

# Now and the Future

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## Gender Equality, Peace and Security in a COVID-19 World

Lebanon



# 1. Introduction

## Background and objectives

This partnership with Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and ABAAD (Resource Center for Gender Equality in Lebanon) aims to gather data across multiple countries on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality, peace and security. GAPS and its partners will publish 10 evidence-based country papers on the short- and long-term gendered impacts of COVID-19 and an overarching multi-country evidenced-based paper. The purpose is to assess and make recommendations for national and international actions to respond to the gender, peace and security impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics.

## Research methodology

The recommendations in this country report for Lebanon are based on evidence from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted by ABAAD with women's rights and international organisations in Lebanon. All interview participants were women leaders, members or staff at local civil society and international organisations, research and policy institutes, and working women's groups. They work directly with or represent, through their organisations and programmes, different groups of women and girls who are impacted by COVID-19. Their insight provides a gendered and intersectional lens on the impacts of COVID-19 in Lebanon, and was used, in conjunction with a desk-based study of country research, to formulate eight country-specific recommendations for responding to the gender, peace and security impacts of COVID-19. LAW, ABAAD and GAPS are grateful to all the organisations and individuals who participated in the KIIs and who assisted in the preparation of this report. For safety reasons the participant organisations are not named in this report, but all project partners are grateful for their time, knowledge and expertise.

## The context in Lebanon

Lebanon has been grappling with a **political, economic and financial crisis** resulting in inequality, unemployment, homelessness and increasing food insecurity. In October 2019, mass protests erupted in response to chronic mismanagement, corruption and political stalemate by an entrenched political elite. This was accompanied by sharp currency devaluation and economic decline. As of May 2020, an estimated **55 per cent of the population** had fallen below the poverty line, almost double the rate a year earlier. Consumer

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prices skyrocketed, putting basic goods out of reach for many Lebanese, as well as Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Lebanon is home to an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees and approximately 192,000 Palestinian refugees.

These difficulties were exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak and related confinement measures. According to the World Food Programme, **61 per cent of Syrian women in Lebanon** reported losing their jobs due to COVID-19 compared to 46 per cent of Syrian men. More Lebanese women reported increased tensions and violence compared to Lebanese men due to the economic situation. LAW's protection hotline saw a 1,425 per cent increase in calls from April to September 2020. Lebanon is also home to 250,000 migrant domestic workers, mostly women. In a **rapid-needs-assessment** in April 2020, the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) found that up to 40 per cent of Lebanon's migrant domestic workers had lost their jobs after the COVID-19 outbreak and 58 per cent since the start of the economic crisis in 2019.

The Beirut port explosion on August 4th 2020 highlighted the marginalisation of women and girls. The risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls **increased** due to the explosion. According to a rapid assessment that UN Women and ACTED produced immediately after the explosion, elderly women and people with chronic illnesses, persons with disability and elderly-headed households were among the **most in need of protection assistance** following the explosion. Another survey underlined how the role of women and girls as family caretakers was **reinforced following the explosion**, particularly as family members were now more likely to be injured, disabled or psychologically distraught.

Even prior to COVID-19 and the port explosion, Lebanon suffered from deep and entrenched gender inequalities, which means that any crisis further exacerbates the risks and vulnerabilities that women and girls face. Lebanon ranks **145 out of 153** on the global World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index and 139 on women's economic participation. The Lebanese legal system lacks provisions to protect women and girls against marital rape, and child marriage remains prevalent especially among Syrian refugees where it is as high as 40.5 per cent among certain age groups, according to a **survey by UNICEF**. According to one interview participant in this study, child marriage has increased due to the economic crisis. Lebanese labour laws, meanwhile, do not include migrant domestic workers under their protections. Instead, migrant workers rely on a different employment contract for their residency and rights, a system known as kafala. Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code has been used to prosecute LGBTQIA persons for 'sexual intercourse against nature'. These are among the ongoing areas of advocacy among Lebanese civil society leaders and NGOs.

As a result, COVID-19 cannot be viewed in isolation but within this complex framework of issues and challenges.

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## Key consultation findings

- Women's representation is absent in decision-making positions and processes, leading to a COVID-19 response that is gender blind and also not addressing the needs of different, intersectional communities. While groups like migrant domestic workers mobilised to voice their needs, this did not necessarily result in their representation in decision-making.
- Women and adolescent girls in civil society and community based organisations are providing a gender-sensitive and community-sensitive assessment of needs but they can be, and often are, ignored by international development funding.
- Although the rate of SGBV has increased during lockdown periods, the emergency humanitarian response to the economic crisis and Beirut port explosion have pushed back discourses on gender inequality. Women and girls, migrants, refugees and trans persons also feel less safe in public due to increased militarism in response to the explosion and to enforce lockdowns.
- Protection in the home, in public and in the workplace for vulnerable groups like women and girls, migrant domestic workers, refugees, and LGBTQIA persons is hindered by gaps in existing legislation, as well as discrimination against those groups. These vulnerabilities have become more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Social and cultural norms, compounded by lack of access to quality information, reinforce gender inequalities and exacerbate the impact of COVID-19 on women's and girls' health, safety and ability to seek protection.
- Women and girls face challenges in accessing hygiene, sanitation and reproductive health services given the increase in prices of these products and services following the economic crisis. Since resources within the healthcare system are focused on addressing COVID-19, very little is being invested to address sexual and reproductive health needs.
- Support networks and safety nets have been compromised due to restrictions on mobility and interrupted operations of community based organisations and NGOs. Many services are being provided online, but this means that women and girls who do not have access to the internet, or who are unable to attend online sessions for several reasons, are unable to benefit from these services. Migrant workers and refugee women and girls have also been victims of reduced social protection.

