



Policy Brief

June 2020

THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA IN LEBANON: A KEY TOOL FOR SUPPORTING RECOVERY FROM ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LEBANON

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Around the world and in Lebanon, COVID-19 has altered lives and societies in profound ways. It has placed entire populations under lockdown, closed airports, paused schools and workplaces and forced people to adjust the way they live with little or no personal interactions with extended family, friends and community members. Local, national, regional and global assessments of the impact of the pandemic are alarming, with predictions of deep recession and increased tensions.

The ten UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) that form the basis of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda deal with women's leadership in peace-making, conflict prevention and recovery, and the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence.¹ In particular, UNSCR 2242 (2015) recognises that 'the global nature of health pandemics' is an aspect of a 'changing global context of peace and security' warranting increased attention as part of WPS.

In September 2019 the Government of Lebanon endorsed its first National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 (herein, NAP 1325).² This commitment was reinforced in January 2020 in the Ministerial Statement issued by Prime Minister Hassan Diab's incoming Cabinet. The NAP 1325 provides a comprehensive national framework for the long-term stability and security of Lebanon and a building block for the attainment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It sets out priority actions on socio-economic protections, the prevention and protection from gender-based violence, inclusive politics, conflict prevention, and economic recovery. Developed over two years under the leadership of the National Commission for Lebanese Women and in broad consultation with government bodies, ministries, and civil society partners, it is the outcome of consultative policy making.

While the NAP 1325 is currently less than a year old, implementation is underway, and its passage has contributed to key demonstrable results. Examples include the significant increase of women into the 2020 intake class of Lebanese Armed Forces military cadets, which included 43 women out of 128 candidates (34%)³, a dramatic and important increase in women's engagement, and the recent Cabinet decision to form the national commission for the missing and forcibly disappeared.⁴

1 The ten resolutions that make up the WPS Agenda are: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019). See: <http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions>

2 <https://nclw.gov.lb/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Lebanon-NAP-1325-UNSCR-WPS-Summary.pdf>

3 <http://www.lebanonfiles.com/articles/الناجدين-تعلن-عن-قيادة-الجيش-تعلن-عن-الناجدين/>

4 <http://www.lebanon24.com/news/lebanon/715334/الم-الهيئة-الوطنية-لل-الحكومة-انشاء-الهيئة-الوطنية-لل-كوييتش-يرحب-بقرار-الحكومة-انشاء-الهيئة-الوطنية-لل-الم/>

As Lebanon moves forward in working to tackle the unprecedented challenges it currently faces, the NAP 1325 must remain a key framework for action.

Lebanon's Peace and Security Challenges in the Context of the Economic Crisis and COVID-19

COVID-19 has reached Lebanon at a time of deep economic crisis. Lock down measures have accentuated the crisis and generated a spike in unpaid care work and gender-based violence – both of which have been borne largely by women.⁵ Preliminary data from the International Labour Organization suggests that women in Lebanon are being laid off and exiting the labour market at rates higher than men as a result of the pandemic – often to take on increased unpaid care work⁶, and data from a forthcoming UN Women study finds that the effect of the current economic contraction on women's overall employment in Lebanon is estimated to result in a 14-19% reduction in women's employment.⁷ Data from national institutions and civil society organizations demonstrates a significant increase in gender-based violence across the country since the onset of lockdown measures.⁸ The pandemic has shut schools across the country, generating a concerning loss in educational opportunities for girls and boys⁹, and increases in unpaid care work for women and men – the majority of which women are shouldering. Eight-one percent of Lebanese women and 64% Lebanese men surveyed, and 73% Syrian women and 64% Syrian women surveyed, report that their household duties have increased at home since the lockdown measures of COVID-19.¹⁰ As the economic crisis deepens, increasing numbers of male and female youth will be pushed into exploitative practices. All of this is taking place as tensions across the country continue to rise.

Tackling this requires institutional reform on a magnitude not yet seen in Lebanon. It requires holistic efforts to address issues of governance, corruption and inequality. In this undertaking, Lebanon's NAP 1325 provides a useful framework for action; it prioritizes the gendered needs of women and girls in times of crisis, pandemics, and conflicts. It calls for women's increased participation in response planning and recovery efforts and commits the Government to ensure that gender analysis is incorporated into crisis and recovery plans, at the national and local level. It also calls for the creation of economic opportunities for women in host communities in Lebanon to support women's economic empowerment, a decrease of negative coping mechanisms and exploitative practices, and to support stability of local communities. The NAP 1325 also recognizes that women's engagement in peace and security deliberations are vital to the country's stability and security.

Today's uncertainties require all national stakeholders, government institutions and civil society organizations, to bolster support for peace and security efforts in Lebanon to avoid violent outbreaks and maintain social stability. This must be done with women as equal partners in decision-making processes and their critical participation in solving some of the

5 UN Women, Gender Alert COVID-19 Lebanon In Focus: Access to Justice and Gender-Based Violence, 22 April 2020, available at <https://ar-abstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/gender-alert-on-covid-19-lebanon>; See also: UN Women, Gender Alert on COVID-19 Lebanon In Focus: Access to Justice and Gender Based Violence, 3 June 2020, available at <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2020/06/lebanon%20gender%20alert%20issue3/update%20652020/gender%20alert%20on%20covidlebanon%20issue%203english.pdf?la=en&vs=3305>.

6 Ibid.

7 Estimates based on contraction up to the first quarter of 2020. Forthcoming report. Salti, N and Mezher, N, 2020, Women on the verge of an economic breakdown, UN Women.

8 ILO, UNDP, IRC, MC, SC, DRC and OXFAM, "Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups in Lebanese Labour Market," Forthcoming. See also: UN Women, Gender Alert COVID-19 Lebanon In Focus: Access to Justice and Gender-Based Violence, 22 April 2020, and UN Women, Gender Alert on COVID-19 Lebanon In Focus: Access to Justice and Gender Based Violence, 3 June 2020,

9 UN Women, Gender Alert COVID-19 Lebanon: In Focus: Women, Gender and the Economy, 15 May 2020, available at: <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2020/05/gender%20alert%20lebanon%20may/gender%20alert%20on%20covidlebanon%20issue%202%20english.pdf?la=en&vs=5557>; See also: UNESCO, What Are Some Important Gender Implications of the COVID-19 Crisis?, available at <https://en.unesco.org/news/resources-parents-and-teachers-motivating-supporting-children-during-remote-learning>.

10 ILO, UNDP, IRC, MC, SC, DRC and OXFAM, 2020, "Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups in Lebanese Labour Market."

country's most challenging issues. The NAP 1325 provides the framework for this and must be central and integrated into all national efforts aimed at recovery.

National Crisis Response and Recovery Priorities x NAP 1325 Commitments

The following outlines priority issues for inclusive recovery in Lebanon, with the corresponding NAP 1325 commitment, to facilitate integration of these national commitments into Lebanon's crisis response and economic recovery planning.

National Priority	NAP Commitment and Action
<p>Economic Recovery and Bolstering Social Protections</p> <p>The Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 strongly links women's economic empowerment to peacebuilding efforts and its valuable benefits to society at large. Global evidence suggests that women are more likely than men to spend their income on family needs and on healthcare and education. In addition, when women have control over their financial resources, they are better able to ensure their security and that of their children and make valuable contributions to maintaining stability in their family and local community.¹⁰</p>	<p>Lebanon's NAP 1325 sets out a framework to support decent work and protections for women in the formal and informal economy through awareness on equal pay, social benefits and workplace protection from harassment. The NAP also calls for increased lending for women with flexible requirements for collateral and trainings on financial literacy. It calls for the amendment of discriminatory provisions in the Labour Code and for the inclusion of informal workers-those working, for example, in the agricultural sector and in family-owned businesses. The NAP 1325 also calls for the amendment of the Social Security Law to allow women workers to pass on social security benefits to spouses and children as the Law only allows women workers to benefit from these provisions if the husband is deceased or unable to work due to an illness or disability.</p>
<p>Prevention and Protection from GBV</p> <p>UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security underscores the obligations of Member States to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) including in emergency and humanitarian situations. CEDAW's General Recommendation no. 30 (GR30) on Conflict Prevention, Conflict, and Post-Conflict Situations (2013) tackles issues such as gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and access to justice.¹¹</p>	<p>Lebanon's NAP 1325 calls on national institutions to link the Internal Security Forces (ISF) Domestic Disturbance Hotline, 1745, to a broader national referral system and to train security personnel, men and women, to respond to complaints. The NAP 1325 recognizes the gaps in current protection responses and calls for the establishment of a coordination mechanism between national institutions including the ISF, courts, hospitals and service centers, while prioritizing the development of standards and guidelines for service provision across these sectors to improve data collection and analysis.</p>

¹¹ UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

¹² UN Women (2015), Guidebook on CEDAW General Recommendation No.30 and the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/8/guidebook-cedawgeneralrecommendation30-womenpeacesecurity#view>, p.9.

In a post-war country such as Lebanon, institutional capacity-building to enable access to justice for survivors of violence is a fundamental element that is associated not only with timely and appropriate responses to protect women from violence, but in preventing and decreasing instances of gender-based violence in the first place.

Lebanon's NAP 1325 calls on national institutions to link the Internal Security Forces (ISF) Domestic Disturbance Hotline, 1745, to a broader national referral system and to train security personnel, men and women, to respond to complaints. The NAP 1325 recognizes the gaps in current protection responses and calls for the establishment of a coordination mechanism between national institutions including the ISF, courts, hospitals and service centers, while prioritizing the development of standards and guidelines for service provision across these sectors to improve data collection and analysis. The NAP 1325 also prioritizes the need to assess existing shelters in order to standardize quality in services and operations and outlines the need for the development of one comprehensive national training curriculum for law enforcement, the judiciary, social affairs, and health on how to effectively respond to gender-based violence based on each entity's mandated interventions.

The emphasis on institution building to respond to GBV cannot be carried out alone without legislation that mandate State responsibility to protect women and children from all forms of violence and exploitation. Legislative reforms in Lebanon are a key component of the country's NAP 1325 that commits to endorsing amendments to Law 293 (2014) on family violence and Law 164 (2011) on trafficking in persons to ensure greater protections for all women and children.

Inclusive Governance: Women's Increased Participation in Political and Public Life

The Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW) General Recommendation no. 30 (GR30) on Conflict Prevention, Conflict, and Post-Conflict Situations supports States parties to meet their obligations to protect, respect and fulfill women's human rights

To promote more inclusive leadership and women's engagement in decision making, the NAP 1325 calls for the adoption of temporary special measures such as a minimum 30% quota for women at the national and local levels. It also calls for the amendment of electoral arrangements to increase women's political leadership to include for instance waiving candidates' fees and increasing women's participation in electoral management. With parliamentary and municipal elections slated for 2022, the NAP 1325 provides

before, during and after conflict and tackles broader issues related to women's participation in public life.¹²¹³

According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Inequality Index, Lebanon scores 149 out of 152 countries on women's political empowerment, only ahead of Oman and Yemen in the region.¹³¹⁴ Despite some progress related to the appointment of 30% of women in Lebanon's new Cabinet, women still make up only 4.7% of parliamentary members and still lag behind in assuming leadership positions in the public sector.¹⁴¹⁵ According to a study published by UN Women in 2018, the last parliamentary elections were unprecedented in Lebanon's history as the largest number of women candidates, 113 who registered to run for elections, and 86 who made it on electoral ballots. Approximately 78% of women ran independently of political parties.¹⁵¹⁶

At this time of unprecedented economic crisis, major decisions will be made in Parliament related to Lebanon's financial recovery plan, the state budget and austerity measures. The low numbers of women in Parliament carries a risk that economic matters and other issues that impact women directly will not be sufficiently addressed. Nevertheless, parliamentary members have a responsibility to engage with women's groups and other stakeholders to place their concerns on the political agenda.

a framework of essential actions to support women's leadership and political participation.

Conflict Prevention and the Prevention of Violent Extremism

UNSCR 1325 underscores women's participation as key to preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

Lebanon's NAP 1325 recognizes that women's voices and agency are necessary in conflict prevention efforts, in countering violent extremism and in promoting peace and stability.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2020, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.

¹⁵ <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

¹⁶ El Kaakour, (2020), Pursuing Equality in Rights and Representation: Women's Experiences Running for Parliament in Lebanon's 2018 Elections; UN Women.

The Global Study on UNSCR 1325 emphasizes women's peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots levels as community-level mediators that can play key roles in formal mediation processes and stresses support for the provision of safe spaces for women to build infrastructure for peace and opportunities for all women to address the causes of tensions and conflicts within their communities. The Global Study also calls for tackling countering violent extremism through a holistic top-down nation-building process that focuses on policies and strategies to bolster sustainable development efforts and uphold the protection of human rights and women's rights.¹⁷

Increasing social tensions in Lebanon and the images associated with them speak volumes to Lebanon's fragile peace. As a matter of priority, dialogue and conflict prevention must be invested in, along with broader structural socio-economic reform.

Lebanon's NAP 1325 recognizes that women's voices and agency are necessary in conflict prevention efforts, in countering violent extremism and in promoting peace and stability. The NAP calls for initiatives to promote dialogue and mediation and commits to women's meaningful engagement in these forums. As one instrument for this, the NAP calls for the development of a national network of female mediators in all governorates and the inclusion of gender responsive provisions in any peace negotiations and national dialogues. The NAP also calls for the development of information, education and communication materials including theater, films and plays to teach children, youth and adults about the importance of citizenship, tolerance, and co-existence as fundamental pillars of nation-building.

The NAP 1325 also commits to the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism, adopted in 2018, that underpins national development efforts, and for an increase in women's participation in the security and defense sectors as global evidence suggests a positive correlation between women's participation in the security sector and levels of community trust. In Lebanon's second largest city, Tripoli, citizens preferred dealing with women police officers as they found them more approachable citizens and eased tensions between community members.¹⁸

¹⁷ UN Women (2015), Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.

¹⁸ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/stories-histoires/2018/lebanon_police-liban.aspx?lang=eng.

The NAP 1325 is a four-year framework, ending in 2022, that outlines concrete measures Lebanon has committed to take to build a more inclusive pathway for sustainable peace and development. It places women's participation and representation at its core and acknowledges that sustained peace cannot be achieved without women's full and active engagement.

This important framework cannot be sidelined during this current juncture as Lebanon works to address extensive economic and socio-political challenges. The implementation of the NAP 1325 must both be invested in and seen as a matter of national priority.

NAP 1325 Progress Since the Onset of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has already tested and put the NAP 1325 framework into action by using it to ensure that national institutions mainstream gender equality issues into COVID-19 response and recovery policies. Through this, the following results have already been achieved:

- The Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Social Affairs have ensured that the application for household assistance prioritizes the basic needs of vulnerable populations such as female headed households.
- Advocating for the repatriation of spouses and children of Lebanese women married to foreign spouses as a right for all Lebanese families.
- Addressing the increase in gender-based violence as a result of the lockdown through new policies to improve prosecution procedures for cases of domestic violence by facilitating testimonies through online communications. As a result, the first online protection order in response to domestic violence was issued on 23 April 2020 which provided protection services to the survivor, her children and extended family from the perpetrator. Moreover, an online mechanism was developed to accept and rule on complaints presented via emails before judges. The email addresses of all courts that deal with domestic violence cases across all regions of Lebanon were widely disseminated to increase access to justice for survivors.
- Working with parliament to fast track the view of draft legislation on sexual harassment in public and the workplace; fast track the review and approval of proposed amendments to Law 293/2014 on the 'Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence' to increase protections for women and children.



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