness on the importance of environmental protection and sustainability.<sup>251</sup>

However, implementation of strategies and policies, and regular inspection and enforcement of laws and regulations remain weak and inconsistent. Enactment of many draft legal texts, including the preparation of needed application decrees to enable their operationalisation, continues to be very slow, mainly due to political instability and lack of clear timelines. In addition, lack of enforcing and implementing legal frameworks remain as the main obstacles to sound environmental governance in Lebanon. Even if full-time public prosecutors and investigative judges specialized in environmental matters will be appointed as per Law 251/2014, although they have not all been assigned yet, their effectiveness will take time and depend on sustained political commitment and the systematic allocation of adequate human and financial resources to enable long-term sustainable development.<sup>252</sup> The recent financial collapse further added to the challenges of strengthening and sustaining adequate institutional capacities for environmental matters.

Overall, a decrease in Lebanon's Environmental Performance Index (EPI)<sup>253</sup> score to 45.4/100 in 2020, compared to 57.9 in 2010, and 70.3 in 2008,<sup>254</sup> shows that progress at the level of environmental policies and legislation has not yet translated into improved environmental health and sustainability. Lebanon's 2020 EPI score ranked 78th out of 180 countries. The cost of environmental degradation in 2018 in Lebanon was estimated at 4.4 per cent of GDP, corresponding to approximately USD 2.35 billion, compared to 3.4 per cent estimated in 2000.<sup>255</sup>

While environmental degradation, including water and air pollution, had affected **public health indicators** in Lebanon for many years, the multiple crises and shocks since 2013 have significantly worsened water and air quality indicators. Recent data show an increased incidence of cerebrovascular cases correlated to heightened levels of air pollution in Beirut.<sup>256</sup> They also indicate a sharp increase in some types of cancer that are known to be highly affected by environmental factors.<sup>257</sup> Similarly, repeated outbreaks of water-borne diseases are observed, including hepatitis A, salmonella and others.<sup>258</sup> Already in 2016, the MoPH had developed a national environmental health strategy to respond to the increasing burden of Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases correlated with environmental challenges. However, given inconsistent follow up and unclear institutional roles and accountabilities for implementation, this strategy has so far not been translated into a plan of action.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>249</sup> <https://www.lpa.gov.lb/Library/Assets/Gallery/Files/SEA/6%20%20SEA%20EP%20Lebanon%20Volume%20%203%20LEGAL.pdf>

<sup>250</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>251</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>252</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>253</sup> The EPI provides a data-driven summary of the state of sustainability around the world. Using 32 performance indicators, the 2020 EPI ranked 180 countries on environmental health and ecosystem vitality (Yale University, 2020)

<sup>254</sup> World Bank, 'Republic of Lebanon Country Environmental Analysis', (2011)

<sup>255</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>256</sup> WHO (2022)

<sup>257</sup> WHO (2022)

<sup>258</sup> WHO (2022)

<sup>259</sup> WHO, 'Country cooperation strategy 2019-2023: Lebanon', (2018)

## Clean water and sanitation

In 2010, the MoEW estimated that Lebanon's available renewable water resources per capita had dropped to 926 m<sup>3</sup> per year, below the 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>/capita/year threshold that defines water stress. Since then, population growth, climate change, and the influx of refugees, migrants and displaced populations have further reduced available renewable water resources to 700 m<sup>3</sup>/capita/year.<sup>260</sup> In addition, many freshwater systems have been polluted, in large measure by haphazard urbanization and municipal solid waste – of which 77 per cent is directed to landfills or open dumpsites<sup>261</sup> – and can either no longer be used or require expensive treatment.<sup>262</sup>

In 2015, only 37 per cent of the population had access to clean and safe water, and only 20 per cent had access to safe sanitary services.<sup>263</sup> Although 95 per cent of households have access to an improved water supply (except informal tented settlements), only 47 per cent of households use a source free of fecal contamination, rendering water unsafe to drink and increasing water borne disease outbreaks.<sup>264</sup> Children are particularly vulnerable to water scarcity and crises which pose direct threats to their health, nutrition, education, development, survival and future.<sup>265</sup> These and other shortcomings are directly linked to systemic challenges of the water sector, including outdated and insufficient infrastructure, poorly managed water utilities, high rates of non-revenue water, limited water storage, poor irrigation efficiency and mounting pressures on ground and surface water supplies.<sup>266</sup>

Agriculture is the largest water consumer in Lebanon with estimations reaching up to 61 per cent of total water withdrawal and irrigating more than 40 per cent of agriculture land.<sup>267</sup> Yet, the availability and affordability of water (high energy cost for pumping and the supply of irrigation equipment) remain a major constraint for farmers. The stark increase in electricity cuts due to the economic crisis since 2019 (see Section 3.3) has further affected the use of water pumps and reduced access to water, especially for the most vulnerable groups. Irrigation schemes in Lebanon are inefficient; most distribution channels need rehabilitation and are not pressurized, leading to large losses through evaporation and leakages. This hinders any initiative to regulate and automate irrigation according to the crop-climate demand. Surface water is highly polluted in both the Akkar and Beqaa plains, which causes land and soil degradation and reduces the quality of agriculture products.<sup>268</sup>

Whereas many strategies and plans, such as the 2012 National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS) and the 2018 Capital Investment Plan, exist to address these challenges, the MoEW and the water utilities have so far focused primarily on ensuring the supply of water for the domestic sector, with less attention to wastewater collection and treatment, servicing the agricultural sector, or building integrated water management capacities. Failure to implement any improvements in the water sector is estimated to carry an annual cost of 1.1 per cent of GDP.<sup>269</sup>

To address the weaknesses of the water sector, a draft 2020 NWSS aims to improve service provision and reduce costs, including by enhancing stakeholder engagement and involvement of the private sector. It also seeks to introduce consumption-based tariffs, a new tariff structure for sanitation

<sup>260</sup> World Bank, 'Republic of Lebanon Country Environmental Analysis', (2011)

<sup>261</sup> German Cooperation Deutsche Zusammenarbeit, Sweepnet, 'Country Report on Solid Waste Management in Lebanon', (2014). (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Beirut, 2014)

<sup>262</sup> German Cooperation Deutsche Zusammenarbeit, Sweepnet, 'Country Report on Solid Waste Management in Lebanon', (2014). (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Beirut, 2014)

<sup>263</sup> Lebanon VNR 2018

<sup>264</sup> UNEP, 'Environment Summary for the Lebanon Common Country Analysis', (2021)

<sup>265</sup> UNICEF, 'The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis', (2021) <https://www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis> (accessed 13/02/2022)

<sup>266</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>267</sup> Lebanese Republic Ministry of Agriculture, 'Lebanon National Agriculture Strategy 2020-2025', (2020)

<http://www.agriculture.gov.lb/getattachment/Ministry/Ministry-Strategy/strategy-2020-2025/NAS-web-Eng-7Sep2020.pdf?lang=ar-LB>

<sup>268</sup> FAO, 'Agricultural sector review in Lebanon', (2021) <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5157en/cb5157en.pdf>

<sup>269</sup> MoE/UNDP, 'Rapid Cost of Environmental Degradation 2018', (2019)



services and for irrigation, improved monitoring and reporting, as well as capacity building at MoEW and the four Regional Water Establishments. The final draft 2020 NWSS provides a detailed summary of proposed projects that aim to increase water availability and improve system efficiency, protect water resources, and improve service delivery. However, in view of the recent economic collapse the strategy will need to be revisited to facilitate water service providers to return to financially viable operations while ensuring that vulnerable households are able to afford and access water services.<sup>270</sup>

## Energy, air pollution and climate change

Not only is Lebanon unable to meet its current demand for electricity (see also section 3.3 Prosperity), it is also relying primarily on **oil-based energy sources for power generation** which causes high levels of air pollution. To cope with inadequate electricity supply capacities and frequent power cuts, about 85 per cent of households depend on private diesel-powered generators. These generators are responsible for about 50 per cent of air pollution in Lebanon.<sup>271</sup>

Per capita **emissions due to road transport** in Lebanon are higher than those for many countries in the region. A highly urbanized environment with great population density, combined with a lack of effective public transport options, lack of non-motorized mobility options, weak urban planning and lack of environmental controls, is causing high concentrations of pollutants.<sup>272</sup> The Syria crisis has further increased the volume of road traffic by 15 per cent in the Greater Beirut Area, and by about 50 per cent in cities where the displaced reside.<sup>273</sup>

More than 85 per cent of **Lebanon's greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)**, predominantly CO<sub>2</sub>, are produced from burning fossil fuels. Electricity generation from public power plants is the main fuel consumer, responsible for 36.35 per cent of the sector's emissions, followed by transport (26.71 per cent), manufacturing industries (19.83 per cent) and the commercial/institutional sector (17.11 per cent) – with much of this activity being concentrated in cities. In 2018, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for Lebanon were estimated at 4.04 metric tons per capita, compared to 2.5 metric tons per capita for Jordan, 2.6 for Tunisia, and 1.6 for Syria.<sup>274</sup> Due to the country's small size and relatively small industrial sector, its GHG emissions are minimal compared to other countries. Nevertheless, trends show emissions have doubled between 1994 and 2013, and increased annually by 3.7 per cent. This increase is mainly driven by the fossil fuel-based energy and transport sectors that together account for around 80 per cent of emissions, mainly in the big coastal cities.<sup>275</sup>

In its updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)**<sup>40</sup> Lebanon unconditionally commits to generate 18 per cent of its power demand (i.e. electricity demand) and 11 per cent of its heat demand (in the building sector) from renewable energy sources in 2030, compared to a combined 15 per cent in 2015. Moreover, Lebanon conditionally commits to generate 30 per cent of its power demand (i.e. electricity demand) and 16.5 per cent of its heat demand (in the building sector) from renewable energy sources in 2030, compared to a combined 20 per cent in 2015.<sup>41</sup> Overall, Lebanon unconditionally commits to increase its greenhouse gas emission reduction target relative to the Business-as-Usual scenario from 15 per cent to 20 per cent, and conditionally commits to increase its GHG emission reduction target relative to the BAU scenario from 30 per cent to 31 per cent.<sup>42</sup> In 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture's forestry programme endorsed to plant 40 million trees which should help in absorbing a portion of Lebanon's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>270</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>271</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>272</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>273</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>274</sup> World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?locations=LB> (accessed 2/1/2021).

<sup>275</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)



**Investing in renewable energy** can significantly reduce these emissions and provide transformative solutions in line with SDG 7. Although a 2016-2020 National Renewable Energy Action Plan aimed at achieving 12 per cent renewable energy production by 2020, and despite Lebanon's great potential for solar and wind, there has been little progress to date in transforming the country's energy sector. Like the rest of the power sector, utility-scale renewable energy projects were hampered for many years by the lack of an independent electricity regulatory authority that would issue licenses for energy projects. In addition, legislation is still lacking to regulate renewable energy distribution in general with absence of governmental incentives. In the current country context, financing for new renewable energy projects remains largely frozen pending a solution to the political crisis and enactment of required reforms.<sup>276</sup>

In 2018, total installed renewable energy power capacity in Lebanon amounted to 350MW including 286MW from hydropower sources, 7MW from landfill and 56.37MW from solar power. The contribution of renewable energy sources to total power production in Lebanon is estimated between 4-6 per cent. In addition to investing in both household level and large-scale renewable energy solutions, energy-efficiency measures across all sectors – along with an integrated urban planning approach – are needed to reduce energy consumption and prevent unnecessary emissions.<sup>277</sup>

**Climate change impacts** in the West Asia region are among the most critical worldwide. Climate trends in Lebanon include increasing annual mean temperatures, decreasing precipitation paired with increasing one-day extreme rainfall events, rising Mediterranean Sea levels, and an increase of 1.3°C in Mediterranean Sea surface water temperature since 1982. Analysis of historical climatic records of Lebanon from the early 20th century with future emission trajectories indicates that the expected warming in Lebanon has no precedent.<sup>278</sup> Climate change is increasing the risk of extreme weather events, including droughts, floods and heatwaves. Average temperatures are expected to increase by up to 4.8 per cent by 2100 in the MENA region.<sup>279</sup> Rainfall is becoming less predictable as the onset and duration of the rainy seasons become more variable. The cold season has started to come later in the year, disturbing the seasonal calendars of crops and decreasing their productivity.<sup>280</sup> Children and vulnerable groups are particularly affected by these climate change impacts and shocks which seriously threaten their basic rights to health, food, water, clean air, education and protection.

Climate change is expected to have a negative impact on the country's agricultural production, power generation, and water supply. Agriculture is especially affected by weather-related events, with major risks in Lebanon coming from floods, storms, wind, hail, cold and heat waves, and late frosts, which affect both plant and animal production. Impacts on agricultural productivity disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations. The estimated total cost of damage to the agricultural sector per year resulting from these risks can reach USD 605 million.<sup>281</sup>

Although Lebanon does not yet have dedicated national legislation to address climate change, it has mainstreamed **climate change adaptation** into various sector strategies. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the National Water Sector Strategy, the Ministry of Energy and Water's national energy strategies, and the forestry strategies all foresee climate adaptation measures. The Ministry of Agriculture prioritized responding to climate change impacts in its 2015–2019 strategy and reiterated the priority in the current National Agriculture Strategy 2020-2025.<sup>282</sup> Lebanon has also promoted climate change adaptation in other vulnerable sectors such as tourism, human settlements and infrastructure and public health.

<sup>276</sup> L'Orient Today <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1256444/edls-struggle-to-stave-off-darkness-exposes-a-huge-missed-opportunity-in-the-renewable-energy-sector.html> (accessed 06/02/22).

<sup>277</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>278</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>279</sup> Bahn *et al.* (2019).

<sup>280</sup> Abdallah *et al.* (2018).

<sup>281</sup> Abdallah *et al.* (2018).

<sup>282</sup> MoA, 'Lebanon National Agriculture Strategy 2020-2025, (2020) (<http://www.agriculture.gov.lb/getattachment/Ministry/Ministry-Strategy/strategy-2020-2025/NAS-web-Eng-7Sep2020.pdf?lang=ar-LB>) Lebanon VNR (2018)

That said, consistent implementation of these strategies and policies is still lacking. In addition, both the development and implementation of environment and climate-related policies need to become more inclusive to local populations, with a focus on vulnerable groups. While grassroots campaigns tend to respond quickly to challenges, maintaining momentum and purpose is difficult over time with such a disconnection between them and national frameworks. This results in ineffectiveness in resolving environment-related issues at the community level, where impacts are most felt by local populations.

In 2017, the country has initiated preparations of an integrated and comprehensive National Adaptation Plan. Furthermore, adaptation principles and priorities have been strengthened in the updated NDC of 2020, which includes the following **seven priorities of action for 2030**:

- Strengthen the agriculture sector's resilience to enhance Lebanon's agricultural output in a climate-smart manner
- Promote the sustainable use of natural resources, restore degraded landscapes and increase Lebanon's forest cover
- Structure and develop sustainable water services, including irrigation, in order to improve people's living conditions
- Value and sustainably manage terrestrial and marine biodiversity for the preservation and conservation of its ecosystems, habitats and species
- Reduce the vulnerability of coastal zones, especially cities, to climate change impacts
- Ensure overall public health and safety through climate-resilient health systems
- Reduce disaster risk and minimize damage by mitigating and adapting to climate-related natural hazards and extreme weather<sup>283</sup>

In view of the worsening impacts of climate change across the MENA region, a recent UN report<sup>284</sup> highlighted the need to **prevent and manage climate-related security risks** and protect vulnerable populations. A just transition towards an environmentally sustainable economy needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty. More specific analysis of Lebanon's climate security risks is looking at potential climate change impacts including livelihood loss, mobility and migration, competition over natural resources such as water, food insecurity and macroeconomic contraction, and the extent of risk these consequences could have for contributing to and enhancing the risk of violent conflict, especially in a country context of weak governance structures, lack of a sustainable urban planning vision and institutional setup, social and political fragmentation and tensions, and fragile ecosystems.

A growing body of literature globally is focusing on the intersectionality between climate change and human security, and on the disproportionate impact of the consequences of climate change on gender and other population groups, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. However, in Lebanon the general acknowledgement by the government of the importance to mitigate the effects of climate change, and a growing focus amongst civil society organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions on the interlinkages between climate, natural resources management, and human security, has so far only resulted in very few initiatives that actively examine and address the climate-social-gender nexus.<sup>285</sup>

Political stalemate can impede Lebanon's efforts to prepare for and mitigate climate change. In such a context, marginalized groups such as rural populations, communities heavily reliant on agricultural resources, refugees, and socially excluded groups such as migrants, women and youth coming from peripheral areas and/or lower socioeconomic classes, etc. are likely to be most affected and thus must be at the forefront of community-led response strategies. Some of the social and gendered impacts on vulnerable populations in the country include:

<sup>283</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>284</sup> DPPA, 'Addressing climate-related security risks in the Middle East and North Africa', (2020)

<sup>285</sup> UN Women (2022)

- Unequal access to land, and land ownership and legal hurdles (such as multiple confessional-based personal status laws) means that women and men experience impacts of climate insecurity in different ways and that women (who are generally daily rural laborers compared to men who have higher land ownership) are at an additional disadvantage when it comes to climatic shocks.
- The burden of unpaid domestic work, such as household chores and caretaking, that falls disproportionately on women, along with the prevalence of patriarchal norms in some communities, may prevent women from active engagement and participation, access, and/or exercising agency in climate insecurity adaptation.

## Sustainable consumption and production

Challenges around the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and SDG 12 are multi-faceted and complex, ranging from materials use, consumption patterns to industrial production and solid waste management, with close linkages to SDGs 2 and 15.

In the absence of a national sustainable development vision and strategy, the **Environment Protection Law** and several application decrees support SCP with a focus on cleaner production techniques, biodiversity conservation, prevention of natural resource degradation, environmental monitoring, setting landfill standards and promoting recycling.<sup>286</sup> As part of an EU-funded initiative to achieve a circular economy in the southern Mediterranean, the MoE and MoI developed the **2015 Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan for the Industrial Sector**<sup>287</sup> which aims to introduce and strengthen SCP approaches through technical innovation, policy and institutional changes, awareness raising of consumers, and consideration of resource conservation and environmental impacts at all stages of the consumption and production chain.<sup>288</sup> Following consultations with key stakeholders like the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Industry and the Association of the Lebanese Industrialists, a road map was developed in 2018 to upscale the application of resource efficiency in the industrial sector. Amid the severe economic and financial crises shaking the country, the efficient and effective use of energy, water and raw materials is gaining more importance. Of key importance, is the need to mainstream resource efficiency at the legislative level and to establish relevant qualification schemes for service providers.<sup>289</sup>

Due to a sharp increase in population because of the inflow of Syrian refugees, municipal solid waste generation in Lebanon has seen a **30 per cent increase between 2013 and 2018**, with higher increases in regions sharing a border with Syria and hosting a high number of refugees (47 per cent increase in Bekaa/Baalbek Hermel, and 48 per cent increase in North/Akkar). Multiple weaknesses in Lebanon's solid waste management system have contributed to a severe **municipal solid waste crisis in 2015**, which culminated in uncollected waste piling up in the streets and a stark rise of illegal open dumping and burning. While the visible effects of the crisis have since been brought under control, many challenges – including weak regulations, planning and enforcement; lack of treatment centers and adequate infrastructure; as well as lack of awareness and compliance, in addition to urbanization that is not well-managed and well-planned – keep preventing the development of long-term solutions.<sup>290</sup> The consequences of inadequate solid waste management are a critical driver for many environmental challenges, including surface and ground water pollution as well as intoxication of both soil and air qualities. They also affect in the long-term the health of people and ecosystems.<sup>291</sup>

<sup>286</sup> Lebanon VNR (2018)

<sup>287</sup> <https://switchmed.eu/country-hub/lebanon/>

<sup>288</sup> Lebanon VNR (2018)

<sup>289</sup> [1] UNIDO-IRI. 2018. Roadmap for Scaling up Resource Efficiency, accessible at: <https://switchmed.eu/country-hub/lebanon/>

<sup>290</sup> ADL (2018). The Lebanon municipal solid waste crisis and pathways (September 2018)

[https://www.adlittle.com/sites/default/files/viewpoints/adl\\_the\\_lebanon\\_municipal\\_solid\\_waste\\_crisis\\_and\\_possible\\_pathways\\_forward-compressed\\_0.pdf](https://www.adlittle.com/sites/default/files/viewpoints/adl_the_lebanon_municipal_solid_waste_crisis_and_possible_pathways_forward-compressed_0.pdf)

<sup>291</sup> UNEP, 'Environment Summary for the Lebanon Common Country Analysis', (2021)

Lebanon's **solid waste management**, as well as **investments in a circular economy** to prevent waste and increase the rate of recycling, are therefore at the core of achieving SCP. Lebanon has faced considerable challenges on material recovery (Process of obtaining materials from waste, that can be reused or recycled) before the Syria crisis; and, ineffective solid waste management presented a major threat to water bodies, ecosystems, and people's health. With most of municipal solid waste ending up in landfills and open dump sites, and recycling and composting rates of less than 10 per cent each, waste management, including health care waste management, across the country was largely limited to rudimentary collect and dump practices.<sup>292</sup> Although the economic and financial crises are having severe negative effects on businesses, particularly manufacturing companies, in various aspects such as increased energy costs and a decreased ability to import raw materials, it has also driven companies, particularly non-exporting manufacturers, to use their resources more efficiently, and to rely more on cleaner renewable energy.<sup>293</sup> Despite their negative impacts, the ongoing crises can thus be a driver for boosting resource efficiency as a central element of SCP.

**Food waste** in Lebanon, estimated at 105kg/capita per year,<sup>294</sup> plays a key role in overall waste management. Strategies aimed at preventing and reducing food waste can greatly strengthen the sustainability of food systems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and generate inclusive green growth opportunities.

## Marine and coastal ecosystems

Lebanon's coastline extends about 230 km along the Mediterranean Sea. With **three quarters of Lebanon's population living in cities along the coast with growing unplanned urbanization**, the high environmental, economic, and social value of its marine resources and seashore is threatened by large quantities of industrial waste, untreated wastewater<sup>295</sup> and solid waste deposited in the sea and on the shore. The lack of a land management framework that preserves the use of coastal land and protects its natural ecosystems, and increasing commercial developments on the coastal areas, over-fishing, oil spills and prospective oil exploitation further jeopardize sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems. As the bulk of the Lebanese population and economic activity remain concentrated along the coastal corridor representing 1,620 km<sup>2</sup> or 13 per cent of the country's territory, hence constituting a growing pressure on the environment.<sup>296</sup> The entire coast is at risk of degradation from massive local erosion due to strong winter storms, sand dredging and reduced sediment-load in the Mediterranean. Dune ecosystems have nearly disappeared, except in the south of Tyre.<sup>297</sup>

Lebanese waters hold about **6 per cent of global marine species**, although currently no comprehensive list of marine species exists for Lebanon. In recent decades, the Lebanese marine ecosystem has come under increasing natural and anthropogenic stresses that have led to a tremendous decrease in marine biological resources. Illegal fishing techniques using dynamite and nets with small mesh size are chronic problems that, even though reduced, have not been completely resolved. The Ministry of Agriculture lacks the necessary financial, technical, and human resources to assess the extent of illegal fishing and related activities and enforce pertinent fisheries management and conservation regulations. The overlap of institutional mandates on fisheries (the fishing fleet management is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport) contributes to the weak and inefficient governance of the sector. Furthermore, the all-artisanal fishing fleet (7 meters average length) limits the fishing area to within three nautical miles from the shoreline, thus causing immense

<sup>292</sup> UNEP, 'Environment Summary for the Lebanon Common Country Analysis', (2021)

<sup>293</sup> UNIDO (2022)

<sup>294</sup> UNEP, 'The State of Food Waste in West Asia', (2021)

<sup>295</sup> Coastal waters in Lebanon receive untreated wastewater from at least 53 major sewage outfalls, equivalent to 65 per cent of the country's total sewage load (UNEP 2021).

<sup>296</sup> World Bank, 'Republic of Lebanon Country Environmental Analysis', (2011)

<sup>297</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

pressure on coastal fish stock and marine environment.<sup>298</sup> A positive development over the last decade has been the construction of artificial reefs which can boost fish yield for the local fishing industry, as well as ecotourism through diverse aquatic activities.<sup>299</sup>

## Land resources

In 2016, **64.3 per cent of total land in Lebanon was devoted to agriculture**, the largest share in the Middle East. The total agricultural land amounts to about 658 000 hectares, of which 132 000 hectares is arable land, 126 000 hectares is for permanent crops and 400 000 hectares is for permanent meadows and pastures.<sup>300</sup>

**Forest coverage** - about 23 per cent of the country – has remained stable for many years. However, recent data show a total net loss of 38.9 km<sup>2</sup> (comprising all types of forests and other wooded lands) between 2013 and 2017, and in October 2019 Lebanon lost 12.4 km<sup>2</sup> of forest land to the largest fires the country has seen in decades. This loss of forest cover, which is the cause of landslides with disastrous environmental, economic and social effects, is due to several factors: urban sprawl, rising energy prices forcing people to find alternative solutions such as wood for heating, and forest fires. Continuing **urban sprawl**,<sup>301</sup> **agricultural malpractice**<sup>302</sup> and **quarrying**, combined with **inadequate regulations and weak law enforcement**, exert tremendous pressure on remaining land resources including biodiversity, topsoil, agricultural potential, freshwater, tourism sites, natural monuments and landscapes. These trends are closely linked to Lebanon's very high population density which has further increased to about 669 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (including migrants, displaced populations and refugees), with exponential growth of peri-urban areas around major cities, as well as between secondary cities and towns.<sup>303</sup>

Although unbuilt space ranges from 35 per cent to 57 per cent of the urban area in major cities, more city-level data are required to assess **cities' public space provision** against the WHO standard of 9 m<sup>2</sup> of green open space per person, noting the importance of these spaces for mitigating urban heat island effects and promoting general public health and well-being.<sup>304</sup>

Land tenure problems are associated with **agricultural land degradation** in Lebanon. The main drivers of land degradation include changes in the human population, policy and political changes, deep societal changes, climatic factors, land tenure and poor management of key natural resources and ecosystems. The Lebanese land market is inefficient, with large registration and transaction costs and unclear roles and responsibilities for managing common lands. This leads to over-exploitation of lands for grazing, quarrying and agriculture. Communal lands are rarely used for agricultural crops, mostly serving as forests and rangeland. The forests are used for fuelwood harvesting or pine nut production. Rangeland is used for grazing small ruminants.<sup>305</sup>

Lebanon lacks zoning laws that divide land into areas with certain land uses. Very small agricultural holdings, such as greenhouses, might be found in many locations, particularly close to urban centres, next to high rise buildings, while landowners wait for better compensation for their land.<sup>306</sup> Moreover, patterns of gender discrimination in land ownership continue. Women cannot inherit assets in the

<sup>298</sup> FAO, 'Briefing Note: Fisheries and Aquaculture in Lebanon', (2021) <https://www.fao.org/3/cb4201en/cb4201en.pdf>

<sup>299</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>300</sup> Bahn et al. (2019).

<sup>301</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

<sup>302</sup> Growing economic hardship and poverty is turning an increasing number of people in Lebanon to agriculture for self-sustenance, many of whom lack the necessary knowledge and experience of sustainable agricultural practices. This is creating additional strains on land resources (UN Women, 2022)

<sup>303</sup> UN Women, 2022; UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

<sup>304</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

<sup>305</sup> World Bank, 2018

<sup>306</sup> World Bank, 2018



same way as men, whether from parents or spouses.<sup>307</sup> Based on the 2010 Agriculture Census, only 9 per cent of farms were owned by women, and only 5 per cent were cultivated by them.<sup>308</sup>

The **National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory** (NPMPLT) endorsed in 2009 presents a holistic vision for national urban planning and critical recommendations for enhancing and harmonizing land uses in Lebanon.<sup>309</sup> Given that detailed environmental planning is not an integral part of the NPMPLT, its effectiveness in protecting the natural and cultural resource base is somewhat limited.<sup>310</sup> The NPMPLT provides a macro overview of land vocations and remains loosely binding at the local level. Its vision and orientations are not backed up by adequate financial and technical resources to prepare and implement the required master plans and detailed urban plans at local level.<sup>311</sup> To date, only 32 per cent of the territory are planned, and only 14.4 per cent have plans that can be enforced by decree.<sup>312</sup>

Lebanon is well known for its **rich biodiversity** and has made considerable investments for its protection, including the creation of 15 nature reserves, three biosphere reserves, 16 protected forests, 16 protected natural sites or landscapes, four Ramsar sites, five world heritage sites, and 15 important bird areas. Lebanon's second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016–2030) aims to increase nature reserves to five per cent of its territory by 2030 and increase natural terrestrial and marine ecosystems within the protected areas network to 20 per cent.<sup>313</sup> This second plan also acknowledges the importance of the **intangible cultural heritage (traditional knowledge) of local communities** for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources.<sup>314</sup> Lebanon has committed, by 2030, to safeguard and document relevant traditional knowledge practices of local communities by integrating them into relevant policies and promoting them in relevant economic sectors.<sup>315</sup>

Lebanon's biodiversity is facing various threats, namely: 1) habitat loss and fragmentation, 2) unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, including a break in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage 3) pollution, 4) invasive species, 5) introduction of new improved varieties (agrobiodiversity), and 6) climate change.

About 56 km<sup>2</sup> of land were exploited for **quarrying** in 2018, mostly outside of the areas considered suited for such activities as per the NPMPLT 2009. Unorganized and illegal quarrying in forests and scrubland ecosystems caused the loss of important habitats, substantial topsoil removal, air pollution and soil contamination. The total cost of land degradation from around 1,330 quarrying sites across Lebanon are estimated at around 1 per cent of GDP. In 2019, the MoE issued a policy as well as a draft master plan for the integrated management of the quarrying sector, however, it has not been implemented yet.<sup>316</sup>

## Disaster Risk Management

Although disaster risk has historically been relatively low in Lebanon, the country is **vulnerable to several natural hazards**, including earthquakes, flash flooding, forest wildfires, landslides, tsunamis, winter storms and slow onset droughts. Environmental, technological, and biological hazards include

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<sup>307</sup> World Bank (2020).

<sup>308</sup> FAO (2021).

<sup>309</sup> UNEP, 'Environment Summary for the Lebanon Common Country Analysis', (2021)

<sup>310</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

<sup>311</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>312</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>313</sup> UNDP/UNICEF/UNHCR/MoE, 'Lebanon State of the Environment Report', (2020)

<sup>314</sup> Lebanon's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016)

<sup>315</sup> Lebanon fifth national report to the Convention of Biodiversity (2015)

<sup>316</sup> Lebanon fifth national report to the Convention of Biodiversity (2015)



oil spills and problems with waste management which can be included in the Sendai Framework's wide scope of natural and man-made hazards.<sup>317</sup>

To strengthen disaster resilience and respond more effectively to these multiple risks and crises, the government has adopted the **Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005**, and the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**. Lebanon has also made progress by 1) adopting a comprehensive and inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) agenda which includes conflict in its risk management frameworks, and 2) creating national DRR capacities, including a **national DRM Unit** attached to the Prime Minister's Office to strengthen resilience and early recovery processes, as well as **regional and district-level DRM Units** and response plans for 15 governorates and districts. Lebanon has also ratified the International Health Regulations (IHR), a globally binding set of health regulations under Global health security, that came into effect in 2007, and has established an IHR team at the MOPH to coordinate with the DRR and management team at Prime Minister office.<sup>318</sup>

At the same time, deep structural and institutional challenges - rooted in Lebanon's sectarian political system and related weak and decentralized governance, as well as concrete obstacles such as pervasive corruption and widespread non-state provision of services - remain to establishing effective and sustainable DRM at all levels and achieving political, social, economic, and environmental resilience.<sup>319</sup> Whereas some cities in Lebanon have developed their own Disaster Risk Management (DRM) strategies, Beirut and many others do not yet have strategies aligned within the Sendai Framework, including early intervention plans, the lack of which was strongly felt after the Beirut Explosions on August 4, 2020.<sup>320</sup>

In support of the central role of the government in disaster risk management and response, the UN system has drafted a UN Contingency Plan in 2021 which aimed to map out the major risks (including an economic collapse, inter-communal tensions, new refugee arrivals, and disease outbreaks) and scenarios that could lead to further deterioration of the country situation and articulate preliminary interventions to respond to such emergencies. A regular revision of this Contingency Plan is planned as part of efforts by the UN and its partners to increase its preparedness and readiness in support of government.

### 3.3 PROSPERITY

*"We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature."*<sup>321</sup>

This section assesses key themes relating to SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, including amongst others the sustainability of economic growth; the state of productive sectors, sustaining and creating decent jobs; resilient and inclusive cities; resilient, accessible and adaptive infrastructure; and access to affordable energy, all while ensuring the reduction of inequalities to ensure fair and inclusive growth for everyone.

#### Economic situation and employment

At the time of developing the VNR in 2018, SDG indicators showed favorable results in terms of progress towards sustainable growth and employment, albeit with structural challenges not addressed. The government had developed a vision for stabilization, growth and employment, which it had presented at the *Conférence économique pour le développement, par les réformes et avec les*

<sup>317</sup> ODI, 'Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace' The case of Lebanon', (2019)

<https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12911.pdf>

<sup>318</sup> WHO (2022)

<sup>319</sup> ODI, 'Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace' The case of Lebanon', (2019)

<sup>320</sup> ODI, 'Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace' The case of Lebanon', (2019)

<sup>321</sup> General Assembly Resolution 70/1, 'Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. (2015)

enterprises (CEDRE) in April 2018, garnering commitment to support the growth of the Lebanese economy with 11 billion USD from the international community. However no funds were disbursed due to the lack of key reforms stipulated as conditions for disbursement. The vision was articulated through a strong and ambitious Capital Investment Program (CIP), essential to sectoral development, as well as plans to support market access, promote labor rights, and address urban, transportation and traffic issues, that all but materialized. Post-2019 developments paint a different picture and are deeply rooted in a structural crisis tied to the unsustainable post-war economic model, and the failure and political resistance to reform a model that benefited a few and hindered inclusive development for decades.

## Key features of the Post-War Economic Model

Following the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990, the post-war economic model focused on privatization, real estate operations, and the financial sector with a disregard for providing public services. The other pillar of the economic model in the 1990s was currency stabilization. In 1997, the Lebanese Lira was pegged to the US dollar (1,507 LBP/USD), leading to the high debt accumulation in the post-war economy. By maintaining a fixed exchange rate to the dollar, the post-war economy was dependent on attracting dollars from abroad, which poured into the real estate, banking, and tourism sectors. Significant dollar capital inflows came from the Lebanese diaspora, particularly expatriates in the Gulf. The banking sector attracted such large deposit inflows by maintaining high interest rates. These high interest rates, meant to attract capital and remittances, and maintain the peg, had a negative effect on investment in country. Capital was channelled into less productive sectors (consumption, real estate, banking, public debt) leaving small room for capital investment<sup>322</sup> and limiting the private sector's access to finance.

More specifically, with this capital, commercial banks financed government spending by investing in government bonds and benefiting from over-priced interest rates. Such high interest rates meant that government debt and debt servicing were accumulating rapidly, increasingly resulting in a debt trap. As early as 1997, debt servicing accounted for 40 per cent of the government budget,<sup>323</sup> while in the early 2000s, public debt reached 130 per cent of GDP<sup>324</sup>. The high debt servicing costs, in addition to inefficient spending and subpar fiscal policy and management, meant that there was no fiscal space to spend on redistributive efforts; rent was accumulated in a very narrow base that seldom trickled down<sup>325</sup>.

The economic model also featured (1) low agricultural and industrial productivity, (2) high reliance on imports, possible through an overvalued exchange rate, and thus an increasing deficit of the balance of trade, (3) an uncompetitive and chronically unconducive business environment due to high costs of production, low levels of capital investment leading to deteriorating infrastructure, (4) a highly sensitive environment to geo-political conditions as well as governance and institutional challenges (such as low legislative productivity)<sup>326</sup>, (5) Heavy reliance on remittance which averaged 7 billion USD between 2008 and 2020 (an average of 15 per cent of GDP post 2010<sup>327</sup>), (6) one of the highest level of income inequality in the world,<sup>(7)</sup> regressive taxation policies generating a rentier economy, furthering the inequality gap, both social and gender, in the economy<sup>328</sup>, and (8) a laissez-faire model based on neoliberal principles, concentrating on urban areas, especially Beirut, with particular focus on large tax-free infrastructure projects, rapid privatization of public land for tourism, an inflated real

<sup>322</sup> McKinsey & Company, 'Lebanon Economic Vision', 2018 <https://www.economy.gov.lb/media/11893/20181022-1228full-report-en.pdf>

<sup>323</sup> Lebanon's public debt increased to an estimated 183 per cent of GDP in 2021

<sup>324</sup> BlomInvest, A historical analysis of Lebanon's public debt, 2019

<sup>325</sup> Salti, N., 'No country for poor men: how Lebanon's debt has exacerbated inequality', Carnegie Middle East Center, (2019)

<sup>326</sup> UNCT CERP

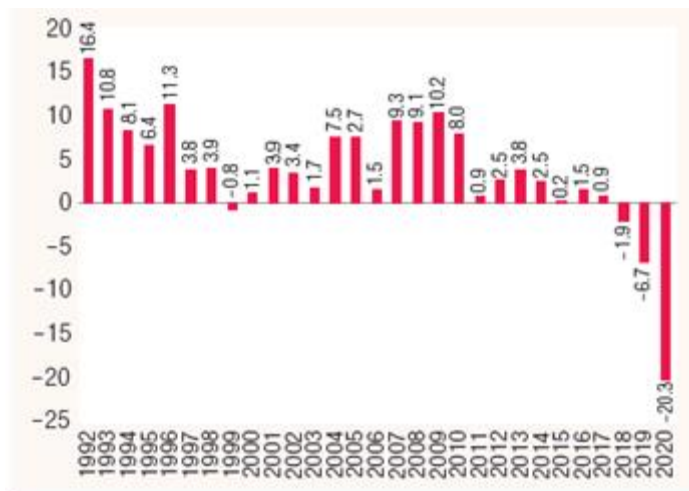
<sup>327</sup> The World Bank's data dashboard for Lebanon, personal remittances, received (% of GDP)

<sup>328</sup> More on the reform of the tax system in Lebanon in "which tax policy for Lebanon: Lessons from the past for a challenging future", Bifani, Daher, Assouad, Diwan, Arab Reform Initiative, 2021

estate sector coupled with lack of enforcement of urban planning regulations<sup>329</sup>. The economic model is further complicated by an institutionalized confessional power-sharing system that has impacted all aspects of prosperity (see also section 3.4).

**Although the economic model showed many structural deficiencies**, regional and international support enabled intermittent phases of economic growth - albeit not inclusive - and an improvement in the living conditions of the Lebanese population. The protracted Syrian crisis (2011-), the unfolding economic crisis (2019-), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-) and the Port of Beirut explosion (2020) further exacerbate and compound the country's structural problems.

