



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the third periodic report of Lebanon

Responses to the list of questions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with regard to the consideration of the third periodic report of Lebanon on implementation of the Convention

Preparation of the report

Question 1

The third periodic report of Lebanon was prepared during an extremely brief period of time directly following the submission of its initial and second reports. During that period, in an effort to involve civil society and civil-society organizations in the task of defining visions and reviewing plans and projects, the National Commission for Lebanese Women held a workshop entitled “Towards implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”, which was attended by representatives of official departments, public institutions and non-governmental organizations, including key women’s organizations. The workshop concluded with a set of recommendations and goals relating to the challenges addressed in one form or another in several parts of the report. Moreover, non-governmental organizations are making substantial efforts, as duly highlighted in the report with particular reference to women’s organizations.

As was the case with the two previous reports, the third report was submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister of Lebanon, which approved its transmission to the Committee through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Constitution, legislation and national machinery for the advancement of women**Question 2**

Paragraph 317 of the report points to an example of the efforts made by civil society towards achieving equality, which naturally included equality before the law. Any progress in that area, however, assumes the country's return to normal politics, which is not the case at present. The war launched against Lebanon in July 2006 and the ensuing repercussions on the situation of the Government and the work of the legislature effectively impeded progress in the required direction and continues to do so. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Social Affairs is making considerable efforts, particularly in combating violence against women, as mentioned in paragraph 118.1 of the report. The Committee for the Modernization of Laws, which operates under a mandate and decision from the Speaker of Parliament, is considering amendments to the Penal Code. The prime objectives of the Committee include "equality between men and women with regard to criminal liability for all offences, in particular sexual assault and crimes of honour" (*Activities of the Parliamentary Committee for the Modernization of Laws, 2006-2007 and Parliamentary Life*, vol. 63, June 2007, pp. 136-7). The Committee has also "discussed various articles relating to women with the National Commission for Lebanese Women and representatives from the non-governmental sector concerned with women's affairs, with the aim of amending or deleting those articles which discriminate against women in order to achieve harmonization with the international conventions ratified by Lebanon" (*ibid.*, p. 137). In June 2007, the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children considered proposed amendments to articles of the Penal Code.

Question 3

Since it was first established, the National Commission for Lebanese Women has depended upon funds secured by the Office of the Prime Minister from the budget reserve and transferred to its budget under the item of social development. These funds represent 0.003 per cent of the total general budget. The Commission has repeatedly requested the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance to create for it a special item under of the general budget. During the summer of 2007, it took steps to remind the relevant authorities in the Ministry of Finance of the need to act on this issue during the preparation of the 2008 annual budget.

Question 4

The adoption of a unified personal status code in Lebanon is far from imminent and no initiatives in that direction have been started. It is worth pointing out, however, that the civil courts are clearly endeavouring to give broad scope to areas pertaining to civil laws and regulations and, consequently, to keep the areas covered by denominational laws within specific limits.

Violence against women**Question 5**

First of all, the amendment of article 562 of the Penal Code is an integral part of the draft amendment to the Penal Code already mentioned in the response to question 2. With regard to the elimination of violence against women, the Ministry

of Social Affairs provides financial support to specialized non-governmental organizations offering refuge to women victims of violence. It also implements awareness-raising, and media campaigns on the subject in cooperation with these organizations and is expected to publish an analysis of the subject in 2008. Moreover, since 2006 the Ministry has implemented a train-the-trainers project for 45 community workers nationwide with the aim of combating domestic violence and violence against women. At the legislative level, it is also worth mentioning that the Supreme Council for Childhood at the Ministry of Social Affairs is currently drafting a law aimed at combating violence against children.

Question 6

Paragraphs 109 to 117 of the report review the efforts of governmental bodies to eliminate discrimination and violence against women. It should be emphasized that these efforts are continuing, in addition to which a new major enterprise is under way by the National Commission for Lebanese Women, which is working simultaneously on two projects already begun.

The first project is being implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) under the Regional Programme to Promote Women's Human Rights in the Maghreb and Mashreq Areas and comprises three components/activities. The first activity is aimed at gathering information as a basis for an observatory on government policies and programmes relating to women's issues and also at establishing a working mechanism for an observatory dealing with the situation of women, all within the framework of the Lebanese Women's Information Centre, established by the Commission in 2004. The second activity entails the establishment of indicators on women's issues in a number of areas, including violence against women and means of combating it. The third activity is directed at capacity-building for dissemination of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and related documents, and at the promotion of social awareness.

