



Press Release

3 July 2019, Beirut

Regional Forum - Enhancing Gender Equality and Engendering the Syrian Crisis Response in Host Countries Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan

Today, the Regional Forum "Enhancing Gender Equality and Engendering the Syrian Crisis Response in Host Countries Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan" took place under the patronage and in the presence of the President of the Council of Ministers, H.E Saad Hariri, at the Grand Sérail, Lebanon. The event was held in the frame of the project "Strengthening access to protection, participation and services for women refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and women in the host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq" funded by the EU, through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the EU "MADAD" Fund.

The Forum provided a platform for dialogue and exchange of experiences, best practices and lessons learned in addressing the needs of Syrian women refugees and vulnerable women from host communities, in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, both at policy level and in practice. The project aims at improving the livelihood, and the legal and social protection of Syrian women refugees, IDPs as well as vulnerable women in Lebanon, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) and Jordan. To achieve this, the project addresses the immediate needs of the most vulnerable women and brings them in the policy framework of these countries to ensure better protection. More specifically, it provides women and girls victims of sexual and gender-based violence better access to safe spaces, psychosocial support, information about their rights, as well as legal consultation and advice, in Lebanon and Iraq. In Jordan, women take ownership of their lives, by having access to decent jobs through vocational trainings, awareness raising about their legal and labour rights and advocating for improving working environment. Beyond the emergency response, a set of policy actions and awareness raising campaigns continue to encourage effective gender equality on both local and national level, thanks to the EU support.

Well attended, the Forum was opened by H.E. Saad Hariri, "It is 2019. It is about time laws are amended for the benefit of women. It is a shame that we are still discussing these issues as if they require discussions. Those issues are unavoidable and inevitable, and I will do everything in my power to grant women their rights."

During the opening session, H.E Ms. Violette Khairallah Safadi, Minister of State for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth (EEWAY), welcomed the participants to Beirut. She noted that today, her ministry is hosting the National Gender Observatory through which they will seek to promote equality and support the urgent needs of women with less opportunities in partnership with all stakeholders and policy makers. She highlighted the fact that "A woman refugee will inevitably return to her homeland and we will make sure that she returns as an active and able woman who can contribute to the reconstruction of her country. In parallel, we will work on empowering the women in the host community".

H.E Ms. Christina Lassen, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon added "Women and girls should have equal opportunities as men. It is not only the right thing to do – it is the smart thing to do. Long-term stability and truly sustainable development will only be achieved if women and girls enjoy full respect of their fundamental rights. Thanks to the establishment of the National Gender Observatory at the Ministry for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth, the EU ensures that actions are sustainable and long term."

Ms. Boriana Jonsson, Executive Director of the EuroMed Feminist Initiative, underlined the necessity of a double approach and a joint response to the prolonged refugee crises, where both women refugees and women in the host communities bear disproportionately the burden.

During the first session, Ministers and Ministerial representatives discussed strategies for social and legal protection and for economic empowerment of the most vulnerable women. H.E. Dr. Richard Kouyoumjian, Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, stressed that Lebanon has put achieving gender equality and ending discrimination as a top priority and seeks to achieve this goal within a comprehensive development approach in line with the "Sustainable Development Agenda 2030".

H.E. Mr. Hamid Al-Ghazi, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Iraq, represented by Dr. Ibtisam Azez, underlined the importance of cross sector cooperation in addressing the crises and highlighted the Iraqi experience of having developed and reported on the implementation of the National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, in the frame of which comprehensive services have been provided to refugee women and women in the host community in need.

Mr. Ahmad Massadeh, Specialist at the Directorate of Policies and International Cooperation of the Jordanian Ministry of Labor, highlighted "Jordan Response Plan (JRP) is a strategic approach to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis through the implementation of developmental and humanitarian projects by international organizations and civil society organizations in Jordan. The ministry of Labor created an administrative unit to organize and facilitate the reach of Syrian refugees to the labor market."

During the following session, EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the consortia partners presented the results of the Regional Baseline Report. The report elaborates on the existing capacities, service provision and legal frameworks of Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, including the specific needs of Syrian women refugee and vulnerable women of the host community, identifying gaps and providing recommendations on the way forward.

In Lebanon, EFI collaborates with Care International Lebanon, Legal Action Worldwide and Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering. In Iraq, EFI collaborates with Baghdad Women's Association and Women Empowerment Organizations and in Jordan with Business Development Centre and Tamkeen.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the EU 'Madad' Fund:

Since its establishment in December 2014, a significant share of the EU's non-humanitarian aid for Syria's neighbouring countries is provided through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the EU 'Madad' Fund. The Trust Fund brings a more coherent and integrated EU aid response to the crisis and primarily addresses longer term economic, educational, protection and social needs of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, and supports overstretched local communities and their administrations.