**Figure 8: Real GDP growth (%)**



Sources: CAS and WB staff calculations.

## GDP growth and challenges

**GDP growth** in Lebanon decelerated rapidly as of 2010. Growth rates ranging from 0 to 3.8 per cent were registered between 2011 and 2014, compared to 8-10 per cent growth rates during the period of 2007-2010. The **slow growth of the real GDP was linked to a deficient economic model and the impact of the Syrian war**<sup>330</sup>. Although the Syrian crisis reinforced the adverse effects of global and regional factors on Lebanon's GDP, the World Bank estimates that not all economic slow-down can be attributed to the Syrian conflict<sup>331</sup>. The Lebanese growth witnessed was nonetheless without sustainable development. This was especially evident through the lack of generation of job opportunities linked to this growth (more on employment below in the subsection on employment, migration and remittances).

Key challenges that impacted the growth of the GDP in the previous period revolve, inter alia, around the issues of electricity, communications and transport infrastructure, and services. The lack of easy and affordable access to high quality services in support of the economy has played a detrimental role in the country's growth. Other structural challenges include the lack of enabling policies for investment to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the high interest rate policy of the Central Bank which crowded out productive investment and affected long term sustainable and inclusive growth, and the absence of commitment to reform the legal and institutional frameworks governing doing business.

<sup>329</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'National Urban Policies Programme in Lebanon: [Diagnosis Report](#)', (2018)

<sup>330</sup> This report distinguishes between the impacts of the Syrian war and the Syrian refugee influx on the Lebanese economy. The negative impact on GDP is looked at through the lens of the Syrian war.

<sup>331</sup> World Bank, 'The Fallout of War: The Regional Consequences of the Conflict in Syria', (2020)

Structural deficiencies in the Lebanese economy, and the contraction of inflows of capital to the country, led to the beginning of the **economic and financial crisis** in 2019. The first signs<sup>332</sup> were the depreciation of the LBP on the black market, capital control measures implemented by commercial banks, and the government's decision to default, for the first time in Lebanon's history, on the reimbursement of USD 1.2 billion in Eurobonds in March 2020. Following the economic crisis in 2019, the GDP is estimated to have contracted by approximately 21 per cent in 2020<sup>333</sup> and a further 10.5 per cent in 2021, the highest contraction amongst 193 countries globally<sup>334</sup>.

The Port of **Beirut explosion** also had a considerable impact on the GDP decline. The Rapid Damage Needs Assessment (RDNA) conducted by the EU, WB and UN estimated physical damages of the explosion at 3.8-4.6 billion USD, and losses in terms of economic flow at USD 2.9-3.5 billion<sup>335</sup>. This came at a time when the country's GDP had plummeted from USD 55 billion in 2018 to USD 31 billion in 2020 with projections at USD 20.5 billion in 2021<sup>336</sup>, making the economic losses incurred more impactful. The estimated impact on the economy includes losses in economic activity, loss in fiscal revenues, trade disruptions resulting in higher transaction costs of external trade and higher inflation and poverty rates.

The World Bank ranked **Lebanon's financial and economic crisis in the top 10, possibly top three, most severe crisis episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century**, with estimates that Lebanon needs at best 12 years to return to the levels of GDP in 2017, and at worst 19 years<sup>337</sup>. It is expected to be prolonged, especially in the absence of the immediate implementation of a comprehensive macroeconomic and financial stabilization plan, encompassing macro-economic, financial, fiscal, social and electricity reforms holistically. The current situation led to a **downgrading by the World Bank of Lebanon's income classification from an upper-middle income country to a lower-middle income country in 2020**<sup>338</sup>.

In the absence of a clear pathway for recovery, and any serious reforms, the crisis has deepened, with the **unofficial exchange rate reaching over 30,000 LBP to 1 USD** at the beginning of 2022. The pressure on the peg caused by the halt in foreign capital inflows is reflected in the Lebanese Pound losing more than 90 per cent of its value. The depreciation of the LBP and heavy reliance on imports by the local market led to three-digit inflation rates since 2019. Between December 2020 and December 2021, the annual inflation rate hit a record high of 224 per cent. Inflation being the equivalent of a highly regressive tax, it has disproportionately impacted the poor and most vulnerable in country. Items of the basic consumption basket saw their prices rise as high as 389.7 per cent in 2020 and of 456 per cent from 2019 to 2021<sup>339</sup>. Cumulative inflation rate reached 735 per cent at the end of December 2021 when compared to its level at the onset of the crisis in October 2019. The triple digit inflation rate is closely associated with the continued increase of currency in circulation which rose by close to six times between October 2019 and November 2021 (see below figure)<sup>340</sup>. According to December 2021 data<sup>341</sup>, the main contributors to annual inflation are transportation (522 per cent), food (438 per cent), water, electricity and gas (425 per cent), restaurants and hotels (414 per cent) and health (404 per cent). These extremely high levels of inflation drastically infringe on residents' right to freedom of movement, right to food, right to adequate housing and right to health.

<sup>332</sup> Prior to that warning signs of the crisis included weak growth as early as 2010 and the costly financial engineering (swap) operations that took place in 2015-2017

<sup>333</sup> The World Bank country dashboard for Lebanon

<sup>334</sup> The World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor, The great denial, Fall 2021

<sup>335</sup> The European Union, the World Bank, the United Nations, Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment RDNA, 2020

<sup>336</sup> The World Bank, Lebanon country overview

<sup>337</sup> The World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor, sinking into the top three, spring 2021

<sup>338</sup> The World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor, Spring 2021

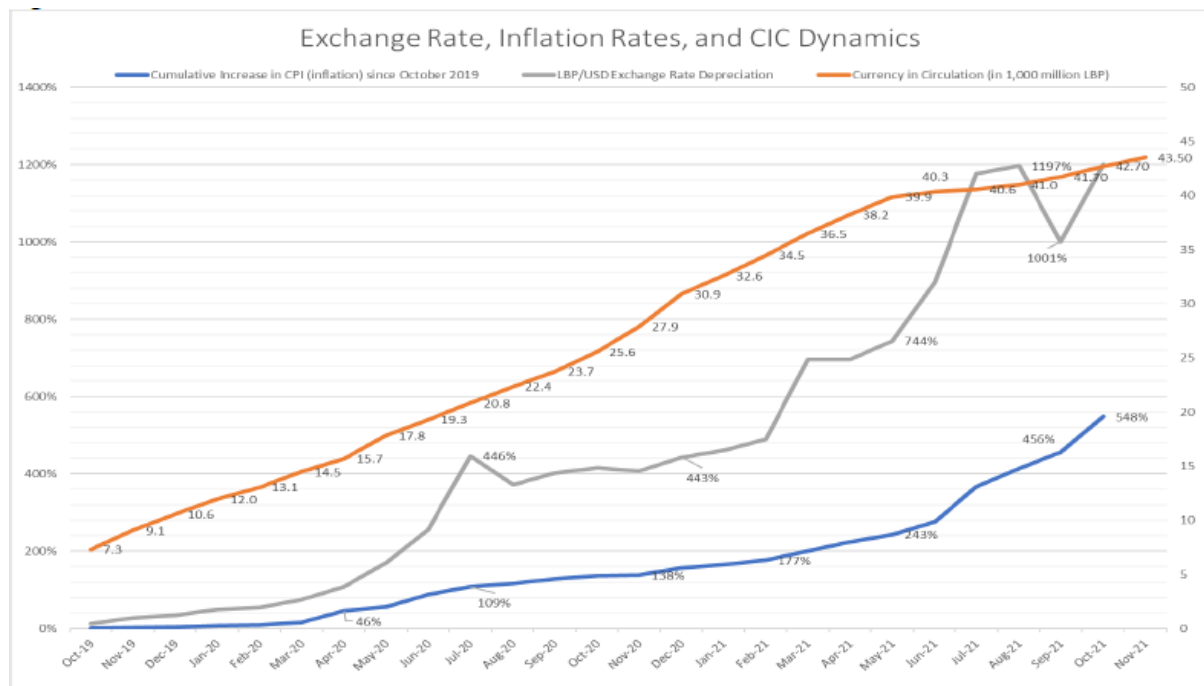
<sup>339</sup> CAS CPI

<sup>340</sup> UNRCO socio economic note, December 2021

<sup>341</sup> Central Administration of Statistics, December 2021.

In the absence of a comprehensive social protection scheme (see section 3.1) to mitigate the impact of the crisis and to protect the marginalized population against soaring inflation, an ad-hoc foreign exchange subsidy scheme on imports was put in place covering what was considered as essential commodities including fuel, medicines, wheat, and in addition selected food and convenience items. Foreign Exchange Subsidies were funded through the BdL’s foreign currency reserves and caused a massive drainage on the latter. The cost of the foreign exchange subsidy was estimated at USD 287 million per month in 2020<sup>342</sup>. As of mid-2020, and given the fast drop in foreign exchange reserves, a decision was taken to start phasing out the subsidy. During the phasing out period, the country faced a major supply crisis with reported critical shortages in fuel, medicines, essential food, and other items. Also, as a result, power supply by EDL reached a record low of only two hours per day, forcing households and businesses to rely increasingly on costly and unsustainable alternatives.

**Figure 9: Exchange rate, inflation rates and currency in circulation dynamics**



Source: UNRCO, Socio-economic note, December 2021

The unprecedented economic and financial crises have exacerbated structural inequality and led to an increase in poverty rates. In the absence of financial intermediation following the 2019 crisis, impoverished households adopted negative coping mechanisms, least of which were borrowing from friends and relatives, supermarket owners and landlords (see section 3.1 People for more details on the impact of the economic crisis on poverty rates, food insecurity and public services).

Even during phases of economic growth, Lebanon had **record high income and wealth inequality**<sup>343</sup>. The top 10 per cent of Lebanese holds almost 70 per cent of total personal wealth and the top 1 per cent holds nearly 45 per cent<sup>344</sup>. Income is extremely concentrated in Lebanon with the richest 10 and 1 per cent adults accounting for almost 55 and 25 per cent of total national income, and very little upward mobility present<sup>345</sup>. Lebanon’s low overall index score of 115 of 158 countries in the

<sup>342</sup> The World Bank, ‘Lebanon subsidy reform note’, (2020)

<sup>343</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, ‘Is now finally the time to discuss inequality in Lebanon?’, (2021)

<sup>344</sup> Dana Abed et al., ‘Inequality in Lebanon: questioning labor, social spending, and taxation’, 2020

<sup>345</sup> Assouad, L., ‘Rethinking the Lebanese economic miracle: the extreme concentration of income wealth in Lebanon 2005-2014’, World inequality lab, (2021)

commitment to reducing inequality<sup>346</sup> has important implications for the performance of key social sectors, especially health and education (presented in more detail in section 3.1 People).

A recent study found that the root causes of inequality in Lebanon could be traced to the sectarian patriarchal political power-sharing system, and that this consociational democracy has enabled the formation of a “party cartel” allowing for elite capture and the passing of laws and policies that favor the ruling class and further increase inequality<sup>347</sup> (see also section 3.4). One notable example here is the absence of a welfare state and large-scale redistributive policies but the presence of large tax breaks for the wealthiest in addition to very low top marginal tax rates<sup>348</sup>. Potential austerity measures (cuts in pension schemes, salaries and wages of public sector employees, less fiscal space for social services, etc.) as part of a recovery plan could have severe implications on the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population, including women who have been disproportionately affected.

A wealth tax proposed in the government’s financial recovery plan could both reduce inequality and create fiscal space<sup>349</sup>. On the other hand, inequality will be impacted by any measures for burden sharing of the banking sector’s losses.

Regional inequality is also widespread in Lebanon, with Beirut receiving considerably more attention and support than the rest of the country. Municipal allocations favor for instance the capital and leave the rest of the country’s municipalities with unequal share of funds to service their communities<sup>350</sup>.

The macroeconomic situation has forced an unprecedented number of people to rely on aid for survival<sup>351</sup>. Performing interventions that ensure that no one is left behind without entrenching dependency on foreign aid will be a central challenge for the international community in the coming period.

## Employment, migration and remittances

The Lebanese **labor market has been characterized by numerous deficiencies**; jobless economic growth, endemic unemployment especially amongst youth, low participation of women, a large informal sector, and high segmentation amongst different lines such as nationals and migrant workers. Yet, and despite having ratified International Labour Convention no. 122 in 1976, Lebanon has yet to develop its first National Employment Policy that will tackle the different challenges facing decent job creation in the country through tripartite engagement by the government, employers and workers.

The Lebanese economy has been **historically unable to create sufficient sustainable and decent jobs**. Even during phases of economic growth, the Lebanese economy was only creating an estimated average of 3,400 new decent jobs annually, equaling around 1/6 of jobs needed for new entrants to the market<sup>352</sup>.

Post 2019, a significant proportion of the business community and many traders, small and medium scale shops and enterprises and even large institutions across all economic sectors (including educational and health institutions in the private sector) have been forced to shut down their

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<sup>346</sup> Oxfam, Development Finance International, [inequalityindex.org](http://inequalityindex.org), accessed in May 2022

<sup>347</sup> Assouad, L., ‘Rethinking the Lebanese economic miracle: the extreme concentration of income wealth in Lebanon 2005-2014’, World inequality lab, (2021)

<sup>348</sup> Gaspard, A, ‘Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002’. The Limits of Laissez-faire, Social, economic, Leiden: Brill, (2004)

<sup>349</sup> UNCT, ‘Rapid socio-economic impact assessment’, (2020)

<sup>350</sup> UNDP Lebanon, SDG 10 dashboard

<sup>351</sup> WFP, ‘Lebanon: Unprecedented number of people forced to rely on humanitarian assistance’, (2021).

<sup>352</sup> Dibeh, Fakh and Marrouch, ‘The poor and marginalized in Lebanon: labor market challenges and policy implications’, Sahwa, (2016)



business<sup>353</sup>. As a result, tens of thousands of people were put off work<sup>354</sup>, prompting a troubling brain drain and emigration of a substantial portion of the labor force (including skilled and professional workers such as medical doctors, nurses and midwives, teachers, professors and engineers to mention a few), and pushing a colossal and unprecedented number of Lebanese families (the absolute majority) into unprecedented outright want and abject poverty.

The understanding and analysis of the labour market in Lebanon is nonetheless constrained by the lack of up-to-date data, the latest national figures on unemployment dating back to 2019. While some conclusions can be expected relative to loss of jobs following the 2019 economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and their impact on a possible rise in informality and a drop in real income, conclusive observations require further data.

In 2019, the total labour force participation rate was 48.8 per cent, with a large difference between men (70.4 per cent) and women (29.3 per cent). Based on the labor force survey from 2018-2019 (the latest available national unemployment figures), the **unemployment rate** for Lebanese and non-Lebanese was 14.3 per cent for women and 10 per cent for men. Although it is estimated that the economic crisis in 2019 has led to an increase in the unemployment rate, this can't be confirmed due to the lack of national data on unemployment after 2019. Gender disparities are also estimated to be further increasing as a result of the crisis (see section 3.1 People for more details).

**Youth employment** is facing specific challenges. Even before the 2019 crisis half of employed young people were working in high-risk sectors<sup>355</sup> <sup>356</sup>, and almost 25 per cent were not in employment, education or training (NEETs). In the ongoing crisis context, it is expected that further disruptions of education and training, and limited prospects for work due to COVID-19, will lead to a significant increase of youth inactivity and NEET rates<sup>357</sup>.

Only some categories of jobs are open to **refugees and migrant workers** as others are limited to Lebanese nationals. The Lebanese labor law does not apply to the domestic work sector, which largely comprises migrant women, depriving domestic workers of basic legal protection and human and labour rights<sup>358</sup> (see also under section 3.1 and in chapter 4). The migrant domestic workers' particular legal status based on the exploitive kafala (sponsorship) system further discriminates against foreign workers and places them at an increased risk of human trafficking and forced labour. It is worth mentioning that women make up an estimated 76 per cent of all migrant workers and 99 per cent of migrant domestic workers who come to Lebanon for employment<sup>359</sup>. Despite coming to the country as workers, they are exempted from labour protection according to article 7 of the labour law as stated above<sup>360</sup> <sup>361</sup>. In 2020 and 2021, IOM assisted 1,107 migrants in vulnerable situations, 45 per cent of whom (503) were victims of trafficking, 86 per cent had been trafficked for the purpose of forced labour. They reported withholding of wages (79 per cent), forced confinement (77 per cent), and physical violence (45 per cent) as means of control. 12 per cent were subject to sexual abuse.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> The World Bank estimates that one in five people has lost their job since the fall of 2019, and that 61% of companies in Lebanon have reduced their permanent employees by an average of 43%

<sup>354</sup> Blominvest Bank, "Information International" Sal released estimates of sectoral Lebanese Unemployment in 2020' (2020) <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/33572/information-international-sal-released-estimates-of-sectoral-lebanese-unemployment-in-2020/>;

<sup>355</sup> The ILO has identified six high-risk sectors where job losses were workers were more susceptible to wage reductions and temporary or permanent job loss. These are: accommodation and food services, manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, real estate and business activities, and arts and entertainment.

<sup>356</sup> ILO, Rapid Diagnostic Assessment of Employment Impacts under COVID-19 in Lebanon, (2020)

<sup>357</sup> CAS, ILO, labour force and household living conditions survey, 2018-2019

<sup>358</sup> Leaders, the labour sector in Lebanon: legal frameworks, challenges, and opportunities, (2019)

<sup>359</sup> UN Women/IOM/ILO/AiW, 'Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Gender Perspective', (2021).

Ministry of Labour (MoL), Internal data on Work Permits (2019).

<sup>360</sup> UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Arab Institute for Women (AiW), 'Migrant Workers' Rights and Women's Rights – Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Gender Perspective', (2021)

<sup>361</sup> UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Arab Institute for Women (AiW), 'Migrant Workers' Rights and Women's Rights – Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Gender Perspective', (2021)

<sup>362</sup> IOM [Case Data \(2020-2021\)](#)

During 2021, **33 per cent of Syrian refugees aged 18 and above reported being employed**. Employment rate for refugees increased during 2021, but real income is considerably lower, condemning the majority of refugees to a life of working poverty). The presence of a limited social protection system without universal equal access forces individuals to accept employment opportunities with subpar working conditions to secure income.

Even though the share of Syrian refugees in employment has been rising, more than 55 per cent report that **humanitarian assistance makes up the main source of revenue** for the household<sup>363</sup>. In 2021, 57 per cent of FHH reported that their main source of income was either WFP e-cards or ATM cards from humanitarian organizations, an increase from 45 per cent in 2020, and far higher than for MHH (39 per cent). FHH in Baalbek-El Hermel (81 per cent) and Bekaa (89 per cent) were particularly dependent on cash assistance<sup>364</sup>. In 2021, the Syrian refugees' mean income from employment in a household only corresponded to about 20 per cent of the required Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). So, while it is estimated that there are more refugees working in 2021 than in 2019, the poverty levels are much higher in 2021 compared to 2019, leading to the conclusion that more refugees are working merely to survive<sup>365</sup>. This overreliance on cash assistance has increased protection risks on the refugee community, and even more so as donors are shifting into dollarization of assistance. A particularly vulnerable group are the women heads of household who receive the assistance, who are increasingly put under risks of exploitation and abuse, as well as targeted for mugging and theft.

One of the main features of the Lebanese economy is **high levels of informality** stemming from the chronic inability to create formal jobs and resulting in an informal market absorbing increasing shares of the labor force. This reality has been further exacerbated by the current economic crisis. According to a recent survey in 2021, informal labor amongst vulnerable<sup>366</sup> Lebanese now stands at 78 per cent, a number that rises to 95 per cent and 93 per cent respectively for Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Informal employment was slightly higher among men (78 per cent) than women (74 per cent). Lebanese workers earned more than their Syrian and Palestinian counterparts – 39 per cent of Lebanese workers earned less than LBP750,000<sup>367</sup>, compared with Syrians (74 per cent) and Palestinians (65 per cent)<sup>368</sup>. Ensuring decent job opportunities for all is hindered by many governance challenges, namely the weakness of labor organizations and lack of enforcement of labor market laws. Even though there is a positive correlation between educational attainment and formality, vulnerable communities show higher informality rates even among highly educated workers (52.2 per cent) and in a wide variety of sectors<sup>369</sup>. This indicates deep interlinkages between vulnerability and lack of access to formal employment.

The crisis has affected informally employed individuals and low wage workers the most, many of whom are working in high-risk sectors. Women, female-headed households, refugees, members of the LGBTQI+ community and migrants, particularly women migrant domestic workers<sup>370</sup> are also particularly disadvantaged as discriminatory practices and lack of protection impact their employment and livelihoods. Disparities exist between the formality of employment of Lebanese women (65.5 per cent) compared to non-Lebanese (11.1 per cent),<sup>371</sup> leaving those women further exposed to vulnerability.

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<sup>363</sup> VASyR, 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon', (2021)

<sup>364</sup> VASyR, 'Gender analysis', (2021)

<sup>365</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>366</sup> Vulnerable here is used to indicate poor Lebanese

<sup>367</sup> At the time of the drafting of the report in April 2022, the unofficial USD rate was around 23,800 LBP per 1 USD. This makes the 750,000 LBP earned equal 31.5 USD (500USD at the official rate) or approximately one dollar per day, considerably below the poverty line.

<sup>368</sup> ILO, 'Assessing informality and vulnerability among disadvantaged groups in Lebanon: a survey of Lebanese, and Syrian and Palestinian refugees', (2021)

<sup>369</sup> ILO, 'Assessing informality and vulnerability among disadvantaged groups in Lebanon: a survey of Lebanese, and Syrian and Palestinian refugees', (2021)

<sup>370</sup> Sometimes also employed in other sectors such as cleaning, gas/petrol stations, retail, agriculture

<sup>371</sup> World Bank; UN Women. The Status of Women in Lebanon: Assessing Women's Access to Economic Opportunities, Human Capital Accumulation and Agency, 2021

A large part of salaries for the employed population is now disbursed at rates considerably below the USD black-market rate, leading to increased vulnerability and heightened levels of poverty (no minimum wage correction has been made). The deteriorating economic conditions and the increasing loss of purchasing power have **increased emigration and brain drain** of different categories of professionals and reduced society's access to those professionals, especially those in the health sector (see also health sector assessment under section 3.1). Further prolongation of the ongoing crisis could hamper Lebanon's capacity to achieve full and productive employment by 2030, especially in the absence of a national policy.

Lebanon is estimated to be entering its 'third mass exodus' ranking 113 out of 144 globally in terms of its brain drain<sup>372</sup>. **Substantial emigration** (particularly among the young people) has been recorded over recent years. According to corroborative sources, between 300,000 to 400,000 Lebanese nationals, mostly of young, skilled and productive age, have emigrated from Lebanon by the late summer of 2021<sup>373</sup> and around 90 per cent of Lebanese with foreign passports have left the country. Several sectors, such as the health industry, are severely affected and rapidly being depleted from their human capital. The combination of the above dynamics ushers in a long-lasting and structural alteration of the population pyramid, with likely negative effects on the size and composition of the Lebanese labor force, and a substantial impact on intergenerational dynamics and the demographic dividend, as well as the dependency ratio. The exodus of highly skilled professionals in some sectors such as the health sector is jeopardizing the productivity and sustainability of these sectors.

While skilled workers, the middle class and dual citizens, are able to emigrate safely, those with low skills or limited resources do not have safe and regular migration opportunities. In 2020 and 2021, a growing number of refugees, largely Syrian, and Lebanese attempted to leave irregularly by sea to Cyprus and beyond, often with the help of smugglers and traffickers. Data from the General Security Directorate indicate a rise of over 170 per cent in numbers attempting to reach Cyprus by boat in 2020, compared to the previous year<sup>374</sup>. According to the AFP, at least 1,570 people, including 186 Lebanese, left on dangerous sea journeys from Lebanon in 2021.

The government of Lebanon adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2018, and committed to implementing comprehensive, rights-based migration policies. Adopted by UN Member States in 2018, the GCM is the first inter-governmentally negotiated global framework and sets out a common approach to managing international migration. Anchored in the 2030 Agenda, the GCM also serves as a roadmap to help achieve the migration-related aspects of the SDGs, such as Target 10.7 ("Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies") among many other migration-related Sustainable Development Goals and Targets.

The heavy and sustained brain-drain trends and the exodus of skilled and proficient labor force in particular are deeply worrying<sup>375</sup>. Reports suggest that "the permanent damage to human capital would be very hard to recover"<sup>376</sup>. Under the very telling heading "the continuous migration of talent will destroy the hope of reviving Lebanon", a new report using the findings of a recent survey carried out by the American University of Beirut suggests that "77 per cent of Lebanese youth (the highest

<sup>372</sup> AUB Crisis Observatory, August 2021

<sup>373</sup> Anadolu Agency, 230,000 Lebanese left Lebanon in 4 months: NGO, (2021) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/230-000-lebanese-left-lebanon-in-4-months-ngo/2395782>

<sup>374</sup> Data that IOM has from GSD indicate that 636 persons, including Lebanese and foreign nationalities, have been returned to Lebanon after attempting to leave via sea to Cyprus, in 2021

<sup>375</sup> The Nurses Syndicate estimated that 1,600 male and female nurses (almost 10 per cent of their members) have emigrated since 2019. The situation is the same with regards to members of the educational body, from which hundreds migrated to the Gulf countries and North America. At the American University of Beirut alone, more than 190 professors, about 15% of the teaching body have already been registered. <https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/202319.html>;

<sup>376</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon sinking into one of the most severe global crises episodes, amidst deliberate inaction, (2021) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes>;

per centage among all Arab countries)<sup>377</sup> said they wanted to leave the country<sup>378</sup>. The 2021 Gallup poll results for Lebanon report 63 per cent of people expressing disposition to leave the country permanently if they were able to. 85 per cent of the people interviewed in Lebanon were either finding it ‘difficult’ or ‘really difficult’ to survive on their income, nearly double the figures of 2019.

Naturally, the recent series of crises is a major driver of emigration due to mass business closures and the quick devaluation of the pound which saw wages value plummet. However, it is also important to keep in mind that emigration has been a feature of Lebanon's socio-economic landscape for decades, due to, among other things, a vast skills mismatch that still plagues the Lebanese labor market. On the one hand, there are no well-established channels to help guide the outputs of the educational system in terms of skill and to ensure the skills acquired by students are indeed needed by the labour market. On the other hand, lifelong learning remains weak throughout the country, severely limiting the opportunities available to develop new skills that are more in line with market demand. As a result, higher education institutions in Lebanon have been churning out large numbers of highly educated individuals in fields where domestic demand is limited, leaving these recent graduates few options but to emigrate and seek employment abroad. Meanwhile, technical and vocational training remains weak, both in terms of attractiveness to students – many of whom turn away due to the stigma related to technical education – and in terms of curricula that are sometimes obsolete due to technological advances in certain fields (see also assessment under section 3.1 on the education sector).

**Large-scale emigration** has a detrimental effect on many socio-demographic indicators, but it has contributed historically to the **high rate of remittances** in Lebanon (see above under Key Features of the Post-War Economic Model). The flow of those remittances through traditional and formal routes, namely the banking sector, has been impaired following the 2019 banking crisis. Outflow of remittances from foreign workers in Lebanon has also declined due to the economic and banking crisis. The presence of the very large Lebanese diaspora spread around the world could be the catalyst for sustainable economic development both through support for access to export markets as well as investments in the local economy. However, for Lebanon to tap into that potential source of investments, major reforms are required in terms of ease of doing business and transparency. Moreover, monetary and fiscal policy must also be crafted in a way to ensure capital flows are directed towards profitable investment opportunities that serve the diversification process and generate decent jobs for people in Lebanon.

There are anecdotal observations of **population moving from urban to rural or peri-urban areas** related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and socioeconomic crisis. In the absence of relevant data, the extent of these movements and their impact on the economy are topics deserving further research<sup>379</sup>. The rate of urbanization is expected to maintain an upward trend despite these probably temporary migration movements<sup>380</sup>. The lack of rural economic development plans and the country’s high degree of centralization are expected ultimately to hinder any significant urban population decrease (See also “Cities and Human Settlements” section below).

This new demographic trend could have a significant bearing on prospective programming. Although there are no official data, it might increase further if the economic crisis worsens, unemployment rises and the cost of living in cities increases in comparison to villages. Appropriate strategies to cope with this reverse internal migration could lead to the devolution of economic and social protection powers to municipalities and districts and to framing the prospective interventions in the context of expanded

<sup>377</sup> Reuters, ‘Explainer: how bad is the crisis in Lebanon?’, (2021) <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-bad-is-crisis-lebanon-2021-09-10/>;

<sup>378</sup> Sawah Press, ‘The continuous migration of talent will destroy the hope of reviving Lebanon’, (2021) <https://sawahpress.com/en/news/the-continuous-migration-of-talent-will-destroy-the-hope-of-reviving-lebanon-politics-reports-and-translations/>; <https://www.facebook.com/CrisisObservatory/>;

<sup>379</sup> France 24, ‘Escaping slow death in Beirut, Lebanese embrace farm life’, (2021) <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211203-escaping-slow-death-in-beirut-lebanese-embrace-farm-life>

<sup>380</sup> According to the [World Urbanization Prospects \(2018 Revision\)](#) published – before the onset of the ongoing crisis in Lebanon – by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the urban population in Lebanon as a per centage of the total population is expected to rise from over 88 per cent in 2018 to over 93 in 2050 (See graphs on [this page](#) by selecting “Lebanon” from the list of countries).

decentralization. Indeed, the latter has been perceived by many as one of the key reforms in the country since the early 1990s.

## Economic challenges and opportunities

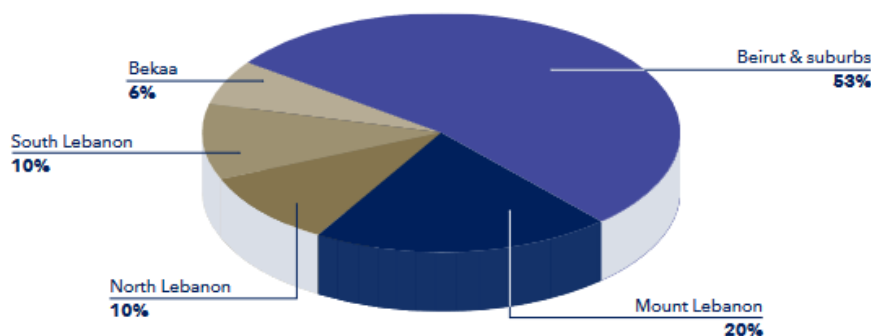
### Access to banking and financial services

The banking sector had been, in the past years, a stable and important contributor to the Lebanese economy, constituting over 7 per cent of the national GDP<sup>381</sup>. The high interest rate policy practiced by the Central Bank encouraged an inflow of capital into the Lebanese banking sector, primarily from the Arab region and the widespread Lebanese diaspora. The banking sector financed through bonds the post war reconstruction efforts, as well as budget deficits, at very high interest rates, resulting in 22 billion USD of profits for the commercial banks in the period between 1993 and 2018<sup>382</sup>. The banking sector's balance sheet stood at USD 234 billion in 2018, making it four times bigger than the country's GDP<sup>383</sup>.

The Association of Banks in Lebanon reported the presence of 63 banks with 1,058 branches in Lebanon in 2019. Those branches ensured access to banking and financial services across different regions of the country prior to the 2019 crisis with a clear concentration in Beirut and its suburbs. There as well, banking deposits and credits were largely concentrated with 66 per cent of total bank deposits and 74 per cent of total loans being in the capital<sup>384</sup>.

Figure 10: distribution of commercial bank branches, 2019

#### Geographical distribution of commercial bank branches 2019



The sectoral distribution of utilized credits in the financial sector was largely stable between 2015 and 2019. Trade and services received the highest per centage of credits (33 per cent), followed by construction (17 per cent), industry (11 per cent and agriculture (1.2 per cent). This is indicative of economic and sectoral priorities during that period.

At the same time, the banking sector faced **structural deficiencies which contributed to the 2019 collapse**, namely the exposure to risk through lending to the Lebanese government and Central Bank, as well as a financial structure that left banks exposed to sovereign, interest rate, and real estate risks<sup>385</sup>. At the onset of the economic crisis, and with the lack of a formal capital control law, commercial banks started implementing capital control measures, which contributed to eroding the

<sup>381</sup> UNCT SERP

<sup>382</sup> Krayem, D. 'Between the State and the 'State of Exception': Syrian Refugee Governance in Lebanon', (2020) (Doctoral thesis). <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.63086>

<sup>383</sup> UNCT, 'Rapid socio economic impact assessment', (2020)

<sup>384</sup> Association of Banks in Lebanon, statistical tables, (2019)

<sup>385</sup> International Monetary Fund, 'Lebanon financial system stability assessment', (2017)



confidence in the banking sector. An unofficial moratorium was put on all new loan disbursements, largely limiting access to finance, and affecting the state of investment and consumption in the economy, thus further constraining economic activity. The local economy has as well become mostly cash based.

The situation of the banking sector was further complicated by the presence of **multiple exchange rate systems**, managed by decrees issued by the Central Bank. Those practices are considerably altering the balance sheets of commercial banks, the accurate portrayal of which is critical to 1) calculate and agree on the losses incurred by the banking sector, and 2) allow for a technical process of restructuring of the banking sector. To date, no consensus on burden sharing of losses has yet been agreed by the main stakeholders.

Severe restrictions on capital outflows have hindered both access to goods and services outside of Lebanon and the ease of doing business. Economic agents have had to resort to the parallel market to purchase dollar banknotes, thus putting pressure on the exchange rate.

A solvent and functional banking sector, which is not the case currently, is a cornerstone to the materialization of opportunities linked to the productive sectors. Restructuring the banking sector should be included in the economic recovery plan, which should protect the rights of depositors and the role of financing recovery.

### Productivity and diversification

The growth of the Lebanese economy in the post-Civil War period has been closely linked to the tertiary sector, especially tourism and banking, and as well construction – focused principally on urban agglomerations, contributing to rural–urban migration, and unplanned urban sprawl<sup>386</sup> – all at the expense of agriculture and industry. Tertiary sector contribution to GDP is noted to be considerably higher than in other countries of the region. There exists today a need to innovate and diversify in the economy as a way out of the crisis.

**Figure 11: Value- Added (% of GDP) by sector**



Notes: Data for 2019; 2018 for Palestine.

Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) database.

**Lebanon’s agriculture sector, although small, is endowed with a variety of agro-climatic zones, giving it a comparative advantage in terms of diversity.** Inter-sectoral linkages, a steady contribution to GDP at roughly 4 per cent, and the weight of the sector in rural areas, all make agriculture’s role in the economy important. The sector employs 3.6 per cent of the labor force (43 per cent are women), with agriculture-related activities accounting for a significant share of the local GDP in the rural areas. Following the economic crisis, agricultural production is estimated to have declined by 38 per cent in

<sup>386</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, ‘National Urban Policies Programme in Lebanon: Diagnosis Report’, (2018) p. 18



2020 as compared to 2018 figures<sup>387</sup>. This is likely to impact the livelihood of the poorest as over 20 per cent of heads of households engaged in the sector are considered highly vulnerable<sup>388</sup>.

The costs of agriculture and food production are generally high, whether in terms of inputs, energy, water, transportation (notably after the closure of the Syrian border forcing producers to export using costlier means than land transportation), or equipment. The cost of energy has been exacerbated by the current economic crisis and the elimination of fuel subsidies. The high cost of production discourages local production and decreases the competitiveness of local food produce. Local food supply is therefore low and diminishing and relatively expensive, thus further threatening food security (please refer to the People section for more on food security and malnutrition).

Almost all supply chains in the agricultural sector are highly dependent on imports, including fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, making the sector highly vulnerable to trade interruptions and foreign currency denominated raw materials, affecting their affordability. The exchange rate crisis has prevented farmers from buying imported inputs. This has resulted in smaller planted areas and a major decline in total production. Shortages or cost increases for agricultural inputs put pressure on farmers' gross margins, reducing profits and impacting the livelihoods of farmers.

Most agriculture holdings have low levels of investment in equipment and infrastructure, and the mechanization of farms is frequently limited to small pieces of equipment, such as water and pulverization pumps. This is mainly due to the fact that agriculture holdings are small in size (micro and small establishments) which prevents economies of scale, in turn impacting the availability and diversity of the food produced for the local markets.

The competitiveness of the Lebanese agricultural sector can be enhanced by taking measures to address total factor productivity and technical changes at the sectoral level, while the productivity and profitability of farming can be improved with farm-level measures. A first step towards improving competitiveness and productivity is to promote the development of sector- and farm-level productive investments<sup>389</sup>.

The agri-food industry accounts for 2.9 per cent of the economy and 38 per cent of the industrial sector<sup>390</sup>. The agri-food system in Lebanon is dominated by an oligopolistic structure among wholesalers, retailers, distributors and importers controlling the market and leaving farmers little to no room for manoeuvre. This also limits investment, as connections with this oligopolistic structure are an essential for successful projects. Entrepreneurs need to invest their own capital and to benefit from an important social network and political connections to reduce costs and be protected from competitors<sup>391</sup>.

The agri-food system in Lebanon is subject to the myriad challenges that impede its ability to be effective and grow sustainably. The multiple crises that started in 2019 (economic, financial, political and health) have aggravated the situation in two ways: on the demand side, the drastic decrease in consumer purchasing power has limited access to food (increased poverty due to currency devaluation and hyperinflation) (see section People 3.1), and on the supply side, the rise in the cost of production including imported inputs has also limited production capacity. Figure 12 provides an overall description of the challenges facing the agri-food system in Lebanon. The top part of the graph depicts the main drivers challenging the development of the transformation of the core agri-food system activities (in the middle). The bottom of the graph illustrates the impacts of these drivers and their interaction with the core activities of the agri-food system.