Entitled "Women's empowerment: Peaceful action for security and stability", the second project is being implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and is reviewed under the response to question 27.

On a further note, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in conjunction with local and international non-governmental organizations and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), runs awareness-raising courses and media campaigns and is planning to publish an analysis of violence against women, as well as issue brochures, films and posters on the subject. The Ministry is also conducting a survey of the services available in that connection in the southern suburbs of Beirut and provides family violence training for community workers at its social and development services centres.

Question 7

The Ministry of Social Affairs (in cooperation with the National Commission for Lebanese Women and the Lebanese School for Social Training — Saint Joseph University) is implementing a capacity-building project for personnel at development service centres, with focus on the prevention of family violence, sensitization to the dangers of violence for the family and family members and use of alternative non-violent forms of communication. The Ministry is also working to

develop the capacities of community workers and spread the culture of combating violence against women. The Lebanese Government supports the efforts of non-governmental organizations involved in combating violence against women, including domestic violence, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and the competent security agencies (paras. 118.1 and 118.2 of the report). As for steps taken towards introducing a law on domestic violence, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Commission are both participating with non-governmental organizations in the efforts to consolidate proposals on domestic violence legislation, although these do not constitute a national plan.

It should also be noted that the Commission is to expand the purview of focal points in government departments and public institutions. To that end, it has organized several workshops and dispatched a number of focal points to participate in regional workshops at which violence was a main topic.

Trafficking in women and exploitation of prostitution

Question 8

The project to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in Lebanon being implemented by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities, with technical assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is aimed at strengthening judicial means of combating trafficking in persons through:

1. Legislative capacity-building in line with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;
2. Giving impetus to national and international networks, whether involving the judicial authorities, security agencies or civil society;
3. Training in the various stages of the legal process for personnel engaged in this area of work, in accordance with the above-mentioned Convention and Protocol.

A key part of the project involves studying the phenomenon of trafficking in persons with a view to using the findings as both the main point of reference and the basis for the implementation of various activities.

In the context of this project, the successes thus far achieved by the Ministry of Justice are as follows:

1. The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which became operational in 2006, is composed of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Directorate General of Internal Security Forces, the General Directorate of Public Security and a civil-society association, the aim being to assist implementation of the project;
2. Proposals have been submitted to the Minister of Justice with regard to the preparation of a legal study on Lebanon's penal legislation and the legislative measures required to bring Lebanese legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention and the Protocols supplementing it;
3. A field study on trafficking in persons in Lebanon is being prepared, with completion expected in December 2007;

4. A training course on ways of dealing with crimes relating to trafficking in persons was held at the Security Forces Institute in Warwar for 50 officers and 60 investigating sergeants from the Internal and General Security Forces.

Question 9

In view of the extraordinary and difficult conditions which the country is experiencing, Government intervention in the area mentioned is currently confined to the provision of financial assistance (via the Ministry of Social Affairs) to non-governmental organizations offering services (shelter, rehabilitation, etc.) to victims of prostitution (see para. 138 of the report). It should be noted that the vocational training and advancement services provided by the National Employment Office, which is a Government institution, are available to all, regardless of social status, family situation, or any other consideration (see paras. 261 and 264 of the report).

Question 10

There are no particular restrictions on women who wish to leave prostitution and seek alternative sources of livelihood. Consequently, the options available to them have not been specifically identified. Some rehabilitation efforts are referred to in question 9.

Participation in decision-making

Question 11

The final version of the draft electoral law, prepared by the National Commission on Parliamentary Electoral Law and submitted to the Cabinet, allocates a quota of 30 per cent for listed women candidates competing for 51 of the 128 seats in Parliament. Elections for those 51 seats are to be conducted on the basis of a proportional system. The draft law establishes no quota for women in respect of the 77 other seats, which will be contested in districts of various sizes on the basis of a majority system.

The draft law, however, was not approved by the Cabinet and the debate on the best electoral law — one on which all Lebanese can agree — has been reopened.

Question 12

No special actions or measures have been taken to encourage the nomination of women for parliamentary elections. The decrease in the number of women candidates can be attributed to the extreme political polarization that characterized the general elections of 2005 and to the decisive role that inclusion on a list of candidates played in determining candidates' fortunes. Indeed, the failure to be listed dissuaded many from standing, as the prospect of election was otherwise non-existent.

Question 13

No specific steps have been taken by the Government to encourage the media to provide equal opportunity to female and male candidates. The media in Lebanon are extremely numerous and diverse and have full freedom to discuss all subjects.

Question 14

No initiatives have been taken by the Government to accelerate women's participation in elected and appointed bodies, including the administrative and foreign services. There are general terms and conditions governing appointment to both of those services, which is competitive for both men and women. Educational opportunities are open to both boys and girls, between whom there are no educational disparities, and women also have the same opportunities as men to compete for public-sector jobs. Appointment to senior positions is either through promotion or outside appointment and is subject to the rule of parity between Christians and Muslims.

Education and stereotypes**Question 15**

A vision of the national strategy for education in Lebanon was submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister on 15 March 2007 in a document containing an assessment of public education at the pre-university level, which includes kindergarten and the first and second cycles of curriculum-based education, as follows:

I. Kindergarten

The weaknesses of the education system at the kindergarten level are typically:

1. Lack of consistency between the curricula used in kindergarten and in the first cycle of basic education;
2. Problems in implementing the kindergarten curriculum;
3. Low proportion of teachers holding an appropriate university degree for teaching at this level;
4. Use of buildings, equipment and teaching methods that are frequently unsuitable;
5. Incompatibility of the school environment with current trends in kindergarten education;
6. Inadequate staffing in both school and central administrations.

These weaknesses are particularly apparent in public kindergartens and in non-fee-paying private kindergartens.

II. Qualification and training of teachers in general education

In terms of teacher qualifications, public basic education faces serious problems in respect of:

1. The high proportion of teachers holding a secondary school certificate or below;
2. The lack of a specific contractual mechanism for teachers with degree qualifications and the lack of any requirement for such teachers to undergo teacher training.

By the same token, public secondary education also faces serious problems in respect of:

1. The ongoing recruitment of secondary school teachers with degree qualifications but no teacher training;
2. The contractual appointment of secondary school teaching staff following their completion of only a short teacher training course. Implementation of a wide-scale training project for teachers in public basic and secondary education began in 2004-2005.

III. Buildings and equipment

Public schools also face problems in terms of the availability, suitability, quality and functionality of buildings and educational equipment.

IV. Administration

Public school administration suffers from flaws in four areas:

1. The limited powers of administration and leadership assigned to head teachers;
2. The failure to include a university degree as a prerequisite for appointment to a position in educational administration;
3. The lack of compliance with the legal requirement for head teachers to complete a training course at the Lebanese University;
4. The absence of any performance assessment system, in addition to which no institution has yet been established to provide training for head teachers in educational leadership and administration and follow up their professional development.

V. Official examinations

Among the top 10 students awarded the intermediate school certificate, females outnumber males (accounting for 90 per cent of those students). The same is true for the baccalaureate certificate (where they account for 70 per cent of those students in general studies, 70 per cent in biology, 90 per cent in social studies and economics, and 100 per cent in arts and humanities). Females were more frequently at the top of their class than males in both public and private schools.

Females also have a higher pass rate than males at both the intermediate and baccalaureate levels. For example, 72 per cent of all females who took the final intermediate school exam passed, compared with only 64 per cent of their male counterparts.

Female academic excellence prevails throughout all six provinces of Lebanon and in all baccalaureate examination subjects: general studies, biology, arts and humanities, social studies and economics. For example, the pass rate by region for females in biology varies, between 78 and 91 per cent, while the pass rate for males in that same subject varies between 73 and 89 per cent.

The pass rate and academic performance of female students nevertheless remain higher in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (the female pass rate in intermediate school final examination in the Bekaa, for example, was 64 per cent, while in Beirut it exceeded 78 per cent). In general, the pass rate is higher in private schools than in public schools, particularly in general studies and biology.

Question 16

At the end of the pre-university stage of secondary education, students in all schools, including public schools, are divided into four streams, namely general studies, biology, social studies and economics and humanities. Students are streamed strictly in accordance with their preferences and academic abilities and not on the basis of their gender.

