



Lebanon National  
Gender **Observatory**  
المرصد الوطني اللبناني  
للمساواة بين الجنسين

## Lebanon National Gender Observatory Recommendations Gendered Emergency Response to the Current Crisis



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



# Lebanon National Gender Observatory Recommendations Gendered Emergency Response to the Current Crisis

## Introduction

The Lebanon National Gender Observatory (hereafter the Observatory) held an on-line meeting of the Steering Committee on 27 August 2020 to discuss the emergency response to the multiple crises Lebanon faces today and consolidate gender-based recommendations.

This note begins with a short analysis of recent events, notably the Beirut Port blast of August 4th, 2020, in a context of a multi-faceted crisis since the end of 2019 and the crisis due to the Covid-19 global pandemic since the beginning of 2020. It then provides a gender analysis of the situation and concludes with gendered recommendations to take forward.

## Contextual analysis

The Beirut Port blast on August 4th, 2020, has created immediate humanitarian needs, with more than 180 people killed, some persons still missing, over 6,000 injured and 300,000+ displaced<sup>1</sup>. The explosion left most of the port facilities destroyed, and surrounding neighborhoods flattened, with damage reported up till six kilometers away from the blast center.

The blast adds significant complexities to a country that, since the end of 2019, has been facing consecutive and compounding social, political, economic, and health challenges, which have led to the multifaceted crisis.

Socially, increased sectarian tensions have been noted before the blast throughout Lebanon, and are linked to the political turmoil enveloping the country. These tensions have been exacerbated by the blast, leading to conflicts in the distribution of assistance. In addition to that, the social tensions have led to an overall increase in crime all over Lebanon, including homicides, kidnapping, and theft.

<sup>1</sup> Lebanon: Beirut Explosion Situation Report No. 5 - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 17 August 2020



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

Economically, Lebanon is currently in hyperinflation, with the devaluation of the local currency exceeding 80% against the United States Dollar. Before the blast, it was reported that approximately 220,000 formal jobs have been lost, and 12% of all local businesses have ceased their activity<sup>2</sup>. In addition to an increasing national debt (current over USD 100 billion<sup>3</sup>), the Beirut blast's damages are estimated to be between USD 5 billion to USD 10 billion<sup>4</sup>.

To add to this, Lebanon, along with the rest of the world, has been facing the COVID-19 pandemic, with cases exponentially increasing as of the end of July. With over 30,000 cases<sup>5</sup>, Lebanon's already strained healthcare system that was heavily affected by the blast which left three major hospitals out of order<sup>6</sup> and two partially out of order is at risk of being overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases.

In this dire context, the situation in Lebanon requires immediate humanitarian aid and a continuation of the development efforts to bolster the ailing economy and contribute to social stability. It is crucial to recognize the differences in risks inflicted upon individuals based on their age, sex, gender, nationality, and/or ethnicity upon which the need for assistance and protection varies. A crucial and often overlooked factor in these efforts is gender.

## Gender-based analysis

In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been increasing evidence that the pandemic exacerbates the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence (GBV), with increased reports of cases as survivors are confined to the home alongside perpetrators, with constrained ability to access services, and potential diversion of resources away from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) response initiatives to meet COVID-19 needs.

<sup>2</sup>Economic Briefs from the Middle East – Week from 07 to 14 February 2020

<sup>3</sup>Abou Aoun; Yacoubian. (2020, August 7). After Beirut Blast, What's Next for Lebanon's Broken Political System? United States Institute of Peace.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/08/after-beirut-blast-whats-next-lebanons-broken-political-system>

<sup>4</sup>Beirut Explosion: loss estimate. (2020, August 14). Atlas Magazine.

<https://www.atlas-mag.net/en/article/beirut-explosion-loss-estimate>

<sup>5</sup>Worldometer. (n.d.). COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from

[https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm\\_campaign=homeAdvegas1?](https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm_campaign=homeAdvegas1?)

<sup>6</sup>Graham, T. (2020, August 21). The Cost of Resilience: The Roots and Impacts of the Beirut Blast. Just Security.

<https://www.justsecurity.org/72122/the-cost-of-resilience-the-roots-and-impacts-of-the-beirut-blast/>



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



In Lebanon, the Inter-Agency Taskforce on SGBV noted increased cases of SGBV, compared to lower levels of reporting, highlighting the increased exposure to SGBV and the challenges survivors are facing in reporting and accessing support <sup>7</sup>.