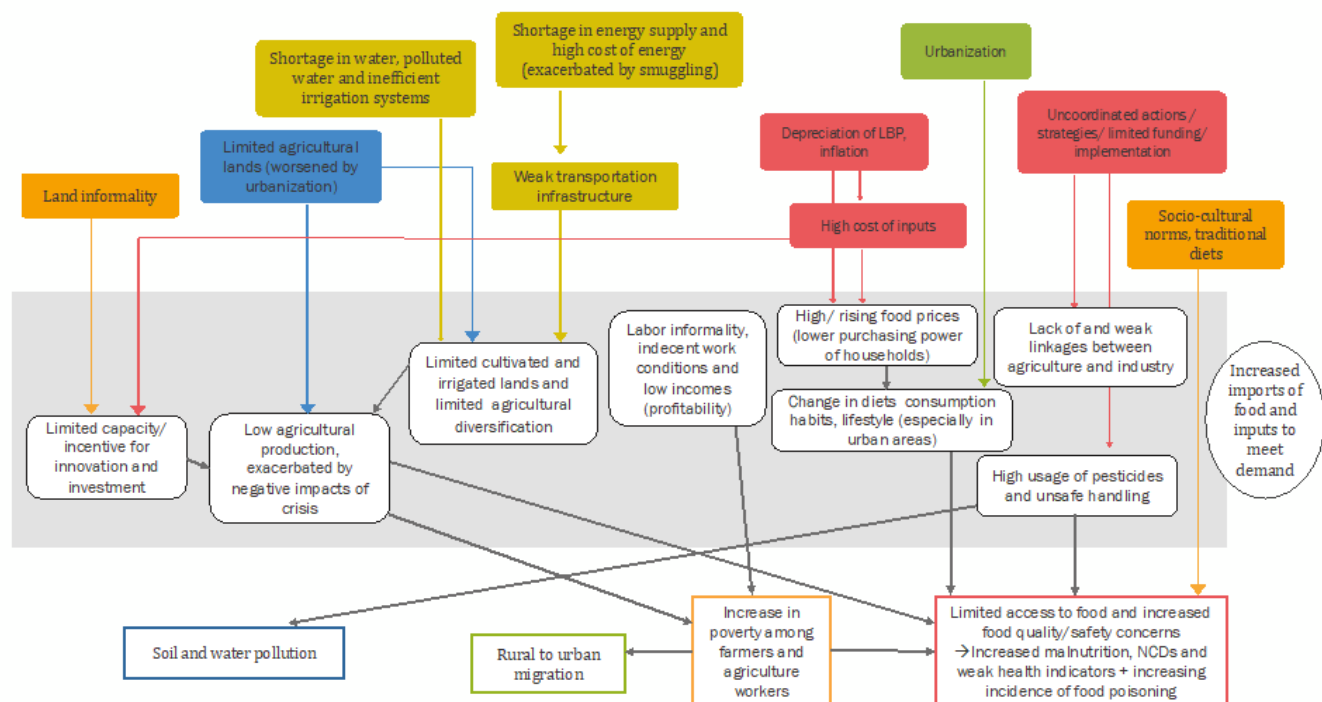
<sup>387</sup> UNCT, 'Rapid socio economic impact assessment', (2020)

<sup>388</sup> UN FAO, Lebanon at a glance

<sup>389</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5157en/cb5157en.pdf>

<sup>390</sup> UN FAO, Lebanon at a glance

<sup>391</sup> FAO, 'Lebanon Food System Assessment', Draft, Nov 2021 (Forthcoming publication).

**Figure 12: Challenges facing the Lebanese agri-food system**


Source: Draft, Nov 2021 (Forthcoming publication). Lebanon Food System Assessment)

The **industrial sector's contribution** to GDP is estimated at around 13 per cent in year 2021<sup>392</sup>, and the sector employs roughly 20 per cent of the labor force<sup>393</sup>. In 2018, the manufacturing sector contribution to GDP (~ USD 55 billion) was around 7.3 per cent<sup>394</sup> amounting to around USD 4 billion while its workforce share was around 10 per cent. According to the 2019 LFHLCs, women accounted for approximately 7 per cent of the total jobs in this sector. The industrial sector comprised of more than 7,000 registered establishments employing more than 200,000 workers; and, with MSMEs are the backbone of the industrial sector<sup>395</sup>. Firms with less than 19 workers generate about 20 per cent of gross MVA while those employing more than 100 workers generate about 50 per cent of gross MVA<sup>396</sup>.

**Industry suffered systematic marginalization during the past three decades because of policies** that locked the economy into a rent-seeking-consumerist mode, thus crippling the manufacturing sector. The failure to channel into productive investments some of the diaspora remittances and FDI that poured into the country over three decades (~ USD 150 billion), largely undermined the robustness and productivity of the economy as well as its capability to generate enough employment opportunities to meet the increasing number of entrants to the job market. The overvalued exchange rate also made it difficult to export, and the high interest rates on government bonds may have crowded out investment in other sectors.

On the other hand, **industry has suffered from chronic challenges** over the past 30 years<sup>397;398</sup>. These comprise low competitiveness due to high production costs particularly energy<sup>399</sup>, high land and labor costs, smuggling of goods across illegal border crossings, tax fraud or tax evasion at the legal ports of entry; unfair trade agreements leading to dumping on the Lebanese market of competing products

<sup>392</sup> The World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic monitor', (2021)

<sup>393</sup> CAS, ILO, 'Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey' (LFHLCs) 2018–2019

<sup>394</sup> UNIDO, (2018) <https://stat.unido.org/cip/Lebanon> accessed October 2020

<sup>395</sup> MoI, 2017

<sup>396</sup> MoI, 2018, Strategic plan for the development of the industrial zones (2018-2030)

<sup>397</sup> McKinsey & Company, 2018. Lebanon Economic Vision

<sup>398</sup> UNIDO, April 2020, Quick Assessment of October 17 (2019) crisis on industry (unpublished)

<sup>399</sup> MoI/UNIDO/ALI. 'The Lebanese Industrial Sector: Facts and Findings 2007', (2010)

that can be manufactured locally, unfair competition between licensed Lebanese companies and illegal non-licensed companies, shortage in skilled technical labor, sub-optimal transportation network, relatively high land transportation taxes and high custom taxes on imports, high bureaucracy, and prior to the collapse of the banking sector, high interest rates on USD bank loans reaching not less than 10.5 per cent in December 2019<sup>400</sup> and high interest rates on bank deposits reaching 13.5 per cent on LBP deposits on average in summer 2019<sup>401</sup>, a fact that discouraged investments in industry.

The economic and financial crisis that unfolded in October 2019 presented additional daunting challenges to industry. The capital control measures imposed by banks and the subsequent devaluation of the national currency led to existential challenges on manufacturing companies, including difficulties to import raw materials due to the lack of liquidity, lack of access to capital for investment, deprivation from differed payment facilities, increased production costs as a result of inflation and decreased purchasing power of consumers. Many companies had to reduce their personnel, or close or relocate to other countries. Additional challenges have been brought by COVID 19 pandemic which induced supply chain disruptions, increased global transportation costs, and forced lockdowns resulting in further losses.

Under the present conditions characterized by an acute shortage in foreign currency, the manufacturing sector is hardly able to substitute imported basic goods by locally produced ones thus failing to relieve the pressure on the trade balance deficit which is narrowing mostly because of reduced consumption rather than increase in locally manufactured goods. Another clear threat to the sector is the on-going brain drain. In 2021, the political crisis between Lebanon and the Arab Gulf countries imposed restrictions on the exports of Lebanese products to the Gulf countries. This has seriously affected the exporting Lebanese companies relying on the Gulf market, particularly UAE and KSA that account for 22 per cent of total Lebanese exports<sup>402</sup>, and which have been relatively spared from the implications of October 2019 crisis because of their capacity to export and their subsequent ability to attract foreign currency. In the absence of economic reforms and the continuous deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the country, this crisis with the Gulf countries has driven a number of large exporting Lebanese companies to relocate abroad in order to avoid closure, a fact that is further weakening the industrial sector<sup>403</sup>.

Despite the difficulties it inflicted on industry, the economic and financial crisis could potentially impose a revision of the Lebanese economic model and encourage **moving from a service and import based economy to a more sovereign and resilient economy based on productive sectors**. This was clearly stated in the Ministerial Statements of the Governments of Prime Minister Diab (February 2020) and Prime Minister Mikati (September 2021).

Industry is more and more seen as the springboard to attain better socio-economic conditions because of its capacity to contribute to local production substituting imported goods which deplete foreign reserves, to earn foreign currency through exports, and to provide employment and achieve some cost reduction resulting from the depreciation of the Lebanese Pound (lower salaries, lower rent, reduced price of some local inputs...). It is worth noting that most value chains in Lebanon are still import-reliant in different proportions, thus localizing value chains can significantly boost value added. Industry could also act as a prime mover to other sectors of the economy like agriculture, construction and other supporting services. An industrial sector properly adapted to the country's reality could help stop the plunge of the economy and eventually redress the course.

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<sup>400</sup> [Brite Indicators and Trends/BLOMINVEST BANK. 2020. Beirut Reference Rate on USD](#)

<sup>401</sup> [Brite Indicators and Trends/BLOMINVEST BANK. 2020. Beirut Reference Rate on LBP](#)

<sup>402</sup> UNRCO, Socio-Economic Note, October-November 2021

<sup>403</sup> Asharq Al-Awsat, Nov. 2021, Lebanon faces industrialists exodus triggered by crisis with Gulf countries

A robust, **productive industrial sector can alleviate economic pressure and ensure access to essential goods** to both Lebanese and refugee populations. Further diversification of the productive elements of the economy is also essential at this point to build more resilience.

Comprehensive sector development plans for both agriculture<sup>404</sup> and industry<sup>405</sup> have been drafted and adopted; however, their implementation will require commitment and partnerships with international development partners and private sector, before substantial public financial resources, which are largely unavailable due to limited fiscal space.

**The services sector with a GDP share of about 70 per cent**<sup>406</sup> was considerably affected by multiple crises and increasingly susceptible to political turmoil. Tourism was hit hard both by internal crises as well as COVID-19, the health and education sectors were affected particularly by the brain drain and inflation, construction has considerably slowed down, and the bankruptcy and insolvency of the banking sector in dire need of restructuring depletes its ability to promote economic growth through providing access to credit to productive sectors and businesses. The services economy, although characterized by low productivity, has a large female and highly skilled workforce and great potential to offer economic opportunities for a large part of the population once it is revitalized.

**The health sector industry** was flourishing before the crisis, with market size of private hospitalization close to USD 1 billion per year, offering around 30,000 employments. The pharmaceutical sector market size was estimated around USD 1.3 billion per year. Local pharmaceutical sector industry covered around 10 per cent of the local market needs.

**The digital and knowledge economy** is viewed today as one of the sectors that could herald the country's recovery<sup>407</sup>. While digital skills, local talent and education play a favorable role in the development of the sector, transitioning into a digital economy is hindered by many obstacles including in terms of infrastructure, inadequate legislative and regulatory frameworks, and the availability of open data<sup>408</sup>. In 2019, a ministry of state for investments and technology was established with the plan of transforming Lebanon into a regional hub for the knowledge economy and for innovation, relying on inter-ministerial cooperation and a favorable legislative and economic environment<sup>409</sup>. Following the resignation of the previous government in October 2019, plans were halted.

Lebanon's private sector, driven primarily by **MSMEs and entrepreneurship**, plays a central role in the country's economy, contributing about 80 per cent of GDP and accounting for 85 per cent of the workforce<sup>410</sup>. Small and medium enterprises in Lebanon represent 95 per cent of all companies in Lebanon and account for 50 per cent of national employment. According to the 2019 World Bank Enterprise Survey, 9.9 per cent of all these are co-owned by women. To fully unleash the potential of the private sector and MSMEs, institutional and governance challenges will need to be addressed<sup>411</sup>. MSME resilience was tested hard during the past couple of years, with many struggling and increasing employee layoffs by 10 per cent permanently and 22 per cent<sup>412</sup> temporarily. Targeting MSMEs with effective interventions can have great leverage in overcoming the challenges of the economic situation and decreasing needs, risk and vulnerabilities for large numbers of the Lebanese and non-Lebanese population.

<sup>404</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon national agriculture survey 2025

<sup>405</sup> Ministry of Industry, Lebanon industry 2025: the integrated vision for Lebanese industrial sector

<sup>406</sup> UNCT, 'Rapid socio economic impact assessment', (2020)

<sup>407</sup> Merhej and Baroud, 'The digital economy as an alternative in Lebanon', the Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut, (2020)

<sup>408</sup> Merhej and Baroud, 'The digital economy as an alternative in Lebanon', the Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut, (2020)

<sup>409</sup> Ministry of state for investments and technology, 'The road towards digital transformation: realizing the potential of the Lebanese knowledge economy action plan', (2019)

<sup>410</sup> GIZ, 'Employment and labour market analysis Lebanon', (2019)

<sup>411</sup> UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, (2017)

<sup>412</sup> UNCT, rapid socio economic impact assessment, (2020)

Driven mainly by MSMEs, before 2019, the **Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI)** represented one of the most dynamic sectors of the Lebanese economy. The Ministry of Finance estimated the participation of CCI in the Lebanese economy at 4.75 per cent of GDP<sup>413</sup> and 4.5 per cent of the official labour force<sup>414</sup>. The sector has been among the hardest hit by the crises.

Most of Beirut's culture and creative industries were established in the neighbourhoods affected by the port explosions<sup>415</sup>. Before 2019, the districts mostly affected by the 4 August Beirut explosion, otherwise called the 'red zone', held some 200 art and design entities, the highest concentration of the country<sup>416</sup>. This is a sector with high per centage of female workforce; more than 70 per cent of the employees of the entities in the red zone were women<sup>417</sup>. Today 55 per cent of those entities are closed either permanently or temporarily<sup>418</sup>.

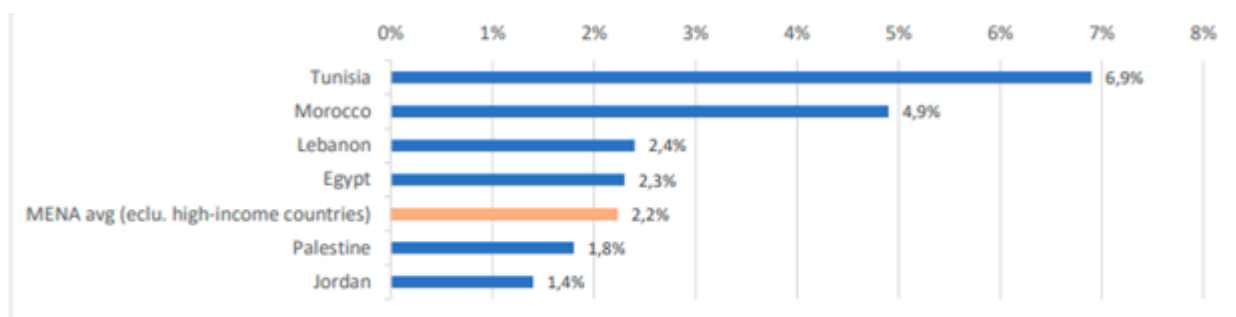
## Technology, innovation and research

Despite the presence of a well-developed education system in Lebanon (see section People 3.1), research and development (R&D), a key component to innovation, technology, productivity and growth, requires more attention and investment. Recent assessments show that spending on R&D in Lebanon amounts to only around 0.3 per cent of GDP, with a concentration of research activities in the medical domain<sup>419</sup>.

Lebanon ranked 92<sup>nd</sup> in the Global Innovation Index (GII) in 2021, down from 87<sup>th</sup> in 2020<sup>420</sup>. The GI measures innovation by looking both at the ecosystem and the outcome of innovation activities. Whereas Lebanon's institutional ecosystem for innovation is weak, it is partially compensated by the creativity of human capital and vibrant entrepreneurship. The massive brain drain since 2019 will undoubtedly affect research output and innovation.

Lebanon ranks slightly above the MENA average in terms of high tech exports as a percentage of manufactured exports in 2019, scoring 2.4 per cent compared to the MENA average of 2.2 per cent. Creating a more conducive environment for the growth of technology should have positive effects for economic growth and for the creation of high-skilled jobs, thus retaining well-trained professionals in the country and decreasing the brain drain.

**Figure 13: High-tech exports (% of manufactured exports)**



Notes: Data for 2019, excluding Lebanon (data for 2018) and MENA average (data for 2017).

Source: WDI database.

<sup>413</sup> IOF, 'The Contribution of Cultural and Creative Industries to the Lebanese Economy', (2020)

<sup>414</sup> UNIDO, 'Development of Clusters in Cultural and Creative Industries in the Southern Mediterranean', (2015)

<sup>415</sup> World Bank Group; European Union; United Nations, 'Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment', (2020)

<sup>416</sup> UNESCO, 'Beirut Cultural and Creative Industries Survey', (2020)

<sup>417</sup> UNESCO, 'Beirut Cultural and Creative Industries Survey', (2020)

<sup>418</sup> UNESCO, 'Beirut Cultural and Creative Industries Survey', (2020)

<sup>419</sup> UN Habitat and UN ESCWA, 'State of Lebanese cities', draft (2021)

<sup>420</sup> World Intellectual Property Organization WIPO, Global innovation index 2020 and 2021

All people living in Lebanon are covered by a mobile network, with 78 per cent being internet users<sup>421</sup>. Internet connectivity declined after 2019, with anecdotal reports that the main service providers are unable to cover the cost of repairs in USD due to the devaluation. Internet interruptions pose a risk to all sectors, and notably security services, airport, banks, central bank, medical and educational institutions and the judiciary. Risks of internet interruptions have pushed businesses to either turn to private sector suppliers or leave the country to ensure continuity of their operations<sup>422</sup>. Although prices of communication have so far remained unchanged, an increase in price levels threatens to leave part of the population without cell phone access.

## Regional economic integration

Lebanon's relatively open trade regime has both the **Arab countries**<sup>423</sup> and the **EU**<sup>424</sup> as its closest **geographical trade partners**. However, to fully exploit the great potential for expanding trade and economic integration with these partners, remaining challenges in using the corresponding free trade agreements (FTAs) need to be addressed. So far, the impact of the FTAs on the Lebanese economy has been negative or at best negligible<sup>425</sup>.

The main barriers to implementing the FTAs are divided into two categories: 1) the FTAs themselves include only small commitments to market access, their non-tariff measures are complex and prevalent, and perspectives for the development of regional value chains are largely absent, 2) existing domestic policies are often characterized by the absence of any diversification and growth promotion strategy<sup>426</sup>. The Ministry of Industry's review of the FTA with European countries notes that – while technical and administrative barriers haven't allowed Lebanon to benefit from the FTA – the policies have affected the Lebanese economy negatively through a hefty increase in imports<sup>427</sup>.

A renegotiation of the FTAs that would allow proper regional integration and have positive economic and social repercussions for Lebanon should be a priority for the coming period.

## Cities and human settlements

### Housing conditions and informal areas

Lebanon's urban population was estimated at 88.9 per cent in 2020<sup>428</sup>. The main cities of Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, and Tyre host 65 per cent of the Lebanese population, 90 per cent of Palestine refugees and between 18<sup>429</sup> and 30<sup>430</sup> per cent of displaced Syrians in those cities and their suburbs. Vulnerable groups of poor Lebanese, refugees and migrants are more likely to reside in informal areas on the outskirts of core urban centres. Urban expansion has increased in the last few decades and is expected to continue, primarily in the informal areas where the impoverished residents of Lebanon are likely to reside, highlighting the **need to guide urbanization – through good, evidence-based urban**

<sup>421</sup> The World Bank, 'Lebanon dashboard' (2017 data)

<sup>422</sup> Saoud, D., 'Internet woes risk isolating Lebanon in crisis', UPI, (2022)

<sup>423</sup> Lebanon's exports to GAFTA in 2018 were of 1,517,628 thousand USD, while imports stood at 2,545,853 thousand USD as per the latest official statistics issued by the Ministry of Economy in Lebanon.

<sup>424</sup> The European commission's website reports on the trade picture of Lebanon: The EU is Lebanon's biggest trade partner, accounting for 30.3 per cent of its total trade in goods in 2020: 38.0 per cent of Lebanon's imports came from the EU and 9.7 per cent of Lebanon's exports went to the EU.

<sup>425</sup> UN ESCWA, 'Ex post evaluation of Lebanon's free trade agreements: the cases of the FTA with the European Union and PAFTA with the Arab countries', (2019)

<sup>426</sup> UN ESCWA, 'Ex post evaluation of Lebanon's free trade agreements: the cases of the FTA with the European Union and PAFTA with the Arab countries', (2019)

<sup>427</sup> Lebanese Ministry of Industry, 'Assessment of The EU-Lebanon Association Agreement on Trade of Industrial Products Report', (2016)

<sup>428</sup> The World Bank, 'Urban population (%of total population)-Lebanon', (2020)

<sup>429</sup> UNHCR estimates

<sup>430</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)



**management and planning** based on an area-based, multisectoral approach<sup>431</sup> – in a way that has the potential to contribute to sustainable development<sup>432</sup>.

Already before the Syria crisis, about 50 per cent of the urban population in Lebanon was estimated to reside in informal areas (described as slums), and the metropolitan area of Beirut included 24 informal areas or impoverished neighborhoods which hosted 20 per cent of the population<sup>433</sup>. Since then, the rapid and large-scale influx of Syrian refugees, combined with weak urban planning, the difficulty to enforce rules and regulations, and unaffordable housing prices, led to further proliferation of informal and disadvantaged areas at the peripheries of major urban centers<sup>434</sup>.

While a range of national and local state entities take part in activities and projects related to urban planning in Lebanon, there is a **lack of vision on sustainable urban management and a lack of institutional setup for the governance and implementation of this vision**. Institutional capacities are weak and fragmented, with overlapping mandates and legislation. National sectoral and intersectoral strategies are also missing<sup>435</sup>. Local authorities play a key role but are most often financially strained and lack technical and human resource capacity and political buy-in to design and implement local strategic and development plans. In addition, the lack of urban data in governmental institutions is a serious constraint of the whole system to respond to needs based on evidence and to improve any gaps. The lack of funds to implement developmental interventions, including in urban areas, is highlighted especially in recent years, when responding to the series of crises has been prioritized<sup>436</sup>. Service provision in informal areas is extremely inadequate, strained by the complexities around the legality and governance of these areas<sup>437</sup>.

**Access to housing** has been largely unequal, to a large extent due to a missing national housing strategy since the end of the Civil War<sup>438</sup>. The ongoing economic crisis has decreased the ability of residents to access adequate housing, due to the loss of income (related to unemployment and/or to the ongoing devaluation of the national currency). Channels of housing finance have been halted following the banking sector crisis. The rental housing market – which is becoming increasingly vital given the ongoing crisis – has had a long-standing poor regulatory framework that has resulted, on the one hand, in the shortage of units at affordable rental rates in main urban centers, and on the other hand, in the proliferation of an unregulated informal rental market especially in the disadvantaged and informal areas, where vulnerable groups seek to find affordable housing and are often faced with exploitative practices, weak security of tenure, and poor living conditions. Furthermore, existing legislation and practices infringe on the right to adequate housing of certain vulnerable population groups. Security of tenure is particularly a problem for old tenants, refugees, migrants, but also for members of the LGBTQI+ community who continue to be illegally evicted on a regular basis<sup>439</sup>. Evictions of Syrian refugees – who mostly hold informal housing arrangements<sup>440</sup> – are also common (eviction threat rate stands at 5.5 per cent) and have increased following the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Refugees continue to live in conditions below humanitarian

<sup>431</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021), pp. 3-4. See the UN-Habitat city profiles ([Beirut](#), [Tyre](#) and [Tripoli](#)) and the [UN-Habitat–UNICEF neighbourhood profiles](#) as area-based data collection tools; and UN-Habitat's National Urban Policy approach (UN-Habitat Lebanon, National Urban Policies Programme in Lebanon: [Diagnosis Report](#), 2018).

<sup>432</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021). The role of well-managed urbanization in enhancing sustainable development is well recognized in the New Urban Agenda (<https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>).

<sup>433</sup> ODI, 'Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace' The case of Lebanon', (2019) <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12911.pdf>

<sup>434</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021), p. 126. See also the [498 most disadvantaged areas](#) at cadastral and subcadastral level in Lebanon identified by UN-Habitat and UNICEF in late 2017–early 2018, as part of their joint [neighbourhood profiling project](#).

<sup>435</sup> For reference, see the three forthcoming publications of UN-Habitat Lebanon on national sectoral (housing and transport) strategies: Guide for Mainstreaming Housing in Lebanon's National Urban Policy (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021); Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021); and Lebanon's National Urban Policy Synthesis Report: Intersection of Housing and Transport (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021).

<sup>436</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

<sup>437</sup> See, for example, these sources about Palestinian gatherings/adjacent areas of Palestinian camps by UN-Habitat and UNDP (2010, 2014).

<sup>438</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide For Mainstreaming Housing in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021).

<sup>439</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

<sup>440</sup> [UN-Habitat \(2021\)](#) and [UN-Habitat and UNHCR \(2018\)](#).

standards with over half (57 per cent) of Syrian refugee families living in overcrowded shelters, shelters below humanitarian standards, and/or shelters in danger of collapse<sup>441</sup>. In 2020-2021, 16 per cent of MHH and 10 per cent of FHH moved or were evicted due to being unable to pay rent. The gender analysis of the VASyR data suggests that FHH (33 per cent) were almost twice as likely as MHH (19 per cent) to be living in non-permanent shelter and almost all FHH in non-permanent shelters were in tents. The per cent of FHH living in tents increased slightly from 27 per cent in 2020 to 32 per cent in 2021. Relatedly, the proportion of FHH in substandard housing also increased from 39 per cent to 46 per cent, a concerning trend. In 2021, 20 per cent of migrant households surveyed in Akkar and North lived in either a garage (10 per cent) or a tent (10 per cent)<sup>442</sup>. The higher rate of FHH living in informal tented settlements is estimated to be associated to the increased willingness to live in a community to mitigate safety and other protection threats.

The explosions of 4 August 2020 in the Port of Beirut widely damaged the urban core, over a widespread extension representing almost 1/3 of the city, with damages across densely populated and historic urban areas.<sup>443</sup> This unprecedented situation forced most residents to evacuate their damaged houses as scarce compensations were not enough to restore. Lots of initiatives took place to avoid the total eviction of the areas' residents. The transitional law n.194 was issued in early October freezing the sale and rearrangements of property rights for a period of one year (October 2021), renewable for one additional year. Additionally, according to this law (Art.7), the Ministry of Culture/DGA is mandated to prepare the Action Plan for the protection and rehabilitation of the urban damaged areas, within the set time of the transitional law (1 year, renewable).

### Access to infrastructure and energy

After the Civil War's end in 1990, reconstruction efforts expanded the road network in Lebanon, without developing a national land transport strategy that encompasses alternative transport modes<sup>444</sup>. Generous budget allocations – around 25 per cent of all Council for Development and Reconstruction's infrastructure expenditures during 1992–2012 – were mainly targeting road works and roadway projects because of **heavy reliance on private cars as the primary mode of transportation**<sup>445</sup>. This has had considerable implications in terms of costs to the environment (see section 3.2 Planet) and economic inefficiencies due to traffic, with an estimated cost of the externalities of congestion and traffic at 5-10 per cent of GDP.<sup>446</sup> In spite of large investments and reliance on the country's road network, an MoD survey in 2020 found that 21 per cent of municipalities reported that their main roads were in "bad" condition<sup>447</sup>. Targeting road infrastructure almost exclusively without investments in sustainable transport modes has contributed to the proliferation of an informal transport network that caters to the needs of disadvantaged groups who do not own cars.

Following the deterioration of the value of the Lebanese pound imported goods have increased considerably in price, including fuel. **Fuel prices in LBP skyrocketed**, reaching over 350,000 LBP per 20 liters of petrol, or more than half the value of the monthly minimum wage. This has made using private individual cars increasingly unaffordable for an increasing segment of the population and considerably limited their mobility. This has also inflated the cost of using the informal transport network (buses, vans, etc.), overburdening vulnerable groups who heavily and often solely rely on this network for their mobility. The cost of transportation of goods has increased as well, further constraining the

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<sup>441</sup> VASyR, 2021

<sup>442</sup> Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA), 2021

<sup>443</sup> World Bank Group; European Union; United Nations, 'Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment', (2020)

<sup>444</sup> UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>445</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021); UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>446</sup> The World Bank, 'Project appraisal document for a greater Beirut public transportation service', (2018)

<sup>447</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021)

purchasing power of a large segment of the population. The **lack of functional transport system in Lebanon** remains the root cause of all above mentioned issues.

Widespread **lack of access to electricity** has become an acute and very visible problem during recent crises. It has brought to the fore the wide implications this issue has on sustainability and the vast investments necessary in this sector, linked to the overall economic recovery of the country, with most economic focus based in cities. Lifesaving services such as hospitalization have been severely affected by the fuel crisis, necessitating emergency support from the UN to maintain the hospitals up and running amidst the COVID-19 latest wave of outbreak. That said, Lebanon has been facing chronic power shortages for many years which affected both households and businesses. Repeated attempts have failed in mitigating these challenges, let alone in fixing the national electricity system. The Electricite du Liban (EdL) faces problems at every level for the supply of electricity, ranging from generation to maintenance, collection and technical losses. It is estimated EdL's losses have totalled around USD 23.1 billion between 2001 and 2020<sup>448</sup>. One example of inefficiency is EdL's operating cost per kWh which is 0.29 USD compared to 0.08 USD as a MENA region median<sup>449</sup>. While the solutions for the electricity problem in Lebanon have long been studied, the reform of the sector requires foremost political will and consensus<sup>450</sup>.

Whereas Electricite du Liban is mandated as the sole producer and supplier of electricity in Lebanon, the state utility's supply of electricity has been down to just a few hours per day. This has given the providers of **diesel-powered private generators** a large role in electricity production. Those operate mostly at neighborhood level at very high cost and contribute to pollution and climate change (see section 3.2. Planet). While private generators and sustainable energy sources such as solar panels help secure electricity supply for some households, many find themselves incapable of covering the cost of substitutes which are earmarked in USD, thus further increasing inequalities and hardship in the country. This also has a negative impact on the sustainability of health services, such as hospitalization and vaccination centers.

**Public spaces**, including streets, in major Lebanese cities are often in a bad condition (suffering from lack of green and permeable cover, lack of equipment, hazardous power cabling, bad lighting, non-disability-friendly access, etc.), hindering residents' access to safe, well-managed and inclusive (green) spaces that could promote social stability and public health, and have positive environmental impacts<sup>451</sup>. For example, of Lebanese households that reported women feeling unsafe in certain areas, around 62 per cent mentioned streets/neighborhoods as unsafe locations, around 39 per cent markets, and around 27 per cent public transportation – with similarly high per centages also reported among Palestine refugees and migrant households<sup>452</sup>.

**The need to upgrade the infrastructure as a driver of economic growth has been at the heart of the Capital Investment Program (CIP)** prepared by the Government in 2018 as part of CEDRE conference on economic recovery. The CIP proposed the improvement of the following physical infrastructure sectors: transport, water and irrigation, wastewater, electricity, telecommunications, solid waste, cultural heritage, infrastructure for three new industrial zones and for one free economic zone<sup>453</sup>. The implementation of the CIP has been halted with the onset of the financial and socio-economic crises in 2019. Its revival would be closely linked to the structural reforms to be undertaken by the government and to the outcome of its negotiations with the IMF.

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<sup>448</sup> Byblos bank, 'Lebanon this week', March 15, (2021)

<sup>449</sup> American University of Beirut, 'Electricite du Liban in numbers', (2017)

<sup>450</sup> UN Resident Coordinator's Office, electricity sector state of affairs note, (2021)

<sup>451</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021), pp. 150-154. Also see UN-Habitat Lebanon, 'Guide for Mainstreaming Transport and Mobility in Lebanon's National Urban Policy', (2021)

<sup>452</sup> Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment 2021: [Protection Sector Analysis Table](#)

<sup>453</sup> [Government of Lebanon. 2018. Capital Investment Program](#)-CEDRE (April 18, 2018)

## 3.4 PEACE, JUSTICE & GOVERNANCE

*“ We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”<sup>454</sup>*

This section assesses key themes and issues linked to SDG 16 and its targets, including achieving peaceful, non-violent and inclusive societies for sustainable development (including equitable and inclusive cities that are well-planned and managed in an integrated manner), effective rule of law, reduction of corruption, participatory and representative decision-making. It also focuses on building an effective state with accountable, inclusive institutions based on a shared national identity and long-term vision.

This chapter is constituted of three sub-sections: 1) Peace and security; 2) Governance; and 3) Human Rights.

### Peace and conflict

#### Lebanon’s history of conflict

The impact of the Civil War remains present in the collective memory of those in Lebanon given the absence of a comprehensive civilian reconciliation process. The unknown fate of the approximately 17,000 disappeared persons from the Lebanese Civil War still haunts the families of the missing as their right to know the truth has been ignored for decades. The history of Lebanon remains heavily contested and is not holistically featured in the educational curriculum in the Lebanese schools. Living in a country that has failed to reconcile its violent past encumbers the ability of Lebanese to deal with continuing societal tensions, or to manage and mitigate conflict, and it exacerbates vulnerability to all types of violence, including gender-based violence.

In November 2018, the Law 105 on Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons in Lebanon was passed by the Lebanese Parliament, establishing an independent national commission. In June 2021, four members of the national commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons resigned from the commission. Despite that, the remaining six members, including 3 women, conducted the internal elections and nominated a President, Deputy for the President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Subsequently, the national commission engaged in developing their bylaws, and in collecting and documenting human rights violations including enforced disappearance in Ansar and Khiam detention camps with the support of OHCHR. The commission has also engaged in various advocacy efforts for the ratification of the Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearance. However, the commission is still in need of financial and material resources to enable it effectively to carry out its work.

### Peace and security today

The political economy that emerged from the Civil War has since shaped the economic, political and social trajectory that culminated in multiple compounding crises since 2019.<sup>455</sup> Productive sectors such as agriculture<sup>456</sup> and industry were largely ignored, while a growth model focused on finance, services and real estate was adopted and, on the whole, mismanaged. In tandem with austerity measures and successive policy failures by the Central Bank, this strategy was implemented throughout the 1990s and 2000s, in addition to a range of other policies that created a rentier

<sup>454</sup> General Assembly Resolution 70/1, ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, (2015)

<sup>455</sup> For instance, see Daher, J., ‘Lebanon: How the Post War’s Political Economy Led to the Current Economic and Social Crisis’, (2022)

<sup>456</sup> By 2019, agriculture constituted just 3% of GDP, down from 9% in 1974 (World Bank, Lebanon)

economy that generated wealth for a few in an extractive system of governance, as expanded on in the following sections.<sup>457</sup> This inequitably concentrated wealth in the hands of political and economic elites and resulted in significant social and spatial inequalities.<sup>458</sup> By 2019, 70.6 per cent of the country's wealth was owned by the top 10 per cent,<sup>459</sup> driving the public's deeply and rightly held sense of social and economic injustice.

Successive political crises since October 2019 amid an accelerating financial and economic meltdown, have revealed the full extent of the failures of Lebanon's economic and governance model. The government's inability, in part as a result of political paralysis, to firmly and decisively address an economic crisis that has impoverished large segments of the population and rapidly increased humanitarian needs, has eroded trust in state institutions and contributed to heightened risk of instability, social unrest and other forms of conflict. This was aggravated by competition over scarce resources such as health services, reflected in recurrent violence against health care workers.<sup>460</sup> This competition over resources has also raised sectarian tensions and deepened political polarization, increased tensions between Lebanese and refugees, and within those groups, impaired the ability of security forces to provide security and stability due to the impact of the crisis; seen the proliferation of (transnational) organized crime; including human trafficking and migrant smuggling; increased violence against women – in addition to other forms of violence, especially, those caused by hate speech and disinformation.

While nearly all threats to security pre-existed the crisis, they have been exacerbated by the unprecedented economic deterioration and decline in living conditions.<sup>461</sup> As explained in the Prosperity section, Lebanon's GDP contracted sharply in 2019-21, and this contraction is having severe consequences across all strata of Lebanese society, particularly the most vulnerable.<sup>462</sup> The long-standing inequities in access to basic services such as health have been exacerbated by these complex crises, adding to social tension. Long-standing unmanaged urbanization, as described in the Prosperity section, has led to inequalities in and competition over people's access to basic urban services and utilities, as well as lack of public goods that promote social interaction, such as open spaces. This is also linked to social tensions between groups, including between refugee and host communities.<sup>463</sup>

In this context of deteriorating economic conditions, non-state armed groups continue to operate outside of the control of the state and its security institutions. While most non-state armed groups were integrated into the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) after the Civil War<sup>464</sup>, some maintained their arms, while others have transformed themselves into modern day political parties. Hezbollah in particular maintained and gradually enhanced its military capabilities under the "people, army, resistance" doctrine to resist the continued occupation of Lebanese territory and deter perceived Israeli aggression against Lebanon. Lebanon's relations with its neighbors continue to be key determinants of its peace and stability and it remains an arena of contest between vying regional powers. Iran's influence in Lebanon, not least through its proxy Hezbollah, has driven tensions between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia and other member states of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)<sup>465</sup>,

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<sup>457</sup> On extractive institutions, see for instance Acemoglu D. & Robinson J., 'Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty', (2012)

<sup>458</sup> Reinoud Leenders, 'Spoilers of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Post-war Lebanon', (2012)

<sup>459</sup> Daher, J., 'Lebanon: How the Post War's Political Economy Led to the Current Economic and Social Crisis', (January 2022)

<sup>460</sup> Itar, Eugénie<sup>a,b</sup>; Carron, Pierre Nicolas<sup>b</sup>; Khoury, Abdo<sup>c,d</sup>; Souaiby, Nagi<sup>e,f</sup> Crisis within the crisis: violence towards Lebanese emergency department workers, European Journal of Emergency Medicine: April 2022 - Volume 29 - Issue 2 - p 93-94

<sup>461</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Managing Lebanon's Compounding Crises', (28 October 2021): <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/east-mediterranean-mena/lebanon/228-managing-lebanons-compounding-crises>

<sup>462</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon's Crisis: Great Denial in the Deliberate Depression', (25 January 2022)

<sup>463</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities', (2021), p. XIII, 175

<sup>464</sup> See for instance: <https://lebanesestudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/c368be59.-The-demobilisation-of-the-Lebanese-Militias-Elizabeth-Picard.pdf>

<sup>465</sup> United States Institute of Peace, 'What's Behind the Lebanon-Gulf Diplomatic Row?', (November 2021)



Overall, the precariousness of Lebanon's current relative peace is reflected in the Positive Peace Index which measures a range of factors salient to building positive peace.<sup>466</sup> The Positive Peace Index found that feelings of safety deteriorated in Lebanon more than anywhere else in the world between 2014 and 2019, with 81 per cent of people stating that they feel less safe.<sup>467</sup>

Lebanon's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP WPS) continues to be implemented despite the challenging context. It provides an important framework for action for peace and security. As peace and security continues to be threatened in Lebanon, there is an urgent need for NAP WPS to be leveraged as a sustainable entry point for change, reform and stability.

As of today, there are four main threats to peace which emerge from this peace and security context:

### 1) Intra-Lebanese political polarization, inter-sectarian and intra-sectarian risks for conflict

Lebanon's Civil War ended in 1989 with the adoption of the Taif agreement. The agreement reinforced the principles of unity, democracy, equality and sovereignty, called for disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militia, and rebalanced the country's sectarian power-sharing formula via a range of political reforms. Among others, it reduced the executive powers of the Presidency, which was transferred to the Cabinet, and created equality between Christians and Muslims in the Parliament, Cabinet, and top-level civil service positions. Whereas on the one hand the Taif agreement enshrined political sectarianism, it also envisaged abolishing this system over time including by deconfessionalizing Parliament and the subsequent creation of a confessional-based Senate, merit-based appointments in the public sector, and administrative decentralization. However, these initiatives remain pending to date while sectarianism has entrenched and affected all state-building efforts. Political decision-making has frequently been beholden to sectarian vetoes, at times paralyzing the country until the key players arrived at a mutually acceptable deal, at the detriment of the public good. The excesses of sectarianism have undermined effective and efficient governance, the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, and weakened public service provision along non-sectarian lines.

