



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Distr.: General
18 February 2021
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic, English, French and
Spanish only

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

Seventy-ninth session

21 June–9 July 2021

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

**Replies of Lebanon to the list of issues and questions in
relation to its sixth periodic report***

[Date received: 17 February 2021]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



General context**(1)**

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women asks the Lebanese State to indicate whether it envisages adopting any strategy to address the impact of the continued political, economic and social instability and security challenges on the rights of women and girls, including their protection from gender-based violence. We should like to reaffirm that the Lebanese State has adopted several national strategies and plans in that regard, one of the goals of which is addressing the impact of those challenges on the rights of women and girls, including their protection from gender-based violence.

The Ministry of State for Women's Affairs¹ adopted the National Gender Equality Strategy (2017–2030) as its action plan on the basis of the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011–2021) and its action plans, one of the strategic objectives of which is taking action against all forms of violence against women and girls in all domains.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women, along with eight relevant official agencies, has reviewed and revised the implementation indicators for the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women and Girls and its action plan.²

In addition, the National Commission, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Women, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the interagency coordination unit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), contributed to the preparation and publication of periodic bulletins entitled "Gender Alert on COVID-19 Lebanon", with a view to highlighting the impact of the health crisis and its social, economic and security implications on gender equality, in particular with regard to protecting women from gender-based violence.³ These publications offer collated data on gender-based violence and include recommendations, in particular strategic ones, aimed at addressing the impact of ongoing crises.

The Committee asks Lebanon to indicate whether the relief and recovery programmes that the State put in place following the explosion at the port of Beirut in August 2020 include measures to guarantee that women are not subjected to discrimination, are protected against gender-based violence and are adequately represented in disaster response structures. In response, we should like to reaffirm that the Lebanese State, including all its specialized agencies that are responding to the catastrophic explosion, ensures that women are not subjected to discrimination when accessing support and that they are adequately represented in disaster response structures.

To that end, a social safety data centre has been established in the Office of the Prime Minister, under the Disaster Risk Management Unit. The Ministry of Social Affairs held awareness-raising courses at seven development service centres for girls and women affected by the Beirut explosion, in order to give them psychosocial support and spread some basic messages related to gender and protection against gender-based violence. Some 700 packages for women were distributed at those courses.

¹ This ministry was abolished.

² <https://nclw.gov.lb/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/VAW-NAP-indicators-2020.pdf>.

³ The bulletins can be found at <https://nclw.gov.lb/en/publications/>.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), launched its strategic plan for the protection of women and children in Lebanon (2019–2026). Work is under way to develop the implementation action plan for 2021–2023, which covers a range of key strategic areas, including:

- Strengthening enforcement of laws relating to the protection of children and women in Lebanon.
- Developing the Ministry’s institutional capacities (i.e., human resources, procedures, infrastructure and logistics).
- Developing services for the protection of children and women and ensuring the quality of such services.
- Effecting behavioural and social change to protect children and women from gender-based violence.

With regard to the adequate representation of women in disaster response structures, the Disaster Risk Management Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister, which is staffed by men and women, has been working in coordination with various provinces to provide shelter for persons who were forced to leave their homes. This work is being carried out in accordance with the early response plan.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women has participated in meetings of the Disaster Risk Management Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister, and it has sought to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated into the tools used to collect information.

The Lebanese Army inaugurated a forward emergency room to monitor the humanitarian and development situation of all social groups, including women, in particular those who are suffering as a result of the Beirut explosion and its aftermath. That room, in cooperation with international organizations and civil society organizations, assumed responsibility for humanitarian and rescue operations and set up telephone numbers for advice and enquiries.

Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on women’s rights and gender equality

(2)

Since the start of the pandemic, the National Commission for Lebanese Women has increased coordination with the relevant ministries and public agencies, in order to provide services to abused women and girls through a variety of channels (governmental and non-governmental) and means.

I. Coordination with the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Interior

The National Commission for Lebanese Women launched an awareness-raising campaign entitled “Quarantine protects you from the epidemic, 1745 protects you from domestic violence”.⁴ In addition, the National Commission has asked the Minister of Communications to order that calls to the hotline are free of charge.

II. Coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants has approved the request made by the National Commission for Lebanese Women to include, in the registration form for Lebanese persons wishing to return to Lebanon, a box for the children and foreign

⁴ 1745 is the telephone number that can be used to report cases of domestic violence to the Internal Security Forces.

spouses of Lebanese women, thereby enabling them to be included on the list of applicants for return to Lebanon.

III. Coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs

The National Commission for Lebanese Women coordinated with the Ministry of Social Affairs to ensure that gender is one of the items on the form that is used by the Ministry for providing assistance to the poorest families.

IV. Coordination with the Ministry of Justice

The Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation has begun filing complaints immediately for women who are victims of domestic violence. Filing a complaint with the Public Prosecutor is not required and women who cannot appear in person at the specialized judicial office can make their statements over the phone.

V. Monitoring the occurrence of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

The National Commission for Lebanese Women has prepared and sent forms to associations and civil society organizations that maintain hotlines to receive complaints of domestic violence, in order to determine the nature and frequency of the violence to which women and girls are subjected and to ascertain the geographical location where the acts of violence occur.

The National Commission, with technical assistance from United Nations agencies, has issued several editions of the “Gender Alert on COVID-19 Lebanon” bulletin, in English and Arabic.

VI. Coordination with civil society associations that operate shelters for vulnerable women and survivors of domestic violence

The National Commission for Lebanese Women held an expanded meeting with representatives of several civil society organizations and the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to review the challenges that those organizations face in protecting women from domestic violence, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the exceptional measures taken in response to the pandemic and the increase in the rate of violence; to ensure that those civil society associations are coordinating with government institutions; to identify urgent, medium- and long-term priorities; and to reduce domestic violence and provide services to the victims of such violence.

One of the most significant challenges facing those associations is their limited capacity to receive and quickly provide temporary and safe shelter for abused women, a state of affairs that is exacerbated by the fact that the Lebanese State itself does not have safe shelters; the difficult economic and financial situation of the associations; the high cost of providing medical treatment to abused women, in particular those who do not receive benefits from the national social security fund or who do not have identification documents; the slowness of judicial proceedings in domestic violence cases; and other factors.

Following are some of the most important recommendations made by those who participated in that meeting: a special fund to assist victims of domestic violence should be established; a special quarantine centre for abused women and girls should be established; and the associations’ protection teams should be exempted from decisions governing restrictions on movement.

Lebanon has put in place measures to ensure that COVID-19 crisis response and recovery efforts effectively address and are aimed at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls.

- Providers of services to victims of gender-based violence in the 12 safe spaces that are available at the development services centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs have changed their working methods. During periods of total lockdown, psychosocial support and case management services for survivors of gender-based violence were provided over the telephone after the relevant hotline numbers were disseminated, while ensuring that privacy and confidentiality requirements were satisfied. In addition, some informational sessions were delivered remotely.
- Intensive psychosocial support services were once again provided face-to-face in those safe spaces when they were reopened, immediately after public movement measures and restrictions had been eased.
- Groups of female volunteers shared information on gender-based violence services with women and girls in their communities. Awareness-raising leaflets and a series of publications on safety tips were printed.
- On 21 December 2020, Parliament adopted amendments to the Protecting Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence Act (No. 293/2014), in order to provide more effective protection for victims of violence. It also adopted an act on criminalizing sexual harassment and rehabilitating the victims of that offence and reintegrating them into society.
- The National Commission for Lebanese Women has communicated with the Office of the Prime Minister with a view to ensuring that the families of eligible Lebanese women are covered by government financial assistance, regardless of the nationality of their spouses.

The Committee requests information regarding the measures that are in place to guarantee the equal participation of women and girls in political and public life, decision-making, economic empowerment and service delivery.

- In January 2020, the Lebanese Prime Minister issued a decree establishing a national committee to monitor and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee is made up of key stakeholders, of which at least 30 per cent are represented by women, including leading figures. All the women on that committee played a vital role in the preparations for and the response to the epidemic.
- In March 2020, crisis operations rooms were inaugurated at the provincial level, and several prevention and awareness-raising campaigns were conducted that were aimed at the general public as well as critical and vulnerable groups, including women.
- Women lead many crisis operations rooms at the provincial and district level, where the coordination centres have played a leading role in ensuring that awareness-raising messages are directed at and reach all communities.

With regard to whether women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, the Lebanese State ensures that the measures and decisions it takes to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, such as restrictions on freedom of movement or physical distancing requirements, do not limit the ability of women and girls, including those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to have access to justice, shelters, education, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services.

- The measures imposed and decisions taken by the Lebanese Government to contain the coronavirus and the restrictions on freedom of movement apply to all Lebanese alike, regardless of their gender.

- The Ministry of Economy and Trade has prepared a draft law on small and medium-sized enterprises under which women-owned enterprises are completely exempted from any kind of tax.
- The Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children has developed a plan under which a series of public hearings on the theme of “Women’s economic security in crises” will be held. Those sessions, for which there is no precedent in the history of the Parliament, are aimed at determining whether there is a need to develop new legislation, amend existing legislation or take administrative measures to improve the economic situation of women. In keeping with the strong desire of the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children to pursue a participatory approach to decision-making, as emphasized in its strategic action plan for 2019–2022, the Committee will invite ministries, public institutions, civil society organizations, experts and the interested parties to participate and share their expertise and opinions, offer information and make proposals and recommendations, in order to ensure that the negative effects of the pandemic, as well as the other crises that Lebanon is experiencing, on women’s economic security are addressed in an effective manner. The Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children has prepared an electronic registration form for those who wish to participate, and it can be downloaded from the official website of Parliament throughout the hearings. Owing to the strict quarantine that has been imposed to control the spread of the coronavirus, the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children has been forced to postpone the hearings until health conditions permit.
- The Ministry of Social Affairs has rolled out several programmes aimed at building public sector workers’ capacity to integrate gender into programmes and policies. It has also organized courses aimed at developing the ability of women to run small and medium-sized businesses and so participate in the growth of their local communities. The Ministry offers many professional and vocational training services at its development services centres, and it runs projects to support women’s food processing cooperatives and help entrepreneurs start their own companies. In addition, the Ministry offers day-care services for a nominal fee at some 24 associations in all regions, in order to support working women.
- In accordance with Government decisions concerning public movement and measures adopted to protect against the coronavirus, the methods for carrying out activities have been modified and harmonized in order to ensure that marginalized and most vulnerable groups continue to benefit from the services provided while preserving the safety of beneficiaries.
- The Ministry of Public Health has set up a national committee to develop uniform national protocols for providing health-care, pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum services to women who have contracted or are suspected of having contracted the coronavirus. Committee members have issued national guidance in English, Arabic and French on clinical practices for care of pregnant women and their children before, during and after birth in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to standardizing health-care practices (both in the public and private sectors). More than 1,200 health-care providers have been trained on these guidelines.
- In response to requests for educational materials on COVID-19 from several influential actors in the Lebanese reproductive health sector, the committee developed materials that answer the questions that pregnant women and their families might have regarding protection, follow-up and sound health practices during the pandemic. These were posted on the social media platforms of

various influential actors, thereby enhancing the credibility of the information provided and avoiding duplication of effort.

- The Ministry of Justice, in line with the recommendations of WHO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has developed a plan to reduce overcrowding in prisons and places of detention in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan calls for the following:
 - (a) Maintaining a balance between the imperatives of public safety, justice, community security and the rights of the victim, and the adoption of objective, scientific criteria, in order to avoid discretionary decision-making.
 - (b) Taking both extraordinary and regular measures within the framework of the legal/judicial plan, in order to alleviate overcrowding, including some measures that are being used for the first time.
 - (c) Trial and release procedures for detainees have been accelerated by:
 - Allowing requests for release to be submitted and ruled on by telephone, fax and email (in cooperation with the Bar Associations of Beirut and Tripoli);
 - Authorizing investigating departments to conduct electronic remote interrogations. More than 4,000 such interrogations have been conducted. An electronic audio-visual system has been launched that avoids the need for detainees to appear or be interrogated in person and allows a detainee to appear before the investigating judge at short notice. This method is in accordance with the law and without prejudice to the detainee’s fundamental rights, as his/her consent is obtained in advance. The detainee’s attorney can appear with him/her, whether in the office of the investigating judge or at the detention centre, or remotely through an audio-visual link. The detainee is shown the transcript of the interrogation by video link before he/she signs the document at the place of detention. If the detainee is a minor, a social worker will be present with him/her.
 - Written requests are submitted to the competent judicial authorities through the Supreme Judicial Council, in order to ensure that trials are conducted promptly, maximum detention periods are observed and alternative means of adjudication are resorted to whenever possible.
 - Judicial investigations are initiated in cases of deviation from judicial norms, in particular with regard to the duration of detention and trial procedures.
 - (d) Convicts:
 - The Government submitted an accelerated bill, which it endorsed on 20 March 2020, under which convicts who have served their sentences would be exempted from paying fines and thus allowed to be released from prison. That bill is still being discussed in Parliament.
 - The penalty reduction committees have proposed that the interpretation of the relevant texts should be expanded so as to take into account exceptional humanitarian and health situations.
 - Certain categories of convicts (the elderly, the ill, those who have completed their sentences and are still in prison for non-payment of fines and those who have no more than three months left on their sentences) are being provided with assistance in preparing special pardon requests that are submitted to the President of the Republic, and a speedy decision is being taken in respect of such applications. In addition, the competent security and administrative authorities have adopted a form for submitting special pardon requests. This plan undoubtedly helps all detainees, including women, to gain access to justice by taking advantage of the mechanisms that it offers.

Reservations and the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention**(3)**

Draft and proposed laws concerning transfer of nationality and equality in marriage and family relations are still under consideration by the relevant Parliamentary committees. The National Commission for Lebanese Women is conducting studies that will pave the way for the drafting of a uniform civil status act that guarantees full gender equality.

The National Commission is also monitoring the progress of a bill pursuant to which the right of Lebanese women to transfer their nationality to their children would be recognized, and it has prepared a study, in cooperation with UN-Women, to marshal support for the bill's adoption.

Constitutional and legislative framework**(4)**

Paragraph C of the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution provides that the Lebanese Republic is founded on respect for fundamental rights and public freedoms, social justice and the equality of all citizens, without discrimination or preference, with regard to rights and obligations. Article 7 of the Constitution provides that all Lebanese citizens are equal before the law, that they enjoy civil and political rights on an equal basis, and that they are equally bound, without distinction, by public obligations and duties. Meanwhile, article 12 provides that all Lebanese citizens have the right to hold public-sector jobs, with no distinction save on grounds of merit and aptitude, in accordance with the conditions laid down by law.

The Ministry of Justice, in conjunction with the No More Violence and Exploitation organization and the National Commission for Lebanese Women, has submitted a bill that would amend the Protecting Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence Act (No. 293/2014) so as to ensure the greatest possible protection for women. The Lebanese Parliament approved most of these amendments at its session of 21 December 2020.

The adoption of an act concerning the criminalization of sexual harassment and the rehabilitation of victims would mark a very important step towards reducing the incidence of sexual violence against women, in particular those who are exploited by those who have physical, moral or formal authority over them, including in the workplace.

With regard to the investigation of sexual assault and rape cases, the rules that must be followed when investigating any criminal offence of any kind are set out in the Code of Criminal Procedure, and specific factors, such the victim's age and the type of offence, are taken into account. In that connection, it should be noted that Office of the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation had issued a circular ordering that there should be a chamber at the Beirut Courthouse where victims of sexual harassment and minors can testify before the competent judge without any judicial police present, in accordance with the relevant international standards.

The Committee, in its concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lebanon ([CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5](#), para. 18), asks whether articles 9 and 10 of the Constitution have been amended to ensure gender equality in the context of religious freedom and sectarian diversity. Those articles have yet to be amended.

In addition, the Committee requests detailed information on the implementation of the strategic action plan of the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children,

the priority objectives of which are to conduct a comprehensive review to ensure the compatibility of legislation with the provisions of the Convention and to amend or repeal all discriminatory laws against women.

The Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children has collaborated with various parliamentary committees, including the Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee, and with the National Commission for Lebanese Women and civil society organizations that are concerned with women's and human rights. Because of their efforts, Parliament adopted Act No. 204, which amended the Protecting Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence Act (No. 293/2014). It also adopted Act No. 205 on the criminalization of sexual harassment and the rehabilitation of victims, which was proposed by the Chairperson of the Committee on Women and Children. These laws were adopted at the legislative session of 30 December 2020. Their adoption is an important step in the development of legislation relating to the protection and empowerment of women.

The Committee on Women and Children and several of its members, many members of Parliament and the Office of the Prime Minister have also submitted several draft laws, including the following:

- Amendment of the Penal Code through the addition of an article broadening the definition of rape; amendment of the Labour Code, in order to ensure that both sexes receive equal pay for work of equal value; amendment of certain provisions of the Social Security Act, in order to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure equality between the sexes; amendment of the Overland Trade Act, in order to give women the authority to open bank accounts for their minor children; and a bill concerning travel of minors and equality between both parents with respect to issuance of passports and authorization for their minor children to travel (in order to reduce the incidence of husbands abducting children, taking them abroad and then depriving the mother of her children).
- Amendment of Act No. 572 (1996) withdrawing the reservation of Lebanon to article 9 of the Convention.
- Amendment of Act No. 572 (1996) withdrawing all reservations entered by Lebanon to the Convention.
- Bills concerning the marriage of minors.
- Amendment of article 25 of Act No. 422 (2002) on the protection of juvenile offenders and vulnerable juveniles to expand the definition of a minor to include those who do not have a record in the civil status register.
- Amendment of articles 503 and 504 of the Penal Code to ensure that they are consistent with the provisions of article 6, paragraphs 7 (b) and (f) of Act No. 293 (2014), pursuant to which the use or threat of violence in order to exercise marital rights is criminalized.
- With regard to the incorporation of a provision concerning a quota for women into the electoral law, most of the proposed bills are still being considered by parliamentary committees. Meanwhile, lobbying efforts are continuing, with a view to ensuring the adoption of such a provision.

Following are some of the activities that have been carried out by the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children:

- A workshop on gender-sensitive budget development was organized in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- Workshops on post-legislative scrutiny strategic planning in parliamentary committees were organized in collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
- Meetings and panel discussions were held with the National Commission for Lebanese Women and women's organizations on the issue of quotas for women, promoting the effective participation of women in politics, the Labour Code, the Social Security Act and discrimination against women in the law and in practice.
- Panel discussions were held in various regions on the obstacles and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs who own small and medium-sized enterprises. Workshops and conferences were held on the need for increased emphasis on technology and science in educational curriculums, as well as events on digital technology and the required infrastructure.

Access to justice (5)

The Beirut Bar Association provides pro bono legal representation to litigants with limited means by assigning lawyers to represent them, plead on their behalf and defend them. Lawyers are offering legal advice free of charge at specialized centres as part of a project to promote access to justice for the most disadvantaged groups in remote areas, which is being executed in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Bar Association has established a crisis unit made up of volunteer lawyers who provide pro bono legal support to those who have been affected by the explosion that occurred at the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020 and who do not have the financial means to hire a lawyer. Those volunteers are working out of centres scattered across the various neighbourhoods of Beirut and in its suburbs. The Bar Association has launched an electronic platform for this purpose. In addition, the Bar Association organized training courses and workshops for front-line workers who deal with women victims of violence, trafficking in persons and other crimes, in order to familiarize them with the Convention and the relevant laws and how they should be applied, as well as the standards that must be applied when dealing with victims.

The Ministry of Justice is taking part in a joint initiative on legal aid that it concluded on 4 September 2019 with UNDP and UNHCR. This initiative is being implemented with the support of the Canadian Government and in cooperation with the Beirut and North Bar Associations. This project provides various legal assistance tools and services and promotes justice for juveniles under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice. It is also in line with the UNDP Action Plan for Lebanon 2017–2020, which was formally adopted after the Lebanese Government gave its approval in 2017. In that connection, pilot projects to provide legal aid are being implemented. Legal aid offices, which function in accordance with a uniform code of conduct and operating procedures, will be opened to provide legal support to marginalized and most disadvantaged groups, including, of course, Lebanese, foreign and stateless women and girls.

Other measures to facilitate meaningful access to justice, in particular for women, are set out in circular No. 68/*sad*/2020, which was issued in April by the Office of the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation. In that circular, judicial police are instructed to file a report immediately in all domestic violence cases, even when the offence is not cognisable.

National machinery for the advancement of women

(6)

The National Commission for Lebanese Women is an official institution that was established in 1998 by Act No. 720 and is attached to the Office of the Prime Minister. Its members are appointed by decree for a three-year term and are charged with promoting the status of women in society. The General Assembly of the National Commission is made up of at least 18 members and a maximum of 24 members. Female members of Parliament and ministers are considered to be advisory members of the National Commission for the duration of their terms. The executive bureau of the National Commission comprises eight members, who are elected by the General Assembly from among its membership. Members of the National Commission serve on specialized permanent or ad hoc committees that are responsible for monitoring the progress of projects or programmes that are being implemented. The operations of the National Commission are managed by a 12-person team that is made up of women experts in gender, project development and management and public policy development from a gender perspective, supported by an administrative technical team. Those experts work with the members of the National Commission in order to ensure that it is able to fulfil its mandate under the law. This mandate includes advising the Office of the Prime Minister and other public administrative bodies and institutions, liaising and coordinating with various agencies, institutions, private and civil bodies, and Arab and international bodies and organizations, and performing operational functions, which include developing strategies and plans, implementing programmes and activities, preparing studies, conducting research, and organizing conferences and workshops.

Pursuant to the law by which the National Commission was established, its operations are financed by the funds allocated for that purpose every year in the budget of the Office of the Prime Minister and by assistance and contributions from local and foreign non-governmental organizations and international organizations. For 2020, the amount allocated in the budget of the Lebanese State was 658,000,000 Lebanese pounds.

To date, the budgeted amount has not yet been transferred to National Commission. However, it has received the funds that were allocated in the 2018 general budget and part of the amount that was allocated for the first two quarters of 2019. It is awaiting payment of the outstanding government contributions for 2019 and 2020.

In addition, various technical projects developed in cooperation with international agencies and funded by international organizations and United Nations agencies help the National Commission to carry out its work as the institutional national authority responsible for women's affairs, gender equality and incorporating a gender perspective into the policies and operations of public agencies.

The National Commission is preparing to draft a new national strategy this year for the period 2022–2030, in cooperation with UNDP, public sector partners and civil society partner organizations, and with technical assistance from the relevant United Nations agencies.

Detailed information on the implementation of each of the 12 strategic objectives of the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011–2021) can be found in the report on the second national action plan for its implementation.⁵

⁵ <https://nclw-applications.com/pdf/Report%202019.pdf>.

Please follow the link below to see a graphical presentation of the most significant relevant data, up to 2019.⁶

With regard to the work done by gender focal points in ministries and various other official institutions in order to integrate effectively a gender perspective into policies and programmes, the National Commission for Lebanese Women held an expanded meeting with gender focal points in September 2020 on the theme of integrating gender into public programmes and policies in view of the prevailing situation. In the course of the meeting, the participants were familiarized with the national action plan for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and its implementation; reviewed the responsibilities of gender focal points, the challenges posed by the current situation and some encouraging initiatives; and discussed how to coordinate efforts to activate the network and the steps that must be taken to institutionalize the role of gender focal point in official agencies and ministries.

At the same time, the National Commission for Lebanese Women convened several meetings of the national coordinating committees concerned with combating gender-based violence, promoting women's participation in political and public affairs, the role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and the participation of women in security, defence and the economy. The National Commission has established working groups on the measures taken to implement the national action plan for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and the gender focal points appointed by the various agencies have participated in these working groups.

Following are some of the issues and themes that the most important of those working groups addressed:

- Combatting trafficking in persons through the law and in practice;
- Surveying and assessing shelters for female victims of gender-based violence;
- Adoption of uniform definitions of the various types of violence;
- Assessing the obstacles faced by women in public and political life and increasing women's participation in parliamentary and municipal elections.
- Conducting a national survey to identify opportunities, needs and gaps in relation to the economic empowerment of women.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women wants to establish a network of gender focal points in the municipalities.

Following are the main objectives of the executive action plan for 2018–2020 of the National Commission:

- Amend laws and adapt legislation and policies in order to promote gender equality, in accordance with the International Bill of Human Rights and international conventions and frameworks aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls.
- Promote women's participation in political life and decision-making processes and in elected councils at all levels.
- Enhance national capacity to integrate gender into policies, budgets, programmes and projects.
- Revitalize and strengthen the role of the National Commission for Lebanese Women as a national authority.

⁶ <https://nclw-applications.com>.

Temporary special measures**(7)**

Act No. 61 (2017) amended the Municipalities Acts with the addition of a clause regarding the right of a married woman whose personal status records have, by virtue of her marriage, been transferred to another municipality to stand as candidate for the municipal council in the electoral rolls of which she was registered prior to her marriage. It is no longer possible to remove a woman from a municipal council following her marriage.

In recent years, the proportion of women who hold public office or serve in the judiciary, the diplomatic corps and the military, internal security and public security forces has increased, and six women held ministerial positions in the previous Government.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women has considered and proposed several draft laws concerning the incorporation of a quota for women into the Parliamentary and Municipal Elections Act.

A participatory gender equality audit was developed in conjunction with two Lebanese political parties. A team from the National Commission has finished auditing one of the parties and found that it needed to increase the number of women that it appointed to political positions and to serve in trade unions, committees and delegations.

Stereotypes and harmful practices**(8)**

In 2020, the National Commission for Lebanese Women Affairs, as part of its partnership with the Women Empowered for Leadership programme run by the Hivos organization, prepared a study in conjunction with the Institute for Media Studies and Training of the Lebanese American University entitled “Gender in media: representations of women and men in Lebanese advertising” in which a number of advertisements are analysed and the representations of women and men in those advertisements are contrasted. The study revealed and documented problems with regard to the stereotypical and traditional manner in which women and men are depicted. We hope to use the results of this study, which documented these problems, to develop programmes and plans for promoting gender equality in Lebanese advertising. The results of this detailed study will also be used to develop courses on changing stereotypes of women in culture and the media that are aimed at male and female students, as outlined in the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon and its detailed action plans.

The appointment of women to serve as the Ministers of Defence, Justice, Labour and Information in the current caretaker Government and the appointment of a woman to serve as the Minister of the Interior in the previous Government has helped to bring about a shift in public opinion towards women, as it has become commonplace for women to lead important ministries.

The Ministry of Culture has established libraries in women’s prisons, one of which has opened. In addition, the Ministry has provided material and moral support to creative and artistic workers, including, in particular, women involved in such endeavours. Moreover, the Ministry completed a baseline assessment aimed at determining women’s participation in cultural life and identifying the obstacles that prevent them from participating actively or deny them the opportunity to participate in cultural life. The Ministry encourages creative individuals in all cultural endeavours to make women the focus of their creative work, in order to mitigate the

effect of the male-oriented approach of families to raising children, and to highlight the progress that they have made in public life and all other endeavours.

**Gender-based violence against women
(9)**

Parliament amended the Protecting Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence Act (No. 293/2014) and the amended Act was published on 1 July 2021 in the first issue of the *Official Gazette*.

The amended Act contains several welcome changes on more than one level.

(a) The concept of domestic violence within the family was expanded to include an act that occurs in the course of married life.

(b) Psychological and economic violence are criminalized and a penalty for the perpetrator of such violence is specified.

(c) With regard to litigation, domestic violence cases must now be handled by a specialized public prosecutor, investigating judge, single criminal judge, appeals court and criminal court.

(d) Under the law, judges in charge of urgent cases can directly instruct judicial police officers to execute the protection orders that they issue.

(e) The law provides that a victim's children who are 13 years of age and under must be removed from the home if the victim is removed from the home, regardless of the age of custody, which may vary from one religious community to another. Minors now have the right to file a request for protection directly with the competent court, without obtaining the permission of their guardian.

(f) In order to ensure that protection orders are fully effective, the penalty for violating such orders was heightened to one year's imprisonment and a maximum fine of twice the minimum wage, or one of the aforementioned measures. If the offender uses violence, the penalty is imprisonment for a maximum of one year and a fine that is no more than four times the minimum wage. The penalty is doubled if the offence is repeated.

In addition to the measures set out in the Act that was published in the *Official Gazette*, all domestic violence complaints reported to the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces are being collected in a consolidated database. The data collected includes the age and nationality of the victim and the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. A computer program is used by all relevant actors to record complaints. This program is linked to the General Directorate's main server, which houses the consolidated database.

Specific principles are followed when dealing with the crimes of sexual assault or rape. Each case is addressed in a responsive or proactive manner. These crimes are investigated in accordance with the established procedures for investigating offences that are cognisable or otherwise, as set out in the Code of Criminal Procedure and its amendments. Great care is taken to ensure that victims' dignity and health are safeguarded and that they are given psychosocial support. In addition, the State strives assiduously to adhere to the additional guidelines pertaining to child victims and survivors of sexual assault. Foreign victims of sexual assault are referred to UNHCR and given support. Great emphasis is placed on seeking medical and psychological care in order to protect the physical and mental health of survivors and safeguard their lives. Victims are informed of the procedures to be followed regardless of their sex or nationality.

Persons who deal with victims of sexual assault or rape must respect the victim and maintain strict professional confidentiality, and they must contact specialized medical centres where the victim can receive psychological and psychosocial support free of charge, if they wish to receive such support. Assaults and rapes committed by members of the security forces are investigated at the request of the military or civilian courts, depending on the circumstances of each case.

(10)

The Committee has requested information on the steps taken to collect data, disaggregated by age, nationality and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, on the number of reported cases of violence against women and the number of prosecutions, convictions and sentences imposed on perpetrators.

- It is not possible to give accurate statistics on such cases, which are increasing steadily because of the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, owing to the fact that court registries do not have automated systems.
- Data on the number of cases of violence against women are collected by civil society associations, and the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces keeps track of the number of reported cases of such violence.

The Committee wishes to know whether any measures have been taken to ensure that all allegations of sexual assault and rape are duly investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned, that victims have access to appropriate redress, including compensation, and that all allegations of assault and rape by members of the security forces are investigated by an independent judicial authority.

- Under the Sexual Harassment Act, both physical and psychological harassment are punishable, and no prior consent is required in order to prosecute the accused. The punishment imposed is determined by who the perpetrator is, and it is heightened if there is a dependent relationship or if the act occurs in an official or military agency and other places specified by law.
- Survivors of violence can bring cases against their attackers in accordance with the Protecting Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence Act, which is the specific law that applies to such cases. It should be noted that the courts have not hesitated to issue protection orders for women since the adoption of that Act.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

(11)

The Ministry of Justice has drafted a bill amending Act No. 164 (2011) concerning the criminalization of trafficking in persons. Under the proposed amendment, this offence would become punishable under a special, separate law, pursuant to which a national anti-trafficking in persons authority would be established. The bill will be submitted to the Cabinet after the formation of the new Government. The bill addresses the loopholes in the current law, the most important of which are the provisions concerning assistance and protection in relation to trafficking in persons, dealing with and protecting child witnesses, fair and effective punishment of traffickers, and treating children with sensitivity.

The General Directorate of Internal Security Forces has developed a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in persons and sexual assault, in particular offences committed against women and children, and to provide support to victims. The strategy consists of the following components: prevention; prosecution, investigation and punishment; providing assistance and protection to victims; and monitoring and continuous follow-up.

The General Directorate of General Security has inaugurated a complaints hotline. In addition, it works with civil society organizations to provide services and protection to victims of trafficking in persons, including safe houses. Following immediate and rapid intervention, the victim is placed in a safe house on the orders of the competent court. The alleged victim is given the opportunity to return to her country, and a lawyer is authorized to complete processing her case with the competent court. In some cases, the authorities coordinate with the party who will receive the victim in her country, in particular when an artist is involved. Prior to investigation, the alleged victim is informed of all her rights and obligations.

The scheme that regulates the entry of artists into the country has not been amended. The entry of such persons into Lebanon is still governed by the Aliens Act of 1962. The General Directorate of General Security has taken several measures and issued many circulars aimed at protecting this category of workers from being exploited in prostitution or becoming victims of trafficking. To that end, the General Directorate of General Security has instituted a system under which artists arriving in the country are interviewed by specialists from the General Directorate of General Security, who inform them of their rights and obligations, familiarize them with conduct that indicates they are being exploited and provide them with a 24-hour hotline number. A special complaints system has been inaugurated and patrols now visit their workplaces in order to identify cases of exploitation. These measures are part of an early warning system that is designed to prevent persons from becoming victims of trafficking in persons.

Participation in political and public life (12)

Promoting women's participation in political life and increasing the number of women in decision-making positions requires a review of the relevant articles of Constitution and the election laws, and the manner in which political parties develop their lists. The National Commission for Lebanese Women has worked with political parties to develop policy papers aimed at enhancing women's access to decision-making positions. It is also helping them to conduct participatory gender audits using the methodology adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Meanwhile, several bills on parliamentary elections proposed by a number of parliamentarians are currently being discussed in Parliament. Under some of the proposed laws, 20 seats out of 128 allocated for voters living in Lebanon would be set aside for women, thereby enabling them to participate in political life and be involved in decision-making. Other proposed laws include provisions requiring that at least 30 per cent of the persons on the party list be males or females, and that the list of candidates be structured such that the names of male and female candidates are presented in alternation. Some of the proposed laws call for the adoption of a quota in respect of nominees for party lists.

The competent authorities, including the National Commission for Lebanese Women, parliamentary committees and official agencies, aided by women's organizations, are studying temporary special measures that are in line with article 4 of the Convention. One of the measures being considered is the adoption by Parliament of an election law that would introduce a system of quotas aimed at reaching a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women and would support the campaigning of women candidates for elected positions.

Education (13)

According to the comprehensive gender study on textbooks prepared by the Centre for Educational Research and Development for 2012–2013, the following recommendations continue to be implemented:

- A gender-sensitive approach is being used to plan educational policies and its concepts are being integrated into curriculums, textbooks and teacher training plans.
- No textbook is published until the Centre has reviewed it.
- A gender review is now required in order to approve any educational resource or textbook used in private schools that is submitted to the Centre for evaluation and certification.
- The authors of textbooks used at the national level must be familiar with international instruments relating to human rights and the elimination of gender-based discrimination. They must also be familiar with all developments in the situation of women in Lebanon and around the world.
- Equality between the sexes in terms of numbers and responsibilities must strictly observed, including with regard to the authors who are producing textbooks for all educational levels and all subjects, and the characters that figure in texts and illustration. The variety of essential roles that both men and women play within the framework of Lebanese values must be highlighted, including in politics, productive activities, social life, reproduction, creative endeavours and leadership. They must not be confined to stereotypical or traditional roles.
- Textbooks on various topics written by Lebanese and foreign women must be used.
- Those who develop curriculums and textbooks in all subject matters for first- and second-year primary school students must receive basic training on gender and the distinction between gender and biological sex, gender-sensitive reading skills and textual analysis of textbooks, and how to write gender-sensitive textbooks that are free of gender stereotypes.
- Following are some of the measures that have been adopted: training books on adopting a gender perspective in education have been issued, training courses on gender have been organized for curriculum developers and textbook authors, and the Centre for Educational Research and Development has added an item on equitable gender representation by subject matter to the resource assessment mechanisms that it uses to approve textbooks used by Lebanese private schools.

Employment (14)

The Labour Code of Lebanon in general does not discriminate between men and women, whether in respect of the type of job that they can hold, the seniority of the position or wages. Official agencies and civil society organizations, with the support of international organizations, are developing campaigns to raise awareness of the rights enshrined in the Labour Code.

Parliament adopted Act No. 205 on the criminalization of sexual harassment and the rehabilitation of victims. This Act includes provisions governing investigation, prosecution and punishment.

Official agencies, the National Commission for Lebanese Women and civil society organizations, with the support of international organizations, are developing awareness-raising campaigns and training workshops on the new law and how to implement it. In addition, they are establishing clear policies for companies and institutions on preventing and punishing sexual harassment, and they are drafting legislative decrees to implement this law in the workplace.

The Ministry of Labour has set up a hotline number (1740) to receive all complaints.

Health (15)

The Ministry of Public Health, in partnership with UNICEF and the American University of Beirut, conducted a study to explore the factors that prevent Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 18 from accessing primary health-care services in Lebanon, including clinical management of rape, mental health and reproductive health services, and the factors that help them to access such services, with a focus on adolescent girls at high risk of gender-based violence.⁷ The results will be used to improve and develop programmes and services aimed at adolescent girls in relation to health, nutrition and prevention of gender-based violence. In addition, the results will provide evidence that will help the Ministry of Public Health to develop health strategies that meet the needs of adolescent girls.