Additionally, Lebanon's economic crisis; likely to be exacerbated by both the pandemic and the port blast, has gendered impacts. Globally, women are often found in informal or precarious work, and in times of economic crisis are harder hit their financial dependence on men potentially increased. Humanitarian and economic crises have been known to lead to families employing negative coping strategies to meet their needs, which may include heightened risks of sexual exploitation, SGBV, child labor, and child marriage.

The explosion in Beirut aggravated the situation of women and girls in Lebanon, who make up 150,000 of the displaced after the blast, and who urgently require shelter, protection from sexual violence, and basic services. **Another lock-down will leave women vulnerable to domestic violence and abuse, and displaced women in dire need of (temporary) housing and access to health care.** While the full damage resulting from the blast has yet to be assessed, it is evident the lives, livelihoods, basic living conditions and coping mechanisms of those living in the vicinity of the blast have all been impacted. Women and girls, are even more exposed and require immediate shelter, protection from SGBV, and access to basic needs and services (i.e. food, hygiene, dignity kits, etc.). It is important and urgent that all response planning address these issues. Programs need to be planned, monitored, and evaluated with gender-sensitive methodologies in the design, if women, girls, men, and boys are supported in the immediate term, and create lasting and transformational change to their lives.

Given the gender-specific impacts of the multi-faceted crisis in Lebanon, the Observatory as a leading coordinating and monitoring body in regard to gender equality takes on a proactive role in ensuring that gender-sensitive approaches are sufficiently integrated into response planning. In addition to that, the Observatory will be focusing its gender-based research to provide analysis, input, and policy recommendations, to drive a gendered national response to the multi-faceted crisis, taking into consideration women and girls' needs. The Observatory will also contribute to the showcase of the work of governmental bodies and national and international agencies providing gender services.

---

<sup>7</sup> Impact of COVID-19 on the SGBV Situation in Lebanon, Inter-Agency SGBV Task Force Lebanon - May 2020 <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/impact-covid-19-sgbv-situation-lebanon-inter-agency-sgbv-task-force-lebanon-may-2020#:~:text=The%20COVID%2D19%20outbreak%20increased,the%20virus%20such%20as%20Lebanon.>



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأوروبية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



The Observatory with its research and communication and visibility teams are ready to provide not only recommendations but also technical support to the governmental bodies and national and international agencies to mainstream gender equality perspective in their emergency response and recovery planning in the context of the blast, the pandemic and broader political and economic crisis, in coordination with other actors.

Moreover, the Observatory recently finalized a consolidated report from wave one of its research "Gender inequality and violence against women and girls in Lebanon, including the perspectives of women from vulnerable host communities and Syrian refugee women". The report was reviewed and validated by the Research Policy Group in August 2020 and has actionable recommendations to stakeholders and civil society. Building upon these findings, a second wave of research will be launched by the research team to produce a report and evidence-based policy recommendations addressing Lebanon's context after the Beirut blast.

## Recommendations

In response to the Beirut blast, the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has released a Flash Appeal outlining the sectoral needs of the response up until November 2020. The appeal covers education, food security, health, logistics, emergency telecommunication, protection, shelter, and WASH.

The response is split into three phases:

- The first phase prioritizes live-saving aid and protection
- The second phase prioritizes the reconstruction of public infrastructure and homes
- The third phase (not covered under this paper as its scope is beyond November 2020), focuses on economic recovery and the initiating of a comprehensive wide-spread response.

Experience has shown that the humanitarian response to disaster bears an opportunity to transform gender relations and empower women and girls as decision-makers, responders, and influencers of economic development.

It is crucial to seize this opportunity and ensure the immediate response to the crisis is gender-responsive, by upholding gender-equitable practices in all sectors of interventions and responding inclusively, considering to the particular needs of women and girls. It is also essential to apply a gender lens to the immediate response, so as not to lose any progress on gender equality that has been made in recent years.



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

Therefore, the Observatory proposes recommendations that are built upon previous efforts, and respond to the crisis, and the current socio-political changes. Split into short, mid and long-term, these recommendations account for the different needs of women and girls in the sectors of intervention, including WASH, Shelter, Livelihood, Protection, Health, and Education. The recommendations provide a roadmap to the different stakeholders. They ensure complementarity with ongoing long-term interventions and update the existing national action plans while considering the contextual changes and emergency set up.

## Immediate: Emergency Response to the Blast

In the immediate aftermath of the Beirut blast, women and girls face increased challenges in accessing aid. Displaced women in particular face overcrowded temporary shelters, with decreased privacy and a limited number of unsegregated sanitation/handwashing facilities. This leaves them at an increased risk of SGBV and exploitation.