At the same time, equivocal interpretations of constitutional texts and capitalization on the defects of the governance system for political gains and power maximization have resulted in repeated, often disruptive and prolonged paralysis of key state institutions, including Parliament, the Presidency, and the formation and functioning of the Council of Ministers, jeopardizing policy- and decision-making in the public interest.<sup>468</sup> In reaction to this paralysis and faced with growing needs of the citizenry stemming from economic decline, political rhetoric has sharpened with sectarian language and threats of coercion more commonly featuring in the national discourse, rather than political negotiation through institutional channels. With much of Lebanon's political actors, groups and relationships tied to sectarian identity, politico-sectarian fault lines have driven inter- and intra-communal tensions, and increased the risk of sectarian-based conflict.<sup>469</sup> These tensions manifested, for example, in violent conflict in Tayouneh in October 2021 between supporters of different political groups.

The current turmoil in the country has adversely affected the operational effectiveness of the ISF, and critical support is needed to ensure the force is cushioned against its collapse. Lack of means to carry out their daily work makes the ISF not only inefficient but also lacking in capacity in cases of emergency interventions. The security forces are further limited by their lack of female representation: women make up 3.6 per cent of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and 4.7 per cent of the General Security

<sup>466</sup> As defined here, for example: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/defining-the-concept-of-peace/>

<sup>467</sup> <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GPI-2021-web-1.pdf>

<sup>468</sup> The expiration of the mandates of 7 out of 10 members of the Higher Judicial Council in May 2021, demonstrates this paralysis: <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2018/04/19/lebanons-political-system-leads-to-paralysis-and-corruption>

<sup>469</sup> Take for instance increasing propensity to violence taken in tandem with growing negative relations recorded between Lebanese groups, as per the Regular Survey on Social Tensions Throughout Lebanon surveys (Wave XII)



personnel.<sup>470</sup> In 2019, women made up 5 per cent of the LAF, including eight female generals spread across administrative and medical units, and 17 female colonels, with a total of 57 women in its officer corps.<sup>471</sup> In December 2021, the LAF established a Gender department headed by a female officer to foster gender mainstreaming within all LAF's units. The lack of sufficient internal security and law enforcement poses the danger of a power struggle between different political families as is already the case in Tyre, for instance.

The municipal police also play a critical role in providing community level security, as recent studies have shown.<sup>472</sup> However, shortages in funding have led to a noticeable decrease in the number of municipal police agents as many municipalities can no longer afford them. This leaves local services stretched and an increased risk of local informal groups providing security arrangements instead.<sup>473</sup> These issues pose a significant challenge to Lebanon's development given the key contribution that functional security and rule of law sector actors have in ensuring stability.

**Violent extremism:** Within a context of political polarization and economic decline, conditions for violent extremist ideologies can emerge, particularly but not exclusively in impoverished regions, though the extent to which this threat has fully re-emerged is unclear.<sup>474</sup> With widespread unemployment and with migration not being an option for many youth from disadvantaged communities, these groups are at risk of being pulled into violent extremist groups<sup>475</sup>, or of being trafficked by networks operating in the region.<sup>476/477</sup> To address this threat, the GoL has endorsed a National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism, which features, amongst other issues, gender considerations that are mainstreamed throughout the plan.

**Crime & organized crime:** A more immediate and regular threat for Lebanon is crime, organized crime and general insecurity. Data from the ISF demonstrate that from January to February 2021, homicides increased by 45.5 per cent and thefts by 144 per cent compared to the same period in 2020, while national and international NGOs reported that deteriorating community security across all regions has been increasing thefts and direct physical confrontations.<sup>478</sup> Crime, in addition to often being a form of violence in itself, can escalate into other forms of political and sectarian-based violence if disputes around incidents are not well managed, or if impunity remains for the crimes. Lebanon is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries in the Global Crime Index, placing it 5<sup>th</sup> highest in Western Asia, driven in large part by it being on a transit route for trafficking in narcotics including cocaine and captagon, hashish and marijuana.

## 2) Social unrest

Nationwide protests that erupted in October 2019 were the culmination of multiple underlying social, political and economic factors that were then catalyzed by several proximate factors. On 2 September 2019, the Prime minister had declared an economic state of emergency, then authorities failed to manage over 100 wildfires spread across the country; an event quickly followed by an announcement that the government would introduce a tax on the use of WhatsApp. The national protests that followed were initially overwhelmingly peaceful, and across 2019 and 2020, only approximately 15

<sup>470</sup> Hivos 2017.

<sup>471</sup> Ghanem 2020

<sup>472</sup> For instance see *Evolution of attitudes vis-à-vis municipal and other policing forces among the Lebanese population: Service Orientation, Duty/Obligation to Obey, Rule of Law*, January 2020.

<sup>473</sup> Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR), 'Conflict Analysis – Lebanon', (November 2021)

<sup>474</sup> [https://carnegie-](https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/85930?utm_source=rssemail&utm_medium=email&mkt_tok=MDk1LVBQVj04MTMAAAGBNKuz0zp1qvDhNbiSLO2ldkuP5759H9vhiss5Rvtfy4CwlpwMagzLS-200C78WiyUGkvET_iDhdSG5NMtZrZJm5iDPORpx8Xko1QDKCgBMr51)

[mec.org/diwan/85930?utm\\_source=rssemail&utm\\_medium=email&mkt\\_tok=MDk1LVBQVj04MTMAAAGBNKuz0zp1qvDhNbiSLO2ldkuP5759H9vhiss5Rvtfy4CwlpwMagzLS-200C78WiyUGkvET\\_iDhdSG5NMtZrZJm5iDPORpx8Xko1QDKCgBMr51](https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/85930?utm_source=rssemail&utm_medium=email&mkt_tok=MDk1LVBQVj04MTMAAAGBNKuz0zp1qvDhNbiSLO2ldkuP5759H9vhiss5Rvtfy4CwlpwMagzLS-200C78WiyUGkvET_iDhdSG5NMtZrZJm5iDPORpx8Xko1QDKCgBMr51)

<sup>475</sup> World Bank, 'Behavioral Strategies to Support Social Stability in Lebanon'. Washington, DC. © World Bank. (2019)

<sup>476</sup> IOM, 'Vulnerability to Trafficking in Person Among the Crises-Affected Populations in the Levant Region, (2021 draft): [https://iomint-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/mluciano\\_iom\\_int/ERLTIITit\\_xDtFMN6swrNPoBSfDX1ka52ry342FBDNqQog](https://iomint-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/mluciano_iom_int/ERLTIITit_xDtFMN6swrNPoBSfDX1ka52ry342FBDNqQog)

<sup>477</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Dozens escape security crackdown, poverty in Lebanon to join ISIL', (3 Feb 2022): <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/2/3/securitycrackdown-in-lebanon-to-join-isil>

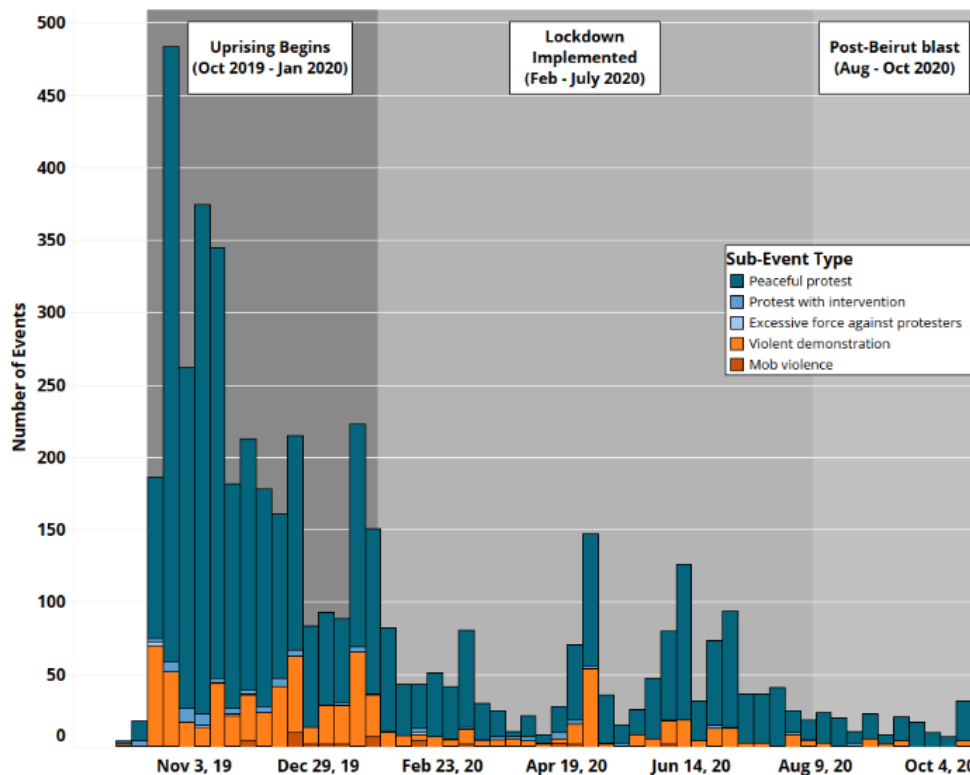
<sup>478</sup> (LCRP) Situation Update, December 2020, p.5.

per cent of protests involved some form of rioting.<sup>479</sup> Demonstrators erected roadblocks across major routes, despite efforts of security forces to prevent them. In a statement decrying incidents of excessive force against protesters in 2019, UN experts explained that the protests are “not only a matter of legal and institutional reforms such as the draft law on the independence of judges and lawyers, along with measures to curb corruption, embezzlement and illicit enrichment, but also of the recognition and fulfilment of essential economic and social rights.”<sup>480</sup>

The sitting government resigned, though tensions ran high as supporters of certain political groups, clashed with demonstrators, and by March, capitalizing on the lower mobilization of protesters, security forces dismantled protest camps and ended the occupation of public spaces. The year that followed was characterized by two further waves of unrest, in the spring of 2020 as the first national COVID-19 induced lockdown came to an end, and second, in the aftermath of the blast in Beirut in August 2020, both of which featured violent rioting.

Women have been on the frontlines since the outset of the protests in October 2021 and played an important role in conflict mitigation.<sup>481</sup> As the October protests grew in size and momentum, photographs spread on social media of young women and girls forming barriers between the army and demonstrators to protect their male counterparts from violence by the army, defuse tensions and maintain the non-violent nature of the protests. During a sectarian clash between neighborhoods of Ain El Remmaneh and Al Chiyah in Beirut in October 2021, mothers from both neighborhoods united and walked hand in hand in a march to call for de-escalation of violence.<sup>482 483</sup>

**Figure 14: Protests and Riots in Lebanon, October 2019 – October 2020**



Source: ACLED (Lebanon), ‘A New Season of Social Unrest in Lebanon’: <https://acleddata.com/2021/05/12/a-new-season-of-unrest-in-lebanon/>

<sup>479</sup> ACLED & Lebanon Support data, ‘Breaking the Barriers: One Year of Demonstrations in Lebanon’, (2020): <https://acleddata.com/2020/10/27/breaking-the-barriers-one-year-of-demonstrations-in-lebanon/>

<sup>480</sup> OHCHR. (26 November 2019) Lebanon: UN experts decry incidents of excessive force against protesters. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25354&LangID>

<sup>481</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/19/lebanon-security-forces-use-excessive-force-against-protesters>

<sup>482</sup> Middle East Eye, (2019), “In Beirut, women lead show of unity after night of tensions”, Accessed on 4 May 2021.

<sup>483</sup> Women International League for Peace & Freedom, ‘In Lebanon, the Revolution is a Woman’, (2019), accessed on 4 May 2021.

As of 2022, while coordinated, nationwide protests have not occurred since the 2019 mass protests, alarming economic drivers mean that the risk of widespread social unrest remains high. National protest movements that are animated by revolutionary objectives have experienced a relative dampening of sentiments through 2020 and 2021. The primary drivers of ongoing protests have shifted to those centered on the economic situation – namely unemployment, the weakening of the Lira, inflation in fuel prices and removal of medicine subsidies, the mismanagement of public finances, and those related to accountability such as those surrounding the investigations into the Port of Beirut explosion. UN human rights experts underscored that the socio-economic grievances form the basis of the protests noting that the protests were “not only a matter of legal and institutional reforms such as the draft law on the independence of judges and lawyers, along with measures to curb corruption, embezzlement and illicit enrichment, but also of the recognition and fulfilment of essential economic and social rights.”<sup>484</sup>

These drivers continue to manifest in regular, though relatively contained, protests. Barring a spike in protests in March 2021, there has been a broader downward trajectory to the number of protest incidents since 2019, though protests that have occurred have increasingly turned violent. This has been at least in part due to co-opting of protest movements by political party forces, as has occurred in Lebanon during previous rounds of unrest prior to 2019.<sup>485</sup>

Proximate triggers that could lead to violence include contests over service delivery, while disputes over access to goods, such as fuel, food, and medicine, are also potential triggers. This type of escalation stemming from disputes over resources have already occurred; for instance the violence over fuel in Maghdouche and Ankoun in August 2021 where violence left six wounded, or in supermarkets where reports emerged in 2021 of fights between customers over various food and drink products.<sup>486</sup>

In response to unrest, the use of excessive force in attempting to contain protests constitutes a risk to stability. While the protests have been by and large peaceful and the response by security forces largely proportionate, there have been documented reports of violence, riots and vandalism on several occasions by smaller groups of protesters and counter-protesters as well as reports of incidents of excessive use of force by security forces. UN human rights experts and human rights organizations have raised concern about excessive use of force and intimidation of citizens during the 2019-2020 protests.<sup>487</sup> Other human rights monitoring groups reported that the LAF and the Parliamentary Police<sup>488</sup> in some cases ‘unjustifiably used excessive, including lethal, force against protestors’.<sup>489</sup> Operating with little institutional scrutiny, such actions threaten to be catalytic, instigating further deteriorations in trust in government, while increasing the perceived legitimacy of using violence as a means of fulfilling objectives.

### 3) Cross-border conflict along the Blue Line

The maintenance of arms outside State control by Hizbullah and other groups, and the wider regional geopolitical developments continue to significantly influence the risk of conflict between Israel and Lebanon. While many militias were integrated into the LAF after the Civil War, some refused to disarm,

<sup>484</sup> OHCHR, ‘Lebanon: UN experts decry incidents of excessive force against protesters’, (26 November 2019)

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25354&LangID>

<sup>485</sup> See for instance the teachers protests in 2011-12 over salaries and the coopting of those movements by political forces, or the politicization of the General Labor Union.

<sup>486</sup> See for instance, Reuters, ‘Brawls in shops as Lebanon’s financial meltdown hits supply of food’, (17 March 2021)

<sup>487</sup> OHCHR, ‘Lebanon: UN experts decry incidents of excessive force against protesters’, (26 November 2019)

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25354&LangID=E>. In January 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the authorities to conduct prompt, thorough, independent, transparent and impartial investigations into alleged use of force violations committed during the latest outbreaks of violence and ill-treatment during arrest and detention (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25483&LangID=E>).

<sup>488</sup> See for instance: Human Rights Watch, ‘Lebanon Police Force Directs Blame for Abuses Against Protestors’, (21 September 2021):

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/21/lebanon-police-force-directs-blame-abuse-against-protesters>

<sup>489</sup> Human Rights Watch, Lebanon: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/29/lebanon-one-protester-dead-tripoli>

and Hizbullah in particular was allowed to remain armed to continue its so-called 'resistance' against Israel's occupation of South Lebanon. Although Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, Hizbullah has refused to disarm, arguing that Israel continues to occupy Lebanese lands (Ghajar) and that it needs to maintain a 'deterrent' against what it perceives as Israel's aggression. Tensions between the two sides escalated in 2006 resulting in 34-day military conflict between them that resulted in casualties and severe damage incurred particularly in the south of Lebanon. In addition to the persistent presence of unauthorized weapons outside state control, contentious issues along the Blue Line and the maritime dispute between Israel and Lebanon remain unresolved and further contribute to tensions between the two countries.

Hizbullah's role in various regional conflicts, supported by Iran, means that Lebanon's security remains directly linked to regional developments. Regional dynamics carry security implications for Lebanon as Hizbullah's role in domestic politics can be leveraged by its patron – Iran – to affect internal political dynamics.<sup>490</sup> At the same time, Israel's violations of Lebanese airspace continue, including reportedly for the purpose of targeting sites in Syrian territory: from 19 June to 25 October, UNIFIL recorded 286 airspace violations, totalling 377 hours and 39 minutes in overflight time.<sup>491</sup> Hostile activities have also been undertaken by Hizbullah, for instance with the launch of a Kornet guided missile in September 2019 and the flying of a drone into Israeli airspace in February 2022.<sup>492</sup>

These disputes and violations, amidst a range of other potential regional triggers, carry the risk of a miscalculation that could set off broader armed conflict.<sup>493</sup> In May, July and August 2021, instances of rocket fire from Lebanon towards Israel and the response fire by the Israel Defense Forces represented serious breaches to the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon. The airstrikes by the Israel Defense Forces on 5 August 2021 and the subsequent use of a multi-barrel rocket launcher by Hizbullah on 6 August marked a dangerous escalation in offensive action.<sup>494</sup> These incidents are stark reminders of the continued dangers for peace and security in the absence of steps towards a permanent ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon.

The deteriorating financial crisis and political instability in Lebanon have put considerable strain on the LAF to maintain critical operational capabilities, as the sole formal provider of national security and defense in Lebanon. To address the situation, many defence partners of Lebanon have signalled readiness to respond to the urgent needs of the LAF. The Security Council also mandated UNIFIL to take temporary and special measures for non-lethal support to the LAF to maintain critical operational capacity in the framework of joint activities with UNIFIL in the South.<sup>495</sup> Notwithstanding the current emergency needs of the LAF, long-term LAF capacity building remains important to avoid a security void in the future. Support of the international community to advance the UNIFIL-LAF strategic dialogue process will remain essential for a more meaningful assumption of responsibilities by the LAF in UNIFIL's area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, in line with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

#### 4) Tensions between refugees, host communities and the state

Given existing vulnerabilities, refugees (both Syrian and Palestinian) are being hit hardest by the economic decline as poverty amongst the population living in Lebanon, including these groups, has increased sharply since 2019.<sup>496</sup> The economic and COVID-19 crises pushed almost the entire Syrian refugee population to below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) – the minimum

<sup>490</sup> See for instance, Council on Foreign Relations, 'What is Hizbullah?', (26 October 2021)

<sup>491</sup> Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 19 June 2021 to 25 October 2021 – Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/953): <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/implementation-security-council-resolution-1701-2006-during-period-19-june-2021-25>

<sup>492</sup> Reuters, 'Hizbullah drone triggers air defences in northern Israel', (18 February 2022)

<sup>493</sup> Blanford, N. And Orion, A. (2020) "Counting the Costs – Avoiding another war between Israel and Hizbullah" Atlantic Council

<sup>494</sup> Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 20 February to 18 June 2021

<sup>495</sup> Paragraph 11 of Security Council Resolution 2591, 30 August 2021

<sup>496</sup> Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASR) 2021: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88960>

amount required for a family to meet their survival needs in Lebanon.<sup>497</sup> Competition for resources and livelihoods increases<sup>498</sup> while tensions over aid distribution are rising, particularly as there is largely a false perception amongst host communities that refugees have access to fresh dollars<sup>499</sup> whereas many poor and vulnerable Lebanese do not. Rhetoric used by some Lebanese politicians continues to pressure refugees for premature returns to Syria in efforts to build constituency support.<sup>500</sup> On 12 November 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, concluding an official visit to Lebanon, expressed concern about the scapegoating of Syrian refugees for the Government's failure to provide essential services and goods to the population. On 20 August 2021, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed similar concerns.<sup>501</sup>

Overall, negative relations have grown sharply since 2019: more than a third of Lebanese (37.4 per cent) now describe relations with Syrian refugees as 'negative' or 'very negative',<sup>502</sup> though incidents of intercommunal (that is, group-on-group) violence are rare. Given that economic concerns, namely real or perceived competition for jobs and resources and basic services in a crisis context, constitutes a key tension factor, the threat to peace is that as Lebanon's economy continues to deteriorate, relations will deteriorate further, increasing the risk of sporadic violence. Longer term, structural drivers of this risk remain, as demographic concerns, underpinned by the experience of Palestinian displacement in Lebanon and of memories of Syrian occupation, also continue to color relations today.<sup>503</sup>

Although violence has occurred and remains a threat to stability – for instance, in December 2020 when a Syrian refugee camp was burned in Miniyeh, North Lebanon, by host community members<sup>504</sup> - the likelihood of widespread violence between refugees and host communities remains low for the time being. The risk of violence is notably higher amongst the factions present in Palestinian camps and gatherings across Lebanon, as a high level of firearm possession, trade in drugs and narcotics, mix with complex factional politics which, occasionally, result in open violent conflict.<sup>505</sup>

## Governance

At the root of Lebanon's fragility lies a power-sharing arrangement and governance practices and institutions that have been denounced for entailing uneven application of provisions of the Lebanese Constitution.<sup>506</sup> The perceived lack of political appetite to address the shortcomings of the country's governance system, combined with a historic dearth of capacity within public institutions<sup>507</sup> have further eroded the state's ability to deliver for the people of Lebanon. These issues have gradually been compounded by a political elite that has orchestrated a 'deliberate depression' resulting in a breakdown of governance that means that the state is increasingly incapable of undertaking core functions of government.<sup>508</sup>

<sup>497</sup> Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2021

<sup>498</sup> UNDP-ARK, 'Interactive Dashboard: Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon', (2021)

<sup>499</sup> Describes United States dollars in the Lebanese economy that are either in cash (banknotes) or received via international wire transfer after October 17, 2019

<sup>500</sup> Evidence documented in multiple sources, including in Tensions Monitoring System, regular monthly briefs

<sup>501</sup> (CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24, paras. 14-15).

<sup>502</sup> UNDP-ARK, 'Interactive Dashboard: Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon', (2021)

<sup>503</sup> UNDP, Tensions Monitoring System, (2021)

<sup>504</sup> UNDP, Tensions Monitoring System, (December 2020)

<sup>505</sup> For instance as reported on 23 February 2017, as per UNRWA, 'UNRWA condemns armed violence in Ein El-Hilweh Camp', (28 February 2017), or as recorded in UNDP, Tensions Monitoring System, (2021)

<sup>506</sup> See for instance, Bassel F. Salloukh, 'Taif and the Lebanese State: The Political Economy of a Very Sectarian Public Sector', (April 2019)

<sup>507</sup> For example, the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) among other institutions lacks capacity. This renders that quantifying the breadth and depth of the current economic crisis highly challenging. See for example, Rola Rizk Azour, 'Personnel Cost I the Central Government: An Analytical Review of the Past Decade', (May 2013)

<sup>508</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2021: The Great Denial', (24 January 2021)

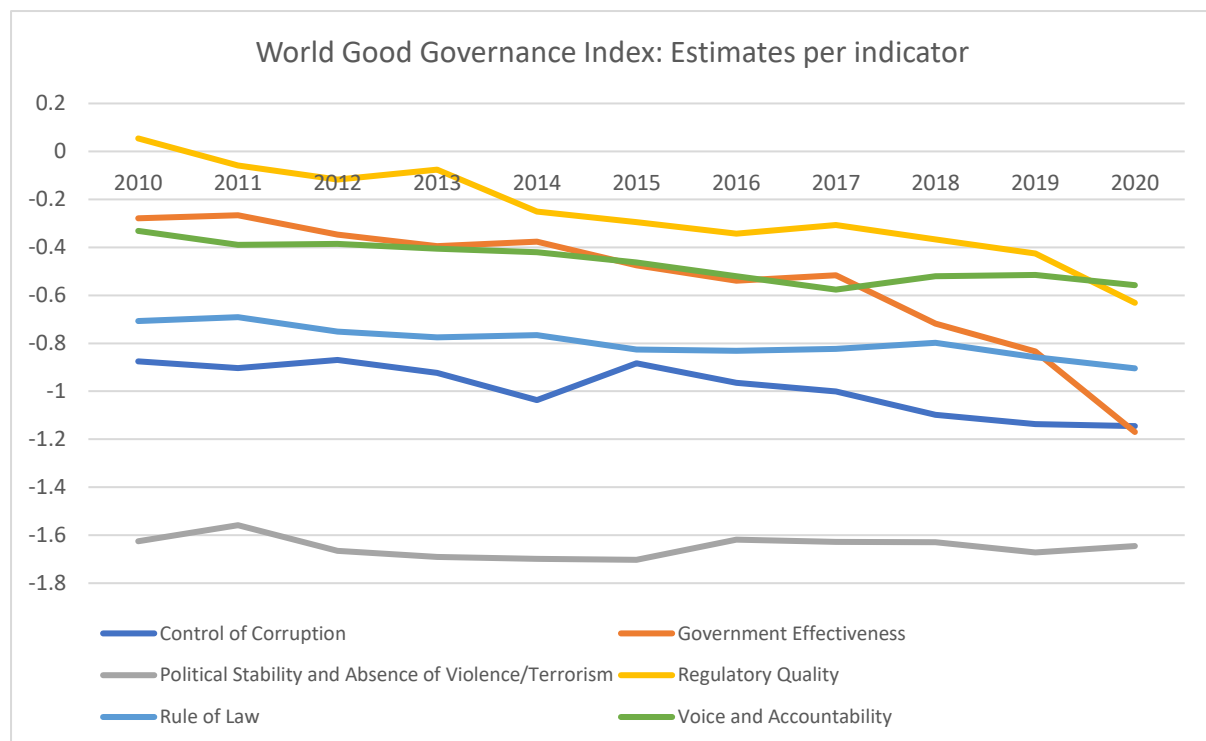
Since 2019, popular grievances have centered on the mismanagement of the economy which has created a severe economic contraction that was left unaddressed by the authorities, while the middle and lower classes bear the full brunt of the crisis.<sup>509</sup> The nature of the mismanagement points to a chronic lack of political will to reform and instead to maintain the status quo to preserve elite capture.<sup>510</sup> Although some efforts to improve multi-sectoral governance were attempted<sup>511</sup>, these have largely failed to bring transformational change to the machinery of government.

This section is structured to examine six key components of governance<sup>512</sup> in Lebanon in the following order:

- 1) Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism
- 2) Control of Corruption
- 3) Government Effectiveness
- 4) Rule of Law
- 5) Regulatory Quality
- 6) Voice and Accountability

The paralysis in governance described above is demonstrated in Figure 15 that demonstrates that since 2005 all six components have been on a downward trajectory, with the most critical degradations in government effectiveness, rule of law, control of corruption and political stability.

**Figure 15: World Bank Good Governance Index, Lebanon**



<sup>509</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon's Crisis: Great Denial in the Deliberate Depression', (25 January 2022)

<sup>510</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic Monitor: The Deliberate Depression', Fall 2020, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34842/LebanonEconomicMonitor-Fall2020.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>

<sup>511</sup> For instance, the attempt to go beyond agriculture in the National Agriculture Strategy 2020-2025 – pillar 5

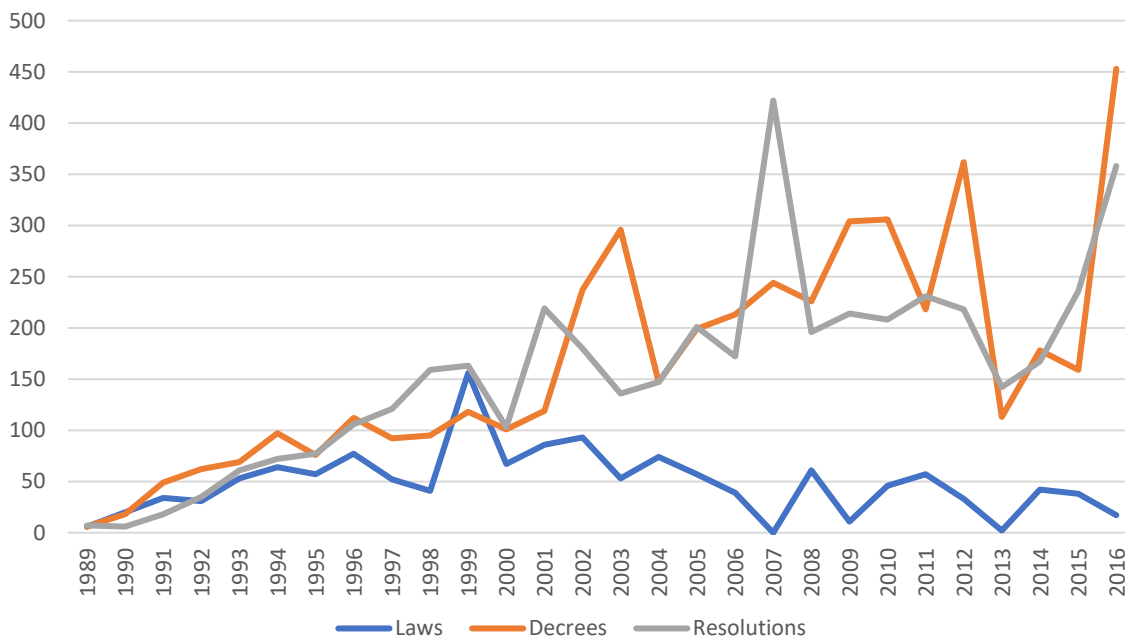
<sup>512</sup> As delineated by the World Good Governance Indicators, World Bank: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators>



## 1) Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism

While Lebanon's post-war political settlement ensured consensus decision-making in a consociational system, it also entrenched sectarianism and effectively paralysed government activity. Steps articulated in the Taif accord to facilitate a transition to a civil state were never implemented and state capacity has slowly eroded since. Facing the threats to peace identified above, the attention of successive governments was more placed on maintaining stability, rather than undertaking much needed reforms. Despite the preservation of a fragile stability, the resulting impact on governance and the ability of the government to deliver services has been devastating. Legislative activity has deteriorated consistently since the early 2000s, while there has been a greater reliance on decrees presented by the executive.

**Figure 16: Total issuance of legislation (laws, decrees and resolutions)<sup>513</sup>**



The governance consequences that have emerged from this sectarian system of power-sharing and political settlement are explained in the subsequent sections.

## 2) Control of Corruption

The social contract between the government and the people is shaped by the exchange of services from elites to constituencies in return for political support in a clientelist system of patronage. Elites use the provision of services to legitimize themselves as leaders of communities, defined by their sectarian identity, also called the *Za'im* system of patronage.<sup>514</sup> This dynamic occurs in particular in the areas of facilitation of recruitment in the public sector, health care and education, and employment as services are offered to individuals or groups in return for political support; most ostensibly through voting during elections. This system results in the provision of services to communities in demarcated geographical territories that are dominated by elites from certain

<sup>513</sup> Mahmalat, M. (2020a) 'Assessing Policymaking in Data Poor Polities – Introduction of a new data set for Lebanon', International Development Planning Review, 42(4), pp. 402–430.

<sup>514</sup> For instance, see: Cammett, M. and Sasmaz, A. 'Political Context, Organizational Mission, and the Quality of Social Services: Insights from the Health Sector in Lebanon', *World Development*, 98, pp. 120–132, (2017)

sectarian groups, excluding services available to citizens in other areas. As a result, Lebanon ranks highly, and only second to Iraq in the clientelist index of the Varieties of Democracy project.<sup>515</sup>

The relationship between citizens and the government is further undermined by corruption which is systemic at a number of levels in Lebanese society.<sup>516</sup> First, at the transactional level, citizens, businesses and state entities use *wasta*<sup>517</sup> driven by sectarian affiliations to secure preferential access to employment, goods and services. Second, in terms of procurement, as explained above, a clientelist system underpins the preferential design and implementation of public projects to benefit certain companies, organizations or groups of people. And finally, entrenched interests between political and economic elites exist at the level of policy capture in the development of laws and regulations that systematically benefit certain groups over others; again often along sectarian lines and executed through the executive branch of government.<sup>518</sup> All three forms of corruption are facilitated by a culture of impunity and by weak or non-existent institutional structures that are responsible for monitoring, accountability and oversight of government: these include the Higher Disciplinary Committee, the Central Inspection, and the Court of Accounts. The weakness in these bodies offers the opportunity for corrupt practices to proliferate, as it has done over Lebanon's recent history. According to the latest available data (2021), Transparency International ranks Lebanon 154<sup>th</sup> out of 179 countries globally, registering a six-point decrease since 2012 and bringing it to the lowest score in its history.<sup>519</sup>

Corruption and financial engineering in the banking and financial sector are critical issues at the heart of Lebanon's recent crises. In a 2014 study, the American University of Beirut found that eight political families controlled 29 per cent of the banking sector's assets,<sup>520</sup> underlining the linkages between the political and economic elite explained earlier. For years, commercial banks offered high interest rates to depositors, which they would then lend to the Central Bank who would in turn lend it to the government. The share of public debt held by the banks rose to more than 40 per cent and since 1993 commercial banks' profits totalled USD 22 billion over the period ending in 2020. In 2020, then Prime Minister Hassan Diab's cabinet estimated that the Central Bank's losses amount to around USD 50 billion.<sup>521</sup> Thus, the banking sector's practices in many ways exemplify the clientelist and sectarian issues that have led to massive profits for the elites at the expense of the state's functioning for ordinary citizens. Offshore havens are believed to be a destination of the accumulated wealth of the country's elite: of all the offshore companies revealed in the Pandora Papers leaks, Lebanese politicians and businesspeople owned the greatest number of them (346), though this has not instigated an investigation by Lebanese authorities.<sup>522</sup>

This poor performance on corruption indices is reflected by citizen's perceptions of the issue. According to Arab Barometer data, 80 per cent of the population believe that corruption exists at the national level 'to a large extent', 19 per cent believe it to exist to a medium or small extent, and 0 per cent believe that it does not exist at all.<sup>523</sup> Bribery is a practice that is seen particularly pervasively as 41 per cent of public service users declared themselves to have paid a bribe in 2019, the highest rate

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<sup>515</sup> Varieties of Democracy, Clientelist Index: <https://www.v-dem.net/>. Question: *To what extent are politics based on clientelist relationships? Clientelist relationships include the targeted, contingent distribution of resources (goods, services, jobs, money, etc.) in exchange for political support. Scale: Interval, from low to high (0-1).*

<sup>516</sup> Government of Lebanon, 'National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2025)': <http://www.undp-aciac.org/resources/National%20Anti-Corruption%20Strategy%20English.pdf>

<sup>517</sup> Arabic term that roughly translates to nepotism or the strength of one's network

<sup>518</sup> Government of Lebanon, 'National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2025)': <http://www.undp-aciac.org/resources/National%20Anti-Corruption%20Strategy%20English.pdf>

<sup>519</sup> Transparency International, 'Corruption Perceptions Index', (2021):

<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/lbn>

<sup>520</sup> New York Times, 'How Corruption Ruined Lebanon', (2020):

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/28/magazine/corruption-lebanon.html>

<sup>521</sup> The Monthly, 'Lebanese banking sector: USD22.1 billion of profits in 26 years', (April 2019)

<sup>522</sup> Transparency International, '9 Countries to Watch on the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index', (February 2022):

<https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/cpi-2021-corruption-watch-list-australia-austria-el-salvador-kazakhstan>

<sup>523</sup> Arab Barometer, 'Data Analysis Tool': <https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-analysis-tool/>

in the Arab region.<sup>524</sup> Moreover, in 2020 Transparency International found that 23 per cent of women they interviewed in Lebanon had stated being victims of sextortion<sup>525</sup>, or knowing someone who had been (the offer of sex in exchange for government services).<sup>526</sup> Given the disproportionate effect that corruption has on poorer individuals, the prevalence of these corrupt practices increases perceptions of unfairness and injustice in the eyes of the citizenry, driving various risks to stability.

There are several opportunities to counter corrupt practices and establish strong accountable institutions to oversee government processes. The National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2020-25<sup>527</sup> offers an important framework to operate under, targeting seven outcomes to be realized through an inter-sectoral approach under three overarching objectives: strengthening transparency; activating accountability, and ending impunity.<sup>528</sup> In addition, the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Institution (NACI) in April 2020 and the designation of its Members in January 2022 also constitutes positive steps for Lebanon. However, Members have yet to be appointed, which is another symptom of the political paralysis induced by polarization. A Public Procurement Law was adopted on 30 June 2021, which was a major milestone in transforming public procurement - though substantive amendments to that law are required if it is to bring procurement processes in line with international standards on transparency, as loopholes allow important information, conflicts of interest and company owners to remain hidden.<sup>529</sup>

An Access to Information (ATI) Law was passed with amendments in 2021 though similarly its application has not been systematic. A study conducted in 2018 found that out of 133 public bodies that were sent ATI requests, only 34 responded, and of these only 18 provided the information requested.<sup>530</sup> In 2020, ATI requests were submitted to 200 public entities, of which 102 did not respond. Among those that did, only 47 entities provided the full requested information, though several public bodies that had not previously complied with the law did submit the requested information. However, notably, the Lebanese parliament refused to comply for the third consecutive year, underlining that willingness to combat corruption remains lacking in the most important institutions in the country.<sup>531</sup> Parliament also adopted a Combatting Corruption in the Public Sector Law, though both are weak in terms of enforcement mechanisms or penalties for institutions that violate terms<sup>532</sup> and thus are facing significant implementation issues. The passing of the Financial Disclosure and the Punishment of Illicit Enrichment Law in September 2020 also constitutes a step forward, though its implementation, alongside the other laws identified above, have encountered significant challenges<sup>533</sup>. Lebanon also needs to use the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) balance granted to the Central Bank by the IMF efficiently and transparently.<sup>534</sup>

In the absence of the adequate implementation of legal and regulatory provisions to control corruption, rules and norms to protect the role of whistle-blowers becomes even more important. In September 2018, the legislature passed Law No. 83 on the Protection of Whistle-blowers, and while

<sup>524</sup> Transparency International, "Global Corruption Barometer – Middle East and North Africa 10<sup>th</sup> Edition", (2019):

<https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-and-north-africa-1/press-and-downloads>

<sup>525</sup> For a working definition see: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/kidnap-and-extortion/sextortion-webcam-blackmail>

<sup>526</sup> Transparency International, "Global Corruption Barometer – Middle East and North Africa 10<sup>th</sup> Edition", (2019):

<https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-and-north-africa-1/press-and-downloads>

<sup>527</sup> Government of Lebanon, 'National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2025)': <http://www.undp-aci.org/resources/National%20Anti-Corruption%20Strategy%20English.pdf>

<sup>528</sup> Government of Lebanon, 'National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2025)': <http://www.undp-aci.org/resources/National%20Anti-Corruption%20Strategy%20English.pdf>

<sup>529</sup> For an explanation of the law's shortcomings, see The Lebanese Transparency Association, 'The New Public Procurement Law: Missed Opportunity?!', (5 July 2021)

<sup>530</sup> Al Moghabat, M. (2018), The Right to Access Information: A Study on the Lebanese Government's commitment to the Right to Access Information Law (No.2017/18), Gherbal Initiative, <https://www.slideshare.net/GherbalInitiative/the-right-to-access-information-a-study-on-lebanese-administrations-commitment-to-law-provisions>.