In the Lebanese University, which is the State university, students are admitted to its various departments or faculties on the basis of either competitive entry or their marks in the final examinations of the preparatory year in those departments. In both cases, papers are anonymous (candidates' names being masked with tape) and gender discrimination is therefore altogether impossible.

It is worth noting that a significant proportion of female students in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Lebanese University either work outside the home or are married homemakers (or both), since attendance in the majority of such faculties and departments is not mandatory (contrary to the case in faculties and departments of science, technology, engineering and business administration). As partial studies have shown, specialization in these fields is open to women and serves to improve their professional status and/or broaden their general knowledge, which is in turn used to enhance knowledge within their families and social circle in all areas (education, health, mental well-being, politics, economics, etc.).

Question 17

The departments of the Lebanese University adopt various measures for inclusion of the gender perspective in their curricula and subjects but have no overall policy to that end. Governmental and non-governmental organizations alike must focus efforts on lobbying their decision makers to adopt the inclusion of gender perspectives as a general policy. Those organizations were heavily occupied with emergency relief efforts immediately after the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in July 2006 and most are still fully engaged in dealing with the aftermath.

Question 18

As in other developing societies, traditional beliefs in Lebanon coexist with modern ideas about women, meaning those which more accurately reflect the evolving status, diverse roles and high social standing of the modern woman in our society. In both practice and theory, such beliefs are based on religious beliefs that are protected by the Lebanese Constitution. Given the political and security conditions in Lebanon during the past two years and the continued partisanship of the religious establishment in the political conflict, this issue is a lower-priority concern for the Government. It is therefore impossible to speak of explicit actions taken in that regard, much less their impact. Nonetheless, modern ideas about women are in fact spreading furiously in various grass-roots and erudite forms of cultural expression (the audio-visual and print media, the arts and other forms of public expression).

Question 19

The Lebanese Labour Act prohibits gender discrimination among workers with regard to type of work, amount of pay and other such rights. All workers also have recourse to the labour courts, without distinction and exempt from charge. Lebanese

law encourages collective employment contracts between employers and workers' unions, thereby diminishing scope for the exercise of any kind of discrimination between male and female workers, at least in sectors where labour relations are governed by collective employment contracts. Harmonization of family and domestic responsibilities, however, together with a better division of domestic and family responsibilities between men and women, can be achieved only gradually by promoting a culture of equality. It should be pointed out that partial studies indicate a trend among young university goes to accept that men should share in domestic chores.

Question 20

No change has yet occurred in the situation referred to in paragraph 200 whereby married women are regarded as single in matters of taxation and do not receive the same tax allowance as married men or heads of household.

Question 21

Pursuant to Decision No. 40/2006 of the Office of the Prime Minister, dated 10 April 2007, a committee by the name of the National Facilitation Committee was established to address the situation of female migrant workers in Lebanon. The members of the Committee were then designated pursuant to Minister of Labour Decision No. 44/1, dated 15 May 2007. This Committee is currently considering:

1. Use of a standard employment contract for female migrant workers;
2. A draft law or decree regulating the employment of such workers.

The Committee is still working on those issues.

Question 22

The National Facilitation Committee is tasked with following up the recommendations of the workshop on raising awareness of the situation of female domestic workers and with preparing and implementing projects designed to strengthen and protect the position of female workers, in coordination with relevant official agencies, the International Labour Organization and all concerned international and Arab organizations, national non-governmental committees and embassies.

All such matters remain under consideration owing to the current situation in Lebanon.

Health

Question 23

Distribution of health services:

There are 117 centres providing essential primary health-care services, including for reproductive health. The distribution of these centres is as follows:

<i>Beirut</i>	<i>Mount Lebanon</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>Nabatiyah</i>	<i>Bekaa</i>	<i>Total</i>
13	26	24	17	13	24	117

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Reproductive health programmes, First biannual report of 2007.

There is a health mapping project (Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Public Health, draft law on health mapping, article 21, 2004) which comprises a set of criteria for regulating the number, distribution and content of health services in Lebanon. The project is an essential tool for licensing and rationalizing consumption, guaranteeing awareness and quality, and filling gaps in the distribution of health services.

Question 24

The primary health care centres provide health services for all groups in the community. There are, however, centres of excellence which offer services to young males and females. Some centres are also due to be turned into youth-friendly centres offering advisory services.

Measures relating to clandestine abortion include awareness-raising and guaranteed family planning services aimed at reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies.

Question 25

The gender perspective is integrated into the national strategic plan for HIV/AIDS, Lebanon 2004-2009. The following examples can be given:

1. *Critical area of concern No. 1: Support, human rights and coordination*
 - Destigmatize shame and minimize discrimination;
 - Enhance partnership with women’s non-governmental organizations on unified programmes relating to AIDS.
2. *Critical area of concern No. 2: Protection*
 - Promote safe and healthy sexual behaviour among the entire population by:
 - Strengthening awareness of reproductive health principles, including sexual awareness, among married persons and families;
 - Providing good-quality condoms wherever they are available;
 - Publicize the importance of condom use for protection against AIDS among the sexually active population;
 - Increase awareness among young people (both in and outside the school environment) and incorporate awareness-raising activities into the school curriculum;
 - Prevent the spread of AIDS among groups at high risk of the disease (including sex workers) on account of their sexual behaviour.
3. *Critical area of concern No. 3: Treatment, care and support*
 - Increase access to reproductive health services that are user-friendly and easily comprehensible.

Rural and vulnerable women**Question 26**

Paragraph 280 of the report is meant to state that special legislation for the agricultural sector was promised in 1946 but that no such legislation has ever been developed.

Question 27

Both during and after the military operations in the Lebanon war of July and August 2006, the Lebanese State institutions, in conjunction with civil-society and international organizations, worked extremely hard to cope with the disastrous consequences of that war for the country. Various programmes and projects, most of them initially relief efforts, were also launched.

Investigations on the ground were then conducted to ascertain needs. Also identified were individuals and organizations working in the affected areas and capable of providing services, especially in the area of mental health and psychological and social support, in particular for young people. In that context, publications were circulated by schools and clubs in the southern suburbs of Beirut, which were badly damaged by the war in July 2006, with the aim of encouraging young people to seek such services. Sensitization courses on mental health have also been run for leading figures in local communities, school administrators, non-governmental organizations and families of students. In addition, training courses have been run for service providers in five of the relief centres attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs and for various non-governmental organizations working in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

On a further note, in the regions damaged by the war of July 2006, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with UNFPA and other international agencies, is currently implementing a number of awareness-raising and education projects on the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making during conflict, as well as on women's issues in general. The Ministry is also currently implementing projects aimed at raising awareness of violence against women. Moreover, it is conducting a survey on the situation and needs of women heads of household in those same war-torn regions, in addition to planning programmes for the establishment of social protection networks, including financial support, for such women.

Concerning Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which stresses the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all aspects of peace, security and public life, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, with UNFPA support, began implementing a project entitled "Women's empowerment: Peaceful action for security and stability" (WEPASS). The project is aimed at empowering women in the war-torn regions of Lebanon with a view to capacity-building in the main areas of concern covered in that resolution, specifically women's rights, gender-based violence, involvement in decision-making and economic empowerment. The regions benefiting from the project were selected using specific criteria based on the notion that women should be represented on municipal councils or in the management of comprehensive social service centres. The regions concerned are: the South province (Aytarun, Bint Jubayl, Dayr Mimas,

Duwayr, Ghaziyah, Kufayr, Nabatiyah and Yarin); the Bekaa province (Ra's Baalbek); and the Beirut province (southern suburbs/Ghubayri).

The project applies the participatory method in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases, having been launched on the basis of public meetings in selected towns through which women's needs and their idea of their own empowerment were evaluated. Local women's committees were established in cooperation with municipalities and comprehensive social service centres. These committees are now the essential link for communication with the local community and for the planning and implementation of activities. They also serve as the focal point for the project in that their individual and collective capacities are being built to provide scope for women's effective participation in decision-making, local development and the protection of women from gender-based violence.

Nationality

Question 28

In view of the critical political situation in Lebanon since the war of July 2006 and the repercussions of that war, there has been no opportunity for the achievement of any official progress (in terms of either governmental or legislative action) in the matter of granting right of nationality to the children of Lebanese women married to non-Lebanese.

Optional Protocol

Question 29

There is as yet nothing new to report concerning ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The same also applies to the position of the Lebanese State concerning the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.
