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Identity and Politics in Lebanon

Challenges and Opportunities for Coalition-Building and Inclusion

Identity and Politics in Lebanon:
Challenges and Opportunities for Coalition-Building and Inclusion

October 2020

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Acknowledgements

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"Where are my rights?" Graffiti in Beirut ahead of Helem's International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia 2018 Campaign, May 2018 (Helem)

Center

"They tried to bury us, but did not know that we were seeds." Student protest at the Ministry of Education, UNESCO Beirut, November 2019 (Marwan Nassar)

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Disability rights activist Ms. Sylvana Lakkis in front of the parliament, protesting against unconstitutional session, October 2019 (Rona Dbeissi/LUPD)

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Women's rights march organised by the feminist movement, Beirut, December 2019 (Diaa Malaeb/ABAAD)

About IFES

An informed and empowered citizenry is a crucial component of a healthy and resilient democracy. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) works to strengthen the participation, influence and representation of citizens in political processes and governance structures.

A key focus of IFES' work is inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, youth, indigenous groups, LGBTQ people, and ethnic and religious minorities. IFES uses an intersectional approach to its inclusion work, ensuring that individuals with multiple social identities have a voice in the way they are governed. IFES works to strengthen political inclusion by:

- Providing technical assistance to election management bodies on how to implement international standards such as the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);

- Empowering civil society organizations and traditionally underrepresented groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, youth, indigenous groups, LGBTQ people and ethnic and religious minorities to advocate for equal rights;

- Assisting citizen-led efforts to define best practices through the development of global tools as the Violence Against Women in Elections framework and tools, the manual Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes and the online resource ElectionAccess.org.

Since 2004, IFES has provided Lebanese stakeholders with technical advice and support on a wide range of electoral and governance issues. IFES built civil society capacity in Lebanon to advocate for women's inclusion in the political process and disability rights and worked with relevant election authorities on electoral reform issues. IFES also developed a Lebanon-specific election violence risk assessment and database to track and analyze violence indicators.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFE	Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality
CAS	Central Administration for Statistics
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPO	Disabled People's Organization
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IIR	Identify, Interpret and Respond: Raising Awareness of Intersectionality in Lebanon
LADE	Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LUPD	Lebanese Union for Persons with Physical Disabilities
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
NCDA	National Council of Disability Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SCE	Supervisory Commission for Elections
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations

Preface

One year ago, on the night of October 17, 2019, a Lebanese revolutionary wave erupted, marking the first major uprising since the 15-year civil war between 1975-1990. Protestors demanded an end to corruption--the root cause for a failing economic and political system--and called for parliament and sectarian leaders to step down.

Protesters used inclusive themes and slogans to resist the sectarian rhetoric that long divided Lebanese citizens based on religion, class, and political affiliation. The protests were labeled as horizontal and leaderless, but avenues of resistance emerged, shaping the revolution into one where women, refugees, youth, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community all had a leading voice. While women's political participation was not new to Lebanon, the revolution enhanced visibility in many ways; women were credited with negotiating with the army to deter violence and actively disseminated news on social media[1]. Palestinian and Syrian refugees, often blamed for the dire conditions faced by Lebanese, joined in the protests to voice their concerns over rising unemployment in the country[2] which also featured as a major concern of youth protestors. People with disabilities were equally active on the streets, demanding to be treated no longer as second-class citizens.[3] Pro-LGBTQ graffiti increasingly appeared near anti-government slogans across Beirut, with activists using gay rights as an umbrella for demanding change.

Protests continued in the streets for months but were hampered by the COVID-19 global pandemic which struck Lebanon in Spring 2020 in conjunction with the onslaught of the worst economic crisis in decades. Quarantines and curfews saw a rise in domestic violence—disproportionately affecting those with intersectional identities (women with disabilities, young LGBTQ people) in unprecedented ways due to the inability to escape confinement with those harming them. The pandemic also took energy away from the protest movement as activists and civil society had to focus limited resources on the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the economic collapse and loss of livelihoods.

Then in August 2020, the unimaginable happened. An explosion at Beirut's port killed at least 200 people, injured more than 6,000 and left 300,000 people homeless. For many Lebanese, the blast was the final straw in the long standoff between those in power and the public. The government stepped down days later but the disaster refueled demands for change and once again gave common cause to diverse groups as they unify in recovery efforts.

It is through this lens of "intersectional revolution" that IFES presents its findings from ongoing research and support to CSOs in Lebanon.

1- Helmy, J. (2019, December 30). The Lebanese uprising: Dismantling sectarianism through inclusiveness. Daily Sabah. Retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2019/12/30/the-lebanese-uprising-dismantling-sectarianism-through-inclusiveness
2- Alwani, G. (2019, October 24). Lebanon protests also bring Syrians, Palestinians out onto the streets. Al-Monitor. Retrieved from https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/palestinians-syrians-participate-in-lebanon-protests.html
3- People with disabilities have showcased their active role in the protests in a Facebook video: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=939958213026648

Executive **Summary**

Marginalized groups in Lebanon experience multiple levels of exclusion based on social identities, including gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation. Individuals with intersectional identities confront additional barriers. Direct and indirect violence against marginalized people is high, with violence "intensifying in frequency, extent and nature when gender and disability intersect."[4] An indicator of women's low political and economic empowerment, Lebanon ranked 145 out of 153 countries in the 2020 Global Gender Gap report[5]. People with disabilities, an estimated 15 percent of the population,[6] are subject to a state policy of isolation[7] and encounter stigma and discrimination. Under Lebanese law, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) persons lack protections and face persecution. The NGO, Legal Agenda, found that LGBTQ human rights violations are perpetrated by the state, including Internal Security Forces that enforce morality-based laws and politicians who denigrate LGBTQ persons in their rhetoric.[8]

Shared challenges that Lebanese people of marginalized identities, particularly intersectional identities such as young LGBTQ people; women with disabilities; women, youth or people with disabilities from poor socio-economic backgrounds, etc., include:
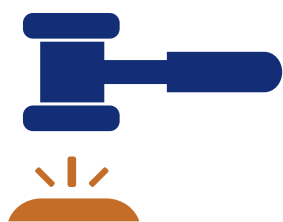
| WEAK LEGAL STATUS OR RESTRICTIVE PERSONAL STATUS LAWS; | STIGMA | LITTLE OR NO REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNMENT |

4- Women With Disabilities Australia. (2013) Stop the Violence Background Paper. Retrieved from: http://wwda.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/STV_Background_Paper_FINAL.pdf
5- World Economic Forum. (2019) Global Gender Gap Report 2020. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf
6- World Health Organization. (2020) Disability and Health. Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs352/en/
7- Global Young Voices. (2016) Disabled people deprived from their rights in Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://www.globalyoungvoices.com/all-articles/2016/1/16/disabled-people-deprived-from-their-rights-in-lebanon
8- Chamas, S. (2015, June 15). The fight goes on for Lebanon's LGBT community. Al-Monitor. Retrieved from: The fight goes on for Lebanon's LGBT community - Al-Monitor: the Pulse of the Middle East (al-monitor.com)

"In a politically unstable environment that faces the effects of both regional conflict and a ballooning refugee crisis, excluding women from the nascent stages of conflict resolution is a missed opportunity to have all voices influence the blueprint for peace and democracy."

Women and Political Transition: The Risk of Replicating Inequality and the Fundamental Need for Gender Parity in Decision Making. IFES (2016).

Lebanese CSOs participate in "The Privilege Walk," an interactive role-play exercise (Virginia Atkinson/IFES)

In addition, they are more likely to experience discrimination in employment, access to education or healthcare, and are at greater risk of being victims of violence.

Over a two-week period in November 2018, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) conducted an intersectionality assessment mission in collaboration with civil society partners Lebanese Union for Persons with Physical Disabilities (LUPD) and ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality. The assessment utilized IFES' Intersectionality Assessment Framework, which identifies intersectional barriers and opportunities related to political participation of people with multiple social identities, such as women with disabilities or young refugees.

Key findings of the assessment, challenges identified and recommendations to stakeholder groups follow below.

Key **Findings**

DPOs and LGBTQ organizations express interest in and acknowledge the benefits of intersectional coalition-building

The proliferation of CSOs has boosted self-confidence of marginalized groups and provided them with a voice in Lebanon

Observer groups and watchdog organizations can be good allies to CSOs fighting discrimination and marginalization

♥ **Opportunities**

Ongoing protests have united people from diverse backgrounds, energized civil society and led to calls for a non-sectarian government and electoral system

The wide spread use of social media in Lebanon can support citizen mobilization and sharing of experiences

The LGBTQ movement has learned lessons from and worked with the women's rights movement in Lebanon, even though they face challenges working closely together

Challenges

Limited funding resources to reduce marginalization and discrimination leads to lack of coordination between organizations working on similar topics.

Trans people experience significant barriers to engagement in political and public life, including exclusion from engagement with CSOs representing other marginalized groups.

Civil society organizations representing different marginalized groups do not freely collaborate or coordinate, particularly with highly stigmatized groups.

Political parties use clientelism to influence electoral behavior, with religious identity playing a strong role in how marginalized communities receive benefits. Political parties are not inclusive.

The sectarian electoral system hinders coalition building and allyship between Lebanese from different backgrounds.

Physical inaccessibility to the polling station continues to be a barrier to voting for many people with disabilities, older people and pregnant women.

There are 15 personal status laws which result in Lebanese citizens having different legal protections.

Lack of accurate and official data impedes effective civil society advocacy measures against marginalization of and discrimination against various groups in society.

Recent protests have led to the resignation of the government, calls for an early election and a non-sectarian election system.

Youth advocated to lower the voting age to 18 but perceive that political parties will not agree due to assumptions about which religions may gain an advantage with additional voters.

The current political crisis has led to a paralysis in government and lack of focus on inclusive policy reform.

Similar to the global trend, social media is playing a large role in Lebanese daily lives and is used successfully for activism, but it is increasingly also used to curb freedom of expression and dissuade political engagement of minorities.

Recommendations

To Civil Society

- Work together to track international commitments & advocate for harmonization of laws.
- Train marginalized populations on using social media for political advocacy and to counter disinformation.
- Raise awareness of intersectionality needs among civil society organizations (CSOs) representing specific identity groups.
- Build intersectional coalitions to advocate together to counter discrimination & marginalization.
- Work with media to raise attention to key issue areas that affect multiple identity groups.

To Government

- Conduct a study on electoral reforms that could address inequalities in accessing political rights from an intersectional perspective.
- Establish inclusion focal points inside Ministries to focus on SDG targets.
- Explore the establishment of gender and disability quotas for elected officials, including targets for women with disabilities.
- Institutionalize relationships with the CSO community and give greater visibility to citizens who are most marginalized from political life.
- Develop a unified civil code regulating personal status matters.

To Electoral Stakeholders

- Train election observers on principles of inclusion and accessibility.
- Leverage social media to increase youth and other marginalized groups' engagement in the electoral process.
- Put a special focus on engaging young voters across all socio-economic, geographic and other identities.
- Advocate for election access on an ongoing basis in collaboration with education organizations.

Demographic Overview of Lebanon

6,825,445
Lebanon's population
(UN DESA, 2020 est.)

Females and males approximately **%50 each**
(CIA factbook, no official census in Lebanon since 1932)

Literacy rate **%93.9** of total population

of which **%96 men** **%91.8 women**
(2015 est.) (CIA factbook)

LGBT No official numbers **%10** of the population
as per global statistics estimates

%50.2 of the population youth under 30 years old
(PopulationPyramid.net)

recognised religions **18 / 15** different personal status laws

1.5 M Syrian refugees
registered with UNHCR
(2020 est)

476,033 Palestinian refugees
registered with UNRWA
(2019 est)

≈**97,735** individuals with disability
registered with Ministry of Social Affairs
Not all people with disabilities in Lebanon are registered to receive the disability card.

(2016 est) of which **%62 men** **%38 women**

of the total number
%55 are people with physical disabilities
%3 are people with learning disabilities
%11.6 are people of working age (between 21 and 63 years old)
According to WHO estimates **%15** of the total population has a disability

≈ **2,366** PLHIV
(2018 est, MoPH NAP)

of which **%94.4 men** **%5.6 women**

Article 7, Lebanese Constitution

All Lebanese shall be equal before the law. They shall equally enjoy civil and political rights and shall equally be bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction.