<sup>531</sup> Chatham House MENA Programme, 'Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon', (June 2021)

<sup>532</sup> The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 'Access to Information in Lebanon', (23 June 2021)

<sup>533</sup> See for instance: Transparency International, 'Lebanon: Systemic Corruption Problems require a systemic Response', (January 2021): <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/cpi-2020-lebanon-systemic-corruption-problems-require-systemic-response>

<sup>534</sup> Transparency International, 'Lebanon: To avoid complete collapse, government must be urgently formed of politicians with integrity', (8 September 2021): <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/lebanon-government-must-be-urgently-formed>

positive, its implementation is contingent on the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission which has only just formed. Further work on preventing rather than just penalizing corruption is also underway, including the development of a Code of Conduct for public officials, in addition to performance evaluations, though these bills have yet to materialize.

The pervasive need to make informal payments to ensure access to services creates greater barriers for some groups over others, most significantly vulnerable groups including women, youth and minority groups. The poor pay the highest per centage of their income in bribes and studies have suggested that the poor are preyed upon more frequently since they are seen as powerless to complain. Remain grossly underrepresented in public and political life under section 3.1 Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls). Lebanon is ranked 149 out of 153 countries in the 2020 World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report's female political representation index. In addition to the exclusion in the political life, with a score of 52.5/100 in the Women Business and the Law Index, , and with only 4 per cent companies having a woman as the primary manager<sup>535</sup> it is evident that women face exclusionary practices in nearly all aspects of life in Lebanon.<sup>536</sup> These practices are also evident in the political realm<sup>537</sup>, including in voting access. Women and girls, relative to men and boys, face relatively much higher levels of domestic violence: half of Lebanese citizens report knowing someone that has suffered from some form of domestic violence, the vast majority of whom are women.<sup>538</sup> Despite the existence of the Lebanon National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2019-2022)<sup>539</sup> and the prominent role that women played in the 2019 *thawra*<sup>540</sup>, there is still much work needed to achieve objectives on gender equality.

Between 2015 and 2019, some efforts were made to advance the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda in line with UNSC resolution 2250 (2015) through advocacy, sensitization, engagement of youth in debates, mapping relevant YPS interventions and actors and participation of Lebanese youth in the World Summit on YPS. A national framework on YPS would be essential to recognize the positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Haphazard urbanization, which has been largely left unplanned without proper urban governance, also contributes to natural insecurities as well as tensions. This is particularly obvious in poverty-stricken, marginalized, densely populated urban pockets, often characterized by various sorts of informalities and poor basic urban services and infrastructure, including housing, water, etc.<sup>541</sup> This highlights the need for good urban management and planning to mitigate these urban fragilities.<sup>542</sup> An integrated, multi-sectoral area-based approach, instead of a sectoral or cohort-specific one, is key in this regard, as it has the potential to benefit all residents of a specific geographical area in the long term, thus contributing to social stability.<sup>543</sup>

### 3) Government Effectiveness

The system of governance is characterised by its weak public procurement and financial management (PFM) processes which are governed by the outdated 1963 Public Accounting Law and other decrees.<sup>544</sup> There are numerous weaknesses and loopholes within that law which has led to a glut of unproductive spending and fiscal mismanagement. The near total lack of transparency around the

<sup>535</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/mashreq-gender-facility#4>

<sup>536</sup> <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en>

<sup>537</sup> See for instance, Lebanon Support, 'Women's Political Participation in Lebanon and the limits of aid-driven empowerment', (2017): [https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-womensassessmentreport\\_en-online\\_1.pdf](https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-womensassessmentreport_en-online_1.pdf)

<sup>538</sup> UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). 2017. Lebanon: Scorecard on Gender-based Violence.

<sup>539</sup> <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/lebanon-nap>

<sup>540</sup> International Alert, 'Prospects for peace in crises: Lebanon context analysis, February-July 2020, (January 2021):

<https://www.international-alert.org/publications/prospects-peace-crises-lebanon-context-analysis-february-july-2020/>

<sup>541</sup> See for example, the 28 disadvantaged neighbourhoods profiled by UN-Habitat and UNICEF: <https://lebanonportal.unhabitat.org/>

<sup>542</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, 'State of the Lebanese Cities' (2021), p. XIII, 175

<sup>543</sup> UN-Habitat has been promoting such an area-based approach to sustainable urban development planning. A key feature of this approach is the collection and analysis of multisectoral, multicohort data on a defined geographical area — see UN-Habitat's city profiles ([Beirut](#), [Tyre](#) and [Tripoli](#)) and [UN-Habitat-UNICEF neighbourhood profiles](#), as well as area-based, integrated urban planning.

<sup>544</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

country's fiscal situation, exemplified by successive failures to produce national budgets, led to the elite capture of state spending, over the needs of the public.<sup>545</sup> Accordingly, Lebanon's public expenditure was significantly lower than regional comparators, even before the multiple crises began in 2019. This has led to a range of poor basic services including in housing, electricity, water supply, sanitation, transport, waste management, telecommunications and others; in fact, Lebanon ranks 130 of 137 countries globally on overall infrastructure.<sup>546</sup> For quality of electricity, it ranks 130, roads at 120, and mobile cellular subscriptions at 104.<sup>547</sup>

Far from being effective, governance has slowly broken down over the most recent decades, in part driven by a lack of fiscal space which limited spending, particularly without official budgets from 2005 to 2016.<sup>548</sup> Low salaries, driven by the currency depreciation and price inflation, compound this problem, despite a public salary scale adjustment in 2018, as low salaries continue to contribute to corruption and fail to motivate the workforce in the civil administration.<sup>549</sup> Reports have emerged of public officials requesting support to purchase basic items such as paper, ink, and fuel for transport. Another major obstacle to effective governance is the civil bureaucracy's use of digital and e-government services, while companies also struggle to establish themselves in a convoluted and outmoded regulatory framework (see section below). Despite the launch of the Digital Transformation Strategy, unveiled by OMSAR in 2018, and the launch of the Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment Coordination and Tracking (IMPACT) by the Central Inspection Board in 2020, progress in this realm has been remarkably slow.<sup>550</sup> The explosion in Beirut in August 2020 underlined the urgent need to provide effective digital channels to deliver rapid financial assistance.<sup>551</sup> According to the Global Findex, in 2017 only 33.1 per cent of adults made or received digital payments that year.<sup>552</sup>

Lebanon's electricity sector (see also sections 3.2 and 3.3) in many ways is a microcosm for the country's broader issues in terms of how the sector is governed and results in inadequate services for its citizenry. Electricity supply, inconsistent before the crises, has worsened to the extent that some of the country relies only on two hours a day from the grid run by Lebanon's public utility, Électricité du Liban,<sup>553</sup> as the distribution of supply is highly uneven and is highly vulnerable to clientelist dynamics. Corruption is rife in the sector<sup>554</sup>, particularly given the prevalence of generators that are privately owned by individuals and are charged at exorbitantly high prices that exceed market rates, and are the only option given the lack of a functioning grid.<sup>555</sup> Law No. 462/2002 aims to organize the sector and establish the National Electricity Regulatory Authority (NERA). This never occurred and instead consolidated the roles of the key policymaker, implementation supervisor and regulator, issuer of licenses and sector planning, to the Minister of Energy and Water.<sup>556</sup> As demand increasingly outstripped supply, the underinvestment in the generation capacity and significant losses in transmission and distribution costs rendered it an unprofitable model that is highly dependent on subsidies. In the first eight months of 2020, treasury transfers to the EDL constituted 7.3 per cent of overall fiscal spending, the third largest item after public sector salaries and debt servicing.

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<sup>545</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>546</sup> World Economic Forum, 'Global Competitiveness Index 2017-18'

<sup>547</sup> World Bank, 'Strategic Assessment: A Capital Investment Plan for Lebanon', (6 April 2018)

<sup>548</sup> World Bank, 'Strategic Assessment: A Capital Investment Plan for Lebanon', (6 April 2018)

<sup>549</sup> Government of Lebanon, 'National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2025)': <http://www.undp-aciac.org/resources/National%20Anti-Corruption%20Strategy%20English.pdf>

<sup>550</sup> Chatham House, 'Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon', (June 2021): <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-29-breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon-merhej.pdf>

<sup>551</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>552</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>553</sup> BBC World, 'Lebanon left without power as grid shuts down', (9 October 2021): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-58856914>

<sup>554</sup> Ahmad, A., McCulloch, N., Al-Masri, M., & Ayoub, M. (2020). From dysfunctional to functional corruption: The politics of reform in Lebanon's electricity sector

<sup>555</sup> Ahmad, A., McCulloch, N., Al-Masri, M., & Ayoub, M. (2020). From dysfunctional to functional corruption: The politics of reform in Lebanon's electricity sector

<sup>556</sup> Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, British Academy, UCL, RELIEF Centre, 'Unbundling Lebanon's Electricity Sector,' (2020)



Solid waste management (see also section 3.2) is another key sector which has suffered from chronic underinvestment as a result of the inadequate governance model. Before the Syrian crisis, just 53 per cent of the municipal solid waste was disposed in the country's two landfills, with the remaining being dumped into unsanitary landfills or being thrown into open dumps.<sup>557</sup> The response to the nationwide unrest in 2015 in reaction to the waste crisis exposed the level of mismanagement in the sector and political interference in tendering processes. A panoply of private service providers remains active – a survey in 2018 found that of 209 municipalities, 36 per cent were outsourcing waste management to private companies in processes that are reported to be highly corrupt.<sup>558</sup> Other municipalities struggle to manage waste sustainably.<sup>559</sup>

The crises have revealed a fragile health system and poor health governance that is threatening health security at large (see also section 3.1). The country's preparedness and capacity to respond to health emergencies is very limited. Several factors cause additional dissatisfaction, generalized social anxiety and exacerbated tensions namely: the increasing restricted access to health services especially by the most vulnerable; the suboptimal risk detection and communication; and the suboptimal food and nutrition safety monitoring.<sup>560</sup>

Accordingly, trust in the government from the public has eroded to the extent that as of early 2022, 91 per cent of Lebanese population state that the central government (Cabinet) of Lebanon 'has worsened life a lot' or 'worsened life somewhat'.<sup>561</sup> Municipalities, so often the front-face of state-citizen interactions in Lebanon, also lack capacity and, critically, intra-municipal mechanisms to resolve issues that require coordination and cooperation across municipal lines.<sup>562</sup> Supporting these municipal institutions constitutes an opportunity given that nearly half of the Lebanese public assert that municipalities 'improve life a lot' or 'improve life somewhat' – contrasting starkly with the central government.<sup>563</sup>

In sum, latest available data in 2020 demonstrates that good governance as measured by the World Bank eroded across all dimensions – and most sharply in terms of government effectiveness and control over corruption,<sup>564</sup> both factors constituted the central themes of the 2019 nationwide protests and have since remained key grievances of the population.

#### 4) Rule of law

In one manifestation of Lebanon's insufficient separation of powers, weak institutions that are exposed to the risk of political interference undermine justice and trust in the judicial system, compounding the perception of impunity. In 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern "about allegations that politicians use their influence to protect supporters from prosecution," calling on the state to "strengthen its efforts to guarantee that the judiciary can carry out its functions without any form of political interference".<sup>565</sup> The State Council Bureau - the body responsible for ensuring the functioning of the administrative justice system - is tied to the Ministry of Justice as its members, including the president of the State Council, are appointed by decree upon the proposal of the Ministry of Justice.<sup>566</sup> In this way, the Minister of Justice has direct influence on the selection of the State Council Bureau. Similarly, the executive's reach and influence over Lebanon's

<sup>557</sup> World Bank, 'Strategic Assessment: A Capital Investment Plan for Lebanon', (6 April 2018)

<sup>558</sup> Abbas, I, Chaaban, J., Al-Rabaa, A., Shaar, A., 'Solid Waste Management in Lebanon: Challenges and Recommendations JEWMM Solid Waste Management in Lebanon', (February 2019)

<sup>559</sup> Democracy Reporting International, 'Solid Waste Management in Lebanon: Lessons for Decentralisation', (October 2019)

<sup>560</sup> See for example, Medecins Sans Frontiere, 'Healthcare system in Lebanon disintegrates as political vacuum persists', (1 September 2021)

<sup>561</sup> UNDP & ARK Group DMCC, 'Regular Perceptions Survey on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon' (Wave XII)

<sup>562</sup> Solid waste management for instance is a key intra-municipal issue. See, 'State of the Lebanese Cities: Governing Sustainable Cities Beyond Municipal Boundaries', (2021) for a full explanation of these issues.

<sup>563</sup> UNDP & ARK Group DMCC, 'Regular Perceptions Survey on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon' (Wave XII)

<sup>564</sup> World Bank Governance Indicators: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators>

<sup>565</sup> CCPR/CLBN/CO/3, paras. 41-42

<sup>566</sup> International Commission of Jurists (2018), 'The Lebanese State Council and Administrative Courts: A Briefing Paper', Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, October 2018, p. 4



civil judiciary is evident in that eight out of ten members of the High Judicial Council are selected by the executive.<sup>567</sup> Public prosecutors are also appointed on a sectarian and/or political party basis.<sup>568</sup>

Efforts to develop and adopt legislation to strengthen the independence of the judiciary are critical but have so far been affected by a lack of transparency, inclusiveness and comprehensiveness. Lebanon's judiciary continues to face integrity and independence challenges, including in key sector such as appointment, promotion and transfer of judges. In numerous instances, the government has reportedly harassed judges by threatening to reduce budget allocations or by punishing those participating in strikes,<sup>569</sup> while a comprehensive detailed Statute for Judges is missing.<sup>570</sup> Oversight of justice institutions is limited, and political interference is perceived to be pervasive. The efficiency of the justice system continues to be affected by the prevalence of a paper-based management system, the length of proceedings, high rate of pending cases, high number of appeals and the insufficient number of judges allocated to courts. Despite ongoing efforts, the country continues to lack a publicly funded legal aid system, impeding access to justice and increasing vulnerabilities.

Key defects in Lebanon's judicial apparatus undermine the rule of law and render accountability mechanisms weak, ineffective and vulnerable to political interference: the World Justice Project's Rule of Law score for Lebanon declined from 0.48 in 2015 to 0.45 in 2020, which results in Lebanon being placed 96<sup>th</sup> of 128 countries across the globe. Further, key human rights violations need to be addressed through policy and legislative reforms, such as through the abolition of Kafala, the strengthening of recruitment policies and regulations to prevent abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices, and the inclusion of domestic workers under the protection offered by the national labour law, with the objective to reduce the risk of migrant exploitation and to strengthen worker protection. The system's shortcomings are reflected in the perceptions of citizens. In Arab Barometer survey data collected in late 2021, 60 per cent stated that they had 'no trust at all' and a further 28 per cent expressed that they had 'not a lot of trust' in the courts and legal system, whereas in 2018 only 34 per cent stated that they had 'no trust at all'.<sup>571</sup>

**Figure 17: Arab Barometer, October 2021 (Lebanon): Q. How much do you trust the courts and legal system in Lebanon?**

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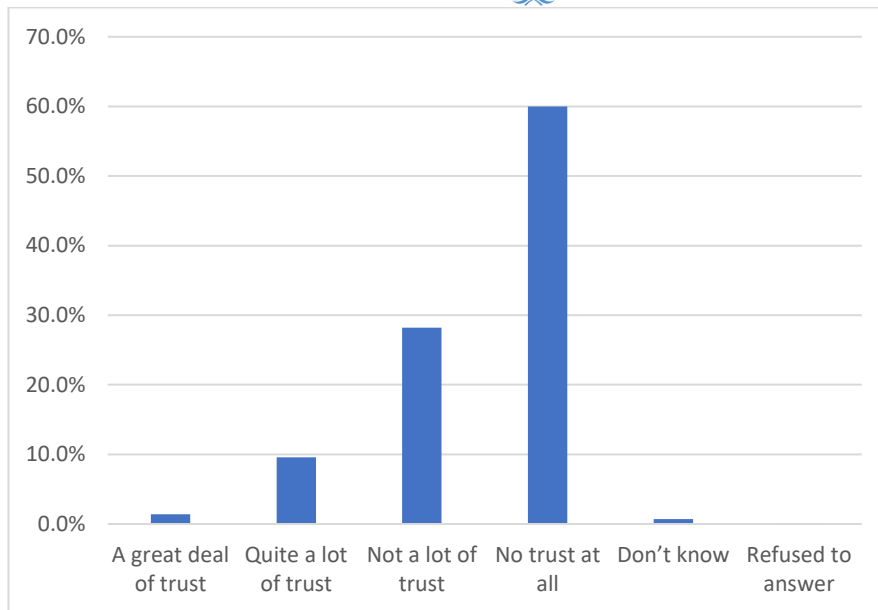
<sup>567</sup> International Commission of Jurists, 'The Lebanese High Judicial Council in Light of International Standards: A Briefing Paper', (February 2017)

<sup>568</sup> Mansour, M. and Daoud, C. (2010), 'Lebanon: The Independence and Impartiality of the Judiciary', Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network

<sup>569</sup> Legal Agenda (2019), 'Legal Agenda to Lebanese Government: Stop Harassing Judges', 12 June 2019

<sup>570</sup> International Commission for Jurists, 'The Career of Judges in Lebanon in Light of International Standards', (February 2017)

<sup>571</sup> Arab Barometer, 'Data Analysis Tool': <https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-analysis-tool/>



The Lebanese criminal justice system is characterized by insufficient human, financial, and technical resources limiting its capacity to tackle the protracted overcrowding and related dire conditions of detention in Lebanese prisons and detention facilities. The overuse of pre-trial detention, the high backlog of cases, the lack of alternative measures to detention remains the main challenges. Despite the justice response to COVID-19 through implementing remote hearings settings, the socio-economic and financial crises severely impacted the criminal justice system and further limited its capacity to manage prison facilities amounting human rights concerns. While a National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism was adopted by the Lebanese government in 2018, rehabilitation and reintegration for prisoners with offences related to violent extremism including terrorism remain limited.

Lebanon's political polarization, fractured along the lines of sectarian identity, has in some instances paralysed the justice sector, which has in turn contributed to further tensions between different groups. For instance, the investigation into the explosion in the Port of Beirut has featured heated rhetoric from different sectarian groups contesting to influence the judicial process, leading to violent conflict in October 2021 in Tayouneh in addition to procedural obstacles that have paralyzed the investigation to date. Moreover, the loss of quorum at the Constitutional Council following the death of three of its members had resulted in an extended period of paralysis at the judicial body, before new appointments were eventually approved by the relevant authorities. The capacity and independence of the judicial system may face a significant test at the elections scheduled for May 2022, if disputes between parties arise, namely through potential appeals before the Constitutional Council. In these ways, the state of rule of law in Lebanon continues to drive – and is in turn affected by – political polarization, in a manner that threatens peace and justice.

While there have been several cases of announced investigations into alleged human rights violations, including excessive use of force and ill-treatment by law enforcement in the context of protests, the outcomes remain unknown. Likewise, there has been no apparent progress in investigations into the murder on 4 February 2021 of Lebanese activist and publicist Lokman Slim.<sup>572</sup>

## 5) Regulatory Quality

Regulatory bodies and the laws needed to operationalize them are either lacking completely in certain sectors or are largely present yet idle in others. These regulatory weaknesses have not been allowed to remain by error. Instead, certain elements within the political and economic elite have benefitted

<sup>572</sup> On 22 March 2021, UN human rights experts called on the Government of Lebanon to ensure a credible and effective investigation into the killing of Mr. Lokman Slim, and denounced that “the investigatory steps taken at national level have led to no meaningful result raising concerns as to the effectiveness of the current investigation” - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26930&LangID=E>

from these weaknesses by exploiting them across sectors and reaping the rewards (rents) from the clientelist model described above. Members of the executive have in fact deliberately blocked reforms to introduce new regulations as those would threaten business interests held by the economic elites. The resultant weaknesses in regulations and oversight in banking, real estate and construction in particular have been exploited in this regard. This has resulted in corrupt practices that see the awarding of large contracts (for instance, in the importing of medicines) that are granted on opaque reasoning, and are perceived to have been done so according to business or sectarian affiliation.

For instance, in the electricity sector, Law 462 to establish and staff the Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) exists, though needs implementation. Without it the sector will continue to lack transparency in public procurement. Antiquated laws and practices also exist in the realm of public investment as the framework around it needs formalization, including in its guidelines and methodologies, to improve the efficiency of using reform and reconstruction funding.<sup>573</sup>

To take another example, in the financial digitalization sector, while a number of large companies and banks are interested to provide services, implementation regulations are missing in Law 81 on Electronic Transactions and Personal Data.<sup>574</sup> Further, there are not proportional customer due diligence regulations, nor a licensing framework for non-bank payment service providers.<sup>575</sup> Barriers to entry need lifting, while regulations for e-money issuance and e-signatures, amongst other steps, require establishing.<sup>576</sup>

In other sectors, such as those related to environmental management, a legal framework is required, complete with regulations and standards. The Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) Law and the hazardous waste decree, for instance, both had regulations that are incomplete.<sup>577</sup>

As identified above, Lebanon's Public Procurement Law also requires secondary legislation, including, for example, the mandatory use of revised Standard Bidding Documents.<sup>578</sup> Lebanon also lacks an independent body for handling complaints with procurement, or a public procurement regulatory body, both of which are required for transparent and accountable spending of public finances.<sup>579</sup>

## 6) Voice and Accountability

At the heart of Lebanon's weak governance arrangement lies a lack of accountability. Public oversight institutions are mostly idle, while audit and internal control within institutions are mostly absent.<sup>580</sup> Weaknesses in the four key bodies responsible for financial and administrative performance of the public sector – the Civil Service Board, Central Inspection, the Court of Audit, and the Higher Disciplinary Board – have severely hampered their functioning. Chief amongst these issues is the fact that successive governments have not passed laws to govern and empower these bodies to carry out their managerial duties. Human and financial resources to enable their proper functioning have also been lacking, while they have also not been free from political interference.

In the parliamentary domain, the Plenary of Parliament for oversight sessions rarely meets, by-laws contain insufficient oversight mechanisms, oversight committees in general do not report back to parliament, in addition to the lack of any televised coverage of the legislative process or public meetings to consult and explain legislative activity.<sup>581</sup> Financial accountability also lacks severely as the parliament lacks an independent budget office as found in other parliamentary democracies. These issues are compounded by the fact that there is not a functional and effective Court of Audit,

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<sup>573</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>574</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>575</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>576</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>577</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>578</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>579</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>580</sup> World Bank, UN, EU, 3RF (2020)

<sup>581</sup> OECD, 'Open Government Scan of Lebanon', (2020)

as identified in the Constitution.<sup>582</sup> In large part the executive has pre-eminence given weak parliamentary oversight and weak judicial independence. Further, the executive, the President and ministers largely operate free of robust accountability measure:<sup>583</sup> for instance, they can only be tried before a special political jurisdiction - the Supreme Council for the Prosecution of Presidents and Ministers - which has a related procedural law that renders it near impossible to administer.

Lebanon also faces a representation issue as sectarian identity is the primary and often only way in which the interests of groups are represented in decision-making processes. While, as explained below, some modest steps have been taken to include civil society in policy consultation, minority groups are largely locked out of decision-making, including in elections. For instance, further work is needed to improve the representation of women in parliament, and while it is too late to include a quota for elections scheduled in 2022, further policy reform is needed in this area to better represent the interests of women in parliament going forward.

## Civil society

Lebanon's civic space remains constrained by several key factors, including intimidation<sup>584</sup>, judicial harassment and reprisals.<sup>585</sup> Recently, there have been several criminal investigations and prosecutions against individuals on allegations of insult or defamation of public officials.<sup>586</sup> Individuals, including journalists, continue to be charged and sentenced under Lebanon's criminal defamation laws (prohibiting also insults and criticism of the President, public officials, public institutions, the army, the flag, or national emblem) for speech critical of public officials and institutions, including in relation to corruption allegations, with some cases against civilians referred to military courts. According to the Cybercrimes Bureau, between 2015 and 2020, 4,154 defamation investigations were conducted, which Human Rights Watch believes does not include interrogations carried out by other security agencies, most of which are alleged to be under the informal influence of segments of the political class.<sup>587</sup> Following interrogations, activists and reporters were reportedly forced to sign a pledge stating that they would not criticize the individual again.<sup>588</sup> The UN Human Rights Committee has raised concern about this situation<sup>589</sup>, as have Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in recent communications on Lebanon.

Within this space, three key groups of actors operate with varying degrees of freedom: non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and emerging political actors. The first, NGOs are largely involved in service delivery, to serve populations in need with basic services and humanitarian support that is not fully provided for by the state.<sup>590</sup> Given that a greater assumption of public responsibility for service delivery by the state in general seems unlikely before serious, structural and accountable reform has occurred, NGOs in Lebanon will continue to play a key

<sup>582</sup> OECD, 'Open Government Scan of Lebanon', (2020)

<sup>583</sup> OECD, 'Open Government Scan of Lebanon', (2020)

<sup>584</sup> For instance the recent instances of elections-related intimidation of political contenders

<sup>585</sup> Chehayeb, K. (2020), 'Controlling the Narrative: Lebanon Compromises Free Speech in Crisis', Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 17 March 2020

<sup>586</sup> Chehayeb, K. (2020), 'Controlling the Narrative: Lebanon Compromises Free Speech in Crisis', Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 17 March 2020

<sup>587</sup> Majzoub, A. (2021), 'Freedom of Speech in Lebanon Is Under Attack', Human Rights Watch, 4 May 2021,

<sup>588</sup> Chatham House, 'Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon', (June 2021): <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-29-breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon-merhej.pdf>

<sup>589</sup> On 22 March 2021, UN Human Rights Committee also raised concern regarding: (a) the criminalization of defamation, insult, criticism of public officials and blasphemy, which can be punished with imprisonment; (b) allegations of extensive interpretation of the concept of cybercrime by the Cybercrime Centre of the Internal Security Forces aimed at restricting freedom of expression; (c) reports of the arrest and prosecution of individuals allegedly criticizing State authorities or political figures, including through social media; and (d) the broad and discretionary powers of censorship vested in the Directorate General of Public Security and the banning of a number of artistic products, including movies

<sup>590</sup> "...public funds were frequently plundered and the Lebanese state was used as a vehicle for extensive self-enrichment and patronage-distribution. This corruption, coupled with an absence of transparency and accountability, paved the way for the current collapse of the Lebanese state" in: Breaking the Curse of Corruption in Lebanon; <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-29-breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon-merhej.pdf>

role in addressing unmet needs. At the same time, sometimes these groups can be limited by their patrons who can hold affiliations to sectarian or political groups. In these situations, this can compromise their neutrality and critically hold implications for the extent to which they can be supported by external aid actors. This can undermine the independence that these groups can operate with, and thus the impact that they are able to generate and the trust they are able to garner from the population.<sup>591</sup>

The second group, CSOs, document and advocate on a range of issues, most often centered on highlighting political, social, or economic injustice issues facing various demographic groups in Lebanon. The latest official statistics on the number of CSOs dates back to 2015, indicating 8,311 registered organisations in Lebanon, though a recent report estimated the figure to closer to 12,000.<sup>592</sup> The impact of these organisations is heavily constrained by successive governments that have limited space for influence over policy-making. At the same time, for the first time in parliament, civil society, NGOs and other institutions were invited to discuss proposals for new legislations and to brainstorm ways to empower women in the Committee on Women and Children, though there remains significant scope to expand engagement with civil society to enhance inclusiveness, participation and accountability, particularly in policy dialogue and service delivery and especially for marginalized and often-overlooked groups.

The third group, often but not always originating from civil society, are emergent political actors. Although many of these actors were active prior to the nationwide protests in 2019, their prominence rose at that time, many with affiliations to non- and anti-sectarian organisations,<sup>593</sup> as well as during their involvement in the response to the Port of Beirut explosion. Some of these groups operate with near complete independence, though others closely coordinate with foreign parties and forces.<sup>594</sup> Others still have emerged from existing political parties as individual leaders resigned from their positions following major events, such as the blast in the Port of Beirut.<sup>595</sup>

Given the prominent role that women played in the protests in 2019, multiple initiatives and individual women have also emerged to advocate across a range of issues, including but not limited to female political representation. Lebanon's 'Feminist Civil Society Platform' is a prominent example of this, which calls on candidates to commit to "achieving full equality between women and men, include that in their priorities as future parliamentarians and work seriously to ensure full participation of women in decision-making levels."<sup>596</sup> Further developments, such as the election to head the influential Beirut Bar Association being won by a popular independent candidate, or student body elections, which have traditionally been won by youth organizations of establishment parties, also won by independents, point to the shift in support that non-traditional candidates now carry.<sup>597</sup> However, many but not all of these independent candidates are set to compete in national elections scheduled for May 2022, though face structural issues with the Electoral Law that will make it extremely challenging to win a significant number of seats.<sup>598</sup>

## Human Rights

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experts called on the Government of Lebanon to ensure a credible and effective investigation into the killing of Mr. Lokman Slim, and denounced that "the investigatory steps taken at national level have led to no meaningful result raising concerns as to the effectiveness of the current investigation":

<sup>592</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & The Pulse, 'The State of Civil Society in Lebanon: a pilot mapping study', (March 2021)

<sup>609</sup> LangID=E <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26930&LangID=Edf>

[https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/lebanon/documents/news/20150416\\_2\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/lebanon/documents/news/20150416_2_en.pdf)

<sup>594</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & The Pulse, 'The State of Civil Society in Lebanon: a pilot mapping study', (March 2021)

<sup>595</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & The Pulse, 'The State of Civil Society in Lebanon: a pilot mapping study', (March 2021)

<sup>596</sup> 'Lebanon's Feminist Civil Society Platform':

[https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2021/09/Lebanon%20Charter/LFCSP\\_STATEMENT\\_ENGLISH-2.pdf](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2021/09/Lebanon%20Charter/LFCSP_STATEMENT_ENGLISH-2.pdf)

<sup>597</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & The Pulse, 'The State of Civil Society in Lebanon: a pilot mapping study', (March 2021)

<sup>598</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & The Pulse, 'The State of Civil Society in Lebanon: a pilot mapping study', (March 2021)

Lebanon is a State party to six of the nine core international human rights treaties: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and its Optional Protocol (CAT-OP); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).<sup>599</sup> CEDAW is ratified with two reservations, on article 9 (2), and article 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) and (g) - primarily containing to issues of equal nationality rights and personal status matters.

Lebanon has yet to become a State party to the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with its Optional Protocol (OP-CRPD) (all of which Lebanon signed in 2007); the Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC) (signed in 2002); and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW). Lebanon did not accept any of the individual complaint procedures under the treaties it has ratified or acceded to.

UN human rights mechanisms have recommended that Lebanon ratifies the outstanding core human rights treaties, as well as other international human rights instruments, including:

- Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), on decent work for domestic workers
- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) of the ILO.
- Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97) of the ILO.
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) of the ILO.
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
- Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;
- Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.<sup>600</sup>

Lebanon reports regularly to the UN human rights treaty bodies<sup>601</sup>, facilitated by a National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) established under the Prime Minister's Office by Decree No. 3268 (19 June 2018), and maintains a close and cooperative relationship with OHCHR, including through its office in Beirut.

Lebanon has a standing invitation for visits of special procedures mandates of the Human Rights Council, since 2011, yet it did not agree to several visit requests in recent years. In August 2021, Lebanon accepted the visit request of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. The visit was carried out from 1 to 12 November 2021, more than six years after the last visit of a special procedure mandate holders (Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, who visited Lebanon from 23 March to 2 April 2015).

<sup>599</sup> See full list here: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=96&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=96&Lang=EN)

<sup>600</sup> See Compilation on Lebanon, report by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/308/07/PDF/G2030807.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>601</sup> Most recently, Lebanon's report to CERD was considered in August 2021, and its report to CEDAW is due to be considered in February 2022. Lebanon has yet to submit its initial report under the Optional Protocol to CRC-OP-SC, overdue since 8 December 2006, and its periodic reports to CAT, due on 12 May 2021, and CESCR, due on 31 October 2021.



Lebanon has made some modest progress on implementing recommendations put forward in the second cycle of the Universal Period Review (UPR) in 2015.<sup>602</sup> Out of 297 recommendations received at the UPR review in January 2021, Lebanon supported 179 (60 per cent), as compared to 128 (58 per cent) out of 219 recommendations in the 2015 UPR review.<sup>603</sup> The largest proportion of recommendations pertain to SDG 16 (48 per cent), SDG 10 (13 per cent) and SDG 5 (12 per cent).<sup>604</sup>

A number of legal reforms in recent years have aimed to strengthen human rights protection, including Law No. 65/2017 on the Punishment of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Law 191/2020 amending Article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure on safeguarding rights of the accused, particularly by securing the assistance of a lawyer throughout the proceedings. The law defines and criminalizes torture for the first time in Lebanese legislation. However, challenges remain with regard to effective implementation measures and the Human Rights Committee<sup>605</sup> noted that the Law does not meet the requirements of Article 7 of ICCPR. In January 2020, the Human Rights Committee of the Parliament initiated a process of amending Law No. 65/2017.

In 2015, Lebanon accepted several UPR recommendations to establish a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) against torture. The Lebanese National Human Rights Commission was established in 2016 by Law 62/2016.<sup>606</sup> The ten-member Commission encompasses the five-member NPM.<sup>607</sup> There were significant delays in establishing the Commission and the Committee, including a lengthy process in appointing the members, who were sworn in before the President of the Republic in 2019, and as of March 2022 the Commission has yet to be allocated a budget to become operational. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) are considered as one of the stakeholders acknowledged in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration that Lebanon has adopted in 2018 which is guided by ten guiding principles including human rights.

In 2021, efforts were made to update the National Action Plan on Human Rights through a participatory process and future efforts will focus on its adoption and the monitoring of its implementation.

Another positive development welcomed by The Committee On Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6) is the adoption of Law No. 205 criminalizing sexual harassment, including in the workplace, with aggravated penalties for certain acts, including those involving abuse of authority. It also welcomed the amendment to Law No. 293 of 2014 on the protection of women and all family members against domestic violence. However, the committee expressed its concern that the sanctions provided for by the new Law No. 293 are not being strictly enforced and noted the long delays in establishing specialized gender-based violence courts and a special fund to support women victims of gender-based violence. It also noted with concern the absence in Law No. 205 on sexual harassment and rehabilitation of victims of sexual harassment of key protections, which falls short of international standards.

UN human rights mechanisms have repeatedly raised concern about the broad jurisdiction of military courts that extends to civilians, including children. In 2018, the Human Rights Committee reiterated its concern noting the reported lack of independence and impartiality of military court judges, as well as allegations of violations of fair trial guarantees and fundamental legal safeguards - including

<sup>602</sup> See full National report from UPR WG 37: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/305/88/PDF/G2030588.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>603</sup> See matrix of recommendations at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LBIndex.aspx>

<sup>604</sup> [https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session37/LB/LEBANON\\_Infographic\\_37th.pdf](https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session37/LB/LEBANON_Infographic_37th.pdf)

<sup>605</sup> (CCPR/C/LBN/CO/3)

<sup>606</sup> The Commission has a mandate to protect and promote human rights in Lebanon, to monitor and report on human rights, to review the legislation and to receive and process individual complaints on alleged human rights violations. The NPM has the power to visit all places of detention, interview inmates, monitor and report on its findings, and to process individual cases of alleged ill-treatment. Under Law 62/2016, all Lebanese authorities are obliged to cooperate with the Commission and the NPM.

<sup>607</sup> When Lebanon acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture in December 2008 it assumed the obligation to establish a NPM within one year

interrogation in the absence of a lawyer, torture and forced confessions, including from children, arbitrary sentences and a limited right of appeal against military court decisions - and called upon the State party to remove, without further delay, the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians<sup>608</sup> In May 2017, the UN Committee Against Torture expressed similar concerns calling on the State party without further delay to prohibit military courts from exercising jurisdiction over civilians.<sup>609</sup>

Lebanon accepted two UPR (2021) recommendations to address the issue of enforced disappearances as the unknown fate of approximately 17,000 disappeared persons from the Lebanese Civil War period still haunts the families of the missing. Law No. 105/2018 on the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared was passed on 13 November 2018. The law foresees the establishment of the National Commission for Missing and Enforced Disappearance, tasked with investigating enforced disappearances. The law enshrines the right for all families to know the fate of their missing or forcibly disappeared family members and relatives. As of March 2022, 10 members were appointed, though 4 had resigned in August 2021, and action had still to be taken to allocate a budget to make the Commission operational.

Finally, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ([CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24](#)) noted the rising racist hate speech against migrants and refugees, and urged the State party to amend its legislation to prohibit hate speech and to step up its efforts to cooperate with Internet service providers and social media platforms to curb the spread of racist and abusive messages online. CERD was also concerned about refugees, in particular Syrians, who have been victims of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment in detention centres or refugee camps. The Committee urged the State party to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are not detained arbitrarily and that all alleged cases of torture or ill-treatment are investigated, and all perpetrators are prosecuted accordingly.

People's access to social, cultural and economic rights are also linked to long-standing deficiencies in urban planning and management in a country that is highly urbanized. Issues related to housing, land and property rights; equitable access to economic opportunities through the availability of affordable public transport systems; adequate and inclusive public spaces; among others, have all been addressed in various other sections of this CCA report.

## Implementation of obligations

The multiple crises facing Lebanon have placed economic, social and cultural rights under additional strain, with an increasing number of people unable to enjoy their human right to an adequate standard of living, including access to adequate housing, food, water, health and education. The Lebanese state faces several key challenges in the implementation of its international human rights obligations. As reflected in recommendations of the UPR and human rights treaty bodies, primary challenges concern judicial independence (see rule of law and accountability section below) and the administration of justice, women's rights, economic, social and cultural rights, the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, the rights of the child, and the situation of migrants and refugees.

Despite some legislative advanced, women remain discriminated in law and practice in a number of areas. For example, human rights treaty bodies have all called on the State to grant Lebanese women equal rights with Lebanese men with regard to transmission of their nationality to their children.<sup>610</sup> Concerns have also been raised about discriminatory legal provisions concerning inheritance and entrenched patriarchal attitudes and the stereotyped image of women, which prevent women from enjoying their human rights on an equal basis with men.<sup>611</sup>

<sup>608</sup> (CCPR/C/LBN/CO/3, paras. 43 and 44).

<sup>609</sup> (CAT/C/LBN/CO/1, paras. 34 and 35).

<sup>610</sup> CRC/C/LBN/CO/4-5, para.17; CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5, para. 16; CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24, para. 17; CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6

<sup>611</sup> CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5, para. 25 and 26; E/C.12/LBN/CO/2, paras. 27 and 28; CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6

The crises have exacerbated concerns about economic stratification in Lebanon, raised by the CESCR in 2016<sup>612</sup>, including concern about children, especially refugee children, who were not in school or had quit school owing to the insufficient capacity of the educational infrastructure.