The laws of Lebanon prohibit abortion. Under articles 539–546 of the Penal Code, it is a punishable offence for a pregnant woman to commit the act of abortion on herself or for another person to do so, with or without her consent, or to cause abortion to occur. It is also a punishable offence to sell, promote or facilitate the use of means of abortion. The penalty is heightened if the perpetrator is a doctor, surgeon or a pharmacist, or an employee thereof.

On the other hand, article 545 of the Penal Code provides that a woman who commits the offence of abortion to preserve her honour can cite that as a mitigating circumstance and be eligible for a reduced penalty. The same mitigating circumstances can be cited by a person who commits the crime of abortion to preserve the honour of one of his or her female relatives up to the second degree. Being pregnant might be a source of shame for the woman, in particular if she became pregnant as the result of an illicit sexual relationship, or because she was raped or was artificially inseminated without her consent. Therefore, the woman might turn to abortion in order to preserve her honour. There are no official statistics on abortion. However, according to the report of the National Committee on Maternal Mortality, there are no records of any mother dying as a result of abortion in 2019 and 2020.

The Centre for Educational Research and Development has developed a range of activities on school health and the stages of adolescent growth that address reproductive health in a general manner. In order to continue educating students about reproductive health, the Centre intends to add this topic to the educational curriculum when it launches the curriculum update project.

Refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women (16)

The General Directorate of General Security does not forcibly return refugees, in keeping with the policy of the Lebanese State of not deporting refugees or any

⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/reports/adolescent-girls-access-primary-health-care-services-lebanonbarriers-and-facilitating>.

person who needs protection, while maintaining the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees, on the one hand, and irregular migrants, on the other.

There has been no change in the position of the Lebanese Government, as outlined in paragraphs 42 and 43 of the sixth periodic report of Lebanon, with regard to (a) developing a legal framework for asylum-seekers and refugees that explicitly includes gender-related claims as grounds for asylum, and (b) reviewing the 1962 law regulating entry into, stay in and exit from Lebanon, so as to distinguish between the protection and other needs of asylum-seeking and refugee women, on the one hand, and those of migrant women, on the other.

Women, peace and security (17)

The National Commission for Lebanese Women works in close coordination with ministries, official agencies, civil society organizations and the relevant United Nations agencies to monitor execution of the national plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Accordingly, a national facilitating committee was formed. Its first meeting was held on 1 July 2020 at the Grand Serail and was attended by representatives from the ministries and agencies that are responsible for implementing that plan. In addition, observers for international organizations that are monitoring the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) attended the meeting. The first meeting was devoted to setting priorities and adopting the programme of work up to and including 2021. The governance structure of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) can be accessed by following the link in the footnote below.⁸ The related work plan for 2020–2021 that was adopted by ministries, institutions and public agencies can be accessed by following the link below.⁹

Please refer to paragraph 6 of the present document for information on the specialized national coordinating committees that have been established to combat gender-based violence and promote the active participation of women in security, defence, economic life, decision-making, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Those committees have generated working groups that include, in addition to the relevant agencies, civil society actors and the United Nations agencies that support them.

It should be noted that a national coordinator has been appointed to oversee execution of the national work plan. This coordinator is supported by experts and programme managers from the National Commission. The relevant United Nations agencies have provided the technical assistance needed to develop oversight mechanisms for the work plan and to conduct a technical review of completed activities.

In the light of the severe financial crisis in Lebanon, financial, logistical and technical support from United Nations agencies and international organizations is urgently needed to support the administrative and institutional structure that has been set up by the National Commission to follow up on the implementation of the work plan.

⁸ <https://nclw.gov.lb/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NSC-1325-Eng-Governance-Structure.pdf>.

⁹ <https://nclw.gov.lb/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Work-Plan-NAP-1325-En-1.pdf>.

**Women migrant domestic workers
(18)**

On 8 September 2020, the Ministry of Labour issued a decree concerning the standard employment contract for domestic workers. However, that contract does not abolish the *kafalah* (sponsorship) system.

The employment contract includes 15 provisions that spell out the rights and obligations of the parties, namely, the employer and the worker. The contract contains many other provisions that address a range of matters, including the tasks that must be carried out by both parties, remuneration, the working environment, safety, occupational health, health care and the right of the worker to freedom of movement, to communicate with others and to take leave. Other parts of the contract govern its renewal and termination and the settlement of disputes. On 21 September 2020, attorneys for the Syndicate of Owners of Domestic Worker Recruitment Agencies filed a lawsuit against the Lebanese State and the Ministry of Labour (case No. 24340/2020) before the State Shura Council, which decided to suspend implementation of the minister's decision because of fundamental irregularities.

However, there has been a positive development with regard to the sponsorship system. In February 2021, the General Directorate of General Security issued a decision prohibiting employers from filing criminal flight complaints against female workers when they leave sponsors' homes, as such complaints have no legal foundation. The employer must now report that the domestic worker has left the employer's home by filing an administrative notification form at a General Security station. By taking this routine administrative measure, the employer waives any civil responsibility arising from the employment relationship. Meanwhile, the General Directorate of General Security has been prohibited from using in all official records any term that does not accord with the law or human rights, such as "flee" or "escape", when referring to the fact that a worker has left the sponsor's home. Those terms have been replaced with the expression "left the workplace".¹⁰

With regard to the steps taken to extend the scope of the Labour Act to foreign workers, the Ministry of Labour has set up a hotline (1741) to receive complaints from domestic workers, in particular those who are victims of exploitation and violence. The Ministry has also been studying the possibility of amending the Labour Act in order to enshrine the rights of domestic workers and to expand its scope to include domestic and agricultural work.

**Rural women
(19)**

The Ministry of Agriculture has been integrating gender into its agricultural policies, programmes and projects. It also includes information on gender in agricultural statistics. Justice and gender equality is one of the guiding principles of the Lebanon National Agricultural Strategy 2020–2025, one of the aims of which is to establish equality between women and men in sustainable agricultural and food production and rural development. The Strategy is aimed at all groups, without discrimination. The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with international organizations, is implementing several agricultural programmes and projects that are primarily aimed at rural women, such as the GEMAISA 2 project, and supporting women's cooperatives and associations in the food and agriculture sector in Lebanon, such as the Rural Female Pioneers programme.