International Girl Child Day commemoration and candle vigil for deceased women's rights activist Nadyn Jouny, October 2019 (Diaa Malaeb/ABAAD)

Background

Identity and Politics in Lebanon

Lebanon is a country of multiple layers of social, confessional, ideological, economic and cultural identities. Lebanon's diversity is one of the reasons that it stands among the most liberal countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. However, Lebanon is also a country with one of the most complicated systems of political representation and legal status, stemming from its complex sectarian identities. There are 18 officially recognized religious groups in Lebanon—4 Muslim denominations, 12 Christian denominations, the Druze faith and Judaism[9]—that are governed by fifteen personal status laws enforced by religious courts.[10] Political representation is determined on the basis of power-sharing between major religious factions, first enshrined in a post-colonial independence agreement and later reinforced in the Taif Accord which ended the brutal civil war that raged from 1975-1990.[11]

Religion in politics has long been attributed as the primary underlying cause of conflict, instability and lack of consensus and social cohesion in the country. However, some experts posit that conflict among sects is not a matter of religious belief but rather of social identity. With different religious groups not only enforcing their own personal status laws, but also providing public services to their communities, religious leaders use this identity to mobilize those within the group to gain a political and economic advantage over other sects, ultimately leading to conflict, and occasionally violence.[12] These social identities have been highlighted by several socio-economic factors including imbalance in access to services outside the capital, low exposure to economic and educational opportunities, and limited inclusion in public service and unemployment, particularly among young people.

Economic disparity in Lebanon is indeed a flashpoint, particularly with the influx of Syrian refugees since 2011, which at one point numbered close to 1.5 million (nearly one quarter of the Lebanese population), according to government estimates.[13] The World Bank estimates that 200,000 Lebanese have been pushed into poverty since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, which has disproportionately affected young, unskilled Lebanese.[14] Aside from the Syrian crisis, Lebanon is already reportedly home to 476,033 Palestinians,[15] many of whom were born or raised in Lebanon but are unable to take Lebanese citizenship and have no means to change their status. Given that they are barred from several professions in Lebanon and are not entitled to own real estate,[16] they are dependent upon limited labor types and resources, which often results in significant tension

9- El Rajji, R. (2014, December). The leaves of one tree: Religious minorities in Lebanon. Minority Rights Group International. Retrieved from: https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/mrg-briefing-religious-minorities-in-lebanon.pdf

10- Human Rights Watch. (2015) Unequal and Unprotected: Women's rights under Lebanese personal status laws. Retrieved from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-law

11- Georgetown University, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. (2013, August). Lebanon: The Persistence of Sectarian Conflict. Retrieved from: https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/lebanon-the-persistence-of-sectarian-conflict

12- Ibid.

13- Figures are according to Government estimates as reported by UNHCR in 2020.

14- The World Bank. (2020) Lebanon Overview. Retrieved from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview

15- Figures as of 31 December 2019 as reported by UNRWA.

16- Al-Arian, L. (2019, July 26). In Lebanon, Palestinians protest new employment restrictions. NPR. Retrieved from: https://www.npr.org/2019/07/26/745041157/in-lebanon-palestinians-protest-new-employment-restrictions

between refugees and Lebanese citizens. The tensions created by unemployment, poverty and the migration crisis have contributed to the formation of violent extremist groups and have exacerbated identity-based politics and rhetoric.

With the introduction of a proportional representation system under the 2017 electoral law, some Lebanese citizens hoped that the system would enable more participation from different small groups, rather than the traditional political parties; however, this has not proven to be the case based on the results of the 2018 parliamentary elections. The next nationwide elections are currently scheduled for 2022, but protesters are calling for early elections and election law reform, including a new electoral system, which could provide an opportunity to change Lebanon's identity-based system.

An intersectional lens is not yet actively applied to internal practices and external programming by CSOs in Lebanon. Civil society partners representing different marginalized groups are still learning to work together and be more inclusive in their policies and activities. While many CSOs are working with people with intersectional identities, for example women with disabilities are actively involved in DPOs and many youth activists are part of gender rights organizations,

Status of Women

Lebanon was the first country in the Arab world to give women the unconditional right to vote, and women were able to run for parliament in 1953. Despite the success of the women's movements that made this law possible, women in Lebanon still face significant barriers in their struggle against the predominantly patriarchal political system. The interdependence of the

CSOs do not deliberately think of their work from an intersectional perspective. Given the current status of thinking in Lebanon on intersectionality, this report emphasizes opportunities for effective coalition building between CSOs in the hope that this will lead to more thoughtful inclusion of people with intersectional identities both in civil society and politics.

Lebanon's legal framework systematizes gender inequality. For example:

- Fifteen personal status laws replicate sectarian and gendered discrimination for Lebanese women. Varying by sects, these laws are more disadvantageous for some Lebanese women than others, for example, when it comes to divorce (although divorce laws discriminate against women of all sects in different ways) or inheritance.

- The Citizenship Law engenders discrimination by not allowing a woman to pass on her nationality to her foreign husband or children, while men can pass on their citizenship to their foreign wives. There is also a fear that providing citizenship to the growing number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees in the country would tip the balance towards some religious groups. As a result, thousands of men and children are stateless in Lebanon, which means they are restricted in access to government services, education, employment and inheritance.

numerous patriarchal and patrilineal legal, political, economic, and social systems creates significant challenges for women wanting to take part in political life and for those working to redefine the structures that impact their decisions as voters and as candidates. When women do enter the

> "Marginalized groups, including women, are facing not only cultural and societal barriers that are hindering them from political life; it is also the Lebanese model and framework of authority that is built on power and wealth at the expense of transparency, accountability and independence, that hinders any chance of democracy and equity."
>
> - Sylvana Lakkis, Executive Director, LUPD

realm of the patriarchal political system, they are held to higher standards than their male counterparts.[17]

The Lebanese legal system requires significant reform to allow women to fully and effectively engage in all aspects of Lebanese society. The legal obstacles created by personal status laws, the criminal code and the electoral law have serious implications for women's participation in political and public life and hinder their ability to act as full and equal citizens.

Despite a few notable exceptions to the low number of women in Lebanese politics, such as the appointment of a woman Minister of Finance in 2010 and the more recent 2019 appointment of a woman Minister of Interior, success stories are infrequent and often reserved for those with familial connections to influential political male leaders and to those with access to wealth. The unprecedented 113 women who registered as candidates during the 2018 parliamentary elections resulted in only six women successfully gaining seats.[18] The high campaign expenditure ceiling—which allows candidates to expense up to 300 million Lebanese pounds for their candidacy race, in addition to the eight million Lebanese pounds nomination fee—has marginalized

women, who often do not have access to the necessary capital,[19] and, as a result, has reinforced a system exclusive to the existing political leaders.

To empower women, both women-centered and gender-specific issues must be represented within all political

Refugee Women in Lebanon

Many of the refugees from Syria in Lebanon are women and girls who may live without the protection of their male spouses or relatives who were victims of the conflict. Women refugees face some of the most difficult conditions, including:

- High rates of social and sexual harassment and violence in camps and on the street.

- High rates of domestic violence often associated with rising stress levels of unemployed male family members.

- Early marriage especially amongst Syrian refugee girls.

- Joblessness or access to only menial jobs that do not provide a living wage. This has made many refugee women vulnerable to prostitution and increased rates of child labor.

- Limited access to healthcare, including reproductive healthcare and mental healthcare.

- Limited availability of educational opportunities.

and legislative structures. Batruni and Hallinan[20] found that the historic number of female candidates who ran in the 2018 parliamentary election were members of new parties and coalitions; however, women's voices were still not integrated

17- El-Turk, N. & Khoury, D. (2017, October 23). Lebanese women in parties have capacities but face sexist attitudes. Women Empowered for Leadership. Retrieved from: https://womeninleadership.hivos.org/story/lebanese-women-in-parties-have-capacities-but-face-sexist-attitudes/
18- UN Women. (2018, May 23). Record number of women on the ballot in Lebanon's first parliamentary elections since 2009. Retrieved from: http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/5/news-record-number-of-women-on-the-ballot-in-lebanon
19- Batruni, C. & Hallinan, M. (2018, April). Politics, Progress, and Parliament in 2018: Can Lebanese Women Make Headway? Retrieved from: https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/electionsbpaper_lebwomen_ls_online.pdf
20- Ibid.

into mainstream politics. In order to push for gender-equality goals, women need access to leadership positions within major parties, which continue to play the role of primary decision-makers in the country.

Establishing female quotas in parliament could be a step towards the institutionalization of women in politics. Currently, quotas are used to allocate parliamentary seats for sects, but not for women in Lebanon.[21] In 2018, the Kataeb party introduced a bill in Parliament proposing a 30 percent gender quota for parliamentary seats. Parliament members struggled to agree on the quota, arguing that women should not be motivated to run and win. The proposal failed when the majority of parties did not agree to adopt it.[22] Female member of parliament, Dr. Dima Jamali, championed the call for women's quota, saying there should either be a quota for women to

Status of People with Disabilities

Legal transition towards laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities in Lebanon has been slow, and the government continues to use a medical model rather than a rights-based approach to disability. Lebanon passed Law 220 in 2000, acknowledging the right of people with disabilities to education, health and other basic services. The passage of this law was made possible as a result of extensive lobbying and advocacy conducted by DPOs in Lebanon for almost two decades.[26] Law 220 holds government accountable for implementing strategies to include people with disabilities in social and economic life. The law immediately established the National Council of Disability Affairs (NCDA), which was

enter government or a quota requirement within political parties.[23] She presented a draft bill on women's representation to parliament in September 2019.[24]

The start of the revolution in October 2019 brought many women to the streets as protestors and shed light on some of these systemic challenges for women. Women from different sects, women with disabilities, women in poverty, women refugees, women from rural or underserved areas, women domestic migrant workers and many more were visible among the demonstrators leading the movement and demanding change.[25]

People with disabilities in Lebanon include:

- Older women, who are more likely to suffer worse health, have a lower socio-economic status, be less educated and live alone.

- Children and youth with disabilities who have less access to school and employment opportunities.

- Palestinian and Syrian refugees who may live in poor conditions, suffer from food insufficiency and food insecurity, and lack of access to health services. Older refugees, women and children and poorer, uneducated refugees are at particular risk of exploitation and neglect.

Situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon, Emilie Combaz, K4D Helpdesk Report, UK Department for International Development, July 15, 2018.

tasked with overseeing national planning to put Law 220 into effect. Unfortunately, the structure of the NCDA puts it under the authority of one ministry, meaning it

21- Associated Press. (2018, January 21). 'Half of society, half of parliament' – Lebanese women campaign for more political power. Retrieved from: https://www.thenational.ae/world/half-of-society-half-of-parliament-lebanese-women-campaign-for-more-political-power-1.697205

22- Batruni, C. & Hallinan, M. (2018, April). Politics, Progress, and Parliament in 2018: Can Lebanese Women Make Headway? Retrieved from: https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/electionsbpaper_lebwomen_ls_online.pdf

23- Home Magazine. Dr. Dima Jamali: Breaking Into the Fortress of the Parliament. Issue No. 9, Business Vocation & Entrepreneurship. Retrieved from: https://mylebanonmyhome.com/dr-dima-jamali-breaking-into-the-fortress-of-the-parliament/

24- Al Diyar, NNA. (2019, September 24). Women's quota proposal, draft law for incriminating sexual harassment. Women Economic Empowerment Portal. Retrieved from: https://www.weeportal-lb.org/news/womens-quota-proposal-draft-law-incriminating-sexual-harassment

25- Nassar, F.N. (2019, November 5). Women and women's rights are central to Lebanon's protest movement. Middle East Institute. Retrieved from: https://www.mei.edu/publications/women-and-womens-rights-are-central-lebanons-protest-movement

26- UNESCO. (2013, September). Social Inclusion of Young Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in Lebanon: Where do we stand and what should be done to promote their rights? Retrieved from: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/images/SHS/Social_Inclusion_Young_Persons_with_Disabilities_Lebanon.pdf

frequently struggles to access information from other ministries and ultimately is prevented from being able to share crucial data regarding necessary services to individuals and organizations.[27] Seven years after this law was passed, Lebanon signed the CRPD. However, the convention has yet to be formally ratified, and has been stuck in limbo in parliament for over a decade. This poses major challenges for the community and signals a lack of commitment from government officials to institutionalize the rights of people with disabilities, leading to marginalization and widespread discrimination, exclusion and violence, both in the home and in public life. Professional and educational opportunities are scarce as a result of discrimination, poor infrastructure and a lack of reasonable accommodations[28] in many environments.[29] Many public buildings and outdoor spaces are not accessible, nor are government and private sector websites and other modes of communication. While 98,000 people (approximately two percent of the population) are officially registered as having a disability in Lebanon[30], the number could be radically more. The World Health Organization estimates 15 percent of the global population

has a disability, which would place the number of people with disabilities in Lebanon at approximately ten times the official number. Low registration for a disability card could be a result of many factors, including stigma or lack of information on how to register for it. The government's definition also does not cover all types of disability and therefore some groups of individuals are excluded from official numbers as a result of this narrow definition.

Services for people with disabilities are very limited; there is no disability pension nor is there any provision or acknowledgement of a right to an assistant. In addition, high unemployment in Lebanon and inaccessible schools for students with disabilities disproportionately affect access to education and livelihoods, especially for the younger groups.

In order to help change these conditions, people with disabilities have been visibly active in the revolution, taking to the streets in places such as Tyre, Tripoli and Beirut among fellow protestors to push for legal, political and economic reforms.[31]

Status of LGBTQ people

The LGBTQ community in Lebanon faces discrimination on many fronts – through legal provisions, the denial of protected right to assembly, an increased threat of harassment and arrest, and lack of societal acceptance. At the same time, however, the LGBTQ movement has made incremental progress through increasingly active advocacy, relatively promising change in societal perceptions and court decisions favoring LGBTQ rights.

Article 534 of Lebanon's penal code allows "any sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature" to be punished with a fine and up to one year in prison. While courts rarely use the law to imprison LGBTQ people, and many judges consider the duration of detention and interrogation of individuals as time served, the law is used by police and security forces to harass people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, with people facing multiple levels of exclusion most likely to

27- Article 19. (2015, May). Lebanon: Disability and Access to Information. Retrieved from: https://www.article19.org/data/files/medialibrary/37983/Disability-and-access-to-information-in-Lebanon,-31-May-2015,-English.pdf
28- Per Article 2 of the CRPD, reasonable accommodation "means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms."
29- Combaz, E. (2018, July 15). Situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon. K4D. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b584da340f0b633af812655/Disability_in_Lebanon.pdf
30- lebanon-elections.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ENG-A5-PWD-brochure-Final.pdf
31- Ajjan, M. (2019, November 2). Lebanese with special needs revolt. Annahar. Retrieved from: https://en.annahar.com/article/1061058-lebanese-with-special-needs-revolt

be targeted.[32] The Penal Code's prohibition of offenses against public decency provides further basis for arrest and harassment of LGBTQ people. Those that are sentenced under Article 534 or other morality clauses subsequently face further marginalization as they are prohibited from voting based on the June 2017 electoral law, passed ahead of the May 2018 parliamentary elections.

In a sign of shifting legal interpretations, over the last decade, judges have ruled on five separate occasions that human actions cannot be considered unnatural, ruling in favor of LGBTQ defendants, including transgender individuals. In the most prominent case, a district court of appeal ruled that consensual sex between people of the same sex is not unlawful – the first ruling by an appellate court. While the decision did not establish a binding precedent, it signals an increasing unwillingness of courts to convict based on Article 534. In March 2019, a military tribunal did not prosecute four soldiers who were dismissed from their post on accusations of "sodomy." While the soldiers were not acquitted, the decision to not issue arrest warrants was lauded by the LGBTQ community.

LGBTQ advocacy in Lebanon, beginning with the establishment of Helem – the first organization in the Arab world created to improve the status of LGBTQ people – has grown since it filed for registration in 2004. CSOs have organized public events and conferences to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and to discuss LBGTQ rights. In 2017, the first ever Beirut Pride event took place featuring over a dozen events and coinciding with the first local advertisement featuring a lesbian couple. This progress has not been without setbacks: in 2018, governmental authorities shut down the Beirut Pride celebration after arresting its organizer, and similarly attempted – that same year – to shut down and intimidate participants of a conference on the rights of LGBTQ people organized by the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE).

While LGBTQ individuals often face discrimination in employment and public services, and encounter threats and violence in their everyday lives, recent studies have shown that Lebanese are relatively more accepting of LGBTQ people than other MENA countries, though the rate of acceptance is still low. A 2013 Pew survey found that 18 percent of Lebanese surveyed said that society should accept homosexuality – the highest percentage among Arab nations.[33] Furthermore, a 2015 study by AFE found that respondents largely opposed punitive action against homosexuals, suggesting a view that homosexuals are not criminals.[34] While AFE's research still found the majority of respondents viewing homosexuals as a societal threat, this demonstrates some level of progress, particularly in comparison to other countries in the region. That said, LGBTQ people are not a monolithic group, with transgender men and women experiencing different kinds of discrimination compared to their lesbian, gay and bisexual peers. As in most countries, the general public in Lebanon is not familiar with the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation and LGBTQ people are not often active members of CSOs representing other identity groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and youth.

Status of Youth

According to the Ministry of Youth & Sports (MoYS) in Lebanon, the youth age bracket is 15-29 years old, constituting roughly 27%[35] of the total population in Lebanon. In 2012, the Lebanese Council of Ministers endorsed a Youth Policy Document intended to outline

32- Ghoshal, N. (2018, August 28). Success to Savor but More Challenges for LGBT Rights in Lebanon. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved from: https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/28/success-savor-more-challenges-lgbt-rights-lebanon
33- Pew Research Center. (2013, June 4). The Global Divide on Homosexuality. Retrieved from: https://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/
34- Nasr, N. & Zeidan, T. (2015). 'As Long As They Stay Away' Exploring Lebanese Attitudes Towards Sexualities and Gender Identities. AFE MENA. Retrieved from: http://afemena.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Report-high-resolution.pdf
35 – Youth Forum for Youth Policy. (2012, April). The Document of the Youth Policy in Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Lebanon_2012_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

the State's commitment to improve living conditions and increase youth access to services and decision-making processes,[36] however the policy document has not resulted in much progress toward implementation.

There are several election-related regulations in Lebanon that are discriminatory to youth, including the voting age, which is set by the Constitution at age 21. Similarly, the minimum age for participation in elections as a candidate is set at age 25, provided that candidates have the financing required to run in elections, which most youth do not. Numerous laws that affect women also have a flow down effect on youth, particularly those related to Lebanese mothers' inability to pass on nationality to their children, and the latter's consequent diminished rights. Not only in law, but in practice as well, there are compounded challenges faced by young women or youth with disabilities in the workplace, such as employment-related discrimination or a greater likelihood to face sexual harassment.

UNICEF estimates that in Lebanon, 520,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are considered "vulnerable" and living in poverty, including over 300,000 Lebanese, 154,000 Syrians, and 51,000 Palestinians.[37] Boys and young men, in particular Syrian refugees, are more prone to be pulled into child labor as a result of the lacking economy and familial pressure to take on adult roles earlier in life.[38] However, there are also situations where girls and young women are forced into child labor due to boys and young men fearing deportation or conflict with local communities who view refugees with contempt. With COVID-19 and the economic crisis, unemployment numbers have skyrocketed in 2020, disproportionately affecting youth in

Lebanon, and contributing to the fact that "Lebanon's young adults continue to leave the country in droves." [39] Young people often have limited opportunities to engage in decision-making processes due to family norms that tend to exclude them from these spaces.[40] Families are typically hierarchical, and negative reinforcement such as threats and shaming are communication barriers imposed by adults to discourage discussions around young people's participation in civic and political life, leaving many, in particular young women, feeling a lack of agency.[41] Typically, youth participation in formal civic groups is low, but "youth who have internet access and those who follow the news are much more likely to belong to a civic group."[42] However, young people do participate in social movements and protests, viewing this means of engagement as more influential than formal political processes.[43] This was visibly demonstrated over the past year since the October 2019 protests, where there were notably strong youth-led movements and participation, highlighting just how dire the situation is for young people across the country.

And yet youth continue to show their agility and commitment to affecting change. In response to the 2020 Beirut explosion, Lebanese youth have mobilized into action with some young men breaking gender norms to volunteer alongside young women cooking in volunteer kitchens and community cleanup initiatives.[44] Youth are on the frontlines participating in relief efforts, from distributing masks, hygiene kits and essential humanitarian supplies, to supporting rehabilitation efforts at blast damaged sites.[45]

36- Ibid.
37- UNICEF. (2020, December 21). Lebanon Youth Development Programme. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/youth-development
38- Youssef, S. (2020, June). Adolescent boys and youth in Lebanon: A review of the evidence. Retrieved from: https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Adolescent-boys-and-youth-in-Lebanon.-A-review-of-the-evidence-.pdf
39- Chehayeb, K. (2020, March 29). Besides coronavirus, Lebanon has an equally dangerous outbreak on its hands – unemployment. The New Arab. Retrieved from: https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2020/3/31/beyond-covid-19-lebanons-unemployment-outbreak
40- Youssef, S. (2020, June). Adolescent boys and youth in Lebanon: A review of the evidence. Retrieved from: https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Adolescent-boys-and-youth-in-Lebanon.-A-review-of-the-evidence-.pdf
41- Chaaban, J. & el Khoury, A. (2016). Spotlight on Youth in Lebanon: December 2015. UNDP. Retrieved from: https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/poverty/Spotlight-on-Youth-in-Lebanon.html
42- Chaaban, J. & el Khoury, A. (2016). Spotlight on Youth in Lebanon: December 2015. p. 49. UNDP. Retrieved from: https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/poverty/Spotlight-on-Youth-in-Lebanon.html
43- Chaaban, J. & el Khoury, A. (2016). Spotlight on Youth in Lebanon: December 2015. p. 50. UNDP. Retrieved from: https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/poverty/Spotlight-on-Youth-in-Lebanon.html
44- UN Women. (2020, August 24). Young women and men step up to rebuild Beirut after the blasts. Retrieved from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/8/feature-youth-step-up-to-rebuild-beirut-after-blasts
45- UNICEF. (2020, August 26). Lebanon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 5. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/media/76816/file/Lebanon-SitRep-26-August-2020.pdf

Intersectionality **Assessment Methodology**

This section provides an overview of the concept of intersectionality, how it relates to political life, and outlines IFES' assessment methodology.

IFES' methodology seeks to identify opportunities for CSOs representing specific groups to build coalitions as well as vulnerabilities that might impact their political participation. Assessments include a desk review, key informant interviews with government, media and civil society leaders, focus group discussions, and feedback loops with key stakeholders. It is tailored to unique country contexts and allows for focus on either one discreet identity, such as women refugees, or multiple groups, such as women, people with disabilities and LGBTQ people, within a standardized framework.

Intersectionality assessment reports offer programming options that allow technical findings to be put to direct use by government, civil society and international NGO implementers.

The Lebanon intersectionality assessment was contextualized specifically for Lebanon and conducted in collaboration with IFES' local partners, the Lebanese Union for Persons with Physical Disabilities (LUPD) and ABAAD – Resource Center for Gender Equality. Key informant interviews were held with 24 Lebanese stakeholders, including representatives of:
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of State for Women and Youth
- Political parties
- Women candidates in recent elections
- Women's empowerment CSOs
- Disabled people's organizations (DPOs),
- LGBTQ rights CSOs
- Media freedom and observer groups

Interviews focused on participation in political and public life and looked to identify opportunities to integrate a more intersectional approach into Lebanese initiatives and explore building coalitions between CSOs representing different marginalized groups.

Data was also collected through a series of interactive focus group discussions and surveys with 42 individuals. These focus groups included men, women, men with disabilities and women with disabilities. Participants were drawn from different age, wealth, and educational strata and an array of religious identities and geographic regions. The IIR partners conducted four, three-hour focus groups. During the FGDs, participants worked in groups to identify and present key information on their political participation that they then analyzed, categorized and prioritized in different ways. Participants also took open "votes" on opinions and priorities that were immediately tabulated and visualized to guide open discussions on results. This methodology emboldened even the quietest of participants to think for themselves and voice their opinions, as opposed to more traditional group interviews where a handful of participants may monopolize the conversation.

The results from the assessment are a rich mix of qualitative and quantitative data, with the focus groups and key informant interview findings providing qualitative information on the issues faced by Lebanese across various identities. Prior to conducting the FGDs, IFES also asked each participant to fill out an

anonymous survey. The survey allowed IFES to collect demographical information as well as opinions on political life in Lebanon. The surveys were cross-tabulated with responses and votes taken during the FGDs to determine how individuals within certain demographic categories feel about their level of civic and/or political participation in Lebanon. The findings are not meant to statistically represent the opinions of each identity group at large.

For more details on why IFES chose a participatory methodology, some common critiques of intersectional research frameworks, and how IFES has addressed them, please see Annex 1.
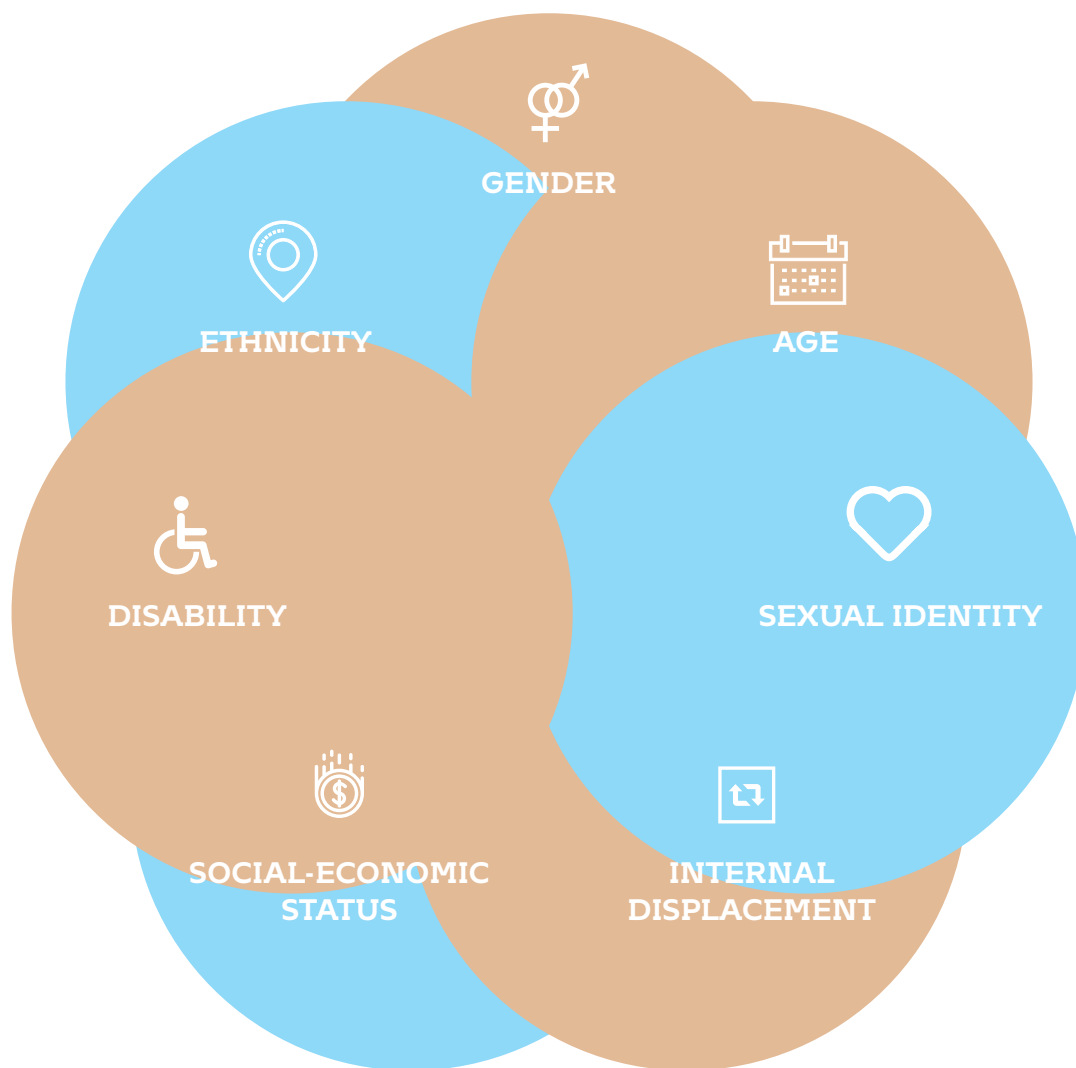
What is intersectionality?

Gender, disability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, and other identity markers all impact an individual's experiences participating in political and public life. Depending on the context, these identities can provide access and agency or can contribute to barriers and exclusion. Traditionally excluded populations – including women, persons with disabilities, young people, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous people and LGBTQ persons – often experience personal and systemic discrimination at the individual, community and institutional levels, as well as inequitable access to and control over resources. The intersection of inequalities caused by different social identities can lead to barriers that prevent meaningful participation in elections and political processes; and, in some cases, may result in the individuals being subjected to physical or psychological violence. The compounding nature of these barriers is often referred to as intersectionality, or the idea that individuals face unique experiences of discrimination resulting from the interconnected nature of multiple social identities.

Intersectionality, n. – the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage *(Oxford Dictionary)*.

Lebanese CSOs close a 3-day camp on working towards national common inclusive policies (Rona Dbeissi/LUPD)

Examples of intersecting social identities

"Intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression: their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers. Intersectionality recognizes that identity markers (e.g. "female" and "black") do not exist independently of each other, and that each informs the others, often creating a complex convergence of oppression."[46]

In 1989, Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to explain how the experience of being a Black woman in the United States is more than the sum of being Black and being a woman.[47] Intersectionality recognizes the unique experience of discrimination that comes with the intersection of multiple social identities. Since that time, the term has been used to describe the experience of many other social identities (class, sexuality, disability, age), and scholars and development practitioners have continued to discuss and use the concept.

46- YW Boston. (2017, March 29). What is intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me? YW Boston Blog. Retrieved from: https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/
47- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

This approach recognizes that intersectional oppression can be experienced at both the individual and at the community level: "the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions" as part of a "matrix of domination."[48] As a research approach and a theory, intersectionality is not only an account of personal identity but one of power, or, as black feminist scholar Brittney Cooper argues, "the intersectionality framework provides a lens to think about identity and its relationship to power."[49]

"When feminism does not explicitly oppose racism, and when antiracism does not incorporate opposition to patriarchy, race and gender politics often end up being antagonistic to each other and both interests lose."

- Kimberlé Crenshaw (Ted Talk, October 2016)

Governments and international organizations have also contributed to the development of an intersectional framework. In 2000, the Beijing Platform for Action outlined the importance of examining women's issues using an intersectional approach, and similar pronouncements have been made at subsequent meetings of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women.[50] The Government of Canada uses a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) approach to explore the changing realities and inequalities of diverse groups of people and the way these realities affect how individuals experience the impact

of government policies, programs and initiatives.[51] This approach recognizes that groups of people are not homogeneous and "examines how sex and gender intersect

"There is a need for a better integration of indigenous persons with disabilities in society. However, the integration must respect the cultural background of indigenous peoples. Often, legislation and policies designed to include persons with disabilities in mainstream society leads to cultural assimilation when applied to indigenous persons with disabilities, threatening their languages, ways of life and identities."

Summary Report of the Expert Group Meeting on indigenous persons with disabilities https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDisabilities/Pages/IPDisabilities.aspx

with other identities such as race, ethnicity, religion, age and mental or physical disability."[52] The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) emphasizes the need for an intersectional approach to development, arguing that "if our baseline analysis and project planning do not begin with a complete picture of the economic, social, political and cultural situation, then our interventions and programs cannot possibly achieve their full potential."[53] Likewise, in their guidelines on Gender Integration into Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Programming, USAID recognizes that interventions aimed at reducing vulnerability and inequality must take these intersections of multiple identities into account in order to be effective.[54]

48- Hill Collins, Patricia. "Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination." Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 221–238.
49- Cooper, Brittney. 2015. "Intersectionality." The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory, edited by Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth. Oxford University Press. Available at: http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199328581-e-20?fbclid= IwAR3c7w55HGB09QsP8i1g5Uf6wP_60J6gY-EgXFJ-CSczQcenR_PDACwg45k#oxfordhb-9780199328581-e-20-bibItem-22
50- Manuel, T. (2006) Envisioning the Possibilities for a Good Life: Exploring the Public Policy Implications of Intersectionality Theory. Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, 28:3-4, 173-203. Retrieved from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1300/J501v28n03_08
51- Government of Canada. Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+): What is GBA+?. Status of Women Canada. Retrieved from: https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/index-en.html
52- Government of Canada. Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+): Government of Canada Approach. Status of Women Canada. Retrieved from: https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/approach-approche-en.html
53- AWID. (2004). Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice. Women's Rights and Economic Change, no. 9.
54- Kozma, A. (2016, June). Gender Integration in Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) Programming Toolkit. USAID. Retrieved from: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2496/Gender%20Toolkit.pdf

An intersectional lens can provide important insight into how overlapping barriers from a broad range of identities manifest at the individual and group levels. For example, refugees with disabilities in Kenya, Nepal and Uganda have noted that a lack of accessibility leads to decreased overall safety.[55] The DisAbled Women's Network of Canada submitted a Parliamentary Brief to the government highlighting the challenges faced by older women, including the fact that there are disproportionately low rates of prosecution and conviction in cases of sexual assault that target older women in institutional settings.[56] The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people has noted that indigenous peoples with disabilities are disproportionately impacted in situations of armed conflict, disaster and climate change. In Honduras, indigenous persons are often not officially registered at birth for many reasons, including living in remote communities that are far from government offices. As a result, indigenous deep-sea divers have no access to health services if they acquire a disability.[57] A study on suicide risk found that in the United States, African American women had a lower suicide risk than European American women in part because African American women had a strong sense of identity and heritage [58]. These examples demonstrate how, in a wide variety of contexts, intersectional approaches lead to a more nuanced understanding of barriers, reach populations otherwise invisible to programming, and point to potential solutions.

> "More inclusive development will be fostered best by integrated programming that reaches people from all marginalized groups (e.g. women and girls, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBT persons) and that recognizes individuals may experience multiple intersecting vulnerabilities."
>
> - LGBT Vision for Action, USAID, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1874/LGBT_Vision.pdf

How is intersectionality relevant to political participation?

While intersectional approaches have so far had the most visible impacts in the fields of social discrimination, equality and related state policies and services, intersectionality is fundamentally about power relations and thus has a profound impact on understanding the dynamics of political inclusion and exclusion. For example, using an intersectional lens, research on women's political ambition in the United States showed that white and Asian women reacted to media narratives around political ambition attributing lack of representation in political institutions to external causes, while Black women had a completely opposite response[59]. If women were treated as one homogeneous group, this finding may not have come to light, and thus interventions might not have addressed the distinct

55- Women's Refugee Commission. (2015, January). Sexual and Reproductive Health and Disability: Examining the Needs, Risks and Capacities of Refugees with Disabilities in Kenya, Nepal and Uganda. Retrieved from: https://s33660.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Reproductive-Health-and-Disability-Summary-Report.pdf

56- DisAbled Women's Network of Canada. (2019, March 29). Challenges faced by senior women with a focus on the factors contributing to their poverty & vulnerability. A Brief Prepared for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in Canada. Retrieved from: https://dawncanada.net/media/uploads/page_data/page-63/dawn_canada_brief_to_fewo_on_challenges_faced_by_senior_women_march_29_2019.pdf

57- OHCHR. (2016, July 7-8). Summary Report: Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved from: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDisabilities/Pages/IPDisabilities.aspx

58- Borum, V. (2012). African American women's perceptions of depression and suicide risk and protection: A womanist exploration. Affilia, 27(3), 316-327.

59- Holman, M. & Schneider, M. (2016, July 26). Gender, race and political ambition: how intersectionality and frames influence interest in political office. Retrieved from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21565503.2016.1208105?journalCode=rpgi20

causes for demotivation, perpetuating underrepresentation of Black women. Similarly, a team of scholars from the School of Oriental and African Studies and organizations based in the Middle East and North Africa looked at how intersections of gender, generation, sexuality, class and race affect youth political participation,[60] and found that, in Tunisia in particular, it is the intersection of religion and gender that affects how young people engage in public life. Young conservative women were excluded from political life because human rights organizations focused on "modernists," including young women who were unveiled. In Armenia, IFES collaborated with disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) from across the country to develop a strategy for influencing public policy. Women's rights organizations were invited to the policy platform drafting sessions, where DPOs learned about a draft gender-based violence law, which did not include any reference to women with disabilities, who are ten times more likely to experience violence compared to women without disabilities.[61] The DPOs and women's rights organizations realized they would all benefit if the law was adopted and developed a joint advocacy plan which resulted in the adoption of the law, with specific clauses included to address the different experiences of women with disabilities.

While using an intersectional lens is important in academic work on political participation and inclusion, it is also critical that it be practically integrated into international development actions. Oxfam International has emphasized the importance of focusing on the political

dimension of intersectionality, calling on practitioners to "use an intersectional perspective not just to 'quantify' the structural discrimination that different groups are subjected to but to understand how that discrimination shapes their political action – and ultimately, how [they] can support such action."[62]

Like intersectionality, politics, too, is about power and those who hold it. It is therefore insufficient to have discussions about political and electoral participation without discussing intersectionality and understanding how various social identities (and the intersection of those identities) affect that participation. Despite growing conversations around intersectionality, many civil society and non-governmental organizations focus on working with individuals facing discrimination from the perspective of only one social identity. For example, there are numerous organizations working on women's rights or the rights of persons with disabilities, but far fewer organizations focused on empowering women with disabilities. Women's leadership initiatives may focus on women who are perceived as the most "electable," further excluding women with less access to resources due to class, race or other social identities and reinforcing some of the same patriarchal structures that led to limited representation of women in the first place. In addition, organizations representing groups from one social identity may share common goals, but rarely work as allies within the broader human rights movement, often because of competition for resources or the perception that rights of all groups cannot be advanced together (rights as a zero-sum game). This lack of coordination results in missed opportunities for impactful

60- Salih, R., Welchman, L. & Zambelli, E. (2017, February). Gender, Intersectionality and Youth Civic and Political Engagement. An Analysis of the Meso-Level Factors of Youth Exclusion/Inclusion in the South and East Mediterranean (SEM) Region. Power2Youth. Working Paper No. 24. Retrieved from: http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/p2y_24.pdf
61- UNFPA. (2018, July). Young Persons with Disabilities: Global Study on Ending Gender-based Violence and Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Retrieved from: https://www.unfpa.org/publications/young-persons-disabilities
62- Enarsson, J. (2015). Re-Politicising Intersectionality: How an intersectional perspective can help INGOs be better allies to women's rights movements. Oxfam Intersectionality Series. Retrieved from: https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Repoliticising_Intersectionality_-_Enarsson__fmkAQFP.pdf

advocacy and collaboration. Further, if individuals and organizations do not have a strong understanding of intersectionality and how it manifests itself in activism and advocacy, they run the risk of working to solve inequalities for one group while unconsciously perpetuating them for another.

What is IFES' Intersectionality Assessment Framework?

IFES' Intersectionality Assessment Framework is an evidence-based tool used in individual countries to:

1. Identify how different social identities impact political access; and
2. Encourage coalition-building among diverse organizations.

By focusing on how identities such as gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion intersect, the assessment provides a nuanced examination of how political and social exclusion is expressed in the exercise of political rights and in public life and identifies ways for CSOs to address discrimination through coordinated action. IFES seeks to use assessment findings to develop programs that identify and break down silos between CSOs representing different groups in order to respond to existing forms of exclusion and prevent further discrimination. The assessment and recommendations can also be used to inform the international donor community of ways to enhance the inclusivity and impact of their existing or future programs. The assessment also includes recommendations for decision makers to better foster inclusive politics in their country.

The Intersectionality Assessment is conducted by IFES global inclusion experts in collaboration with IFES field teams and local organizations, with an emphasis on using the assessment's results to empower CSO partners as advocacy leaders. The framework's participatory evaluation approaches to gather evidence privilege the experiences and views of historically excluded groups to identify programmatic strategies that can support their increased participation in political life. The assessment methodology is adapted to each country context based on the key demographics in the country and needs identified by national actors. Findings are used to develop easy-to-understand, actionable recommendations to increase access to political life and to promote collaboration between organizations representing different social groups.

To identify intersectional barriers and opportunities, the assessment uses the following approaches:

Desk Review

A desk review of relevant laws (such as election laws, anti-discrimination laws and laws that target specific identity groups), policies, election observer reports and media is used to contextualize the assessment methodology. This includes any assessments or publications from local or international NGOs and a comprehensive review and analysis of UN treaty Committee reports and other relevant global or regional reports.

Key Informant Interviews

The assessment includes key informant interviews with a variety of stakeholders involved in the political process, including government officials and political, religious, community and CSO leaders.

Recommendations for interviews are provided by IFES field staff and local civil society organizations. An illustrative question guide is contextualized for each country report. Data collected during interviews sheds light on stakeholder perspectives on the impact of intersectionality in political life and how each stakeholder is or is not addressing it in their respective roles. Interviews with government officials and political parties help identify opportunities to integrate CSO priorities with government initiatives and interviews with civil society leaders can help determine opportunities for collaboration with each other. Participation in the assessment is often the first-time government and CSO stakeholders are exposed to the concept of intersectionality and begin to think about how they can better target their policies or programs to ensure they are inclusive of all people.

Interactive Focus Group Discussions

The assessment generates broader qualitative data through collaborative focus group discussions and participant-led analysis with the assessment's target populations on access, voice, and leadership. IFES' participatory focus group methodology centers on the voices and deliberations of participants in order to ensure their meaningful participation.

Moderators give space to participants to share, interpret, and examine their experiences through group and individual exercises. While IFES has a standardized approach to each focus group, participants drive the conversation.

Intersectionality Assessment Report

Data collected through the desk review, key informant interviews and interactive focus group discussions is presented in a detailed report. Key findings related to barriers and opportunities for political engagement included in the Intersectionality Assessment Report are then used to develop easy-to-understand, actionable recommendations for evidence-based programming.

Feedback Loops

In collaboration with local partner organizations, IFES organizes socialization workshops as a platform for participants to provide feedback on a draft version of the Intersectionality Assessment Report. These feedback loops ensure the assessment process is collaborative by empowering participants to take a lead role in the design and implementation of intersectional programming. In the case of Lebanon, the report also includes lessons learned from collaboration with civil society partners via an Inclusive Dialogue Working Group.

Opportunities and Vulnerabilities

The following opportunities and vulnerabilities were drawn from the assessment and used to identify potential entry points for change or highlight where challenges exist as an impediment to change.

"As a Deaf person, there are many difficulties. No one explains anything; there are words I don't understand and no sign language to clarify what I should do or where I should write or who the people are on the ballot. I might vote for the wrong person. We need sign language at the voting center."

- Man with a disability, Focus Group Discussion

OPPORTUNITIES

Lebanon is diverse in terms of religion and ethnicities, and co-existence is a reality for Lebanese citizens.

Lebanon has a history of CSO activism and many CSOs have experience in mobilizing around causes.

Recent protests have united people from diverse backgrounds, energized civil society and led to calls for ending sectarianism and reforming the electoral system.

Youth make up a large percentage of the electorate and this population is generally more socially conscious and open to social change.

The new electoral law introduced ballot secrecy for the first time for the 2018 elections, providing a unique opportunity to increase voter independence.

The 2018 parliamentary elections were the first time numerous candidates called for LGBTQ rights.

In January 2020, a new cabinet was established in response to calls by protestors, increasing the number of women to 6 in the positions of: Deputy Prime Minister & Defence Minister; Justice Minister; Labor Minister; Youth & Sports Minister; Minister of Displaced; and Information Minister.

There are many knowledgeable and experienced CSOs working on discrimination and marginalization of Lebanese citizens.

Lebanese CSOs are beginning to see the benefits of working together in coalitions.

DPOs and LGBTQ groups are particularly aware of the intersectional nature of their members and are keen to collaborate.

VULNERABILITIES

Lebanese citizens are disenchanted by corruption, clientelism, economic stagnation, and weak service delivery by the government. This has led to widespread protests which could escalate to violent crackdowns against protestors or closing space for civil society.

For the most part, people with stigmatized social identites are not included in broader civil society movements.

Inaccessibility of public information combined with lack of transparency makes it difficult to advocate for access to services on an equal basis.

The parliamentary election upheld the status quo, with seats divided under a sectarian system and women making up less than 5 percent of the legislature.

In 2020, Lebanon ranked 145th out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap report.

Different religious laws mean there is not one unified civil status law that people can advocate to change. For example, women continue to suffer discrimination under 15 different status laws, dependent on their religious affiliation.

The CRPD has not yet been ratified by the Lebanese government. The bulk of support provided to persons with disabilities is done by religious groups, leading to unequal distribution of services.

Article 534 of the penal code has been used to persecute LGBTQ persons.

Ongoing turmoil in neighboring Syria continues to put economic, political and social pressure on Lebanese society.

Key **Findings**

There are 15 different confessional personal status laws, which result in Lebanese citizens from different religions having different legal protections. The lack of a unified secular civil status law hampers unified advocacy efforts. Citizens have different experiences with many areas of civic life, including divorce, inheritance and the minimum age for marriage.

There is a lack of accurate and official data on Lebanese citizens which impedes the capacity of civil society to effectively advocate against marginalization of and discrimination against various groups in society. Since Lebanon has not conducted an official census since 1932, all demographic data is estimated for the country. While the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) does collect some data, this is often sporadic and may be subject to political interference. Decision makers and activists alike do not have access to the information needed to adequately plan, determine policies, advocate for reform, or strategize for the future. Additionally, without accurate data, authorities cannot budget properly for the resources required, including upgrades or refurbishments to ensure accessibility or services essential to certain communities.

The proliferation of CSOs and associations has boosted the self-confidence of marginalized groups and provided them with a voice in Lebanon. Lebanon's 1909 Law on Associations has generally created an enabling legal environment which allows civil society organizations to thrive, compared to other countries in the MENA region. There were approximately 3,500[63] officially registered NGOs in Lebanon in 2005; by April 2018, the number had grown to at least 8,500 NGOs.[64] Many of these organizations have actively advocated for human rights, civil liberties

> "The rate of success is influenced by [civil] society, [women's equality] associations... all of them, without them women wouldn't have dared to talk. It was forbidden, even her parents were against her. Did you see a mother before - if you go back 15 years ago - who would stand by her daughter? She used to take her by the hand and return her to her house and tell her: 'this is your husband and shame on you and shut up' These ideas were developed. When the openness happened and [as a result of] associations, things changed and she was able to say, 'no, I want to go live my life' … regardless of the negative insinuations she'll get later on."
>
> -Lebanese woman, Focus Group Discussion

and a reduction of marginalization and discrimination. Women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ persons, refugees and others acknowledge that they have a voice when they did not before, and both women and people with disabilities noted that CSOs were active in providing civic and voter information and encouraging political participation around the 2018 elections.

63- Melki, Jad and Mallat, Sarah. Digital Activism: Efficacies and Burdens of Social Media for Civic Activism. Arab Media and Society (Issue 19, Fall 2014). Retrieved from: https://www.tasharuk.net/resources/files/1438761358MelkiMallatDigitalActivismFinal.pdf. P.2.
64- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. (2020). Civic Freedom Monitor: Lebanon. Retrieved from: http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/lebanon.html

Funding resources to reduce marginalization and discrimination in Lebanon are limited, leading to a lack of coordination between organizations working on similar thematic topics. Funding for organizations is scarce, leading CSOs working on similar issues to compete for limited funding opportunities. Moreover, this limits the growth capacity for grassroots organizations that may not have the same ability to compete for funding, despite having important networks and responsibilities in their communities. There is a recognition of this major challenge, and organizations and activists openly lament that they fail to coordinate and often duplicate each other's work. One reason often noted for this inefficiency is lack of coordination amongst international donors who fund similar projects, setting up a competitive rather than a cooperative environment for CSOs.

"Everyone has their priorities and we are still not seen as a priority. This is why trainings to sensitize one another are so critical. What is LGBTQ? What does that acronym mean? We need to really include it in the mindset. While working in a group on the subject of education, I suggested adding the definition of LGBTQ into the curriculum. Others in my group said "it is too early; they are too young" - they were reluctant to add that component. How could we be intersectional if our peers do not understand?"

-LGBTQ activist, Key Informant Interview

Civil society organizations representing different marginalized groups do not freely collaborate or coordinate, particularly with highly stigmatized groups. Representatives of groups that are stigmatized in Lebanon

often find it a struggle to reach common ground even with those closest to their issue area. For example, DPOs and LGBTQ organizations have not worked together to protect the rights of LGBTQ people who have a disability, and women's rights organizations are not coordinating with HIV/AIDS organizations or working to integrate trans women into their work. A CSO working on advocacy for women living with HIV also found that when it attempted to expand its focus to work with sex workers or those with a drug addiction, there was active resistance by some people within the group.

Additionally, CSOs tend to fall into the trap of identifying individuals by a single characteristic and look at issues and experiences of the individual from this prioritized factor – for example, a woman with a disability is assumed to only be interested in belonging to or having her needs addressed by a DPO, rather than also being involved in or being targeted by mainstream women's CSOs. Similarly, women with disabilities who are members of women's CSOs, find it a challenge to get their concerns as women with disabilities included in some larger advocacy platforms on women's rights. This may result in CSOs addressing only one set of concerns rather than developing high quality programming which looks at a complexity of experiences that may shape the individual's needs; additionally, beneficiaries may have to look for multiple services provided by several different actors which may increase inefficiency and reduce effectiveness. This also raises another important aspect of coordination as it relates to service provision, particularly when it comes to protection of people at risk of exploitation or abuse. There are several CSOs that provide shelter, but many are not equipped

for people with disabilities or people who are trans, which can result in delays or failure to protect.

> "We were all stressed about how to handle the blind participant at the conference because we have not worked with people with disabilities before. We know we need to learn more about disability inclusion."
>
> -LGBTQ activist, Key Informant Interview

DPOs and LGBTQ organizations have an interest in and acknowledge the benefits of intersectional coalition-building and learning from others' experiences, but it is not yet reflected in practice. Both DPOs and LGBTQ organizations noted that they need to find ways to work together because members within their groups have multiple social identities. LGBTQ groups, in particular, have recognized that working in coalitions on broader issues of civil liberties is one of the key ways they can make their voices heard without experiencing significant backlash specifically aimed at LGBTQ activism. For example, LGBTQ rights advocates have worked through youth advocacy networks on health issues in the past; they have advocated with a variety of organizations for proportional representation and an end to confessionalism in politics which they see as creating obstacles for youth, women and other marginalized people; they have worked in partnership with women's rights organizations, DPOs, Palestinian refugee groups and others on labor rights reform; and they have joined a diverse set of organizations to work within a national coalition for freedom of speech. Similarly, DPOs have taken the lead, alongside LGBTQ

groups and other networks, to advocate for more inclusive workplaces, both from an accessibility standpoint, but also by promoting diversity.

Observer groups and organizations that play a watchdog function can be good allies to CSOs fighting discrimination and marginalization. Members of Lebanese observer groups and other organizations that conduct monitoring of political processes are knowledgeable about the barriers women, persons with disabilities, youth and LGBTQ people face when attempting to participate in public life. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) integrated gender and disability as key components of their monitoring methodology and released a report on the 2018 parliamentary elections from a gender perspective. LADE and LUPD worked together to field observers, including observers with disabilities, during elections and observation reports noted accessibility findings. They are also incorporating the LGBTQ community as a target of their work and as observers, and an LGBTQ perspective will be integrated into their strategic mission in the future. Similarly, Maharat Foundation, an NGO which works on freedom of expression and media issues, conducted media monitoring of electoral campaigns from a gender perspective.

The LGBTQ movement has learned lessons from and worked with the women's rights movement in Lebanon, but they have also faced challenges working closely together. While LGBTQ groups are actively learning from other rights-focused advocacy efforts, with one activist stating that "a lot of the queer rights movement is based on what is happening in the feminist movement," and that they have fought the

patriarchy in society together, there is also acknowledgement that there are some tensions between the movements that must still be reconciled, such as on trans issues. One LGBTQ rights leader stated that "we have to figure out what a woman is for the feminist movement… there are a lot of really uncomfortable conversations on the horizon… how we move forward will require a lot of compromise."

While LGBTQ citizens continue to be marginalized in Lebanon, there are some positive signs signaling the opening of space on LGBTQ issues in Lebanese society. The 2018 parliamentary elections were the first time LGBTQ issues were part of political platforms, with 100 candidates openly advocating for the rights of LGBTQ people and decriminalization of homosexuality. LGBTQ advocates that were interviewed by the assessment team noted that part of this shift could be a result of candidates wanting to appeal to the more socially conscious young Lebanese joining the ranks of the electorate for the first time and who make up almost one-quarter of all voters. Prior to the elections, the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE) released a video pushing for the eradication of Article 534, stating "Discrimination is a disqualifier." The new Koullouna Watani coalition, as well as more traditionally conservative parties such as the Christian Democratic Kataeb party, made decriminalization of homosexuality part of their official electoral platforms. Additionally, the LGBTQ community has experienced judicial gains in recent years with both civil and military courts ruling in favor of LGBTQ rights.

Adoption of a revised elections law[65] created a new impetus for civil society to work together and expand representation in parliament by fielding non-traditional candidates. The revised electoral law allows for the creation of new and unforeseen alliances on candidate lists across the country, but the system still favors traditional parties, pushing individuals to run as part of a negotiated list. This makes it more difficult for some potential candidates, including women, people with disabilities or other marginalized people, all of whom are less likely to be part of a party. Despite this, civil society which had unified under the Koullouna Watani (We are all the nation) banner during the 2015 You Stink garbage crisis, for the first time fielded a coalition of CSO activists as part of the Beirut Madinati list. Unfortunately, the election law still retained the essential sectarian schism, with 64 seats reserved for Muslims and 64 for Christians and did not include the 30 percent quota for women that many civil society organizations had advocated for. The May 2018 election cycle saw more women than ever before put their names into the ring as candidates,[66] but women only won two extra seats in parliament, increasing their representation to six women out of 128 seats (less than 5 percent of all seats). As LADE, an observer organization, reported "[the law] reinforced the centralization of sectarian votes within a sectarian/political scope and weakened the ability of new candidates, especially women who do not have a popular base and a deep-rooted clientelist network to "penetrate" the elections."[67] Candidates with disabilities are known to have run for municipal elections. It is unknown

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65- Issued in 2017, the new elections law changed the electoral system from a block vote majoritarian system to a proportional representation system with a preferential vote.
66- Initially, 113 women submitted paperwork to run as candidates but 27 withdrew, resulting in a total of 86 women candidates out of 597 total candidates. A large reason for the withdrawal for many of these women was that they were unable to find electoral lists to join or come up with the hefty candidacy fees, which were higher than in the past.
67- Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections. (2018). Report on Election Monitoring 2018 From a Gender-Based Perspective. P.18.

whether any candidates with disabilities were fielded for parliamentary elections in 2018, however these elections did mark the

> "In Lebanon, you can apply to any job at 18 years and there is military service at 18. How can you serve in the military but not be allowed to vote?"
>
> -Young man, Focus Group Discussion

first time that a woman with a disability was made a member of the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE).[68]

Youth advocated to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 but perceive that political parties will not agree due to assumptions about which religions may gain an advantage with additional citizens on the voter's list. Lebanese law sets 18 years as the age of adulthood, which is the customary age at which citizens are enfranchised in most democracies.[69] However, Article 21 of the constitution stipulates that Lebanese citizens must be 21 in order to vote. Civil society groups such as the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform and the Lebanese Democratic Youth Union have advocated for the age to be lowered. A proposal to amend the constitution to reduce the voting age to 18 did pass the parliament in 2009 but did not complete all the required stages of the constitutional amendment process before the 2009 parliamentary elections. It was also not revived for the 2018 elections, in which young men and women voters represented

approximately 30% of the registered electorate.[70] Youth, as well as others the assessment team spoke with, speculated that a large reason for this is that the status

> "There are not standards to respect people with disabilities. A woman was carried [to the polling station] by the Civil Defense as if she was a sack of potatoes…He threw her on his back and went up the stairs."
>
> -Man with a disability, Focus Group Discussion

quo does not want to see the balance shift if some confessions add a large number of new voters to the voter register. Statistics Lebanon research released in March 2009, for example, showed that 175,000 Muslims could have been added to the voter roles as compared to 58,000 Christians, with Shia Muslims gaining the most new voters.[71]

Physical inaccessibility to the polling station continues to be a barrier to voting for many people with disabilities, older people and pregnant women. While the recent EU observation mission for the May 2018 parliamentary elections reported that 47 percent of polling stations were accessible,[72] DPOs conducting election observation and LUPD and IFES' 2009 survey shows that only 3 centers out of 70 visited met the criteria for accessible elections. LADE's monitors noted that at least 242 polling stations they monitored for the 2018 elections were inaccessible.[73] There were numerous reports of members of the Civil Defense assisting

68- EU Election Observation Mission to Lebanon. (2018). Lebanon Final Report Parliamentary Elections 2018. Retrieved from: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final_report_eu_eom_lebanon_2018_english_17_july_2018.pdf. Sylvana Lakkis was a representative of civil society on the SCE. She resigned on 20 April 2018.
69- ACE Encyclopaedia. Voter Registration. Retrieved from: http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vr/vra07/vra07a
70- UNDP. (2018, September 4). 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections: Results & Figures. Retrieved from: https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/democratic_governance/2018LebaneseParliamentaryElectionsResultsandFigures.html
71- Nash, M. (2010, January 29). With lower age, how many new voters? Retrieved from: https://www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc/mustknow/With_lower_age_how_many_new_voters.pdf
72- EU Election Observation Mission to Lebanon. (2018). Lebanon Final Report Parliamentary Elections 2018. Retrieved from: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final_report_eu_eom_lebanon_2018_english_17_july_2018.pdf. P.32.
73- Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections. (2018, May). Initial Report to Assess Voting Day.

citizens upstairs, including people with disabilities, older people or people with temporary injuries. Many IFES focus group participants noted their own discomfort with being physically carried upstairs or reported seeing older people or persons with disabilities being transported and then laid on the floor. Women with disabilities also noted that they were uncomfortable being physically handled by armed men. Others reported that if a voter needed help getting up the stairs, they were often asked to reveal who they were voting for in order to get assistance from members of that political party. Some added that once they were taken upstairs, they had difficulty finding someone who would take them back down. Election observers with disabilities also noted that there were many centers where they were unable to observe their assigned station since it was located on a floor they could not access.

> "In political life, just because she is a woman, she will be judged as incapable. So, imagine how difficult it would be when a disability is added. She will have to deal with two "disabilities": as a woman and as a disabled [person]...
>
> - Man with a disability, Focus Group Discussion

Within the disability community, women and Deaf people are especially marginalized and unable to access their full political rights. Although all persons with a disability mentioned encountering barriers when they went to vote, Deaf voters and older voters who are hard of hearing had particular difficulty communicating with poll workers, which affected their

participation on Election Day. In addition, ahead of Election Day, lack of sign language at political rallies or on television shows where candidates discussed their political views made it difficult for Deaf citizens to engage in the electoral or political process. Few political parties or candidates have attempted to be inclusive and develop any materials directed at Deaf or hard of hearing voters. Women with disabilities also face additional marginalization. Women who ran for office, as well as focus group participants, noted that physical appearance is an important signifier of electability in Lebanon. This is particularly acute for women with disabilities because of societal norms around what is traditionally considered beautiful.

Trans citizens experience significant barriers which affect their political participation. Societal stigma and discrimination have created numerous barriers to education, employment, and political participation for trans citizens in Lebanon, especially for people who also identify with another marginalized group in Lebanese society. While changing one's gender is legal in Lebanon, many trans citizens lack identification cards which match their appearance or birth certificates. Therefore, they face challenges on voting day since poll workers are not equipped to deal with trans citizens who look different than their identification cards, and often consider it a fraudulent attempt to vote.

Political parties are not inclusive. Political parties rarely advance women within their ranks, and there are few women leaders in the spotlight or behind the scenes who are part of the decision-making process. Few parties have instituted internal gender quotas, and women's committees

within parties are often given social tasks which are not tied to politics, such as gift wrapping for social events. Many political party leaders, including the few who are women, are not pro-quota because they feel women have no interest in running for office or engaging in the clientelism that is considered necessary by politicians. For the most recent elections, traditional parties did not nominate many women to run on their lists[74] because they feared that voters would view women as unqualified candidates and any votes for women would dilute preferential votes. A few parties did not nominate any women at

> "I will never run in my district. It is really difficult [to engage in politics in Lebanon]...You have to be able to open your house...it is pure clientelism. I don't want to receive people from 6 am."
>
> -Woman member of a major political party, Key Informant Interview

all. Women candidates who did get votes were women who came from a higher social and economic status, were affiliated with mainstream parties and religions, and had access (or could provide access) to the political system. Observer groups also noted that parties rarely reach out to women voters or address them during campaigns: during door-to-door campaigns, political parties were observed asking for the man of the house rather than discussing issues or platforms with women. Additionally, while historically vote-buying focused on women and older voters, the new electoral system--which introduced the preferential vote and a secret ballot, thereby reducing parties' capacity to control votes and incentivize vote buying--actually worked against

bringing women out to vote.

Lebanese political parties have never had an openly LGBTQ person as a candidate for elections.

Additionally, people with disabilities noted that during campaign rallies, parties and their candidates made no attempt at inclusivity, with little thought given to venues' accessibility or use of sign language; the only attempts to be inclusive for the 2018 parliamentary elections were made by candidates hailing from civil society, who were more likely to provide sign language interpretation at rallies but also lacked the resources of traditional parties.

Finally, the unique power-sharing political system in Lebanon also leads to lack of inclusivity in political parties. Most parties and their members function as representatives of their sects and only cater to Lebanese with the same religious affiliation, neither representing a broader Lebanese constituency nor members of

> "Maybe a non-sectarian government would be good for Lebanon because there would be no more clientelism and no more division of shares. Everyone would be working for Lebanon."
>
> -Young man, Focus Group Discussion

religious groups other than their own.

Political parties use clientelism to influence electoral behavior, with religious identity playing a strong role in how benefits are doled out in various communities. Parties in Lebanon are generally broken down along sectarian lines, serving their own religious

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74- Out of 86 women candidates, only 12 were part of traditional political parties while the majority ran under the Koullana Watani banner.

communities rather than all voters in their districts. Elections in Lebanon have typically been a transactional event, based on one's religious affiliation. The close relationship between the parties and their voters created a clientelist and patronage-based system which has been reinforced from election-cycle to election-cycle through the legal framework by allowing politicians to provide in kind or material services. Prior to ballot reform for the 2018 elections, there was little secrecy of the vote and it was especially easy to see how families voted. Political parties cut deals with clan or family leaders, promising jobs and benefits, including cash, food, access to services, educational scholarships and other privileges. Voters based outside the country were flown back into the country

> "[Voters'] aim was to go vote for someone so this someone can hire him, because of course we are entering a high unemployment rate in Lebanon. So I could go to vote because I was promised a job or a trip or 100 dollars or I don't know."
>
> - Young man, Focus Group Discussion

with their airfare fully covered. During the election period, political parties also offered jobs to the voting age population in exchange for votes. Jobs are an especially important commodity in an economic environment where there is high unemployment.

Poor families and poor women are especially vulnerable; one woman with a disability noted that "If a family is well off then they can vote more freely. A poor family will try to fulfill their needs through

their vote." At the same time, interviewees also stated that many times the promised jobs do not become reality and that "everyone promises and takes your vote" but "no one keeps his promises" and "they only provide services during elections." In some cases, young people reported being given a job during the elections period on a probationary status and then laid off soon after the election. While ballot reform has increased opportunities for people to vote the way they prefer, the fact that polling stations are still clearly allocated in communities that are divided by clan and confession, vote-buying and family voting remains a concern and continues to leave the door open to the patronage system that has always existed.

Older people, people with disabilities, citizens with no or low literacy, and women face particular barriers to their political participation that may result in losing freedom to vote for their candidates of choice. Focus group participants noted that certain groups of Lebanese citizens face challenges when they attempt to vote. For example, women noted that they are expected to vote based on how their families vote and based on their religious affiliation rather than based on their own interests, although this also holds true for most Lebanese citizens. Even if they do

> "Today as a young man who finished his studies and holds a BA, I reached a point in this country where I cannot find a job. So, when elections start…each candidate starts offering you a service and offers to employ you in order to vote for him. We are having a hard time finding a job in Lebanon. That's why we put a lot of hope on this, on any person who will tell you such a thing."
>
> - Young man, Focus Group Discussion

not wish to vote, they are often not given a chance to abstain as families go together to vote. Women from uneducated families are sometimes restricted from voting at all, or their votes are organized by their father or husbands. Women also noted that, while generally their choice is limited to male candidates since few women run for office, even if they want to vote for a woman, they are often directed to vote for men. Additionally, women who are married may find their choices further constricted. Once married, they must vote in their husband's home district, where they may not be familiar with the candidates; in the case they are a different religion from their husband, they may also find few candidates from the same religious background as them on the ballot.

> "Illiterates, persons with disabilities and the elderly...they (political party operatives) take their IDs and vote for them...I also noticed pregnant women and people with a broken leg were voting through another person."
>
> -Lebanese man with a disability, Focus Group Discussion

Some participants noted that they or others they saw at polling stations were forced to vote in front of everyone rather than behind a privacy screen or curtain because they had a disability that could not easily be accommodated in the polling station. An observer noted: "Even the architectural equipment was not available. No sufficient place to vote in the voting booth; there is no professional secrecy available for the disabled person. It was revealed that

everyone in the room could see who they were voting for." In other cases, when voters such as pregnant women, older people and people with disabilities could not physically get to the polling station because it was located on a second floor,

> "A woman's votes are organized by her family...rare is the woman who goes out to vote based on her beliefs...when we see ladies who are running, we cannot vote for them because we are not free. We are told to vote for the man...we are oriented."
>
> -Lebanese Woman, Focus Group Discussion

others took their voter cards and voted for them, potentially allowing for stolen votes; this was also true for blind or voters with no or low literacy who received assistance to vote.   A woman with a disability who served as an observer notes: "We found out that some people voted instead of [the voter]. I confronted them and got involved in an argument. When they learned that I was an observer, they used pity, that they wanted [the voter to have a vote and, therefore,] they went to vote in his place."

Similar to the global trend, social media is playing a large role in Lebanese citizens' daily lives and has been used successfully for activism, but freedom of expression may be under increasing threat in Lebanon. Despite slow internet speeds in Lebanon, social media has widespread usage, with almost 76 percent of all Lebanese active internet users[75] and 66 percent active social media users.[76] Lebanon also does not have a history of website filtering or

75- Internet World Stats. Lebanon: Internet usage, broadband and telecommunications reports. Internet Usage Statistics: 4,545,007 Internet users as of June 30, 2016; 75.9% of the population, according to IWS. Retrieved from: https://www.internetworldstats.com/me/lb.htm. Accessed on December 23, 2020.
76- Digital in Lebanon. (2018, February 27). Retrieved from: https://www.slideshare.net/EveryLeader/digital-in-lebanon-2018

blocking, although there is also no law which protects freedom of expression online.[77] Still, the viral You Stink campaign, led by citizens in Beirut, gained popularity as a result of social media, with protestors discussing larger issues of corruption online. However, in the past three years, online activism also brought increased scrutiny by Lebanon's security forces. Activists and journalists who have raised questions about corruption, religion or accountability of leaders are consistently being arrested and interrogated about their online posts and pressured to sign pledges to abstain from social media or from criticizing political leaders. This raised red flags about freedom of expression and the looming threat of censorship.

The outbreak of the Lebanese revolution was sparked by the introduction of a "tax" to the social media platform WhatsApp which provides free calls and texts via internet which many Lebanese make use of given the prohibitive expense of non-internet-based communications.[78] WhatsApp and other social media have been widely used to document and organize protests across the country, however, they have also been used to spread disinformation and to intimidate.[79] For example, the use of smear campaigns to harm individuals' reputations are magnified by social media. This includes the sharing of personal information on social media to enable large numbers of people to directly contact individuals with hate messages.

Gender impacts how candidates use social media. The way in which women and men candidates use social media in Lebanon differs. Although women candidates opened accounts with social media platforms such as Facebook during their campaigns, the information that was shared on these platforms was limited to the posting of a speech or schedule of upcoming rallies, for example. Men candidates established social media accounts long before they ran, used their accounts in a more dynamic way during their campaigns and kept them active after the campaign. Women candidates noted an unwillingness to share too many details about their personalities or personal lives online, preferring to use social media strictly for information sharing, rather than building a "brand."

77- Maharat Foundation. (2018). Internet Freedom in Lebanon 2018. Retrieved from: http://maharatfoundation.org/media/1439/1internet-freedom-in-lebanon-english.pdf. P. 13
78- Sewell, A. (2019, October 24). How Lebanon's 'WhatsApp tax' unleashed a flood of anger. The World. Retrieved from: https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-10-24/how-lebanons-whatsapp-tax-unleashed-flood-anger
79- Lewis, E. (2019, November 12). WhatsApp as a tool for fear and intimidation in Lebanon's protests. .coda. Retrieved from: https://codastory.com/disinformation/whatsapp-lebanon-protest/

Recommendations

The individuals, CSOs, media and government officials with whom the IFES team spoke over the course of this assessment identified a number of suggestions to reduce barriers and create opportunities for decreasing discrimination and marginalization and increasing the political participation of Lebanese citizens. Key recommendations include the following:

More awareness raising on intersectionality needs to be done with CSOs representing specific identity groups. There are different interpretations of "intersectionality" among groups that sometimes result in confusion. Although some groups have successfully campaigned together, there is still a lack of understanding about how an intersectional approach to advocacy could produce greater results. Coalition-building is just one aspect; it is about understanding one another's challenges, hearing from those that experience multiple layers of discrimination and finding those shared priorities that can be achieved together.

CSOs should actively work together to track Lebanon's international commitments and advocate for harmonization with national laws. Lebanon contributed to the drafting of some of the earliest international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, it has ratified or acceded to numerous international instruments, including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, CEDAW (with reservations), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. Lebanon has signed, but not ratified, the CRPD. Lebanon is also not party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. CSOs should work together to track Lebanon's international commitments, especially in those cases where the national legal framework has not been harmonized with the international law—for example, upholding Lebanese women's rights--in order to hold the State accountable for rights it has committed to for its citizens.

Civil society organizations should make a concerted effort to build intersectional coalitions to advocate together to counter discrimination and marginalization. Marginalized groups need to learn more about each other's experiences and from each other. Because an individual or group is oppressed does not mean they lack their

> "Lebanon has signed some international conventions that fight corruption from a human rights perspective, but it does not implement them."
>
> -Lebanese man, Focus Group Discussion

> "Too often we are drowning in microcosms, and we need to open our minds to think about how other groups are affected by the same challenges and opportunities."
>
> -Gender Equality Advocate, Key Informant Interview

own prejudices against other marginalized groups or understand other perspectives, and there is room for increased coordination and coalition-building at the organizational level. This could include gathering organizations that work on interfaith issues, women's empowerment, disability rights, youth engagement, LGBTQ rights and others to facilitate a dialogue on the root causes of marginalization and other issues of common concern.

Exploring alternatives or reforms to the election system in Lebanon could shed light on how to better include the voices of youth, women, people with disabilities and others independent of sectarian identity. For years, contracts for public services, such as electricity, trash collection and road construction have been given to companies with ties to political/sectarian leaders, with a lack of accountability. Frustration with poor public services was one of the main drivers of recent protests. Protesters from all walks of life have filled the streets in Lebanon, calling for a technocratic government and early elections. However, without a revised election system, the current sectarian divides could be replicated in any future government, leading to similar public dissatisfaction.

Government ministries should establish inclusion focal points, with a focus on meeting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Ministries should track compliance with the SDGs and develop programs around addressing SDG targets which are disaggregated by gender, disability, age, etc. This should be in the form of a full-time budgeted expert in inclusion with relevant experience and connections, responsible for tracking SDG and other international commitments.

Government should investigate the establishment of gender and disability quotas for elected officials, which include targets for women with disabilities. Currently, quotas are only used to allocate parliamentary seats for sects, but they could also be used to ensure more inclusive representation of marginalized groups. Tunisia is a positive example of gender and disability quotas which Lebanon could use for reference.

The election management bodies, including the SCE and the Ministry of Interior should put a special focus on young voters. Whether the law is reformed to make the voting age 18 rather than 21, young voters make up a large portion of the electorate. While there are no recent statistics from the government on population breakdown, the World Factbook estimates almost 40 percent[80] of the population is under the age of 25. This large group of Lebanese citizens will make up the electorate for years to come. Further, this issue must be separated from sectarian politics in all advocacy measures to counteract the efforts to block youth inclusion by parties.

Election observers should be trained on principles of inclusion and accessibility. Observer groups should also seek to recruit more diverse observers, such as Deaf rural women and young Druze men (both of which were categories reported to be traditionally underrepresented). All election observers should be trained to recognize and report on accessibility issues accurately and effectively.