Challenges also remain to address discrimination faced by persons with disabilities. As the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted, children with disabilities suffer from not being integrated into mainstream education, and from inadequate and insufficient rehabilitation services, and lack of support services to families of children with disabilities.<sup>613</sup>

The crises have also exposed the extreme vulnerability of an estimated 210,000 migrant workers in Lebanon, of whom 76 per cent are women.<sup>614</sup> The migrant population is particularly affected by human rights abuses given the vulnerabilities linked to the kafala-system, exacerbating the risks of abuse and exploitation, including human trafficking.<sup>615</sup> Recent events have highlighted this when Kenyan domestic workers in Beirut found themselves on the street, some without papers after their employers had seized them – either because they had fled from their homes after being mistreated, or because they had been abandoned by their employers on the grounds that they no longer had the means to pay them due to the economic crisis.<sup>616</sup> Despite ongoing efforts by civil society organizations, such as Amel Association, to advocate for migrant workers and help them access state support in 25 centers nationwide,<sup>617</sup> these marginalized groups remain in a precarious position.

Security threats constitute an important factor for populations with a greater vulnerability such as migrants based on the circumstances in which they travel, the conditions they face upon arrival, and other demographic aspects. Preliminary data from a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment conducted in all regions in Lebanon in 2021 shows that migrant populations are experiencing a number of security concerns: almost one out of three migrant households (29 per cent) reported security concerns for girls, such as verbal harassment, bullying, kidnapping and exploitation while 13 per cent mentioned safety concerns for women.<sup>618</sup>

Another concern raised by human rights mechanisms is that apart from migrant domestic workers, several categories of workers do not enjoy the protection of the Labour Code, including those working in unregulated sectors and in the informal economy.<sup>619</sup>

Lebanon's 1925 Nationality Law fundamentally discriminates against women who are married to foreigners, their children and spouses, by denying citizenship to those children and spouses.<sup>620</sup> The law has significant detrimental consequences on these children and spouses, including legal residency, access to work, education and social services, while risking statelessness for some children.<sup>621</sup> While individual ministries have taken some small steps to ease barriers for those affected to access services, they remain piecemeal and fail to address the root cause of the issue: the law itself.

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<sup>612</sup> CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5, para. 25 and 26; E/C.12/LBN/CO/2, paras. 27 and 28

<sup>613</sup> CRC/C/LBN/CO/4-5, para. 28

<sup>614</sup> The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon in February 2022 (CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/6), was concerned about the suspension by the Council of State of the implementation of the new single standard contract for migrant domestic workers, and recommended that the State party amend the Labour Code to extend its protection to domestic workers and to recognize the human rights of domestic workers in accordance with international standards.

<sup>615</sup> In August 2021, CERD reiterated its recommendation that the State party abolish the sponsorship system (kafalah), ensure that the employment of migrant domestic workers is regulated by the Labour Code, ratify the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), tackle abuses by agencies recruiting foreign migrant workers, and ensure that a common standard contract that adequately protects the rights of those workers is adopted and effectively enforced (CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24, paras. 24-25).

<sup>616</sup> In fact, almost 1 out of seven migrants (13.9%) in Lebanon have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence, employment-related abuse or other types of exploitation, based on a Needs and Vulnerability assessment conducted in late 2020/early 2021.

<sup>617</sup> UNV, "State of the World's Volunteerism Report Building Equal and Inclusive Societies" (2022)

<sup>618</sup> IOM, DTM, LHF, 'Multi-Sector Needs of Migrants in Lebanon', (May 2022)

<sup>619</sup> CERD/C/LBN/CO/23-24

<sup>620</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Lebanon: Discriminatory Nationality Law', (3 October 2018)

<sup>621</sup> The law grants citizenship to those born in Lebanon to unknown parents or parents of unknown nationalities, meaning that children of Lebanese mothers with unknown paternity have a greater claim to citizenship than Lebanese mothers and a known foreign father.

On the conclusion of his mission to Lebanon in November 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights strongly advocated for a “credible plan to finance the economy, address inequality, ensure a balanced and fair justice system, reduce political impasses, improve accountability and engage the principle of transparency”.<sup>622</sup> Such a plan can be a viable option in the medium to the longer term. However, considering the worsening living and service conditions in the country almost by the month if not the week, urgent interventions, and at times very urgent targeted interventions, are required immediately. This is essential to mitigate the increasingly damaging effects of the above predicaments, particularly among expanding vulnerable groups, and to increase and sustain the resilience of the suffering populations.

### 3.5 PARTNERSHIP

*“We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people”<sup>623</sup>*

This chapter assesses key trends, challenges and opportunities relating to SDG 17, including development financing and partnerships with focus on ODA; trade, FDI, remittance, and data. The “Partnership” component of the 2030 Agenda, and the targets of SDG 17, emphasize several global commitments and key measures that will be essential to set Lebanon on a path towards inclusive and sustainable development. Specifically, this section assesses the current financing for development and partnerships landscape, as well as the fundamental theme of ensuring a strong and effective national statistics system which can provide decision-makers and the public with timely and disaggregated quality data to inform and direct Lebanon’s recovery and reforms. It also looks at the cross-boundary, regional and subregional perspective of partnerships.

#### Development Finance

This section looks at different internal and external financing instruments that are currently operational. These include Official Development Assistance (ODA) comprising grants and loans, domestic sources of financing, innovative financing sources<sup>624</sup> and mechanisms as well as the status of FDIs and remittances.

##### Official Development Assistance (ODA)

For many years, Lebanon has benefitted from a strong presence and financial support from the international community<sup>625</sup>. Since 2013,<sup>626</sup> the country has been a target recipient country in ten consecutive regional pledging conferences to support the Syrian people, the neighboring countries, and the communities most affected by the Syria conflict.

Several international conferences were also organized to support Lebanon’s key priorities. These include the CEDRE in 2018 where the international donors pledged USD 10.2 billion in loans, of which USD 9.9 billion concessional, and USD 860 million in grants. The pledges were made against priority projects identified in Lebanon’s Capital Investment Programme (CIP); a list of priority infrastructure projects developed by the government. To avoid challenges of previous Lebanon pledging conferences

<sup>622</sup> Statement by Profesor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporeur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to Lebanon, 1-12 November 2021: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-nations-special-rapporteur-extreme>

<sup>623</sup> General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (2015). “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (25 September 2015)

<sup>624</sup> Such as blended financing or Islamic financing

<sup>625</sup> Funding received was still considerably less than the appeal leaving numerous needs unmet

<sup>626</sup> Kuwait (2013-2015), London (2016) and Brussels (2017-2021)

(Paris I, II and III), disbursement by the international community was tied to the implementation of key structural and legal reforms identified in the government of Lebanon’s “Vision for stabilization, growth and employment”. In the aftermath of the Port of Beirut explosion, two aid conferences focused on humanitarian aid and security assistance were organized by France with the support of the United Nations rallying over USD 650 million in pledges.

Compared to countries in the MENA region, or with upper-middle-income countries or refugee hosting countries, ODA to Lebanon is higher per capita. Lebanon receives mostly humanitarian assistance through mainly the UN system and some development assistance through government systems<sup>627</sup>.

**International assistance** disbursed<sup>628</sup> to Lebanon as grants totalled USD 1,706,884,543 in 2020, a considerable increase compared to preceding years, where international grant assistance was at USD 1,526,740,947 in 2019, USD 1,571,753,827 in 2018, and USD 1,374,428,778 in 2017.<sup>629</sup> The drivers of this increase in international aid were mainly the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Port of Beirut explosion. In 2021, reported grants disbursed by donors stood at USD 1,325,890,780.

Due to the nature of the reporting system and information shared by donor and implementing partners, the Lebanon aid tracking does not provide a delineation between humanitarian and development funding and is disaggregated by response plan instead. Between 2017 and 2021, the majority of grant funding received<sup>630</sup> was channelled through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), Out of the total USD 1.7 billion reported donor support to Lebanon in 2020, 85 per cent of the funds were reported as allocated to the LCRP, 5 per cent . under the Lebanon Emergency Appeal in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and 10% under the Flash Appeal in response to the Port of Beirut explosion. This trend seems to continue in 2021 where out of the USD 1.4 billion reported donor support to Lebanon, 89 per cent of the funds were reported as allocated to the LCRP, 8 per cent under the the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) and 6 per cent under the Emergency Response Plan (ERP).

**Figure 18: 2021 response plan VS response funding required VS total donor support reported, in percentage**

2021 response plan	percentage of funding required	percentage of total donor support reported
LCRP	56%	89%
ERP	19%	6%
3RF	25%	8%

Support to Lebanon rose with the onset of the Syria crisis to respond to the impact on Syrian refugees and host communities. Aid also included support to public sector institutions to help them manage the impact of the crisis with a specific focus on quality of, and access to, public services.

**Figure 19: Top 5 donors to Lebanon by year (2017-2021)**

Donor	2017	Donor	2018	Donor	2019	Donor	2020	Donor	2021
<b>US</b>	\$450.0 M	<b>US</b>	\$494.3 M	<b>US</b>	\$453.1 M	<b>US</b>	\$499.1 M	<b>US</b>	\$485.6 M
<b>EU</b>	\$235.0 M	<b>Germany</b>	\$352.2 M	<b>EU</b>	\$389.3 M	<b>EU</b>	\$408.3 M	<b>EU</b>	\$234.0 M
<b>Germany</b>	\$214.8 M	<b>EU</b>	\$277.7 M	<b>UK</b>	\$171.1 M	<b>Germany</b>	\$178.3 M	<b>Germany</b>	\$137.4 M

<sup>627</sup> OECD, ‘Transition finance country study Lebanon’, (2019)

<sup>628</sup> Defined as funds disbursed from donor following a signed commitment or a contract

<sup>629</sup> UNRCO, Lebanon aid tracking data

<sup>630</sup> Defined as funds received by implementing partner following a signed commitment or a contract

<b>UK</b>	\$132.2 M	<b>UK</b>	\$82.6 M	<b>Germany</b>	\$169.1 M	<b>UK</b>	\$147.7 M	<b>Netherlands</b>	\$69.4 M
<b>Norway</b>	\$73.7 M	<b>France</b>	\$64.0 M	<b>Norway</b>	\$61.9 M	<b>Canada</b>	\$73.9 M	<b>UK</b>	\$64.3 M

Source: UNRCO, Lebanon aid tracking data

Funding for sustainable development remained constrained due to lack of progress on key reforms enactment and implementation. Moreover, the GoL underutilizes development funds available for the country, prioritizing short term solutions at the cost of essential long term development approaches.

Several **funds** have been established to provide additional targeted grant support to Lebanon<sup>631</sup> including different regional and national trust funds such as the OCHA Lebanon Humanitarian Pooled Fund, the UN Lebanon Recovery Fund (LRF), EU MADAD fund, and the recently established 3RF Lebanon Financing Facility (LFF).

Broadening the donor base, including through greater support to pooled financing mechanisms, is key to promoting coherent allocation and disbursement of resources for implementation of programmes and actions around shared results.

From a gender perspective, reported support shows a lack of funding for local NGOs as well as women’s rights/women-led organizations. Local and national organizations have so far received directly less than 0.6 per cent of total humanitarian funding for Lebanon’s COVID-19 response plan. This is less than the already low global average, with 8 per cent of all humanitarian aid going to local and national groups worldwide.<sup>632</sup> In certain sectors, such as health, NGOs are important partners implementing PHC and a significant part of hospitalization and are being funded accordingly. According to data from the Financial Tracking System (FTS), of the USD 156 million that was channelled through the Flash Appeal, less than 3 per cent of funding went to the six organizations principally working towards gender equality and women’s rights (including national and international NGOs and UN agencies) despite a strong presence of national and international women’s rights organizations in Lebanon<sup>633</sup>.

The financing landscape in Lebanon compared to peer countries shows that Lebanon benefitted in the previous period from large amounts of both external funding and domestic credit, albeit both have been used mostly in non-productive investments and have thus not been a driver of growth.

**Figure 20: Gross domestic product and domestic and external financing in Lebanon**

<sup>631</sup> The Lebanon Recovery Fund (LRF) was established in 2006 after the July war, while the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund, Madad and the Lebanon Financing Facility were established in the years following the Syrian crisis

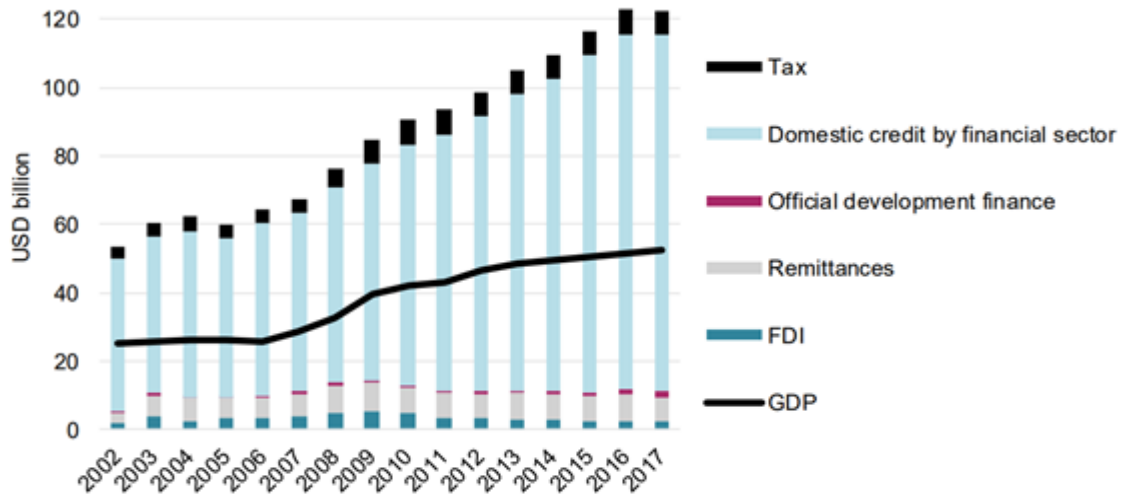
<sup>632</sup> The Guardian, ‘Grassroots groups hold Beirut together, yet big NGOs suck up the cash’, (27 August 2020):

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/aug/27/grassroots-groups-hold-beirut-together-yet-big-ngos-suck-up-the-cash-lebanon>

<sup>633</sup> UN Women, ‘Gender Equality in the Humanitarian Response to the Beirut Port Explosion’, (2021):

<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/06/womens-rights-humanitarian-action-wps>



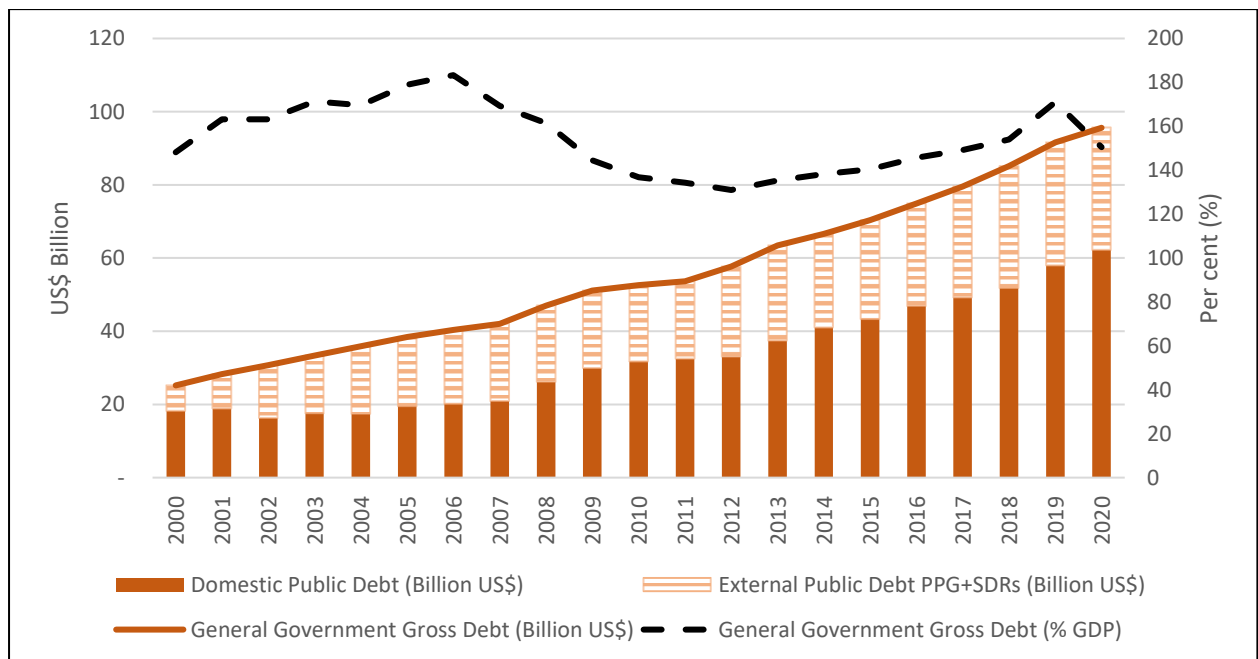


Source: OECD, transition finance country study Lebanon, 2019

**Lebanon's public debt increased to an estimated 183 per cent of GDP in 2021.**<sup>634</sup> Depreciation of the Lebanese currency effectively reduces the US dollar equivalent of Lebanon's domestic debt. However, the sharp decrease in GDP in dollar terms has also a denominator impact on the debt-to-GDP ratio. Given the country's high debt level and a constrained ability to raise funds due to the economic slowdown as well as devaluation of the local currency, Lebanon faces severe debt sustainability challenges.

**Roughly two-thirds of Lebanon's 2020 public debt was domestic (USD 62 billion), while USD 32 billion was external.** About 97 per cent of interest payments on public debt goes to private creditors as they hold 94 per cent of external public debt. This pattern suggests not only a high external debt service burden, but also high risks associated with external debt servicing either due to exchange rate shocks or due to any negative shock to trade balance.

Figure 21: Gross Public Debt in Lebanon



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2021)

<sup>634</sup> World Bank, [Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2021: The Great Denial, \(2021\)](#)

Lebanon has access to **loan financing** through the World Bank and other IFIs, including the EBRD, EIB and Arab funds. Lebanon has also access to the Global Concessional Financing Facility - a World Bank, UN and the Islamic Development Bank initiative that supports middle-income countries impacted by the influx of refugees through the provision of concessional financing. However, Lebanon has only benefited from two projects, (1) a roads and employment programme, for which USD 45 million came from the Global Concessional Financing Facility and (2) the Lebanon health resilience project, for which USD 30 million came from the GCF. <sup>635</sup> Jordan, a similar upper middle income refugee hosting country, has benefitted so far from 11 projects from the GCF for a total projects amount of USD 2,112.64 million in ISA loans and concessional <sup>636</sup>.

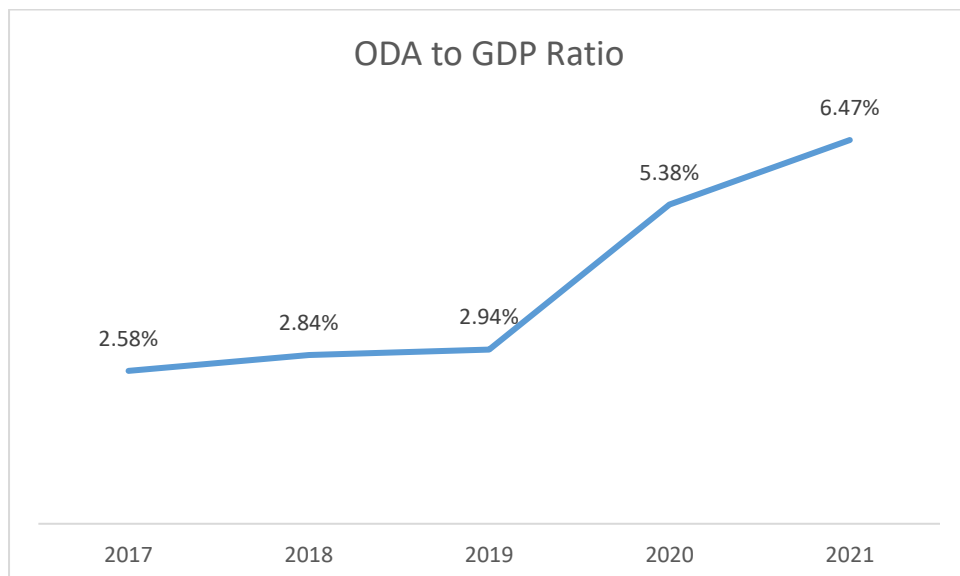
Lebanon has greatly benefitted from bilateral support from Arab countries, with half of all funds received between 1992 and 2017 being from Arab development partners. Support went primarily to public institutions and came in particular from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Lebanon’s performance in terms of loan management has nonetheless been subpar, with a reported long accumulated backlog of loan agreements not implemented or with long implementation delays. The continuing lack of reforms has also halted further disbursement of loans to scale up infrastructure and production. In comparison with countries in the MENA region, upper-middle-income countries and refugee hosting countries, debt level and servicing costs are comparably high in Lebanon constraining fiscal capacity, increasing financing costs and requiring large portions of Lebanon’s public expenditure, further limiting public resources for social spending and productive investment <sup>637</sup>.

The continuous lack of reforms initiatives, the absence of a robust economic recovery plan, the lag in the government grant and loan portfolio and missing appropriate incentives to partner with private sector and private capitals prevent a strong targeted and focused response to the current economic situation, which is impacting every layer of society.

At the same time, the increase of grant ODA to GDP ratio in 2020 and 2021 (due to both the increase in ODA and decrease of the GDP) threatens to push Lebanon further into a highly aid dependent economy.

**Figure 22: Grant ODA to GDP ratio (2017-2021)**



*GDP data source: World Bank data, 2021 GDP estimate*

<sup>635</sup> GCF secretariat

<sup>636</sup> Global concessional financing facility 2020-2021 annual report

<sup>637</sup> OECD, 'Transition finance country study Lebanon', (2019)

### Foreign Direct Investments (FDI)

The combination of the impact of the multiple crises and the slow progress on reforms kept FDI at a low USD 2.5 billion on average in the past five years<sup>638</sup>. Compared to other countries in the MENA region, upper-middle-income countries and refugee hosting countries, FDI are higher in Lebanon and have historically targeted the real estate sector. Other FDI were mainly in the trade, tourism and financial sectors<sup>639</sup>. The majority of FDI to Lebanon come from the MENA region. Between 2003 and 2015,<sup>640</sup> 50 per cent of the FDI to Lebanon originated from the United Arab Emirates followed by 14 per cent from Kuwait and 13 per cent from Saudi Arabia. OECD countries including the UK, US, France and Switzerland also play an important role in FDI to Lebanon not only as a source but in private sector development including through promoting and strengthening investment to SMEs and start-ups.

### Remittances

Remittances are estimated at USD 6.2 billion in 2020 (19.8 per cent of GDP).<sup>641</sup> Lebanon is a notable case of a remittance dependent economy, with a steady brain drain and out-migrants that ensures regular inflows of remittances. In Lebanon, remittances are used primarily for private consumption and contribute, especially after the onset of the economic crisis in 2019, to securing basic rights and needs and to sustaining living standards in the absence of an adequate national social protection system. Nevertheless, the decline in remittances (in absolute terms, although still resilient) and foreign investment sustained a continuous downtrend in the current account balance recording a deficit of nearly 28 per cent of GDP in 2019, as well as depleting the foreign reserves held by the Central Bank (Banque du Liban)<sup>642</sup>.

**FDI and remittances** are high in comparison with other middle-income countries, even with the decrease in FDI during the past decade<sup>643</sup>. Nonetheless, both FDI and remittances have not contributed to the development of productive economy in Lebanon.<sup>644</sup>

### Domestic sources of financing

Domestic sources of financing including tax and non-tax revenues, PPP, public/private borrowing and domestic philanthropy, are all constrained by the lack of trust in the state institutions and the economic crisis. Domestic government revenues, which were historically low, have lost most of their value following the massive devaluation of the LBP. Fiscal space is even more constrained, further limiting public investments in a productive economy. The default of Lebanon on its Eurobonds in March 2020 - domestic credit having once dominated the public financing landscape - further reduced the country's access to loans to drive growth<sup>645</sup>. However, it has reduced the fiscal deficit by 54.1 per cent.<sup>646</sup>

**Lebanon's fiscal deficit is estimated to be 13 per cent of GDP in 2021, compared to 18 per cent of GDP in 2019 and 4.7 per cent of GDP in 2020.**<sup>647</sup> While both expenditures and revenues declined in 2020, expenditures declined by a greater magnitude, causing the deficit to narrow. Total expenditures, including off-budget items such as treasury advances and customs administration amounted to LBP 19 trillion in 2020, a decline of 23.7 per cent from the previous year. Total revenues, which include tax

<sup>638</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon', (dashboard): <https://data.worldbank.org/country/LB>

<sup>639</sup> IDAL, Lebanon at a glance, FDIs: [https://investinglebanon.gov.lb/en/lebanon\\_at\\_a\\_glance/lebanon\\_in\\_figures](https://investinglebanon.gov.lb/en/lebanon_at_a_glance/lebanon_in_figures)

<sup>640</sup> UNCTAD (2018), Investment policy review - Lebanon

<sup>641</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon', (dashboard): <https://data.worldbank.org/country/LB>

<sup>642</sup> FAO, 'Agriculture Sector Review', (2021 – DRAFT)

<sup>643</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon', (dashboard): <https://data.worldbank.org/country/LB>

<sup>644</sup> OECD, 'Transition finance country study Lebanon', (2019)

<sup>645</sup> OECD, 'Transition finance country study Lebanon', (2019)

<sup>646</sup> World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic Update', (October 2021)

<sup>647</sup> ESCWA, 'Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2020-21'. (2021); International Monetary Fund (IMF), 'World Economic Outlook Database', (October 2021)

revenues, non-tax revenues, and treasury receipts, fell by 12.5 per cent to approximately LBP 15 trillion in 2020. Capital expenditures have also reached a historic low at 2 per cent of budget expenditures and not exceeding 0.5 per cent of the GDP. According to ESCWA’s baseline scenario forecasts, the fiscal deficit is expected to be 7 per cent in 2022 and 4.5 per cent in 2023.

**Lebanon did not passed an annual state budget for 12 years**, between 2005 and 2017, as a result of the chronic political paralysis that has afflicted Lebanon. A review of the national budget for the last four years shows the evolution of the impact of the crisis on national expenditures and revenues.

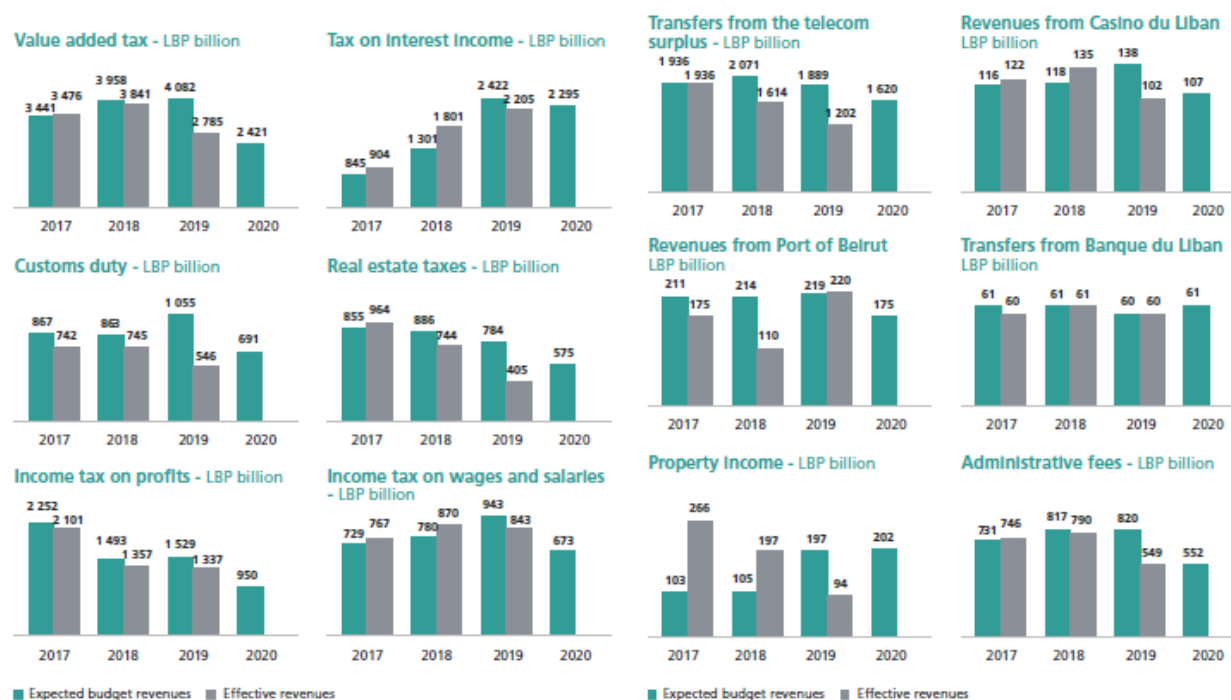
The division of the national budget highlights the state priorities. The table below shows a high portion of the budget allocated as a treasury advance to the EDL- the state-owned electricity company that had proven to be inefficient as it was not yet successful to provide reliable electricity services to the public. Whereas the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of industry budgets constitute together less than 1% of the national budget. The environment protection budget share is also a very minor portion of the budget. This suggests that basic development is not considered a priority for the state and it is not able to provide significant financing to develop these sectors.

**Figure 23: Planned national budget expenditures (2018-2020)**

(LBP billions)	Treasury advance to EDL	Defense	Public order and safety	Economic affairs	Health	Education	Environmental protection	General public services	Housing and community amenities	Social protection	Recreation, culture and religion
<b>2018</b>	<b>2,100</b>	2,694	1,539	1,448	721	2,068	74	10,108	274	4,841	123
<b>2019</b>	<b>2,500</b>	2,407	1,509	941	736	2,058	68	9,817	341	5,108	121
<b>2020</b>	<b>1,500</b>	2,421	1,534	431	686	1,922	46	6,055	40	4,985	111

Source: MoF citizen budgets 2018, 2019, 2020

The below figures show a comparison between the planned and effective revenues over the years 2017-2020 exhibiting significant variations in a number of cases.

**Figure 24: planned vs effective state revenues 2017-2020**


Source: MoF citizen budgets 2018, 2019, 2020

### Expenditures (Current/Capital breakdown)

**Budget expenditures have been falling in nominal terms and as a share of GDP, and this trend is observed for both current and capital spending.**<sup>648</sup> Total budget expenditures fell from LBP 23.1 trillion in 2019 to LBP 17.2 trillion in 2020, a decline of 36.7 per cent, which was part of policy options to reduce budget deficit. This represented a reduction from 29 per cent to 18 per cent of GDP. During the first six months of 2021, as per available data, nominal budget expenditures were down 16 per cent year-on-year between January-June 2020 and January-June 2021.

**Lebanon's budget is heavily concentrated in current expenditures, with a very low share of expenditures going toward capital expenditure.** In 2020, current expenditures were 98 per cent of total budget expenditures, while capital accounted for 2 per cent. Interest payments and salaries consume about 77 per cent of total budget up until 2019. In 2020, interest payments were low due to the Eurobond default. Low capital expenditure adversely impacts productivity and infrastructure as well as creating an uncondusive business environment: Lebanon ranked low in terms of quality in roads (121 out of 137), electricity (134 out of 137), transport (100 out of 137) and ports (91 out of 137), according to the World Economic Forum 2018. More recently, severe shortages of fuel caused electricity blackouts across the country, with public services providing only a few hours of electricity per day.<sup>649</sup> In October 2021, Lebanon suffered a nationwide 24-hour blackout due to fuel shortages in two of the country's major power plants.<sup>650</sup>

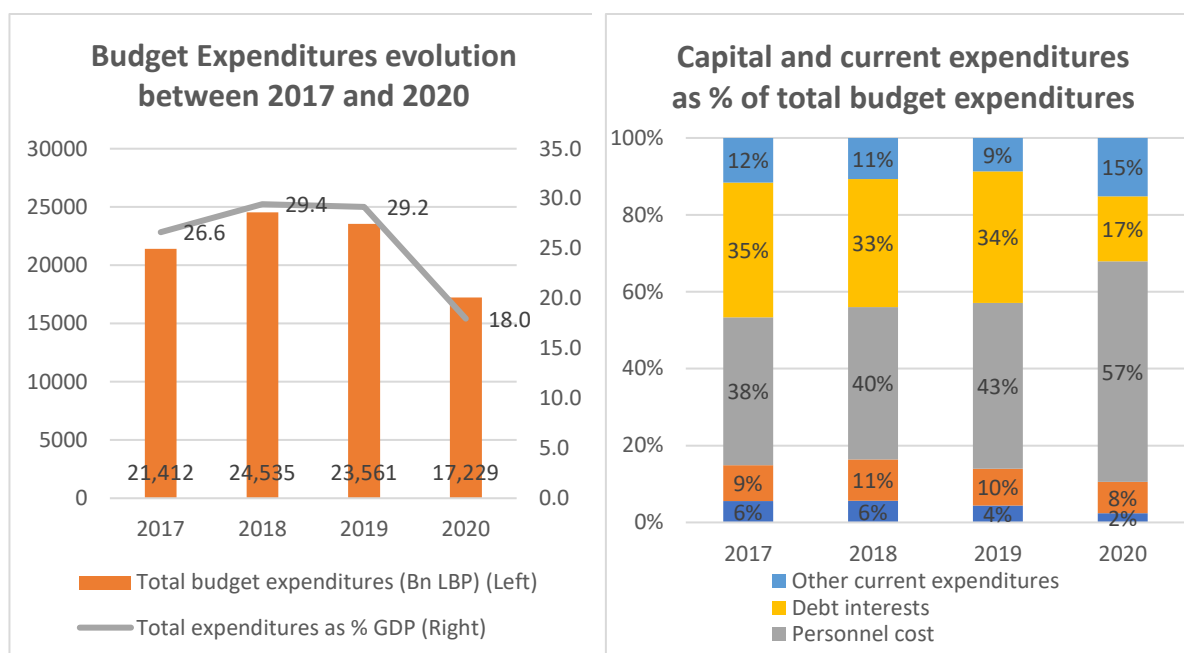
A combination of the Eurobond default and a new arrangement with the Banque du Liban on domestic debt and cuts in transfers<sup>651</sup> resulted in reducing current expenditures from 28 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 18 per cent of GDP in 2020. Over the same period, capital expenditures fell from 1 per cent of GDP to 0.4 per cent of GDP. Current and capital expenditures decreased in the first six months of 2021 relative to their values a year ago. Capital expenditures were only LBP 136 billion from January-June 2021, compared with 363 billion in January-June 2020.

<sup>648</sup> Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Finance, 'Public Finance Reports': <http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-us/Finance/Rep-Pub/DRI-MOF/PFR>

<sup>649</sup> World Bank, [Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2021: The Great Denial, \(2021\)](#)

<sup>650</sup> CNBC, [Lebanon suffers 24-hour blackout, food poisoning, business closures amid fuel crisis'](#) (2021)

<sup>651</sup> World Bank, [Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2021: The Great Denial, \(2021\)](#)

**Figures 25 and 26: Budget Expenditures**


Source: Lebanon Ministry of Finance; IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2021)

**COVID-19 has severely impacted economic activity in Lebanon as it has in other countries throughout the world.** To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the Lebanese government announced policy measures to support people in need during the pandemic. The total government fiscal support announced during the past two years is estimated at USD 300 million<sup>652</sup>. In-kind transfers amounted to around LBP 18 billion distributed through solidarity basket of food and sanitizers for families hit economically and financially because of COVID-19. In addition, the ministry of Social Affairs and Environment allocated LBP 75 billion as cash transfers through the “Social Solidarity Programme” to provide financial assistance to help the poorest families and those hit hardest by the pandemic, which is worth LBP 400,000 per family.

#### Budgetary revenues (Tax vs. Non-tax)

**Total budgetary revenues amounted to LBP 13.6 trillion in 2020, down 13 per cent from the previous year.**<sup>653</sup> This figure represents 14 per cent of 2020 GDP, below recent historical values. Budgetary revenues were stable between 19.5 and 20.5 per cent of GDP in each year from 2017 to 2019. In 2020, tax revenues were LBP 10.4 trillion, roughly three-quarters of total budgetary revenues, while non-tax revenues were LBP 3.2 trillion.

**Both tax and non-tax revenues declined as a share of GDP from 2019 to 2020.** Goods and services taxes, which include VAT, were nearly halved from 4.8 per cent to 2.5 per cent of GDP between 2019 and 2020. While the Lebanese pound depreciated in the black market, customs duties continued to be calculated on the official exchange rate which overvalued the local currency, effectively reducing customs rates. As a result, tax revenues from international trade declined severely from 2.2 per cent to 1.3 per cent of GDP between 2019 and 2020. Non-tax revenues failed to keep up with the inflation-related increase in nominal GDP from 2019 to 2020, which caused the share of non-tax revenues to GDP to decline from 4.2 per cent to 3.4 per cent.

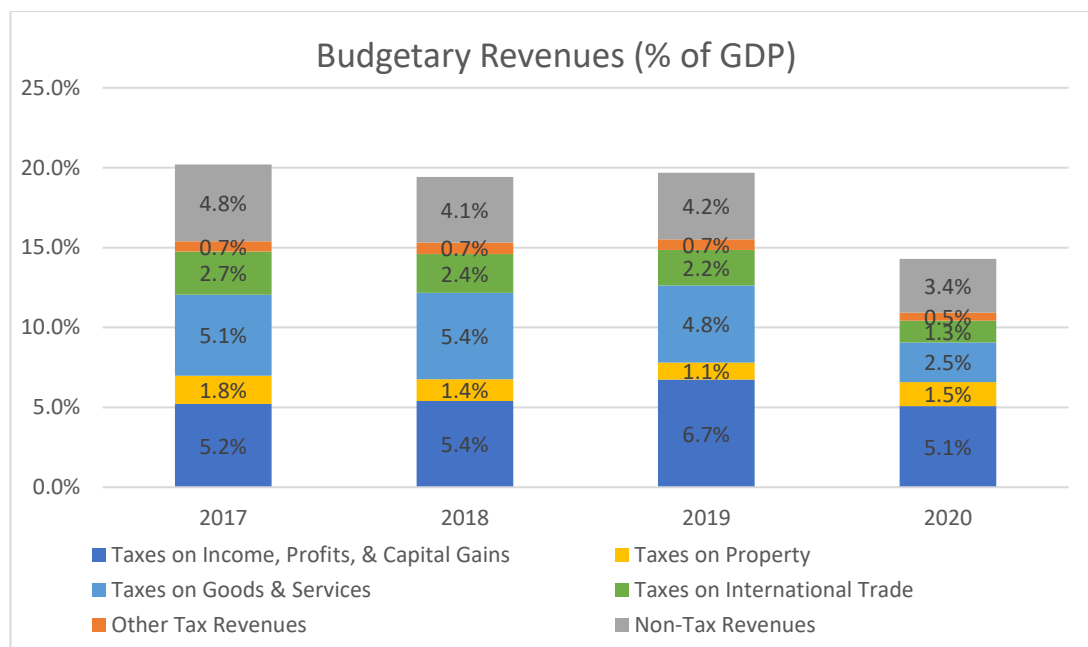
<sup>652</sup> Out of the \$300 million, the ESSN project financed a US\$246 million which is World Bank low-interest long-term maturity loan to support the vulnerable population through cash transfers. See [UN COVID-19 Stimulus Tracker: Global Observatory on Social Protection and Economic Responses](#).

<sup>653</sup> Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Finance, ‘Public Finance Reports’: <http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-us/Finance/Rep-Pub/DRI-MOF/PFR>



Numerous factors have contributed to the decline in Lebanon’s budgetary revenues as a share of GDP. The World Bank cites factors such as the increase in nominal GDP due to inflation, lower effective tax rates and fees due to failure to adjust valuations for inflation, reduced capacity in the revenue administration, reduced tax revenue from interest income due to declining deposits, and measures delaying tax collection imposed in the face of COVID-19.<sup>654</sup>

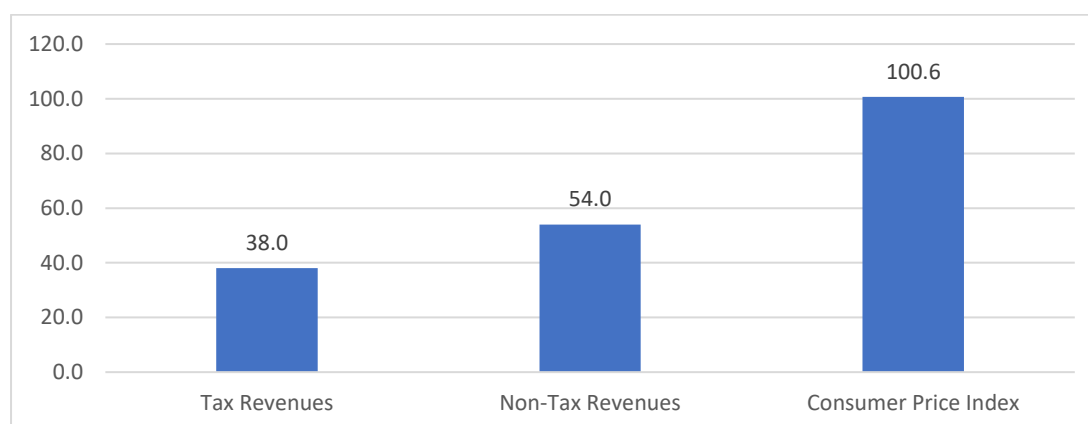
**Figure 27: Budgetary Revenues (% of GDP)**



Source: Lebanon Ministry of Finance; IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2021)

**Budgetary revenues increased in the available data covering the first half of 2021.** Tax revenues were LBP 6.9 trillion in the first six months of 2021, a 38 per cent increase over the same period in 2020. Meanwhile, non-tax revenues increased 58 per cent year-on-year to reach LBP 1.5 trillion. However, the Consumer Price Index doubled from 206.83 in June 2020 to 414.97 in June 2021, suggesting that the increase in budgetary revenues was more than offset by the rise in prices. Therefore, the purchasing power of revenues continues to decline.<sup>655</sup> The World Bank estimates Lebanon’s 2021 tax revenues at 6.6 per cent of GDP, roughly half its 2020 value.

**Figure 28: Revenues and Price Level in Jan-Jun 2021 vs. Jan-Jun 2020 (Year-over-Year % Change)**



Source: Lebanon Ministry of Finance; Lebanon Central Administration of Statistics

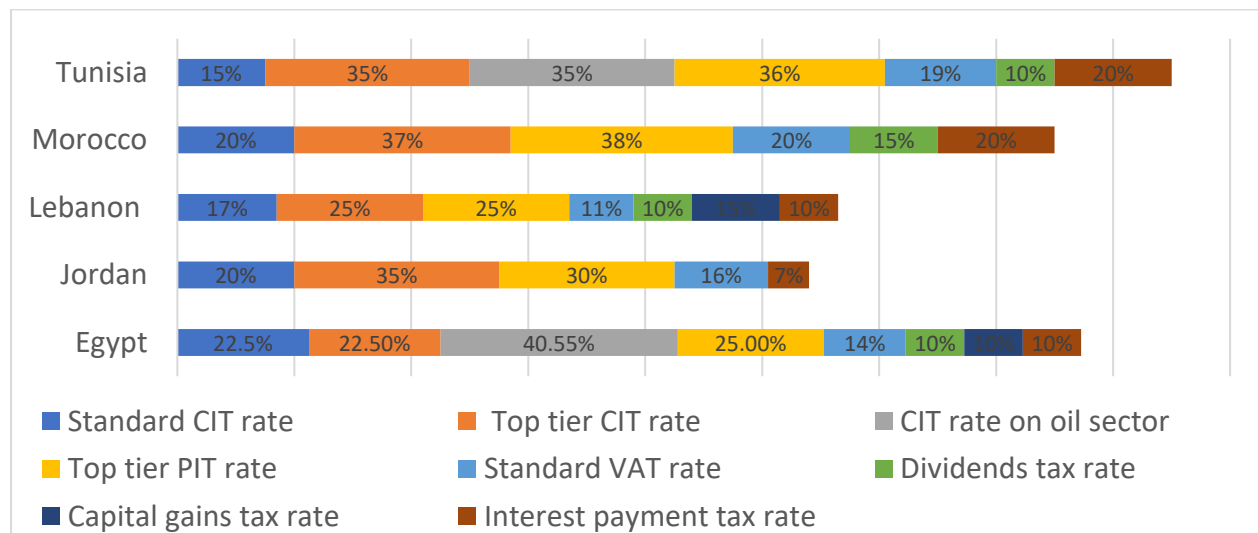
<sup>654</sup> World Bank, [Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2021: The Great Denial, \(2021\)](#)

<sup>655</sup> [Lebanon Central Administration of Statistics](#)

**Lebanon's tax-to-GDP ratio has historically been low and has further declined in the face of compound effect of the economic crisis and the pandemic.** Before the economic crisis, tax revenues represented 15 per cent of GDP, well below the average of Arab middle-income countries at roughly 19 per cent of GDP in 2019. Tax revenues declined further in 2020 to 11 per cent of GDP. Additionally, the pattern of taxes adversely impacts low-income groups and the middle class since a large proportion of the taxes are through VAT. Direct taxes, including personal and corporate income taxes, have contributed less than half of total tax revenues.

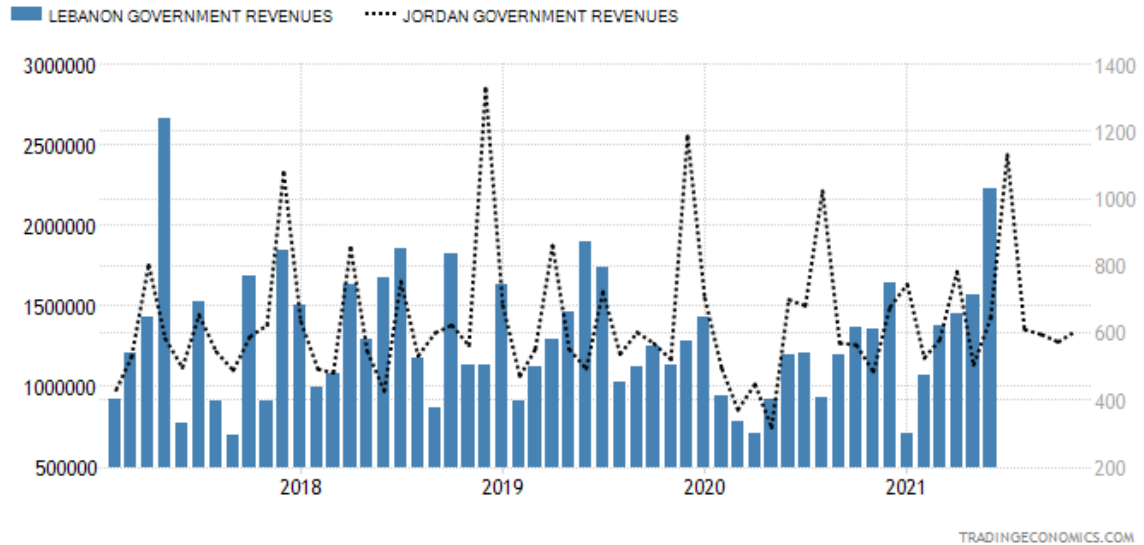
**However, there is potential to raise revenues through improved efficiency of tax collection and improving progressivity of taxation.** Figure 6 displays several key tax rates in Lebanon and other regional peers. Lebanon's tax rates are lower than its regional peers on several fronts: the top-tier personal income tax (PIT), corporate income tax (CIT) and even the value-added tax rates. Second, Lebanon could generate more revenues through improved efficiency. For example, Lebanon's VAT revenue ratio, measured as the ratio of VAT revenues to the theoretical VAT tax base, has been declining from 0.51 in 2010 to 0.32 in 2019. This value is far below the OECD average VAT revenue ratio of 0.56. Improving efficiency to the OECD average benchmark would have increased 2019 VAT revenues by USD 1.4 billion without any increase in the tax rate.

**Figure 29: CIT, PIT, and VAT Rates Relative to Peers**



Source: ESCWA compilation from Ministries of Finance, official gazettes, and relevant tax authorities of respective countries

Figure 30: domestic government revenues – Lebanon vs Jordan (Billion LBP and Million JOD)<sup>656</sup>



Note: Similarly to Lebanon previous status, Jordan is an upper middle income refugee hosting country

Furthermore, Lebanon's tax system is considered to be unfair and inefficient, with a regressive tax incidence, a limited tax base<sup>657</sup> and constrained tax collection due to limited auditing capacity and systems. The current tax regime seems to favor the economic elite and contributes to rising inequalities. Tax reforms are central to ensure fiscal justice, revenues for the delivery of public goods, and the financing of a robust and sustainable development plan for Lebanon and the reduction of inequalities.

Public institutions are facing significant challenges in terms of human resources and the capacity to follow-up on daily activities as well as on long-term reforms. Collapsing wages, prolonged strikes, energy and basic office supply shortage, may create a situation in which the Lebanese administration is paralyzed in the medium and long-term, threatening the recent efforts made to improve the administration services and efficiency. This is very critical in the health sector where public hospitals are strained, as they had to accommodate rapid expansion in terms of bed capacity to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in a financially deteriorating environment which was impeding access to medications and medical supplies, and pushing human resources for health into emigration.

#### Support to statistical capacity building

Lebanon's capacity to produce continuous, reliable, timely, coherent, disaggregated and up to date data at national and local levels is constrained by many challenges and is a barrier to the design of evidence-based policies and plans.

Information in the public National Statistical System (NSS) in Lebanon is not centralized, with contributions from several governmental ministries, administrations and other entities. The Central Administration of Statistics is the core of that system and is responsible for producing and publishing statistics alone or in coordination with other ministries and public agencies.

The NSS faces many issues including reported lack of collaboration from ministries and other public entities, lack of uniform and international standards, low statistical capacity in line ministries and at subnational levels, a lack of organized data transmission mechanisms to facilitate the flow of data, as well as a lack of a comprehensive agreed master plan for the statistical work.

<sup>656</sup>Jordan is an upper middle income refugee hosting country which is similar to Lebanon's previous status

<sup>657</sup> Bifani, Daher, Assouad and Diwan, Which tax policies for Lebanon? Lessons from the past for a challenging future, Arab Reform Initiative, 2021

CAS faces several challenges in fulfilling its mission, including an outdated legal and regulatory framework, limited decision-making power, insufficient human and financial capacity to absorb technical assistance, absence of a “culture of statistics,” weak statistical infrastructure in terms of sampling frame for social, economic and vulnerability surveys and others, and limited investment in IT, among others. This has all led to CAS producing selected and limited national statistics and indicators such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Lebanon’s statistical capacity score as per the World Bank dropped from 66.6 in 2017 to 44.4 in 2020 (on a scale of 0-100)<sup>658</sup>, impacted by the economic crisis and the COVID-19 situation.

This has hampered considerably the capacity to plan for sustainable development, with the lack of data on progress towards SDGs, absence of national targets and overall lack of data to inform strategic planning and programming in country. The CAS is frequently impacted by the political cleavage and instability of the country, as it totally depends on and is under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. Sensitive data, such as Lebanon population demography, is a subject of continuous debate, and remains proxy data difficult to validate with precision, and hence affects the computation and monitoring of the SDG indicators.

At a local level, the data landscape is characterized by inconsistencies, lack of time series and disaggregated datasets, outdated and unreliable data, diverse or ambiguous concept of the geographic unit (e.g. city), etc. Good urban planning and management in a highly urbanized context as Lebanon requires the generation, management and monitoring of data for evidence-based local decision-making. Such local data frameworks are key for the development of Voluntary Local Reviews.<sup>659</sup>

## Development Partners

Whereas Lebanon endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs in 2015, there are no functioning platforms or mechanisms to identify priority national SDG targets or to track progress against them. This section examines the landscape of partners that are positioned to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Lebanon has a very active national and international community. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and joint response analyses and planning are among the key characteristics of this community as evidenced by instruments such as the 3RF, LCRP and ERP. The different response plans do not feature the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as the main goal, however they contribute indirectly to progress against the SDGs.

**National authorities** are the critical player for the advancement of development. The chronic absence of longer-term comprehensive planning resulting in a national strategy and national SDG targets, the lack of complete ownership and will to implement key structural and legal reforms, and the devastating impacts of the multiple crises have all hindered progress towards the SDGs in the last few years. The UN and partners have been supporting Lebanon on its national commitments to the SDGs and Agenda 2030 using its convening power to bring together different actors from national entities to the international community, academia, civil society and the private sector. A recent example is the UN and World Bank support to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in the coordination of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic including the tracking of cases, deaths, hospitalization, tracking and vaccination and national deployment of vaccination. The UN also led the coordination of the response including in identifying the gaps and prioritizing the needs with national and international partners.

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<sup>658</sup> World Bank, Bulletin Board on Statistical Capacity, 2020

<sup>659</sup> UN-Habitat and ESCWA, ‘State of the Lebanese Cities’, (2021), pp. 196-197.

The **donor community** supports Lebanon both through bilateral and multilateral initiatives to achieve the SDGs. The role of the donor community extends beyond financial support, and includes technical assistance and capacity building, in addition to advocacy, the importance of which is greater today with the need for immediate reforms to halt the economic collapse. The RC co-chairs with the Director of the World Bank the Lebanon Development Forum, a grouping of international partners (bilateral donors, regional and multilateral organizations) that meets regularly to coordinate and ensure the coherence of international efforts in Lebanon in support of the 2030 Agenda. An attempt to map donors' interventions on development was carried out in the SDG 2 domain while supporting the design of the National Agriculture Strategy 2020-25, with intention to identify synergies and gaps. To this end, RCO is also supervising a Joint UNDP, FAO, UN-Women Programme financed by the SDG-fund to foster gender-sensitive SDG 2 public financing. A broader exercise is needed under the same perspective embracing other SDGs. Similarly, and in partnership with all stakeholders, the development of a national Health Sector Strategy was initiated, to be completed by mid-2022.

Slow approval processes through the treasury, as well as the lack of much needed reforms, are hampering Lebanon's access to the full potential of IFIs programmes, including with the World Bank, the EIB, the EBRD, and the IMF, all of which make available considerable financing towards Lebanon's development, contingent to advancement on reforms. IFIs coordinates with the UN to ensure development financing leads to sustainable and inclusive growth. In this context, the UN has contributed to the IMF technical discussions on required reforms and provided recommendations to the IMF on how to ensure that Lebanon builds better while leaving no one behind<sup>660</sup>.

However, lack of reforms and government inefficiency lead to delays in the approval and implementation of much needed large-scale support programmes.

**Civil society** in Lebanon plays an integral role in development given the weak state leadership and engagement (see also section 3.4). As a key development partner, it encompasses national and international NGOs, academia, think tanks, activists, human rights defenders, trade unions, professional societies, syndicates and orders, media and journalists, women groups and youth groups. Local and international NGOs' presence in the field, before and during the Syria crisis, has allowed greater representation of the priorities of beneficiaries in the planning and implementation processes of interventions. National NGOs help ensure local ownership of activities through constant engagement with local communities and are critical to the achievement of the SDGs. The role of academia in certain sectors, such as health, education, economy, and social protection, has been pivotal in providing guidance and technical advice to related government institutions.

On the response front, the 3RF allowed for a new, different way of working; designed as an inclusive, collaborative process that is based on the participation of the government, civil society, the private sector and development partners, reflected in in the governance structure and its mechanisms. Central to the framework is the Consultative Group, a tripartite structure of high-level representatives of the three stakeholder groups, providing guidance and promoting policy dialogue, which has proved to provide real value added in bringing all key actors around the table and working together towards shaping priorities, feasible options and sustainable solutions. Civil society participation and engagement at the planning and management levels have been strengthened where for the first time, a civil society representative co-chairs the 3RF Consultative Group alongside the PM, donor representative and the RC on behalf of the UNCT. Innovative is the establishment of a 3RF Independent Oversight Board, consisting exclusively of representatives of civil society, to hold all stakeholders accountable.

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<sup>660</sup> UN Country Team Position Paper to the International Monetary Fund: <https://lebanon.un.org/en/110361-un-country-team-position-paper-international-monetary-fund>

**Businesses** have a great impact on numerous SDG indicators and areas of priority. They are the key drivers of economic stability, social protection and even environmental protection. The contraction of sales and economic output following the 2019 economic crisis has had negative impacts on all socioeconomic indicators. Further contraction of the economic activity can still be expected in 2022 in the absence of reforms. According to the World Bank, the manufacturing value added in USD was 4.422 billion in 2017 (8.3 per cent of GDP), 3.851 billion in 2019 (7.4 per cent of GDP) and 0.99 billion in 2020 (3.1 per cent of GDP). The private sector remains however a key partner to ensure no one is left behind while achieving the 2030 Agenda. There is considerable potential for UN partnership with the private sector that should be pursued further to ensure they are part of the solution and not just beneficiaries of programming. The COVID-19 pandemic had a limited or negligible effect on selected business operations of the input suppliers. For example, the agricultural sector was one of the sectors that were exempt from closure during the total lockdown, which generated opportunities for learning good practice in partnerships with the private sector. On the other hand, some business operations have been severely impacted by COVID-19, such as health sector, with repeated lockdowns, shortages of medications and medical supplies, emigration of human resources; all this has limited access to health care, particularly affecting the most vulnerable groups. The Global Compact Network in Lebanon (GCNL) was launched in September 2015. It provides learning, policy dialogue and partnership opportunities on the ten principles of responsible conduct and the 17 SDGs. With more than 160 businesses and non-business participants enrolled in the Lebanese network to date, GCNL helps create an engaged community that advances sustainability practices by working closely with the private sector, as well as the chambers of commerce and trade, the Council of Ministers, the UN and other development partners<sup>661</sup>.

#### Cross-boundary, regional and sub-regional partnerships

Lebanon enjoys a strong presence of regional UN offices including the ILO, UNEP, OHCHR and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) headquartered in Beirut. Lebanon also benefits from regional offices of resident UN agencies, funds and programmes such, UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States, the World Bank Mashreq Office and others leading response activities to the major transformations that the Arab States region has been undergoing since the beginning of the current decade. ESCWA also acts as the secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) which aims to improve coordination among the work of the UN in the Arab region<sup>662</sup>.

This strong regional representation provides an important opportunity for the UN to support Lebanon through facilitating inter-agency dialogue on key issues at the regional level, including issues such as response to socio-economic challenges and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, regional UN Issue Based Coalitions in the Arab Region like the one on Social Protection play an important role in facilitating effective, timely and coordinated efforts to promote a better understanding of current and emerging issues in the region, foster dialogue and collaboration in line with the 2030 agenda.

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<sup>661</sup> UN Global Compact Network in Lebanon

<sup>662</sup> ESCWA was also one of the five UN regional commissions to join forces in a flagship project with UNCTAD to help developing countries tackle trade and transport challenges from the coronavirus pandemic.



## 4. STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES, LNOB AND PATTERNS OF EXCLUSION

Chapter 4 provides insights on the main structural development challenges, identifies principal patterns of exclusion and key vulnerable groups, and assesses the current country situation against the principle of “leaving no one behind” (LNOB).

### 4.1 Structural challenges

The multiple crises since 2019 have had a devastating impact on Lebanon’s trajectory in achieving the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The assessment of the “5Ps” in Chapter 3 shows that the economic collapse in 2019 has caused a severe deterioration of key development indicators across the full spectrum of social, environmental and economic SDGs. At the same time, Chapter 3 also shows that Lebanon had been facing political and socio-economic challenges reflected by persistent poverty, high rates of unemployment and the marginalization of most at-risk groups, as well as considerable environmental and governance issues before the multiple crises.

Accordingly, the impact of the crises Lebanon has experienced over the last decade is closely linked to - and has been aggravated by - several long-standing structural challenges and root causes, which continue to constrain the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in the country. Overall, and despite Lebanon’s commitment, the continued absence of **a national strategy for sustainable development**, a national economic plan or a poverty reduction strategy for Lebanon, affects the systematic implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (see also section 2.3).

#### Political and governance challenges

Unimplemented reforms articulated in the Taif agreement have led to the evolution of a political system that is at the core of many structural and underlying development challenges in Lebanon (see also section 3.4). It weakens state institutions and allows the concentration of power in the hands of few political leaders whose decisions, conflicts and actions dominate, constrain, and paralyze the functioning of state institutions. By providing social and security services and performing economic activities outside of the framework of public institutions and instead through clientelist networks of patronage, these sectarian political power structures significantly weaken the state.

Long-standing **political instability** precedes the recent wave of shocks and crises and has had a significant negative effect on the Lebanese economy, environment and social sector and institutional performance for many years. In this context, policy planning and implementation became extremely complicated and ineffective. Proposals to reform the sectarian-based power sharing system in the Taif agreement were never implemented, while political and economic elites thereafter have resisted reform efforts. The government’s resultant inability to perform core functions of government, strengthen the capacities of public institutions, and facilitate an inclusive social dialogue, further erodes the state’s ability to deliver for the people of Lebanon. This has severely eroded government effectiveness across a number of service areas and government functions and is reflected in extremely low levels of trust in the central government.

At the same time, political polarization and a **fragile institutional framework** have deepened systemic corruption, impunity and political interference in the judiciary, leading in several cases to paralysis of the justice sector. In turn, **weak rule of law** contributes to rising public discontent and threatens sustainable development and peace (see section 3.4).

Overall, **weak governance**, which is deliberately used by sectarian elites to advance their interests at the expense of society,<sup>663</sup> is both a root cause and a major obstacle to effectively address the multiple crises Lebanon is facing. Deteriorating public governance, compounded by limited fiscal space and the impact of the Syrian crisis, has severely worsened the delivery of public services and the quality of infrastructure in virtually all sectors. **Regulatory quality** in these sectors is particularly and deliberately weak, permitting political and economic leaders the space to exploit weaknesses to operate conglomerates to their own advantage. At the same time, political gridlock keeps preventing the formulation and implementation of required policies and reforms.<sup>664</sup> Moreover, reform processes thus far have largely been characterized by their narrow and largely non-consultative approach, which have often **excluded the voice of the population, civil society, and groups at risk of being left behind** from participating in policy-making processes.

## Socio-economic challenges

Lebanon's economic crisis is directly rooted in **long-standing structural fiscal and external account imbalances** and an overvalued currency, all sustained through sovereign debt issuance and financed in large part by expatriate remittances.<sup>665</sup> Strong **reliance on financial and real estate services** since the 1990s and the resulting over-borrowing have greatly increased public debt. In parallel, the Lebanese economy has not generated sufficient and decent job opportunities in the last decades, serving as a **low-added-value service-based economy**, externally oriented, and dependent on foreign capital, with most companies in Lebanon employing only one to five workers, mainly as informal laborers, and mostly in import and trade as well as services. The current deadlock in the financial system, from capital control to access to credit and currency stability, is impacting economic development as well as the financing and funding of the SDGs.

The concentration of power in the hands of a few, weak public administration, lack of transparency in procurement and accountability mechanisms, as well as prevalence of corruption are factors that facilitated the **accumulation of great economic wealth** amongst a small elite while, at the same time, increasing the concentration of economic activity in few sectors, such as real estate and finance, without positive spill over into the overall economy, and impeding economic diversification. At the same time, the **Lebanese tax system** is benefitting higher income earners, with a focus on indirect taxes, such as the Value Added Tax (VAT), while limiting progressive direct taxation, encouraging speculative investments (such as waiving taxes for vacant real estate in cities), and routinely benefitting large-scale corporations with tax exemptions.<sup>666</sup> This reduction in potential resources further reduces the ability of the State to function properly in all sectors.

Even during phases of economic growth, Lebanon has had record high income and wealth inequality (see section 3.3). The recent crises have exacerbated **pre-existing structural inequalities**, with important implications for the severe deterioration of access to health care, education and other services since 2019. The root causes of socio-economic inequalities in Lebanon can be found in the **sectarian political power sharing system** that has allowed for elite capture and the passing of laws and policies that favor the ruling class by weakening the state's public services, thus further deepening and perpetuating existing inequalities (see section 3.3). Collusion between political and economic elites has led to the development of a political economy that is averse to reforms that would risk their position at the top of society.

Lebanon's political polarization, fractured along the lines of sectarian identity also contributes to the **fragmented and partial provision of social services and coverage** in areas such as social protection, health, and education. Missing policies in areas such as access to adequate housing and security of

<sup>663</sup> World Bank Group, 'Systematic Country Diagnostic: Lebanon', (2016)

<sup>664</sup> EU, UN, World Bank, Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), (2020)

<sup>665</sup> EU, UN, World Bank, Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), (2020)

<sup>666</sup> Social Watch, Arab NGO Network for Development, 'Structural challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda': <https://www.socialwatch.org/node/17455>

tenure, and a general lack of implementation of existing policies and legislation, continue to discriminate against the most vulnerable and at-risk population groups, including older persons, refugees, migrants, women and girls, youth, children, and members of the LGBTQI+ community who are most affected by the dramatic socio-economic deterioration since 2019 (see also 3.1 and 4.3).

**Long-standing unplanned urbanization**, as assessed in Chapter 3, affects multiple aspects of social and economic life. In particular, it resulted in dire inequalities in access to services and infrastructure within and between cities which have been exacerbated by the compound crisis emerging since 2019, thus jeopardizing human rights related to adequate housing, water and sanitation.<sup>667</sup>

## 4.2 Leaving No One Behind

The principle of **Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)**, a key UN principle for implementing the 2030 Agenda, mandates countries to prevent discrimination and expand opportunities for vulnerable groups so that every individual can participate in social, economic, political, and cultural life with equal rights. This is relevant for Lebanon as a country that is affected by long-standing **structural inequalities and discriminatory legislation and practices**, as well as the devastating impact of multiple crises which have deprived a growing number of the population from enjoying their **human right to an adequate standard of living**, including access to adequate housing, food, water, health and education (see also section 3.4).

In trying to identify those who are left furthest behind and design targeted interventions to reach them first, **multiple, intersecting deprivations** need to be considered, including discrimination based on status or identity; laws and policies; geographic location; economic situation; and vulnerability to environmental, economic, or political shocks (see Figure 31).<sup>668</sup>

**Figure 31: The “Five Factors” of LNOB: Who is left behind and to what degree?**



Source: UNSDG (2019). LNOB Operational Guide for UNCTs

<sup>667</sup> UN Habitat (2021). The UN-Habitat-ESCWA State of the Lebanese Cities report (2021) <https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-lebanon-escwa-state-of-lebanese-cities-2021>

<sup>668</sup> UNSDG (2019). <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf>

Regularly updated disaggregated data on each of the “five factors” of LNOB are considered fundamental to identify who is being excluded or discriminated against, how and why, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. In the Lebanese context, this entails identifying inequalities in opportunities and outcome, patterns of discrimination in law, policies and practices, as well as deeply rooted structural and cultural patterns of exclusion for multiple vulnerable groups amongst Lebanese citizens and for different non-Lebanese populations including Syrian and Palestine refugees, as well as migrants.

Lebanon’s political and social system which is dominated by religious/sectarian institutions, patriarchal family structures, and political patrons (see 4.1), constrains people’s agency and opportunities for diverse livelihoods, and discriminates against women, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, children and youth, older persons, and non-heteronormative individuals.

Whereas many of the biases and forms of discrimination are sanctioned socially, the **Lebanese legal framework** still includes numerous principles, provisions and procedures which discriminate against vulnerable population groups, whether in relation to their status in the country, their labor, and/or other aspects of their socialization. While the Lebanese Constitution preamble states that all citizens are equal before the law without any discrimination, and Article 7 provides for equality between all Lebanese in enjoying civil and political rights, current legislation and legal provisions are not in compliance with the constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination.<sup>669</sup> Thus, numerous population groups routinely face biases, exclusion, or mistreatment based on one or more aspect of their identity, such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, class, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.<sup>670</sup>

### 4.3 Factors of exclusion and vulnerable groups

To varying extents, all groups are affected by the multiple crises occurring in Lebanon. The most vulnerable have been particularly exposed to the effects of deteriorating services and utilities, as well as reductions in purchasing power, among the range of other issues identified in previous sections. In addition to social norms and behaviors, as well as legislative gaps and weaknesses which discriminate against Lebanese populations, including women, children, PWDs, older persons, LGBTQI+ people, informal workers, etc., various factors of exclusion and discrimination are widespread and systemic with regards to non-Lebanese populations, including **migrants and refugees**. Whereas more analyses will be needed to ascertain the multiple intersections between the exclusionary factors listed further below, the LNOB Operational Guide described under section 4.2 should be used as a basis for identifying population groups who are most affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities.

#### Refugees

Syrian and Palestine refugees comprise the majority of refugees in Lebanon. In addition to those groups, there are 8,931 registered refugees from Iraq, 2,307 from Sudan, and 2,476 from other states.<sup>671</sup>

#### Syrian refugees

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<sup>669</sup> With regards to the many forms of discrimination impacting women and other vulnerable and intersecting vulnerable groups, and with reference to the Lebanese legal framework, Lebanon lacks a civil code regulating personal status matters such as marriage, inheritance, child custody, and so relies on 15 separate personal religious-based status laws and courts for 18 recognized categories <https://www.un.org/democracyfund/news/equal-personal-status-law-lebanon#:~:text=Lebanon%20lacks%20a%20civil%20code,for%20the%2018%20recognized%20categories.>

<sup>670</sup> UNDP, ‘Leave No One Behind; For an inclusive and just recovery process in post-blast Beirut’, (2020)

<sup>671</sup> UNHCR, ‘Lebanon: FACT SHEET’, (January 2022): <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Lebanon%20-%20Operational%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20January%202021.pdf>

With an estimated total of 1.5 million (including 839,788 registered with UNHCR as of the end of January 2022),<sup>672</sup> the **Syrian refugee population** in Lebanon remains one of the largest concentrations of refugees per capita in the world. With geographical differences in vulnerabilities at governorate and district levels, the main vulnerabilities this population faces include difficulties in obtaining and renewing legal documentation; the increase in restrictive policies by the Lebanese State and the worsening of relations with host communities; a steep rise in inflation; limited access to healthcare; poor housing conditions; economic vulnerability, unemployment and job insecurity; child labor and marriage; as well as the increasing difficulties for the schooling of minors, while durable solutions remain limited.

The assessment of development challenges related to SDGs 1-5 under section 3.1 shows that, in 2021, nearly 90 per cent of Syrian refugees were living in extreme poverty, with 88 per cent living below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) to meet survival needs for food, health and shelter.<sup>673</sup> A 557 per cent increase in the price of the average food basket since October 2019,<sup>674</sup> negative coping mechanisms such as reducing food consumption have been widely adopted. Access to healthcare is a major issue with 63 per cent of Lebanese and Syrians describing their access as poor or worse. In terms of education, Syrian refugee children face barriers including lack of space, legal obstacles to enrolment, discrimination, language issues and long distances, or lack of available and affordable transport to schools. 30 per cent of Syrian refugee children have never been to school,<sup>675</sup> and primary school attendance dropped by 25 per cent in 2021 for children between the ages of 6 and 14.

Legal residency is a critical issue that affords refugees protection, access to basic rights and living in safety. Despite steps taken by the government to facilitate access to legal residency, a considerable number of refugees are still unable to obtain a temporary residence permit in Lebanon. The rate of legal residency among Syrian refugees has continued to decline, with only 16 per cent of individuals aged 15 years and above holding legal residency – and rates are lower for women.<sup>676</sup> This leaves refugees exposed to exploitation such as non-payment of wages, denial of time-off, and limited freedom of movement. Lack of residency also leaves refugees more vulnerable to the risk of arrest, detention and deportation, and limits refugees' ability to move freely, impacts refugees' self-reliance and ability to meet their needs such as shelter, food and education. Other risks also face Syrian refugees, including 22 per cent of families stating they sent their child to work, 35 per cent stating that they had stopped their child's education and 100 per cent stating that they had to buy food on credit or incur debts to do so.<sup>677</sup> In addition, around 20 per cent of Syrian refugee girls of ages 15-19 were married, while 56 per cent of children aged between 1 and 14 experienced at least one form of violent discipline. Further, currently 5.4 per cent of households are living under eviction notice, most often due to inability to meet rent.<sup>678</sup> Social tensions with Lebanese host communities are also present, with access to cash being the most widely stated driver (75 per cent) and competition for lower-skilled jobs (53 per cent).<sup>679</sup>

Several municipalities continue to impose discriminatory curfews and other restrictions on refugees, contrary to concerns raised by the Human Rights Committee about this practice.<sup>680</sup> There are continued reports of detentions and deportations of Syrian refugees carried out without adequate

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<sup>672</sup> VASyR (2021)

<sup>673</sup> VASyR (2021)

<sup>674</sup> Lebanon Food Security Sector, LCRP

<sup>675</sup> VASyR (2021)

<sup>676</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>677</sup> VASyR (2021)

<sup>678</sup> VASyR (2021)

<sup>679</sup> UNDP & ARK, 'Regular Perception Survey of Social Tensions Throughout Lebanon', (2021)

<sup>680</sup> According to VASyR 2021 (p. 37), "Five per cent of households reported that discriminatory curfews were enforced specifically where Syrians live and 4% cited curfews as a safety and security concern (a decrease from 11 per cent in 2020). El Nabatieh had by far the largest proportion of Between 2-4 per cent of households reported that they worried about a household member being sexually exploited while accessing services such as housing, food, health services, legal services, and employment, which was similar to 2020. However, less than 1 per cent reported having heard of actual incidents of sexual exploitation in the 3 months preceding the interview. households reporting curfews at 38 per cent followed by the South at 10 per cent. Curfews were mainly imposed by the municipality (94 per cent) followed by the local community (15 per cent)."



due process and safeguards against non-refoulement, despite concerns raised by UN human rights mechanisms.<sup>681</sup>

### **Palestine refugees**

180,000 Palestine refugees from Lebanon (PRL) are residing in 12 camps and 156 gatherings, while 29,000 Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) have also been displaced to Lebanon.<sup>682</sup> An estimated further 50,000 eligible persons bring the total estimated by the Government of Lebanon to 257,000 Palestine refugees, as of October 2021.<sup>683</sup> About 45 per cent of Palestinians live in the country's 12 refugee camps. Conditions in the camps are characterized by overcrowding, poor housing, unemployment, poverty, and lack of access to justice, and are heavily securitized by the presence of the LAF.

Palestinians in Lebanon do not have access to several fundamental rights as they cannot work in as many as 38 professions (including key professions in law, engineering, and medicine) and cannot own real estate. Because they are not formally citizens of another state, Palestine refugees are unable to claim the same rights as other foreigners living and working in Lebanon.<sup>684</sup> A backlash on social media to a recent move to permit access to certain sectors of work underlines that discrimination not only exists on a legal level, but also more broadly expressed by the host community in terms of prejudice. Palestinians face widespread informal barriers such as being the first employees to be fired, without notice nor indemnities, or only being considered for physically or psychologically dangerous jobs.<sup>685</sup>

According to a survey conducted in 2020, 87 per cent were poor and 11 per cent were extremely poor.<sup>686</sup> Amongst PRL, 73 per cent live in poverty, according to a monitoring survey conducted in July 2021.<sup>687</sup> 62 per cent of those interviewed in April 2020 stated that their household income was reduced following COVID-19 and the series of public protests, compared to 2019, while 39 per cent reported that they had lost their jobs and 21 per cent witnessed a reduction in their salaries.<sup>688</sup> A more recent survey found that 56 per cent of families have reduced food consumption and 25 per cent of adults in the families ate less in favor of their children.<sup>689</sup> This socioeconomic decline is having a profound impact on the lives of refugee families who, for instance, saw 1,275 children drop out of UNRWA schools in 2020-21 – 55 per cent of whom cited psychological distress as the main factor. Qualitative reporting points to an increase in intimate partner violence and violence against children. In terms of healthcare, UNRWA reports that the mortality rate from COVID-19 is three times higher for Palestinians compared to Lebanese, likely as a result of living conditions.

PRS face additional barriers as they often lack the social networks to access housing or employment opportunities, given their more recent displacement into Lebanon. Legal residency rates remain low amongst PRS – just 49 per cent have residency which enables them to receive protection, access basic rights and services and to live safely in Lebanon.<sup>690</sup> A waiver on legal residency and overstay fees was applied in July 2017 to PRS who entered legally before September 2015, though this has created barriers to access residency for those that entered irregularly.<sup>691</sup>

Further, “Non-IDs”, perceived by the GoL as “illegal residents”, are a group not registered with the Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees (DPAR), and face restrictions on movement, risk of arrest and detention, nor have access to civil documentation for birth, marriage, divorce or death, or have access to other rights in education and health. Most of this group arrived after 1967, and only a few

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<sup>681</sup> VASyR 2021

<sup>682</sup> The Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee undertook a census in 2016 and estimated between 193,000 to 241,000 Palestinian refugees were residing in Lebanon. The exact figure remains contested.

<sup>683</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-23

<sup>684</sup> UNRWA, “Where we work”: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

<sup>685</sup> UNRWA (2022)

<sup>686</sup> UNRWA, Socio-economic Survey on Palestinian Refugees from Syria living in Lebanon, (2020)

<sup>687</sup> UNRWA, Crisis Monitoring Report, (2021)

<sup>688</sup> UNRWA, Socio-economic Survey on Palestinian Refugees from Syria living in Lebanon, (2020)

<sup>689</sup> UNRWA, Crisis Monitoring Report, (2021)

<sup>690</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-23

<sup>691</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-23



hold Special Identity Cards (SIC cards) issued by the General Security Office (GSO) and some hold documents from the Palestinian Embassy, Palestinian Authority Passports issued from Ramallah. These “Non-IDs” are further divided into two groups: those that are and are not registered with UNRWA. Those that are registered have access to nearly all UNRWA services though limitations or delays in education and hospitalizations apply. Those who are not registered with UNRWA can only access primary health and education services, and do not have access to hospitalization. UNRWA records that 1772 accessed primary healthcare in 2020, though the size of this group is likely far higher.

## Migrants

As assessed under 3.1, Lebanon's **more than 200.000 migrant** in Lebanon have been particularly impacted by the worsening socio-economic crisis, while also suffering pre-existing vulnerabilities under the sponsorship (Kafala) system.<sup>692</sup> Migrants face significant unmet needs, the most acute of which include healthcare, food security protection assistance, psychosocial support, shelter needs and access to livelihoods.<sup>693</sup> At least one member in 59 per cent of migrant households had reduced their food expenditure in the 30 days prior to the MSNA 2021 data collection and in 25 per cent of households bought food on credit and/or borrowed money to purchase food during the same time frame.<sup>694</sup> The same proportion (25 per cent) of migrants reported being in debt, 41 per cent of migrants reported that they could not afford to buy medication and on average nearly one (0.86) person per household (out of an average of 1.75 persons per household) was unable to access healthcare when they needed it.<sup>695</sup> Organizations working with migrant communities report prevalent and severe mental health needs among Lebanon's migrant communities, including very high rates of suicide, long preceding these latest crises which have further worsened the psychological state of at least a fifth of all migrant households.<sup>696</sup> Access to protection assistance remains limited even for victims of violence. For instance, 65 per cent of migrant households reported the lack of services for women and girls who experience some form of violence.<sup>697</sup> Migrants are also often overlooked by governmental and non-governmental actors or prevented from accessing humanitarian support— 95 per cent of migrant households had not received support from these actors in the three months prior to the MSNA 2021 data collection. Given these realities, 44 per cent of migrants in Lebanon express a desire to return to their country of origin, but many lack the means to do so.<sup>698 699</sup>

**Migrant domestic workers** constitute a large proportion of all migrants residing in Lebanon. These workers are almost exclusively women<sup>700</sup> and have already been amongst the most vulnerable before the recent crisis due to the exploitative working conditions enabled by the *kafala* system. The multiple crises since 2019 have severely affected their situation as many of them lost their jobs which effectively terminated their legal residency while many employers refused to pay their wages.<sup>701</sup>

There are broadly two categories of domestic workers: those that live with their employers, and those that do not. For those that live with their employers, it is more difficult to report abuses and therefore access justice mechanisms as reporting work-related violations proves challenging. Many face restrictions of movement and are physically prevented from accessing services or seek assistance. These workers are also vulnerable to human trafficking and many fall into irregular status, unable to access services or return to their country of origin due to losing documentation or due to financial

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<sup>692</sup> While most foreign workers require a sponsor (either a local citizen or company) to work in Lebanon, the conditions are especially severe for migrant domestic workers who often live with their sponsor/employer.

<sup>693</sup> IOM Preliminary Findings on migrant humanitarian needs: Lebanon Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (2021)

<sup>694</sup> IOM Preliminary Findings on migrant humanitarian needs: Lebanon Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (2021)

<sup>695</sup> IOM Preliminary Findings on migrant humanitarian needs: Lebanon Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (2021)

<sup>696</sup> IOM Preliminary Findings on migrant humanitarian needs: Lebanon Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (2021), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International. “COVID-19 and Economic Downfall Reveal Mental Health Crisis in Lebanon: MSF.” 3 December 2020.

<sup>697</sup> IOM Preliminary Findings on migrant humanitarian needs: Lebanon Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (2021)

<sup>699</sup> IOM, ‘Needs and Vulnerability assessment of migrants in Lebanon’, (May 2021)

<sup>700</sup> IOM, Migrants’ Presence Monitoring (Baseline Assessment, Round 1). <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/lebanon-baseline-assessment-round-1>

<sup>701</sup>

Wilson, C, Zabaneh, J, Dore-Weeks, R (2019), Understanding the Role of Women and Feminist Actors in Lebanon's 2019 Protest. UN Women, p.6, available at: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/12/gendering-lebanons-2019-protests>

shortages<sup>702</sup> Domestic workers that live separately from their employers, or have fled an exploitative employer, also face enormous challenges as their legal status is linked with their sponsor. Many fall into an irregular status leaving them without identification papers, rendering their access to services extremely limited, and making them at risk of prolonged detention and deportation. The increased levels of debt and difficulties in paying rent or purchasing basic items have exposed vulnerable migrants to various forms of violence and abuse, including sexual and labor exploitation and human trafficking. As a result, limited income and loss of livelihoods have pushed them to rely on negative coping strategies to meet basic needs, elevating the need for psychosocial support and protection case management. In short, domestic workers are often left with the choice of either staying with an exploitative employer or falling into an irregular status<sup>703</sup> becoming further marginalized from support structures, including exclusion from basic services and protection schemes.

The kafala system and the exclusion of domestic workers from the labor law, and from access to justice,<sup>704</sup> are key root causes for many of the challenges that face migrants in Lebanon, and addressing them requires structural reform. Preventative work is also needed with employers and employment agencies, to raise awareness of abusive behavior, as well as with law enforcement and the judicial system to mitigate, respond to and ultimately prosecute abuse and exploitation against migrants. Particularly vulnerable are survivors of violence or abuse, victims of trafficking and undocumented and/or irregular migrants as no national safety net exists for these individuals. In addition, children of migrants of two different nationalities, or of undocumented migrants, also face legal challenges to their stay in Lebanon and risk falling into statelessness and/or unable to go to school. Another group at particularly high risk is women trafficked under the Artist Visa Scheme, which feeds a large sex industry.<sup>705</sup> An average of 3,000 women are recruited to Lebanon through the scheme each year, leaving them often in debt, with restrictions on movement and denial of their bodily autonomy and other fundamental rights. Artists have no access to justice and face intimidation to not report issues with their stay, meaning that no cases of women Artists have been brought to the courts.<sup>706 707</sup>

### Factors of exclusion and related vulnerable and at-risk groups

The assessments under Chapter 3 have revealed the following **factors of exclusion and related vulnerable and at-risk groups** in the present country context:

**1. Gender** – As assessed in section 3.1, women and girls in Lebanon are left behind in political, social, and economic terms. In addition, gender-based violence is common in Lebanon, and women and girls are particularly affected by the intersections of different LNOB components including legal and social discrimination, economic status, country of origin, disability, personal status, geographic location, etc.

**2. Geography/area of residence** – Opportunities for leading healthy and productive lives in Lebanon and exposure to environmental and other risks depend significantly on the location of one's residence. Access to social services and economic opportunities differ between rural and urban areas, contributing to rural-urban migration and posing challenges to effective urban planning. This affects especially women and girls in rural communities in Lebanon who are far less likely to be educated or in the labor market (see section 3.1).

<sup>702</sup> Wilson, C, Zabaneh, J, Dore-Weeks, R (2019), Understanding the Role of Women and Feminist Actors in Lebanon's 2019 Protest. UN Women, p.6, available at: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/12/gendering-lebanons-2019-protests>  
<sup>703</sup> While it is difficult to assess the number of irregular migrants in Lebanon, especially based on self-reported information, the MSNA (December 2021) indicates that at least around a fifth of migrant households surveyed (19 per cent), the primary wage-earner does not have a valid work permit.

<sup>704</sup> OHCHR (2022). Migrant workers, notably domestic workers and in particular women, face barriers in accessing to justice as many are unaware of the remedies available to them in the event of a violation of their rights. Additionally, many are reluctant to file complaints for fear of negative repercussions in addition to common instances where perpetrators of violations go unpunished (as reflected in CERD).

<sup>705</sup> Kafa & CAP, 'On Article 6 to the Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women for the review of Lebanon's periodic report at the 81<sup>st</sup> session', (January 2022)

<sup>707</sup> Kafa & CAP, 'On Article 6 to the Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women for the review of Lebanon's periodic report at the 81<sup>st</sup> session', (January 2022)

**3. Age – Children and youth** are more at risk of being excluded in Lebanon. Children are particularly vulnerable to poverty and exploitation (see section 3.1). With 44 per cent of the population under the age of 24, the share of youth in Lebanese society is high compared to the global average. Youth in Lebanon face mounting challenges, including poverty, security and socio-political instability, scarce decent work opportunities (especially for skilled youth), incompatibility between education and labor market needs, and high cost of living but low wages. Other challenges include corruption, nepotism and favoritism, and weak political opportunities and representation. Faced with rising unemployment rates and no opportunities for migration, many youth from disadvantaged communities are at risk of being pulled into violent extremist groups or of being trafficked by networks operating in the region (see section 3.4). Children of migrants are also at risk of falling into irregular status, or at worst, statelessness, unable to access essential services, including education.

Lebanon has the **greatest proportion of elderly in the Middle East**, with 11 per cent of the population over the age of 65. About 80 per cent of Lebanese 65 or older have no retirement benefits or healthcare coverage<sup>708</sup> and traditionally depend on family members and charities as their prime source of support. The recent stark increases in poverty and unemployment rates are affecting these traditional support systems, while savings in US dollars cannot be accessed and local savings have lost more than 90 per cent of their value.

**4. Disability** – Disability in Lebanon remains under-researched and under-reported. According to the most recent national survey an estimated 4.1 per cent of females and 3.9 per cent of males live with some form of disability.<sup>709</sup> One reason for this relatively low prevalence rate is that Lebanon's official statistics body uses a medical model of disability, instead of a social one. Amongst Syrian refugee households, female headed households more commonly have members with disabilities (36 per cent) compared to male headed households (29 per cent).

**5. Sexual orientation and gender identity – LGBTQI+ people** in Lebanon are among the most marginalized in Lebanon, facing multi-layered structural discrimination and violence. The fact that LGBTQI+ individuals are often criminalized leads to their systematic social exclusion from access to protection, jobs, shelter, education, and critical health and social services; it also leads to different forms of violence against LGBTQI+ people and impacts their ability to report incidents of abuse, harassment, violence, or any other type of violation. The UN Human Rights Committee has called upon Lebanon to comply with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and ensure LGBTQI+ people are afforded, both in law and in practice, adequate and effective protection against all forms of discrimination, hate speech or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, LGBTQI+ people are facing intersectional discriminations due to their refugee or migrant status, age, and/or HIV Aids status.<sup>710</sup>

The negative impact of the economic crisis, COVID-19 lockdown measures, and the Beirut port explosion, have been extremely severe on LGBTQI+ people. Many of them endured isolation, loss of jobs, income, and the loss of solidarity networks. In addition, they are often unable to afford housing and required to return to their families where they can be subjected to rejection, aggression, violence, and abuse. The risks of becoming homeless or living in informal housing have increased for LGBTQI+ people, with subsequent risks of being subject to additional human

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<sup>708</sup> ILO (2021)

<sup>709</sup> Central Administration of Statistics, 'Demographic and Social Statistics': <http://www.cas.gov.lb/index.php/demographic-and-social-en>

<sup>710</sup> OHCHR (2022). In the 3rd UPR cycle, Lebanon received 3 recommendations relating to LGBTQI+ rights, of which it accepted two relating to guaranteeing universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, and fighting against harassment and intimidation, and protecting their right to peaceful protest. However, Lebanon noted the recommendation to repeal article 534 of the Penal Code that criminalizes homosexuality and enact legislation to protect the rights of LGBTQI+ persons. (A/HRC/47/5)

rights violations, chronic homelessness and long-term unemployment. Also, LGBTQI+ individuals are at higher risk of resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, namely selling and exchanging sex which expose them to further discrimination, violence and detention. The mental health impact on LGBTQI+ people has been devastating with a recent OXFAM survey indicating that nearly 75 per cent of LGBTQI+ respondents reported that their mental health was negatively impacted to a large extent due to the three-layered crisis. Several LGBTQI+ organizations in Lebanon, reported an increase of calls from LGBTQI+ people during the lockdown, reporting different types of violence, including rape, suicide, domestic violence, and abuse.

**6. Informal employment** – According to a recent survey, the informal employment rate is 77.8 per cent. This means that almost four out of five jobs in Lebanon fall outside national labor legislation, with no income taxation, social protection, or entitlements such as paid leave. Syrians and Palestinians recorded even higher rates of **informality** – 95 per cent and 93.9 per cent, respectively. In comparison, 64.3 per cent of Lebanese workers from vulnerable households were in informal employment. Domestic workers, the majority of all migrants in Lebanon, are also excluded from the national labour law, and denied their freedom of association.

**7. Statelessness** – Though their exact number is difficult to determine due to a lack of an official census since 1932 and a lack of civil registration records for stateless persons, several tens of thousands of stateless persons are estimated to live in Lebanon.<sup>711</sup> The Constitution and national laws do not provide a legal framework for stateless persons,<sup>712</sup> nor do they establish a statelessness determination procedure. Stateless persons have no legal status, no official records, and no automatic access to a wide range of rights including the right to legal existence, to civil registration, and other civil and economic rights,<sup>713</sup> Including access to education and health care.<sup>714</sup>

**8. Legal status** – The legal status of refugees, and of migrants results in severe discrimination and vulnerabilities (see above). As mentioned under section 4.2, people experiencing multiple, intersecting deprivations related to more than one source of discrimination, for example women refugees, or children with disabilities living in rural areas of Lebanon, or children of irregular migrants, are most likely to be among the furthest behind. Whereas Chapter 3 captures many of these intersecting discriminations and vulnerabilities, further investments in analyzing factors of discrimination for different segments of the Lebanese population by gathering information on the absolute deprivation(s) and relative disadvantage(s) faced by different groups across different stages in people's life cycle will be essential to prioritize interventions, select the most effective approaches and optimize targeting while aiming to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

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<sup>711</sup> OHCHR (2022). In the 3rd UPR cycle (A/HRC/47/5), Lebanon noted the only recommendation that called on the state to take measures towards reducing and preventing statelessness, highlighting the lack of attention and priority given to this vulnerable group. There are a number of causes of statelessness including historic causes, namely the nonregistration of individuals in national census; gaps in the nationality law such as gender discriminatory provisions that do not grant women equal rights with men in regard to nationality; and a complex civil registration system that requires many documentation steps and access to the courts for late registration of births. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5638627ad.html> . <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5638627ad.html>

<sup>712</sup> UNHCR (2022). Lebanon is not a signatory to either 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons. The Lebanese nationality law contains gender-discriminatory provisions, which only allow a Lebanese woman to confer her nationality to her children in exceptional circumstances. Provisions for naturalization are highly politicized and at the discretion of the Lebanese State. Safeguards against statelessness at birth are interpreted very narrowly by the courts. Amongst constraints to statelessness in Lebanon hindering any reforms in that regard is the nationality law.

<sup>713</sup> Ruwad alHoukuk FR & The Global Campaign for the Equal Nationality Rights, 'Gender Discrimination in Nationality and Personal Status Rights in law and practice': <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=8236&file=EnglishTranslation>

<sup>714</sup> OHCHR (2022). See statement of UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food at: [https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-nations-special-rapporteur#\\_ftnref58](https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-United-nations-special-rapporteur#_ftnref58)

## 5. SDG-BASED MULTI-DIMENSIONAL RISK FRAMEWORK

The table below presents the 12 common risk areas derived from the United Nations SDG-based Risk Framework. The list of risks is not exhaustive and includes only the predominant risks in the context of Lebanon. The table is followed by an overview of the status of Lebanon’s disaster risk management framework.

Risk Areas (description) <i>[Alphabetical order]</i>	Key Risk Factors	Likelihood of the event (High-Medium-Low)	Impact on the ability to achieve sustainable development results <sup>715</sup> (High-Medium-Low)
<b>1. Democratic Space:</b> [Risks to democratic and human rights institutions, and to civil and political rights resulting from shrinking civic space, exclusion, repression, and intimidation]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political stasis continues, reforms do not pass</li> <li>Increasing harassment of women candidates and elected leaders and gender discrimination against human rights defenders (especially women)</li> <li>Intimidation and harassment of non-establishment candidates during elections</li> <li>Increased sectarian tensions</li> <li>increased political polarisation</li> <li>Deterioration of meaningful participation and representation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups, minorities and local communities in political processes</li> <li>Shrinking space for freedom of speech</li> <li>Increased hate speech</li> <li>Decreasing public access to information</li> <li>Increasingly restricted freedom of assembly</li> <li>Clampdown on human rights defenders, journalists, and critics.</li> <li>Incidents of arbitrary detention and torture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>High</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> </ul>
<b>2. Displacement and migration:</b> [Risks to the population and the stability of the territory resulting from pressures associated with displacement and/or migration as well as human rights violation]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deteriorating human resources due to emigration (brain drain)</li> <li>Hardening of implementation of return policy for Syrian refugees</li> <li>Deteriorating social and economic conditions for migrant workers</li> <li>Continued impact of immigration on various socioeconomic aspects</li> <li>Decreasing number of refugees with legal residency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High</li> <li>Medium</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> <li>High</li> </ul>

<sup>715</sup> As defined in the forthcoming Cooperation Framework (CF)

<b>3. Economic stability:</b> [Risks to the economic, financial and fiscal stability of the country which could impact governance, social cohesion, or people's ability to satisfy their needs]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased dysfunction in the banking sector</li> <li>• Increased inability of the Government to raise public revenues</li> <li>• Increased economic insecurity (decrease in real income and purchasing power and inability to find job, especially for women and minority groups))</li> <li>• Persistent high inflation</li> <li>• Inability to fund social protection schemes</li> <li>• Continued inability to pass national budget</li> <li>• Failure to negotiate IMF programme</li> <li>• Increasing dysfunction and deterioration of ministries responsible for economic and fiscal management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<b>4. Environment and climate:</b> [Risks to the ecology of the territory, its ecosystem and its people resulting from issues associated with environment, climate and natural resources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued weak environmental governance and absence of national environmental planning</li> <li>• Continued lack of enforcement of climate and environmental strategies, laws and measures</li> <li>• Increasing energy insecurity (electricity rationing or limitations on operational hours) yet relying on fossil fuel-generated power</li> <li>• Continued lack of awareness &amp; prioritization of environmental issues (given economic primacy of economic issues)</li> <li>• Occurrence of climate change extreme disasters, including forest fires, urban climate impacts (e.g. floods, excessive heat, GHG emissions, etc.)</li> <li>• Increasing reliance on private cars and absence of a functional and sustainable public transport system</li> <li>• Deteriorating water quality/quantity, irrigation facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<b>5. Food security and food systems, agriculture and land:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water shortages/lack of access to water/destruction of and damage to water systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> </ul>



<p>[Risks to people, agriculture, and/or food production in the territory resulting from crop, food production, livestock and land-related issues]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened disruption to value chains</li> <li>• Limited opportunity to create employment / food system enterprises to absorb especially women /youth unemployment</li> <li>• limited access to inputs (seeds and fertilizers) due to high import prices</li> <li>• Decreasing access to food / food poverty due to increasing food prices and diminishing purchasing power</li> <li>• Limited energy for food storage, processing limiting the quality, quantity and remuneration of food system</li> <li>• Increasing Malnutrition and malnourishment rates for Lebanese and refugee population</li> <li>• Obesity among rural and urban population</li> <li>• ERW/UXO resulting in lack of access to farmland</li> <li>• Reliance on food imports</li> <li>• Limited physical access to food (markets malfunctioning –poor wholesale governance)</li> <li>• Competition over arable/ grazing land</li> <li>• Housing, land and property issues/loss or lack of arable land</li> <li>• Lack of resources for food production sectors</li> <li>• Inadequate governance of local and wholesale markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Infrastructure and access to social services:</b> [Risks to the population, the economy and stability in the territory resulting from inadequate and lack of public and private physical infrastructures and basic social services]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay of implementation of reforms or implementation of procurement law</li> <li>• Increasingly unequal access to education, protection and health services</li> <li>• Decreasing resource mobilization for rehabilitation projects prioritized to deliver basic services, including soft rehabilitation (digitalization of education services for example)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sustainable urban planning and management system (e.g.lack of long-term vision, inexistent/old/flawed urban planning laws, weak enforcement of urban planning regulations, lack of institutional set-up)</li> <li>• Increasingly unequal access to adequate and affordable housing (e.g. lack of channels of housing finance, long-standing poor regulatory framework, shortage of units at affordable rental rates in main urban centers, proliferation of an unregulated informal rental market, re-appropriation of land by landlords for farming over hosting informal settlements, leading to evictions)</li> <li>• Unequal access to basic urban services (e.g. water, wastewater, electricity, solid waste)</li> <li>• Delay of implementation of social protection strategy</li> <li>• Increased risks of negative coping mechanism at the community level resulting in students drop out or non-enrollment in schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Internal security:</b> [Risks to the security of the territory, its people and infrastructure, and to the ability of the international community to operate effectively as a result of security issues]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmentation of security apparatuses/fragmentation of decision-making across apparatuses, loss of legitimacy and ability to provide security across the country, including risk of increasing desertions</li> <li>• Lack of impartiality and degrading capacity of security services leads to inability to prevent, manage and respond to violence.</li> <li>• Significant increase in terrorism attacks and recruits to violent extremist groups</li> <li>• Breakout of large-scale sectarian clashes between Lebanese groups, including with militias</li> <li>• Access restrictions to governorates and project sites due to armed conflict</li> <li>• Excessive use of force/killings by security forces;</li> <li>• Large-scale violence between refugees and host communities</li> <li>• Increasing xenophobic violence against refugees</li> <li>• Increased in violent incidents perpetrated by armed groups, militias and non-state actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>

<b>8. Justice and rule of law:</b> [Risks to the air, effective and comprehensive implementation and application of the principals of justice, the rule of law and accountability from issues]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No passing of law for independence of judiciary, no implementation of access to info law, no appointment of High Judicial Council</li> <li>• Further delay in Beirut Port explosion investigation</li> <li>• Gaps in the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation and human rights commitments</li> <li>• Failure to improve the quality of justice services.</li> <li>• Deteriorating trust in the justice and weakening rule of law.</li> <li>• Deteriorating functionality of judiciary</li> <li>• Increasing political interference in the judiciary</li> <li>• Lack of reforms to discriminatory legal frameworks, such as the Nationality law, personal status law</li> <li>• Lack of accountability and acts of impunity by law enforcement agencies.</li> <li>• Further deterioration in upholding human rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<b>9. Political stability:</b> [Risks to the stability of established political and governmental structures in the territory resulting from politically-driver factors]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of term of parliament , President, and Government (failure to hold elections)</li> <li>• Increased risk of political assassinations</li> <li>• Increasing polarization and entrenchment of sectarian politics</li> <li>• Prolonged or widespread social unrest/ disruption; increase in violence and security incidents)</li> <li>• Collapse of government and political paralysis</li> <li>• Increase in cases of corruption and lack of accountability to population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<b>10. Public health:</b> [Risks to the population, the economy and stability of the territory resulting from actual and emerging public health emergencies]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 related threats increase and overwhelm public health system</li> <li>• Increase in number of public health entities shutting down</li> <li>• Increase in emigration of health practitioners</li> <li>• Unequal access to quality health services amplified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mortality rates rise, particularly for women and children</li> <li>• Increase of malnutrition and malnourishment rates</li> <li>• Decrease in access to quality maternal health and menstrual hygiene products</li> <li>• Unequal access to COVID-19 vaccines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<b>11 Regional and global influences:</b> [Risks to the integrity, stability, safety and prosperity of the territory and its people as a result of the actions of external actors, or the influence of external events]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International donors lose further trust in GoL and place increasing conditionalities on aid</li> <li>• Regional interference and influence from neighboring countries increase</li> <li>• Large-scale conflict between Israel and Hezbollah</li> <li>• Escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict with further negative implications beyond Europe, especially in MENA</li> <li>• Food crises linked to Ukraine war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Low</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Medium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>
<b>12 Social cohesion, (gender) equality and non-discrimination:</b> [Risks to social unity and equality resulting from direct and indirect discrimination, horizontal inequalities and demographic trends]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase inequities in education, increase drop-out and illiteracy rates</li> <li>• Further social, political and economic exclusion of women and girls</li> <li>• Marginalizing actions by the state or by the community against minorities increases</li> <li>• Increase in inter and intra-communal tensions</li> <li>• Increase in discriminatory measures against migrants and refugees</li> <li>• Increased discrepancies in services accessed by certain groups (i.e. gaps between groups)</li> <li>• Deterioration of community capacities in coping with the crisis (depleted resources, breakdown of relations, debt)</li> <li>• Inadequate social protection for vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Proliferation of racist hate crimes and hate speech</li> <li>• Rising economic inequalities</li> <li>• Poor implementation of anti-discrimination laws</li> <li>• Negative attitude to gender equality and the inequalities faced by women in access to political decision-making, education, decent jobs and adequate health care.</li> <li>• Negative attitude towards LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities, and people living with HIV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> <li>• High</li> </ul>

## Disaster Risk Management

To respond more effectively to the multiple risks outlined above and to strengthen disaster resilience, the Government of Lebanon adopted the **Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005**, and the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**. Lebanon has also made progress by 1) adopting a comprehensive and inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) agenda which includes conflict in its risk management frameworks, and 2) creating national DRR capacities, including a **national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Unit** attached to the Prime Minister's Office to strengthen resilience and early recovery processes, as well as **regional and district-level DRM Units** and response plans for 15 governorates and districts.

At the same time, deep structural and institutional challenges - rooted in Lebanon's sectarian political system and related weak governance as well as obstacles such as pervasive corruption, lack of institutional capacity and awareness to address climate impacts on cities, natural bodies and the ecosystem - remain to establishing effective and sustainable DRM at all levels and achieving political, social, economic, and environmental resilience.<sup>716</sup>

There is a dire absence of DRM capacities at the municipal level, limiting the ability of local authorities to respond effectively to disasters. Whereas some cities in Lebanon have developed their own DRM strategies, Beirut and many others do not yet have strategies aligned within the Sendai Framework, including early intervention plans, the lack of which was strongly felt after the Port of Beirut explosion on August 4, 2020.<sup>717</sup>

Although both men and women contribute to DRR, the COVID-19 response in Lebanon has looked to embed gender mainstreaming and the active engagement of women at the heart of national efforts on prevention and response to COVID-19. It has focused on ensuring that women, across all levels, play a key role in tackling COVID-19 in Lebanon, in terms of preparedness and response.<sup>718</sup>

## 6. CHARTING A WAY FORWARD: EMERGING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The assessment of key SDG-based development issues in Chapter 3, and the analysis of structural challenges and factors of exclusion in Chapter 4 confirm that a holistic and integrated "whole of Lebanon" approach will be required in addressing the root causes of the ongoing crises. The following overarching conclusions and emerging development opportunities could be considered:

### 6.1 Guiding principles for the way forward

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<sup>716</sup> ODI (2019). Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace' The case of Lebanon <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12911.pdf>

<sup>717</sup> ODI (2019). Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace' The case of Lebanon <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12911.pdf>

<sup>718</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction - Regional Office for Arab States (2021). Women's Leadership in DRR: examples from the Arab States

- Achieving the 2030 Agenda vision of transformative change and sustainable development in Lebanon requires concurrent responses to the **immediate, medium, and long-term needs, risks and vulnerabilities of all segments of the Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations**, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable.
- In line with the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, achieving sustainable development and the SDGs in Lebanon should be based on an integrated **national sustainable development strategy**, as well as agreement - amongst all national and international stakeholders and partners - on a prioritized set of **shared longer-term results/collective outcomes** which enable flexible and complementary collaboration of all development actors in accordance with their comparative advantages.
- The pursuit of a prioritized and integrated set of collective multi-year outcomes should require **strengthening joint assessments and planning** between humanitarian, development and security partners to maximize the focus on equitable, inclusive and rights-based socio-economic and political empowerment.
- Increased emphasis and implementation of the principles of **inclusiveness, transparency and accountability** across the public and private sector will contribute to sustaining peace while, at the same time, supporting the required **transformative legislative and institutional reforms** which need to **include and reflect the voice of the population, civil society, and those at risk of being left behind** in policy-making processes
- The effectiveness and sustainability of the necessary reforms, as well as socio-economic and political empowerment requires significant and targeted investments in **building and strengthening both, institutional and human capacities**, as well as the generation of **inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities** to accelerate attainment of the SDGs.

## 6.2 Key challenges and emerging development opportunities

The challenges and opportunities in this section are distilled from the analysis presented in the preceding sections. As such, for a full explanation of these, please see those sections which unpack this summary presented here.

### 1) Human development and well-being

**Challenges:** The stark rise in poverty rates, the severe deterioration in the delivery of essential social and basic services (health, education, housing, water, energy) and provision of social protection, food and nutrition security, as well as the deeply rooted challenges to achieving GEWE, are affecting a growing proportion of the population, with devastating impacts on the most vulnerable who are pushed even further behind.

Potential development opportunities and accelerators include the following:

- **Improving wellbeing and poverty eradication** through strengthening and scaling up of social protection systems, services, and safety nets to ensure that all population groups, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from adequate social protection.
- **Strengthening protection systems** particularly to address SGBV, negative coping mechanisms, eviction risks, and all forms of violence, including violence against children and violence against migrants.
- **Ensuring equitable access to quality basic and social services**, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized including those with disabilities. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring equitable access to quality education and vocational training with a focus on innovation and technology, as well as access to health, water, and sustainable energy sources.



- **Advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls** in political, social, and economic terms, including addressing underlying cultural norms, as well as gender-based violence, with a focus on the intersections of different LNOB components including legal and social discrimination, economic status, disability, personal status, geographic location.
- **Developing human and technical capacities** to strengthen the resilience, accountability and effectiveness of public systems and institutions at the national and local levels.
- **Enhancing food security and the availability and affordability of healthy diets of the most vulnerable groups** through providing social protection tools and other measures such as monitoring prices and food security outcomes of groups already affected by the multiple crises in Lebanon, as well as the groups pushed into hunger and poverty by the deteriorating economic, financial, political and ecological conditions.

## 2) Environmental sustainability

**Challenges:** The cumulative effects of long-standing environmental mismanagement; accelerating degradation of natural resources; loss of biodiversity and forest cover; soil, water and air pollution; and the growing impact of the effects of climate change in a context of unplanned urbanization and the unmanaged densification of urban areas due to population growth, present a growing threat to Lebanon's prospects of achieving sustainable development and the SDGs. Climate risks increase existing vulnerabilities and tensions.

Potential opportunities to address these challenges include:

- **Developing and strengthening laws, policies and interventions** that promote climate resilience, climate security, resilient and green buildings, green infrastructure, sustainable public transport and mobility systems, sustainable food systems, climate-smart agriculture, circular economy, resource efficiency, clean energy and technologies, integrated water resource management, good governance in natural resources management, sustainable forest management, open and green public spaces, effective wastewater and solid waste management including at the municipal level, and increased investment in renewable energy sources.
- **Investing in capacity building** for climate change adaptation and mitigation, dispute resolution and access to justice, climate change communication, research, and development and climate financing as well as resource efficiency
- **Identifying and investing in innovative and "green" circular economy opportunities** which strengthen both, environmental sustainability and economic growth (e.g. sustainable tourism, renewable energy solutions, etc.)
- Identifying and investing in targeted interventions which address the gender-climate nexus

## 3) Economic transformation, equitable and inclusive growth

**Challenges:** The post-2019 economic developments illustrate a structural crisis tied to the unsustainable post-war economic model, and the failure and political resistance to reform a model that benefited a few and hindered inclusive development for decades. The growth of the Lebanese economy in the post-Civil War period has been linked to the tertiary sector at the expense of agriculture and industry. The current economic and financial crises are compounding the effects of long-standing structural challenges that affect the Lebanese economy and are preventing Lebanese, refugees and other populations to achieve sustainable development and the SDGs. The economic situation is affecting all residents in the country at different levels and impacting all aspects of life.

Potential opportunities to address these challenges include:

- **Strengthening the role of MSMEs and supporting the creation of an enabling environment for their development**, by addressing institutional and governance challenges facing them. This will allow the economy to grow again, absorb the growing workforce, halt outmigration, and impact positively on social indicators.
- **Unlocking the potential of the agri-food system and industrial sectors**, by addressing the structural challenges that face the sectors in addition to emerging ones. Support to food systems (production, processing, logistics, retailer, consumption, geographic indication, high value-added production) with economic, social and environmental benefits impacts positively the lives of the most vulnerable and supports food security in the country. A productive industrial sector can alleviate economic pressure, ensure access to essential goods, and decrease import dependence.
- **Supporting the localization of essential value chains** to decrease import dependence (opportunity to grow more domestically – import substitution), the outflow of foreign currency, minimize exposure to external shocks and disruption of supply chain, as well as protect the living conditions of the most vulnerable.
- **Formalizing an increasingly informal labor market** through measures that would help institutions regain trust in the system as well as see the value and importance of formality. Creating decent jobs for all was a challenge to the Lebanese economy even prior to the crisis and is increasingly so today.
- **Reforming the tax system and exploring innovative financing venues** to both address economic inequality and allow needed tax incentives for companies to remain in the country and grow. While a wealth tax could reduce inequality and create a much-needed fiscal space, tax reform needs to also address measures and incentives for companies, especially in fast growing sectors, to incorporate and grow in Lebanon. Innovative financing and taxation – at national and local levels – would need to be explored together as part and parcel of sustainable, equitable financial flows and investment in sustainable development.
- **Supporting the better regulation of the housing market**, including the informal rental market, to promote a people-centered provision of affordable housing that facilitates people’s residence in proximity to areas of economic opportunities.
- Promoting the **development of an effective, well connected and sustainable transport system**, including public, to enhance people’s equitable access to income-generating opportunities.
- **Supporting development of green technology and digitalization** and its integration in the productive sectors to support the increase in productivity all while capitalizing on the comparative advantage Lebanon has in terms of education. Technology and digitalisation infrastructure is also critical to public participation in terms of access to e-governance, education, remote medical consulting, entrepreneurship, post-pandemic flexible work arrangements, etc. Digitalisation in this sense is critical for women's economic empowerment and participation in public life. Its presence and accessibility are a condition for human development and well-being.
- **Increasing global / regional economic integration** through the expansion of FTAs and signing of new ones to allow Lebanese companies to exploit the full potential of expanding trade routes and access to new markets.
- **Supporting reforms in the electricity sector as well as sustainable energy solutions.**
- **Promoting decent work and preventing exploitation and abuse, including human trafficking and forced labour, with a focus on migrant workers.**
- **Strengthening the participation of youth in the economy**, through advocacy for a more inclusive policy framework as well as by fostering inclusive job creation
- **Harnessing urban growth** as a force for sustainable development, including by strengthening the institutional landscape to help catalyze localization of the 'urban' sustainable development goal 11 and related SDGs and contributing to an increasingly inclusive and sustainable future for communities in Lebanon.
- **Strengthening gender inclusive approaches** especially with regards to women's role in MSMEs, decent jobs, gender responsive taxation and the fiscal system

#### 4) Transformative, accountable, and inclusive peace and governance

**Challenges:** Sectarian-based governance system averse to reforms has resulted in a clientelist form of governance that creates exclusionary access to services; systematic corruption at multiple levels; weak regulatory, oversight and accountability mechanisms; lack of independence in the judiciary and rule of law sector; lack of voices, particularly of marginalized groups, in policy-making; ineffective institutions that have led to extremely low trust in government, all of which increase the risk of various threats to peace and sustainable development<sup>719</sup>

Potential opportunities to address these challenges include:

- **Advocating for a Lebanese-led process of dialogue on a social contract** to reinforce national unity and adopt a people-centered approach that is geared towards a more inclusive, effective and just system of governance by undertaking fundamental reforms across institutions, including through the empowerment of women.
- **Combatting corruption** by reforming the legislative, regulatory, and cultural norms that result in corruption by tackling it at multiple levels (including the transactional, procurement, and policy capture) with short, medium and long-term initiatives.
- **Ensuring the independence of the judiciary** by undertaking the reforms needed to free the judiciary from political interference.
- **Strengthening the capacity of key national and local governance institutions** to promote more inclusive dialogue and citizen engagement across policy areas, engaging all parts of society, particularly those that are often under-represented or marginalized, including establishing and/or improving oversight and accountability mechanisms.
- **Promoting evidence-based and people-centered decision-making by national and local public institutions**, to ensure accountability, transparency and hence increased trust and social stability.
- **Building the capacity of the legal system**, justice and dispute resolution including by providing a free-of-charge state legal aid service
- **Promoting digitalization and other reforms** in state bureaucracy to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of institutions in delivering services for the people.
- **Strengthening the Lebanese state and its institutions** to enable it to provide essential services to the population, consolidate state authority across the Lebanese territory, and deliver on international commitments including relevant Security Council resolution.
- **Promoting an integrated vision of a diverse yet unified Lebanon** in the face of multiple crises which is inclusive of marginalized populations.
- **Ensuring security forces have the resources and capacities** to sustainably perform their functions in adherence to human rights standards and effectively manage Lebanon's various security threats so that peace prevails.
- **Supporting the effective implementation of Lebanon's National Action Plan** for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- **Promoting more inclusive governance** by advocating for and supporting the political participation and representation of women, youth and other minority groups.

#### 5) Partnerships and Data

**Challenges:** Availability of data has always been considered a challenge in Lebanon, mainly in terms of timely, coherent, multisectoral, gender and inclusion multicohort, up-to-date, reliable and internationally comparable statistical data. Many areas – such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women's access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment – lack

<sup>719</sup> As per those identified in Chapter 3 'Peace' sub-section

comparable methodologies for regular monitoring. The current crises have further exposed the structural weaknesses of the national statistical system, as it fell short of providing a solid basis of data or evidence for informing a rigorous and swift policy response to mitigate the impact of compounding crises. Lebanon's inability to produce continuous, timely and reliable data is impeding on the country's capacity to efficiently design, implement and monitor evidence-based policies and plans, a critical element of recovery in the coming period.

Potential opportunities to address these challenges include:

- **Strengthening partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders**, including the private sector, civil society, migrants and diaspora organisations, faith-based organisations, local governments and communities, trade unions, parliamentarians, national human rights institutes, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the media, academia, think tanks and research institutions to deliver innovative and sustainable programming.
- **Forging more partnerships with rights-based CSOs** with presence and experience at local level who understand the specific vulnerabilities of the most left behind population groups.
- **Expanding regional and international collaboration** and knowledge-sharing, including participating in regional and international fora and dialogues.
- **Strengthening national institutional data/statistics capacities and systems** to produce continuous, reliable, timely, coherent quality data, based on the SDGs and using a human rights lens which identifies the most vulnerable population groups by disaggregating gender identity, geographic location, age, economic status, disability and other key parameters to ensure that no one and no place is left behind and to enable evidence-based and targeted development interventions.
- **Strengthening local evidence generation and management systems** to promote data-led planning and localization of SDG implementation and progress monitoring.
- **Using innovative financing mechanisms** including blended financing and climate financing while designing fund structures that provide access to local private and public sector entities.