### Ministries:

#### - Uphold Gender Mainstreaming in Ministerial Services

Mobilize existing mechanisms and Standard Operating Procedures related to gender mainstreaming in all ministries.

#### - Strengthen the role of gender liaison in coordination mechanisms

The gender focal points or units of the ministries play a central role in engendering the crisis response and action plans of each ministry. Ministries are advised to engage the gender focal points, to consistently attend, participate and provide continuous input on gender issues in the relevant sector working groups (i.e. Ministry of Education to attend Education working group, etc.)

#### - Assure gender disaggregation of all collected data

Promote the usage of disaggregated data by age and gender, to inform the response of the specific needs of women and girls.

#### - Promote the Involvement of Women in the Response

Ensure that women are present and active in all aspects of the response, particularly in decision making and as first responders; include in the discussions women from the local communities, and those who have directly been affected.

A gender sensitive emergency response is the basis for a more inclusive, equitable, efficient, and impactful long-term response. If engendered, the immediate response can be the basis for a more gender sensitive, efficient



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



- Guide Immediate Programming to be Gender Sensitive  
Ensure gender mainstreaming in all sectors of interventions (shelter, health, education).

## National Gender Observatory:

- Develop publications and position papers highlighting the immediate needs of women and girls (access and participation) and assessing current responses from various actors.  
This could include for example a position paper on GBV in the times of crisis

- Conduct gender analysis and integrate gender findings into recovery planning (mid-long-term planning).  
To better understand the gender dimensions of the blast, make gender-based research, analyze and provide actionable recommendations to guide a gender-inclusive response.

- Provide a platform for the exchange of experiences and expertise in gender mainstreaming among ministries and stakeholders  
The Observatory Steering Committee will provide a platform for on-going discussions and exchange of gender related data, analysis and statistics, expertise, and good practices by different stakeholders as ministerial Gender Focal Points to support prioritizing gender mainstreaming in response both in the emergency phase as well as on mid and long-term planning to strengthen a nationally coordinated gender input in all areas.

Facilitate consultations and provide dialogues platforms (physical or on-line) with local communities and civil society to promote the involvement of women in the response.

Promote the need for gender-based statistics and support the on-going work by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) by spreading, using, and highlighting CAS gender-segregated data via referring to it on the Observatory Website.

## Mid-Term: Blast Recovery Planning and COVID-19 Response Ministries:

- Uphold and monitor gender mainstreaming as the response to the multi-faceted crisis' (Blast, COVID-19, Economic Crisis, etc.)  
Maintain gender mainstreaming as the emergency response shifts from meeting immediate needs and assuring access to services, toward more sustainable aid and long-term recovery (i.e. livelihoods, MHPSS, Women's Empowerment, Legal Aid, etc.);
- Assess and review gender mainstreaming in sector-specific response plans and framework, under their mandate



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



## National Gender Observatory:

- Provide technical support and gender analysis to relevant agencies or ministries for gender-responsive services

Provide gendered analysis and information, recommendation and guidance to relevant agencies or ministries for gender-responsive services where gaps or needs are identified, prepare and disseminate policy briefs

- Engage young volunteers and the partners

During the crisis, young people were among the first to act and make a difference on the ground however, their efforts risk to be hidden now that aid organizations have begun their response. The Observatory would support the energy of young people by taking and making visible their testimony and discussing other ways to integrate their thoughts and concerns into planning. Assessments and Briefs would be published and distributed online.

## Long-Term: National Gender Observatory Role

- Continue research and institutionalizing of data collection in the different areas based on the approved indicators.

- Provide support to ministries

Focus on continuous high-quality research and data to support better informed and evidence-based decision-making by policymakers and other key stakeholders.

- Pursue monitoring gender mainstreaming

Continue to follow up and support gender mainstreaming of government policies, programs, and services.

Other recommendations can also be added based on the expertise, involvement, and vision of the actual situation.

**[We also note the need to consider COVID-19 precautions throughout all the above actions]**

## Next step

- Condemn all forms of violence, including GBV and VAWG.
- Prepare a set of research-informed recommendations that address emergency and crises situations and that are complementary to existing strategies or action plans such as UNSCR 1325.
- Provide a structural platform for the exchange of practices, analysis, and expertise to ensure the gender equality lens is applied in governmental response to the current situation.



Funded by the European Union  
بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed