



# BREAKING THE POLITICAL GLASS CEILING: ENHANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LEBANON

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INTRODUCTION

Over sixty years passed since women in Lebanon gained their suffrage rights in 1953,<sup>1</sup> yet only six deputies out of the 128 who were elected into Parliament in Lebanon’s most recent parliamentary elections, held on 6 May, 2018, were women – a staggering 4.6%.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the proportion of women in ministerial positions in 2016 was reported to be 3.4%.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, Lebanon ranked 137th among 144 countries – and 11th among 14 Arab countries – on the Gender Gap Index.<sup>4</sup> Such figures and indicators demonstrate that Lebanese politics continue to be an androcentric realm where women are underrepresented.

Women’s inability to break through the political glass ceiling in Lebanon has generally been attributed to macro-structural factors, including the Lebanese confessional system,<sup>5</sup> the pervasiveness of political familism,<sup>6</sup> and clientelism, with the *Zu’ama* system as one of its mechanisms.<sup>7</sup> It can be argued that, together, these three factors contribute to the widening of the gender gap in two ways.

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1 Lebanon Support, “Women’s Achievements in Lebanon,” Website, *The Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, April, 2017, <https://civil-society-centre.org/gen/women-movements-timeline/4939> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

2 Lebanon elects six women to Parliament,” Website, *The Daily Star*, 9 May 2018, available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-Elections/2018/May-09/448633-lebanon-elects-six-women-to-parliament.ashx> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

3 “Lebanon – Proportion of women in ministerial level positions,” Website, *Trading Economics*, available at: <https://tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/proportion-of-women-in-ministerial-level-positions-percent-wb-data.html> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

4 The Gender Gap Index measures gender equality throughout the world based on different indicators, including rates of economic participation, employment opportunities, access to education, access to health care, and political achievement. See: “Lebanon filled about 60% of the gender gap but has regressed from 2016,” Website, *Annahar*, 13 November 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2MfPBkV-2016> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

5 Confessionalism became enshrined in Lebanese politics as a result of the *Ta’if* Agreement (1989), which ensured an equal division of parliamentary seats among Christians and Muslims, and a proportional distribution among their sects. See Elizabeth Picard, “Is the Consociational system reformable?,” Website, IREMAM – *Institut de Recherches et d’Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman*, 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/2P8ZiPW> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

6 Scholars have explained the twofold role of political familism in Lebanese politics, where on the one hand, citizens depend on their families and kinship ties to access services and enjoy privileges from the state, and on the other hand, political leaders depend on family ties to establish their loyalty. See Suad Joseph, “Political Familism in Lebanon,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Political Familism in Lebanon Vol. 636 (1), 2011, p.150-163.

7 Clientelism in Lebanon is based on the *Za’im* (leader, plural: *zu’ama*), who is usually a person with influence and authority acquired through family and confessional affiliation, and who offers services in exchange for loyalty. See Nizar Hamzeh, “Clientelism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37 (3), 2001, p. 170-171, available at: <https://bit.ly/2B81La9> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

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First, they obstruct the formation of state-sponsored social welfare programmes, and further consolidate the role of private actors and sectarian parties in social welfare provision.<sup>8</sup>

Sectarian parties' distribution of social benefits in Lebanon is determined by their calculus of electoral considerations and their capacity for mobilisation.<sup>9</sup> The resulting irregular patterns of social protection diminish the prospects of women's participation in politics, particularly when they continue to work in precarious conditions and are forced to leave their jobs for childcare responsibilities.<sup>10</sup>

Second, having clientelistic relationships established across patrilineal and sectarian lines hinders the renewal of political elite,<sup>11</sup> thus inhibiting women's entry into the political arena (with the exception of some women who belong to political families, in which having a male kin enables their rise to power).

In addition, religious authorities continue to rule personal status laws, regulating matters such as marriage, divorce, and maternal custody, often empowering men over women.<sup>12</sup> Other studies propose cultural explanations for women's underrepresentation,<sup>13</sup> notably the patriarchal social norms governing Lebanese society, which restrict women to more

8 Although the state should be the primary source of social services provision through its social welfare programmes, "weak" states like Lebanon provide a terrain for non-state actors, including private actors and sectarian parties, to provide social benefits. Such dynamics further consolidate social division and segmentation along sectarian lines. See Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar, "Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon," *World Polit.*, Vol. 62(3), 2010, p.381-421.

9 Mobilisation can be nonviolent, such as through protests and sit-ins, or violent, through the organisation of militias, for example. See Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar, *op.cit.*, 2010, p.383-835.

10 According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 57% of workers in the informal sector in Lebanon are women. See International Labour Organisation, "Advancing Women's Employment in Lebanon: ILO in Action" ILO, n.d., available at: [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/information-resources/factsheets/WCMS\\_438671/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/information-resources/factsheets/WCMS_438671/lang--en/index.htm) [last accessed 11 November 2018]. For more on the gender-specific implications of social policies, see Cecilia Luttrell and Caroline Moser, "Gender and Social Protection," Website, *ODI.org*, 2004, available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1686.pdf> [last accessed 11 November 2018].

11 Thibaut Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, and Confessional Democracy in Lebanon," *Middle East Law and Governance*, Vol. 6, 2014, p.255.

12 Sofia Saadeh, "Women in Lebanese Politics: Underlying Causes of Women's Lack of Representation in Lebanese Politics," *International Alert*, 2011, p.14, available at: <https://bit.ly/2B823xL> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

13 Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, "Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 12(3), 2001, p. 129,131.

"traditional" roles.<sup>14</sup> While these explanations provide insights into macro-level structures, they fail to shed light on women's personal experiences of these structures within political institutions.

To address this lacuna and to further unravel the underlying factors that inhibit women's political participation in Lebanon on an institutional (meso) and individual (micro) levels, Lebanon Support conducted and published an empirically-grounded, participatory study entitled "Women's Political Participation: Exclusion and Reproduction of Social Roles. Case Studies from Lebanon."<sup>15</sup> The study examined four organisational structures in Lebanon: a political party (the Lebanese Forces), a social movement ("You Stink"), a syndicate (the Teachers' Syndicate), and a civil society organisation (the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union).<sup>16</sup> By reviewing these structures' official documents, public discourse, and practices, as well as the experiences and challenges of women involved in these structures, the study analysed barriers hindering women's full political participation. In doing so, the study employed a case study methodology, using semi-structured interviews (35) and focus groups (7) for data collection, between July 2017 and April 2018.

Drawing on this study, the aim of the policy brief presented here is twofold. First, it provides a synthesis of the study's key findings. Second, it proposes action-oriented and practical recommendations to actors at the macro-level (Lebanese government, political elite), meso-level (the broader local and international civil society in Lebanon; civil society organisations; movements; syndicates), and the micro-level (women's individual experiences), to help to address the barriers faced by women.

## BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

14 Victoria Louise Stamadianou, "Perspectives of Young Women in Political Parties on Women and Politics in Lebanon," *International Alert*, 2011, p. 26, available at: <https://bit.ly/2B823xL> [last accessed 4 October 2018].

15 Manar Zaiter and Sarah ElMasry, "Women's Political Participation: Exclusion and Reproduction of Social Roles. Case Studies from Lebanon," Lebanon Support, *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, November 2018, available at: <https://civilsociety-centre.org/node/52394> [last accessed 12 November 2018].

16 For a full rationale behind the selection of these case studies, see: Manar Zaiter and Sarah ElMasry, *op.cit.*, 2018.

DISCRIMINATION, EXCLUSION, AND RELEGATION

Three of the four political structures selected for the study – the Lebanese Forces (LF) party, the “You Stink” movement, and the Teachers’ Syndicate – were found to be generally inhospitable to women with regards to facilitating access to leadership roles.

During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the majority of women affiliated with the LF were mostly restricted to household and caregiving roles in line with the traditional roles of women. Responsibilities they were tasked with included cooking, providing first aid, and managing childcare centres.<sup>17</sup> Despite the increasingly important roles some LF women figures played in security-related positions<sup>18</sup> and the direct organisation of protests and demonstrations at the time when the party’s political movement was banned (1994-2005), the only woman to participate in the party’s leadership was Setrida Geagea, the wife of the party leader Samir Geagea. This underlines the role of political family ties and kinship in facilitating the rise of women who are married or related to male political figures, to leadership positions.