¹⁰ For further information, please refer to the decision issued by the General Directorate of General Security at <https://www.general-security.gov.lb/ar/posts/324>.

It is expected that a committee for gender equality in agriculture and food will be established in the Ministry of Agriculture. This committee will be made up of decision makers, the Minister, general managers and the gender focal points of the directorates and institutions of the Ministry of Agriculture. Its tasks will include establishing a mechanism for integrating gender, raising awareness of the concept of equality and monitoring the indicators established for this goal.

Many staff members of the Ministry and regional institutions and agencies participated in awareness-raising sessions on gender equality and means of preventing all forms of discrimination.

In addition, a project will be implemented in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop a gender-sensitive national budget and realize the second Sustainable Development Goal (ending hunger). The most important outcome of this project will be to set and consolidate the total gender-sensitive budget allocated for Sustainable Development Goal 2.

The designation of gender focal points in the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI), the Green Plan and the General Directorate of Cooperatives, as well as the workshops that have been organized and the training that has been offered, have helped to entrench the concepts of justice and equality in the work of those institutions, in line within the policy adopted by the Ministry of integrating gender into its policies, programmes, projects and institutions.

The General Directorate of Agriculture distributes in-kind agricultural grants to farmers and is developing a farmer support programme to ensure that they have access to agricultural resources (fertilizer, medicines, seed, seedlings, etc.) It estimated that at least 10 to 15 per cent of the beneficiaries will be women. Another project to provide emergency assistance to farmers and ensure that the most vulnerable farmers have access to agricultural resources is being implemented in cooperation with FAO. The proportion of women farmers targeted is approximately 30 per cent.

With regard to marketing products locally and opening international markets, the Ministry of Agriculture is opening overseas markets by organizing fairs for Lebanese wine, olive oil and delicacies, all of which are sectors that employ the largest number of rural women in production.

In order to strengthen the role of rural women and promote gender equality, the Rural Women Pioneers project is being implemented by FAO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the General Directorate of Cooperatives and General Directorate of Agriculture, and with funding from the Canadian Government.

More than 250 women's cooperatives, associations and groups, as well as displaced women, have benefitted from increased community awareness of women's rights and roles as a result of the campaigns that have been organized to raise awareness of gender equality and to prevent gender-based violence. In addition, a gender assessment of the food and agriculture sector has helped guide women to employment opportunities. Women's cooperatives and associations have benefitted from training on management of cooperatives, business administration and other relevant projects by enrolling their members in agricultural business administration schools.

The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Affairs, within the framework of the project on gender equality in rural development, organized several workshops in the Shuf, Baalbek, Hirmil and Akkar to raise awareness of women's rights and the medical services that the Ministry of Social Affairs provides to women and children. In addition, women's rights organizations provided information on how victims of domestic violence can access protection.

The scope of the Labour Code does not extend to female workers in the agricultural sector. Female and male farmers benefit from social protection. One of the most important programmes of the Lebanon National Agricultural Strategy 2020–2025 is the programme to develop a social protection system for most vulnerable farmers, agricultural workers and producers, and fishermen. In addition, the Ministry has inaugurated the agricultural register, which will allow an actuarial study of farmers to be conducted and make it possible for them to receive social benefits. In addition, farmers will be able to benefit from the offerings available through the social safety net programme, which is operated with the assistance of the World Food Programme and is aimed at small farmers who are in greatest need of assistance.

Marriage and family relations (20)

I. Parliamentary activity

- The strategic action plan developed by the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children includes several measures aimed at addressing voluntary civil marriage, discrimination against women in personal status laws and child marriage. However, progress on implementing those measures has been slow. This can be attributed, on the one hand, to the sensitive nature of those issues and the attitudes of religious and sectarian leaders, and, on the other hand, to the successive crises that Lebanon has experienced and the prevailing situation in the country, which continues to make it impossible to hold meetings with the relevant parties.
- Several sessions were held in the Parliament to discuss a bill that would set a minimum age for marriage and a bill on civil and social rights for the children of Lebanese mothers.

II. With regard to studies that will pave the way for the development of draft laws, the National Commission for Lebanese Women is following up on various legal studies and measures that are aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in Lebanon, including:

- The National Commission is planning to conduct studies that will pave the way for the drafting of a unified civil status code that guarantees full equality between women and men. One of those studies will compare the personal status laws of France, Cyprus and Tunisia. In addition, a comparative study will be conducted of the drafts concerning this matter that have been submitted by several actors.
- The National Commission is following up on a bill that would see Lebanese women given the right to transfer their nationality to their children. To that end, the National Commission is continuing its efforts with parliamentarians and civil society partners, and it is preparing a study in cooperation with United Nations agencies in order to gain support for the passage of the bill, which it had drafted.

With regard to administrative measures, the Minister of Education, at the suggestion of the National Commission for Lebanese Women, issued decision No. 401/*mim*/2020 on 7 September 2020. In that decision, the Minister requests the officials of all public and private primary and secondary schools and institutes to give due attention to the registration of pupils who are the children of Lebanese women married to foreigners and to treat those pupils as Lebanese students and provide places for them.

**Climate change and disaster risk reduction
(21)**

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the requirements of climate change adaptation and the Sendai Framework, a gender perspective has been integrated into the disaster risk reduction strategy, which is expected to be finalized in 2021. This is evident in the overall vision that informs the disaster risk reduction strategy, as well as in the related policies, programmes and projects that have been developed and implemented. The strategy contains several sections on gender equality and participation in decision-making, and calls for data collected to disaggregated by sex.

It should be noted that women are represented at various levels in the National Technical Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.

The Ministry of Environment and the National Commission for Lebanese Women have developed standard operating procedures to help ministries integrate gender into their policies and strategies. Those procedures provide clear guidance on how to integrate gender into planning and climate reporting, including collection of relevant data and information. Accordingly, gender considerations have been incorporated into the solid waste draft strategy of the Ministry of the Environment at the general level and into related staff capacity-building activities.