CSOs should advocate for election access on an ongoing basis in collaboration with education organizations. Because schools are often used as polling stations, there is an opportunity to connect advocacy for more accessible schools for educational purposes,

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80- Approximately 23 percent of the Lebanese population is under 14 and another 16 percent is between 15 and 24 years old. Retrieved from; https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html, updated May 23, 2019.

to those efforts for accessibility around elections. There could be large campaigns for accessibility not only ahead of elections, but also ahead of and throughout the school year, and including a focus on communication tools such as Braille and sign language in addition to measures to ensure physical accessibility. Accessible schools would facilitate easier access for numerous constituencies, including pregnant teachers, students and poll workers with disabilities, and older voters.

Since social media is already a proven source of information for Lebanese citizens, it should be leveraged to increase youth and other target groups' engagement in the electoral process. Government authorities, including the election administration, and CSOs promoting increased political participation should strongly consider wide-ranging social media voter and civic engagement campaigns. Youth should be targeted as they make up a large part of the Lebanese population, and are more likely to be open to anti-discrimination messages. Social media campaigns should also emphasize the diversity in Lebanese culture and feature stories and pictures of people with intersectional identities, such as young women or a transgender person from a religious minority.

CSOs and the international community should train women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized populations on the effective use of social media for political advocacy and to counter disinformation. Social media is a powerful tool for mobilizing support, but many marginalized groups lack the capacity to use it for advocacy beyond their own networks. There exist some CSOs, especially feminist groups, that excel at social media for advocacy and could share important knowledge and skills with other organizations. Countering disinformation and intimidation on social media is also a key area to address so groups can protect themselves

and their messages from spoilers.

CSOs should work with traditional media to raise attention to key issue areas. The media can be a strong ally in raising awareness among the general public about issues such as inequality, inaccessibility and discrimination. Developing relationships with the media to cover these issues involves also a shared understanding of how to accurately and effectively report on issues of marginalization and discrimination.

The SCE and the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) should institutionalize relationships with the CSO community and seek to give higher visibility to citizens who are most marginalized from political life, such as women with disabilities and trans women. The election administration should seek advice and work with CSOs on civic and voter education materials and making the political process more accessible. This could be in the form of an Election Access Working Group that begins two-way communication between election administrators and CSOs in order to build relationships, share information and provide consultation on appropriate methods to reach key target groups. This type of transparent communication would help build trust in the integrity of the electoral process and provide valuable insight to both sides as they plan their activities around the elections.

Government should consider developing a unified civil code regulating personal status matters. The law is the starting point for combating inequality and discrimination in society. The government should unify the 15 different confessional personal status laws into one civil code that would enable all Lebanese citizens to pursue equal treatment before the law per its international commitments.

Recommendations by **Stakeholder Group**

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- Conduct more regular dialogue with CSOs working in a variety of fields to increase understanding of how Lebanese citizens experience discrimination and marginalization and how better to support each other.
- Apply an intersectional lens when designing programs and consult with other CSOs to ensure all target groups' needs and perspectives are integrated into program design.
- Make a concerted effort to build intersectional coalitions to advocate together to counter discrimination and marginalization.
- Proactively recruit staff with intersectional identities.
- Develop coalitions that advocate for harmonization of national law with international law to which Lebanon has committed; push for ratification of international conventions such as the CRPD and lifting of reservations on CEDAW.
- Unify to advocate for laws that discriminate against multiple marginalized groups such as the Penal Code, the Labor Law, the Nationality Law and the Personal Status Law.
- Showcase the active role traditionally marginalized constituencies have taken in the recent revolution, including women with disabilities and LGBTQ youth.
- Meet with political parties to make them more accountable and ensure they meet their commitments to be more inclusive, such as recent pledges to support LGBTQ rights.
- Advocate with political parties to be more inclusive in their membership, their leadership and their outreach to voters.
- Ally with observer and watchdog groups to integrate inclusivity into monitoring efforts and use data to support advocacy directed at holding elected officials and government institutions accountable when they do not uphold Lebanese citizens' right to fully participate in public life.
- Leverage social media to increase youth and other target groups' engagement in the electoral process.
- Provide training for women, people with disabilities, youth and LGBTQ people on how to effectively use social media for political advocacy and to be allies for each other.
- Advocate with the Parliament, the MOI and the SCE to support development of assistive tools and voter education, taking into account the additional barriers that may be faced by rural women, Deaf voters, and voters with low or no literacy.
- Design programs that consider the specific needs of women, youth, older people, refugees and LGBTQ people.
- CSOs focused on education should advocate for increased accessibility in schools which would not only benefit youth and teachers with disabilities during the school year, but also simultaneously increase access to polling stations for older voters, pregnant women and voters with disabilities.
- Collaborate with observer groups to facilitate their integration of accessibility and inclusion questions into mainstream observation efforts.

Government (Cabinet and Parliament)

- Demonstrate commitment to inclusive representation by inviting input from constituents of diverse backgrounds (socio-economic, gender identity, people with disabilities, refugees, etc.).
- Research and propose legal reforms that can counter discrimination or marginalization.
- Proactively recruit staff with intersectional identities to help advise on the needs facing diverse communities.
- Support the voices of those in parliament who represent marginalized groups.
- Adopt institutional quotas for inclusive representation.

Observer groups and watchdog groups

- Conduct observation and monitoring efforts utilizing an inclusive perspective and develop specific reports on the barriers to political participation faced by voters with intersectional identities.
- Consult with women's equality organizations, DPOs, LGBTQ and other groups to develop and integrate additional questions on election access for marginalized voters on observation checklists.
- Proactively recruit more observers with intersectional identities.

Election Administration (SCE and MOI)

- Institutionalize relationships with the CSO community, particularly with organizations that are advocating for the political participation of marginalized groups, and proactively seek their advice to ensure election process is inclusive. This could be through the formation of an Election Access Working Group.
- Hire focal points for women, youth, and persons with disabilities within the election administration whose job is to consider the inclusion of these populations in all election efforts, including coordination with each other, CSOs and other ministries. These positions should come with a budget.
- Conduct a study on alternatives to the sectarian-based election system in the Lebanese context.
- Partner with DPOs to conduct polling station audits and include accessibility as a criterion for polling station selection. Collaborate with the Ministry of Education to develop a long-term plan for making adaptations to schools used as polling stations.
- Leverage social media to increase citizen engagement in the electoral process.
- Strengthen collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of State for Women and Youth to more effectively reach all people with disabilities, youth and women.
- Add audio files with election and voter information to the election administration's webpages to reach voters with visual disabilities.
- Recommend and encourage political parties to produce their information in accessible formats and hold events with accessible venues, sign language interpreters and other reasonable accommodations.
- Proactively recruit more women to serve as election staff, including young women and women with disabilities.
- Establish an institutional quota for women in election management to serve as an example for a broader-based women's quota.
- Implement the three percent government quota for hiring people with disabilities within the election administration, including as poll workers.
- Political Parties

- Recruit more diverse members to join political parties and diversify leadership to include more youth, women, people with disabilities and LGBTQ people.
- Adopt party quotas for women, youth, people with disabilities and others to demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity.
- Develop political platforms that are inclusive of the needs of all Lebanese citizens, but which specifically consider the rights of marginalized groups.
- Disseminate platforms in accessible formats and hold campaign events, speeches, announcements and debates at accessible venues, including the use of sign language interpreters.
- Conduct outreach to target marginalized voting groups such as women, youth and persons with disabilities in both urban and rural settings.

Media

- Give voice to and make interviews more inclusive of the perspectives of women, people with disabilities, youth, LGBTQ, refugees, etc.
- Work with CSOs/DPOs to ensure that coverage of discrimination and marginalization is done accurately and respectfully.
- Develop social media campaigns that emphasize the diversity in Lebanese culture and feature stories and pictures of people with intersectional identities, such as women with disabilities or LGBTQ youth.

International Organizations/Donors

- Encourage collaboration and coordination between Lebanese CSOs in order to reduce unhealthy competition for limited funds.
- Support initiatives which focus on traditionally marginalized groups such as LGBTQ youth or women with disabilities.
- Require CSOs representing a specific identity group to report on how they are including people with multiple social identities.

Annex 1: Why did IFES **choose to use a participatory research framework?**

The framework includes the use of participatory evaluation approaches that privilege the experiences and views of groups facing discrimination, especially those whose views may otherwise be invisible, to identify programmatic strategies that can support their increased participation in political life. Participants are asked to work in groups to identify and present key information on participation in political life that they then analyze, categorize and prioritize in different ways. This methodology emboldens even the quietest of participants to voice their opinions, as opposed to more traditional group interviews where a handful of participants may monopolize the conversation. The result is a rich mix of qualitative, narrative-driven data, and a preliminary, stakeholder-led analysis of the information gathered.

Through its collaborative and participatory approach, the Intersectionality Assessment Framework empowers partners to form cross-sector coalitions and strengthen their advocacy with a united voice. Using the Intersectionality Assessment Report as a guiding document, partners can develop targeted inclusion initiatives and project activities to support intersectional advocacy. The assessment can be used to inform follow-on programs positioning CSOs to recruit and engage male allies, policymakers, political parties, human rights advocates and other strategic partners for reform.

What are some common critiques of an intersectional research framework, and how has IFES addressed those critiques in its methodology?

One of the most common critiques of research involving the concept of intersectionality is "the lack of a clearly defined intersectional methodology."[81] Thus, in developing the methodology for our framework, IFES has sought to address key critiques to common methodological challenges and in offer a clear and direct approach to translating our conceptual framework into a research strategy.

Challenge: Data must be analyzed in an intersectional way rather than an additive way. [82] An intersectional analysis looks at how different identity categories intersect to create a unique experience, whereas an additive analysis suggests that one can simply combine inequalities faced by each social identity. An additive approach can be harmful because "it conceptualizes people's experiences as separate, independent,

81- Nash, J. (2008). Re-Thinking Intersectionality. Feminist Review 89: 1–15.
82- Bowleg, L. (2008). When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research. Sex Roles 59, no.5-6: 312-325.

and summative," and it implies that "one's identities and/or discrimination based on these identities can be ranked."[83] It is also problematic as it seeks to define, in broad terms, the experiences of a single social identity without taking into account the nuance of individual experience. This has historically privileged, for example, cisgender women from a majority ethnic group who do not have disabilities as "the" experience of women, while excluding the experience of women who face compounding discrimination based on race, class, religion, disability or displacement.

IFES response: In IFES' framework, focus groups participants are asked to identify the level of impact various identities have on their political engagement from a predefined list, including an "other" category, to allow for open discussion of any other areas identified by participants. A facilitated discussion draws out interactions and causality.

Challenge: Designing interview questions to authentically capture participant experiences without biasing responses, while simultaneously gathering the needed data for specific research questions; or, as one researcher asks, "should the themes of intersectionality be asked directly within the interview or should the research expect them to emerge without specific prompting?"[84]

IFES response: IFES takes a mixed approach to directly and indirectly address intersectionality during the assessment data collection. Focus group discussions are based on experiences from participation in political life, with issues of intersectionality generally surfacing organically in discussions with participants. Key informant interviews are generally a mix of direct and indirect questions related to specific constituent groups.

Challenge: Ensuring research participants are selected randomly and from varied backgrounds.[85] For assessments that seek to analyze multiple social identities, the intersection of only two or three identities can be studied in isolated groups.

IFES response: IFES seeks to address these issues by randomly selecting focus group participants, taking into consideration the distribution of urban and rural participants and a mix of individuals who are more or less involved in civic activism. IFES deliberately creates a balance of other identities within each group, including considerations for religion and location. In contexts where randomly selected individuals might be hesitant to self-identify with a specific group, such as in locations where LGBTQ is criminalized, IFES will note that reflections come from CSO members, rather than a random mix of the general population.

Challenge: Under-represented populations are often the subject of research, without being consulted on the final product or seeing practical changes in their daily lives from the time they spent speaking with analysts.

IFES response: A cross-section of key informant interview and focus group participants are invited to participate in feedback loops with the assessment team to ensure the process is one of meaningful participation rather than extractive/consultative "participation." Recommendations to government, civil society, political parties and media are disseminated widely and IFES seeks to support advocacy and appropriate programmatic interventions based on assessment findings and recommendations.

83- Ibid, p. 314.
84- Windsong, E.A. (2018). Incorporating intersectionality into research design: an example using qualitative interviews. International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 21:2, 135-147, DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2016.1268361
85- Hunting, G. (2014). Intersectionality-informed Qualitative Research: A Primer. The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, Simon Fraser University.