Even after the LF institutionalised into a formal party with a political programme in 2012, the opportunities for women to access the party’s key positions remain limited. For example, most grassroots positions such as “unit head” or “area supervisor” in the party’s offices across Lebanon are occupied by men whom the party’s leadership favours on account of their presumed ability to draw more voters, particularly during election seasons.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, women’s electoral nominations depend on the party’s electoral and sectarian alliances, resulting in the party’s nomination of candidates who are more likely to win seats; in most cases, these candidates are men.<sup>20</sup>

17 Focus group held by the research team with a number of LF women members, Beirut, 16 March 2018.  
18 Security-related positions included combat roles for women, who were trained as part of the “women fighters” units. Other organisational roles played by women during this period included organising student activism on university campuses.  
19 Manar Zaiter and Sarah ElMasry, *op.cit.*, 2018.  
20 Interview by the research team with an LF official, Tabarja, 28 July 2017.

*“If a woman proves herself on ground, the hakeem will make sure to nominate her in a leading position.”*  
*Female representative of the Lebanese Forces at the consultation meeting, Beirut, 8 November 2018.*

Overall, from an outsider’s perspective, the LF appears to be quite progressive in terms of gender equality, given that they have a female MP, had several female candidates during the 2018 parliamentary elections, and that their secretary-general is a woman. Furthermore, the LF publicly pushes for some legislative reforms on women’s rights, including amendments to articles 503 and 504 of the Lebanese Penal Code regarding marital rape, and supporting a bill against child marriage. At the same time, the party’s political line appears to clearly undermine other reforms, such as the reform of personal status laws and nationality laws. In addition, the LF has no clear stance on applying a women’s quota,<sup>21</sup> which shows an inherent incongruity in the party’s stance on women’s issues.

This dissonance is also discernible through other challenges that women in the LF encounter. While attempting to balance their household duties and their political activities, some women found themselves having to choose between their family chores (including childcare) and their commitment to attend party meetings, which are usually scheduled at late hours and for long intervals.

Looking at another type of organisation, we wanted to gauge whether social movements would offer a more enabling environment for women’s participation. Our attention focused on one of Lebanon’s latest protest movements: “You Stink/Tel’et Rehetkon.” This collective adopted a horizontal model of organisation to allow for participatory leadership and representation, and to avoid the challenges of hierarchy that restrict decision-making to a mere few.<sup>22</sup> However, and as in other horizontal structures previously studied<sup>23</sup> and

21 Focus group held by the research team with a number of LF women members, Beirut, 16 March 2018.  
22 For more on horizontalism, see Tova Benski et al., “From the streets and squares to social movement studies: What have we learned?”, *Current Sociology*, Vol. 61(4), 2013, p.549.  
23 Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi, *L’altermondialisme au Liban : un militantisme de passage. Logiques d’engagement et reconfiguration de l’espace militant (de gauche) au Liban*, Pantheon-Sorbonne University – Paris 1, doctorat de science politique, 2013.

elsewhere,<sup>24</sup> power dynamics within the collective lead to the exclusion of youth, particularly young women: the adopted horizontal model thus seems to have failed to achieve its wider goals of broader and inclusive participation;<sup>25</sup> men with previous political engagement experiences dominated decision-making within the collective. This tendency was exacerbated when political figures and party representatives joined the campaign, as they dominated the discussion in debates, interrupted women's interventions, and belittled their interventions and complaints.<sup>26</sup>

*“Sexual harassment issues and incidents had to be dismissed as we feared they would threaten the movement as a whole and scare people from mobilising and joining the movement.”*

*Female representative of “You Stink/Tel’et Rehetkon” at the consultation meeting, Beirut, 8 November 2018.*

These issues need to be addressed at a structural level, and not at an informal-personal level. While women in the campaign played some visible roles in relaying media statements<sup>27</sup> and confronting security forces during demonstrations, the female activists interviewed believed that women were given visible roles to perpetuate the idea that the campaign was inclusive of women. This inclusivity was deemed cosmetic, as women were rarely given the chance to contribute to these statements.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, throughout their participation in the campaign, women encountered a discourse that stressed their fragility, weakness, and need for protection by men, especially during confrontations with security forces at protests.

Another organisational structure we have examined is the Teachers' Syndicate. Although women make up to 75%<sup>29</sup> of the Syndicate members, only one woman was elected into

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24 Jo Freeman, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, Leeds, Leeds: Leeds Women's Organization of Revolutionary Anarchists, 1970, available at: <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm> [last accessed 13 November 2018].

25 Interview by the research team with a former activist in *Tel’et Rehetkon*, Beirut, 25 October 2017.

26 Interview by the research team with a feminist activist, Beirut, 22 August 2017.

27 AlJazeera Mubasher, “Conference for *Tel’et Rehetkon* demanding solving the garbage crisis,” *Youtube*, Website, 2015, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQ6YpXRpX7Q> [last accessed 11 November 2018].

28 Interview by the research team with a feminist and human rights activist, Beirut, 26 July 2017.

29 Due to the lack of official statistics by the Syndicate, this percentage was estimated by all interviewees and focus group participants.

the executive board.<sup>30</sup> This reveals a vast gender representation gap within the union. For example, the Syndicate lacks clear bylaws and procedures; communication between its executive board and boards of branch offices is strained; and internal elections have been primarily based on party and sectarian alliances;<sup>31</sup> in addition to other interventions, notably by school administrations. While school administrations discourage teachers from joining the Syndicate so as not to mobilise against administrations, political parties dominate how the Syndicate's electoral alliances are formed,<sup>32</sup> to the extent of asking women nominees to withdraw their nomination if necessary.<sup>33</sup>

Women teachers experienced discourse-related challenges. During Syndicate meetings, their male colleagues seldom took their views and suggestions into consideration, often commenting on how they dress or talk.

*“We are often praised for how our presence ‘beautifies’ meetings”*

*Female teacher during interview, Beirut, 12 November 2018.*

Women who are politically active in the Syndicate have voiced that they are often criticised by their entourage, as their engagement distracted them from household duties. The growing pressure they experience often forces them to disengage from political involvement or remain inactive in the Syndicate. Other challenges that were voiced included balancing their engagement with their caregiving roles at home; the pressure exerted by school administrations to actively not join the Syndicate; and their own lack of trust in the Syndicate as an advocate for their rights.

Lastly, we delved into the investigation of the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU), as a non-governmental structure (known today as the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD)). The LPHU can be considered to be the most inclusive of

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30 The members of the successive executive boards can be found on the Syndicate's website: <https://bit.ly/2vJ08c1> [last accessed 7 October 2018].

31 Focus group held by the research team with a number of women teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

32 Members with dual membership in the syndicate and in a political party tend to be swayed to follow their party's nominations, eventually serving the party's interests and not those of the syndicate.

33 Focus group held by the research team with a number of women teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

women’s participation, both outside and inside the organisation. Indeed, the organisation is headed by a woman, and boasts several female members. Nevertheless, LPHU’s executive boards have predominantly consisted of men; out of a total of 12 members, only one or two have been women over the years.<sup>34</sup> Activists from the LPHU attributed this exclusion to the presumed “political inexperience” of women, a pretext that is usually put forward by male board members.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, despite its expansion across the Lebanese territory with offices in the North and South, the Union’s activities remain centralised in Beirut. This impedes the participation of women, including lower-income women, from peripheral regions, and isolates them from the decision-making process.

Research shows that women and girls with disabilities experience double discrimination – first, for being women, and second, for having disabilities – which impacts their willingness to take part in political and public life to avoid social stigma.<sup>36</sup> This double discrimination particularly manifests at home. Women with disabilities explained how control exerted by their families and/or partners can hinder them from making personal decisions, and hence affect their capacity to be politically engaged.<sup>37</sup> Family support seems to be present and maintained as long as women undertake paid labour that can help the family financially, but it ceases when women with disabilities want to volunteer in public or political activities. These activities are seen as a source of potential danger as they entail traveling and going out, which puts women with disabilities at a higher risk of sexual harassment.

Findings from research undertaken in the four institutions indicate that the issue of gender-based violence (GBV), particularly sexual harassment, are left unaddressed in internal documents and general public discourses. For example, the *Tel’et Rehetkon* campaign ignored sexual harassment incidents to prevent the reputation of the movement from being tarnished by the government. Also, the LPHU has not set forth any measures or procedures

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<sup>34</sup> It was only during the 2016 election of the executive board that the LPHU encouraged two young women from the Beqaa to run for the elections.

<sup>35</sup> Interview by the research team with an activist in the LPHU, Beirut, 11 August 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Diane E. Taub, Penelope A. McLorg & Patricia L. Fanflik, “Stigma management strategies among women with physical disabilities: contrasting approaches of downplaying or claiming a disability status,” *Deviant Behavior*, Vol. 25(2), 2004, p.170-171.

<sup>37</sup> Focus group held by the research team with a number of women members from the LPHU, Beirut, March 11, 2018.

to address incidents of sexual harassment against women with disabilities, though they are considered among the most vulnerable groups to experience sexual harassment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on in-depth qualitative analysis, in addition to the discussion of research findings with research participants during a consultative workshop, this policy brief proposes the following recommendations to the various actors involved. The recommendations below are organised at a policy level; at an institutional level; and at an individual level. However, this policy brief would like to emphasise that proposing recommendations at an individual level ought to be read within the context of institutional and policy constraints, as well as gendered power dynamics and conditioning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AT A POLICY LEVEL

The Lebanese government should, on the short term:

- Make available updated gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data and gender-specific indicators in Lebanon, including data on women in the labour market and the education sector.<sup>38</sup> This would enable more targeted and impactful interventions focusing on women’s political empowerment.
- Abolish and/or revise all discriminatory laws against women and girls, such as laws pertaining to political governance, notably the law of associations, the electoral law, and the civil servants law, in order to ensure they are gender-sensitive. Personal status and nationality laws, that continue to discriminate between women and men, should also subject to rigorous reforms, as well as laws and codes impacting women’s socioeconomic conditions, for example, laws targeting uninsured sectors such as agriculture, maternity leave, and health insurance, among others. Moreover, a law

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<sup>38</sup> The lack of public data available on women is a major impediment in the work of gender actors in Lebanon. Last official sex-disaggregated data and gender-related indicators by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) date back to 2009.

criminalising sexual harassment in private, as well as public spaces (such as the workplace), should be issued.

- Implement necessary legal reforms enhancing gender equality, including the introduction of (temporary) women’s quota, notably in local and parliamentary elections and establishing efficient and effective mechanisms that ensure such implementation, as well as compliance with international treaties.
- Incentivise religious-based parties to endorse such quotas. This would improve both their international image,<sup>39</sup> as well as their electoral gains on a national level.
- Appraise and evaluate the impact of the programmes already established by the Lebanese government, targeting PWDs (under the Ministries of Social Affairs, Industry, and Labour) and women (under the National Commission for Lebanese Women, as well as the Ministry for Women’s Affairs);
- Start integrating gender mainstreaming procedures<sup>40</sup> based on systematic needs, across all state’s institutions and agencies to help instil gender inclusivity through a top-bottom approach.
- Speed up the process of merging the education system in Lebanon to ensure the fair integration of persons with disabilities (PWD), including women, which will contribute to their personal and political empowerment in the long run.

International donors should, on the short term:

- Link continued funding support to the application of policy changes and legal amendments related to gender equity and equality.
- Support the Lebanese government in establishing fair, universal, and equitable social protection programmes taking into account women and minorities (PwDs, sexual minorities, and migrant workers, among others).
- Support local civil society organisations (CSOs) in increasing women’s representation

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39 Endorsement of women’s rights and allowing women to run for internal as well as external party posts has helped Islamist parties in Joran, Tunisia, and Egypt to be viewed as more “moderate,” and made them amenable.  
40 For practical information, tips, and tools on gender mainstreaming, see Lebanon Support, “A Practical Guide for Civil Society Organisations in Lebanon towards Gender Mainstreaming,” Website, *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, 2017, available at: <https://civilsociety-centre.org/resource/practical-guide-civil-society-organisations-lebanon-towards-gender-mainstreaming-en-ar> [last accessed 12 November 2018].

by funding women empowerment programmes, particularly in marginalised Lebanese regions; support programmes for the rights of people with disabilities, primarily women and children.

- Continuously and reflexively assess their own funding streams and agenda and their compliance with localised needs on the ground.

*“Many older men who have previously fought in the party view their current positions as a reward for their years of engagement, and feel threatened by younger and more qualified women.”*

*Female representative of the Lebanese Forces at the consultation meeting, Beirut, 8 November 2018.*

Political parties should, on the short term:

- Make available updated gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data of membership in the party.
- Institute internal policies and measures to report, investigate, and address sexual harassment and bullying, and to create a safe space for women within the party.
- Gender mainstream<sup>41</sup> internally notably through establishing a women’s quota to enhance women’s representation and help women accumulate the experience needed for municipal and parliamentary positions. This can also be done through expanding women’s opportunities to occupy grassroots positions to help break societal barriers about politics being a “man’s realm,” through the establishment of temporary quotas for such positions. Another example of gender mainstreaming and sensitivity would be to schedule activities, meetings, and events at times that are convenient for both men and women, to facilitate women’s attendance and participation.
- Sensitise their own membership to human rights-based approaches and principles as well as gender mainstreaming.<sup>42</sup>
- Engage men, especially from older generations, with issues pertaining to women’s rights as well as women’s political participation.

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41 Lebanon Support, *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, op.cit. 2017.  
42 Ibid.

- Enhance youth participation in party politics through the establishment of more inclusive decision-making settings and mechanisms.
- Engage with feminist organisations, as well as other political parties, on broad feminist demands and priorities beyond sectarian lines and affiliations.

*“Many grassroots collectives stumble on the sexual harassment issue and disintegrate after the occurrence of such incidents. This should not be dealt with in an informal manner, but rather be addressed at the structural level.”*

*Feminist participant at the consultation meeting, Beirut, 8 November 2018.*

#### CSO's and social movements should, on the short term:

- Make available updated gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data of membership and staff.
- Gender mainstream,<sup>43</sup> revisit, and evaluate the campaign's horizontal structure. This can be done through the setup of roles and assignments, as well as checks and balances mechanisms, to ensure achieving the structures' egalitarian and participatory goals. This should notably implemented by the adoption of codes of conduct (even in informal structures) that ensure women's issues are specifically addressed in their strategies, programming, and projects, either in a cross-cutting manner or in a more targeted way. Also, making available measures and procedures that protect women from sexual violence, particularly during their participation in street activism, and create support channels for survivors.
- Sensitise their own membership and bases to human rights-based approaches and principles as well as gender mainstreaming.
- Adopt a human rights-based approach throughout their structure, strategy, programming, projects, and communication, as well as with their audiences and beneficiaries. This can be done through the adoption of specific quotas that would ensure equitable participation of all, including women and other minorities.
- Decentralise activities and prioritise the attendance of members from the marginalised

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

regions to ensure inclusion of all members.

- Acknowledge and address the double discrimination that women with disabilities encounter, and integrate them into their programmes, plans, and strategies.
- Engage with wider social movements, unions, and political parties to improve the environmental conditions for women's political participation, including granting them an open access to leadership roles.

#### Syndicates should, on the short term:

- Make available updated gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data of membership in the syndicate.
- Establish and adopt an internal organisational structure with clear roles, responsibilities, and duties. This structure needs be gender-sensitive so as to ensure women are given equal opportunities for leadership, as well as adopt a clear gender quota.
- Redefine the relationship between the executive board of the syndicate and its branches to grant voting rights to members of the different branches, ensure fair representation, and avoid the centralisation of power.
- Gender mainstream<sup>44</sup> through the establishment of policies and measures to address sexism, sexual harassment, and bullying within the syndicate.
- Activate the role of the syndicate to address the broader demands – economic and otherwise – by teachers, particularly women teachers.
- Ensure women's specific demands are included in the syndicate's agenda, as well as in its strategy and lobbying actions (equal pay, maternity leave, social protection, arbitrary dismissal protection, working hours in violation of the law, discrimination in financial receivables, child care, low wages, dismissal from work in case of pregnancy, violation of the law with regards to maternity leave (some schools do not give women teachers more than 15 days of leave), discrimination with regards to tax deduction, obtaining pension compensation from the Compensation Fund, obligation for the teacher to be married, lack of registration in social and health insurance, among other issues)
- Establish a unit or a focal point that would proactively address violations targeting

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

women in schools.

- Engage with recent non-partisan trade union experiences and build on lessons learned from such experiences.
- Reach out to a bigger audience to expand the membership base and activate the current members by engaging with them beyond the election seasons.
- Activate the role and inputs of the syndicate branches in the Lebanese regions so as to ensure more participation from the peripheries.
- Regulate members with dual memberships at the syndicate and at a political party to ensure partisan interests do not override the syndicate's interests.

*“We need to institutionalise ‘good’ intentions, as solutions cannot be individual.”*

*Female representative of a local civil society organisation at the consultation meeting, Beirut, 8 November 2018.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Women in Lebanon should, on the short term:

- Seek psychological support when they experience forms of sexual violence and harassment.
- Report incidents of sexual harassment that occur in the workplace, private spaces, as well as in public spaces through the available mechanisms (NGOs that offer legal support, shelters, NGOs' listening and counselling centers, voluntary emergency lines, as well as legal channels when possible etc).