As a result, the response to COVID-19 to date was widely perceived by KII participants to be gender blind, and failing to incorporate long-term and strategic approaches to address the needs of different communities and to end gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

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## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Funding for women's rights organisations and civil society:** Donor organisations must integrate their work on gender equality with the challenges raised by COVID-19. Donors should increase funding to provide civil society organisations (CSOs), particularly women's rights organisations, with flexibility to adapt, and expand their work, to address the local challenges with a gendered lens. Funding should be sustained, long-term and strategic, focusing on women's rights organisations outside of Beirut and smaller organisations that may not be well known by the international community.
- 2.2. Gendered Health Services National Action Plan:** National COVID-19 response plans must factor in and commit resources to the needs of marginalised communities to provide health services that include primary healthcare, free/subsidised COVID-19 testing, and sexual and reproductive health rights care. The government, along with the international community should explore the possibility of deploying mobile units to address needs at the community level, specifically the needs of marginalised women and girls. Action plans must task, and fund, local actors and women's rights organisations and women-focused civil society organisations (CSOs) with the responsibility of identifying the needs of the community to set up sustainable and institutionalised solutions for addressing issues related to gender equality. The plan must be inclusive of essential sexual and reproductive health rights and needs of women and girls.
- 2.3. Women's and girls' meaningful participation:** Women's and girls' representation, particularly from marginalised communities is critical to identify the needs of the community and to advance a gendered lens while developing action plans and campaigns, particularly during pandemic and crisis response. The international community and donor organisations must lobby for women's and girls' meaningful inclusion in assessment, planning and implementation of humanitarian work. Women must be represented in consultation processes, decision-making roles and awareness campaigns with national, international and local actors.
- 2.4. Gender-based violence prevention, protection and response:** The Lebanese government must enhance the institutional response measures to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, protect marginalised communities and respond effectively. First responders must also include psychosocial support, shelter, safe spaces and hotlines for victims and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). The Lebanese government must coordinate with local organisations to set up support groups for survivors. Importantly, any SGBV measures must include the voices of women and girls of all affected communities. They must also ensure that the justice mechanisms continue to function during emergencies to enable victims and survivors to report SGBV.

The international community must lobby for the government to set up secure online SGBV reporting services where any case of SGBV can be reported to appropriate authorities.

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- 2.5. Critical information about COVID-19 and marginalised communities and access to technology:** The Lebanese government must take the following steps to ensure marginalised communities receive essential information on COVID-19 and future health and other emergencies: critical information regarding COVID-19, testing facilities, access to justice and essential services must be disseminated through verified profiles on social media platforms; grassroots CSOs must be equipped to disseminate information with a gendered lens to marginalised communities on access to health services and justice; appropriate measures must be taken to prevent misinformation and to hold persons accountable for spreading misinformation; the international community and CSOs must collaborate with, lobby for and offer technical support to the Lebanese government to prepare and disseminate critical information in the form of ‘Know Your Rights’ templates; the Lebanese government must also ensure that quality internet services are available at reasonable prices for all communities so that they can access essential services.
- 2.6. Complementary labour and employment legislation and access to justice:** The international community must lobby for protective policies that safeguard the rights of women, girls and the LGBTQIA community. The Lebanese government must commit resources to enhance access to justice for marginalised communities, including migrant workers and refugee women. Emergency legislation and policy-making must include a gendered lens and protect women and girls against abuse and exploitation at home and at their workplace. It should institute measures to secure the rights of informal workers, protect them against discriminatory policies and abolish the kafala system.
- 2.7. Social norm change and gender transformative approach including public awareness:** International organisations have committed resources by providing cash assistance and hygiene and dignity kits. However, the Lebanese government must proactively challenge social and cultural norms adversely impacting women, girls and gender nonconforming persons including in accessing sexual and reproductive health needs and unpaid care. These efforts must be made in a sustained and long-term manner through public awareness programmes, gender sensitisation of key stakeholders and targeted policy changes.
- 2.8. Comprehensive, coordinated and accountable approach:** The implementation of national action plans and the international community’s intervention must be monitored for efficiency and opened for public feedback. This would ensure that target communities and affected persons can report service gaps and rights violations. Additionally, the feedback and accountability mechanisms would contribute to bridging the data and knowledge gap on the impact of COVID-19 on different communities.

# 3. Recommendations and Evidence

## 3.1. Recommendation 1:

**Funding for women's rights organisations and civil society:** Donor organisations must integrate their work on gender equality with the challenges raised by COVID-19. Donors should increase funding to provide civil society organisations (CSOs), particularly women's rights organisations, with flexibility to adapt, and expand their work, to address the local challenges with a gendered lens. Funding should be sustained, long-term and strategic, focusing on women's rights organisations outside of Beirut and smaller organisations that may not be well known by the international community.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs.**

## Evidence:

Interviewees observed that donor organisations provide basic assistance around raising awareness on the impact of COVID-19. However, this pushed back the discourse on gender equality. The economic collapse and the Beirut port explosion further forced many CSOs to focus on immediate emergency response that does not include a gendered lens. Interviewees also noted that local organisations located outside Beirut struggle to secure funding. They recommended setting up long-term and sustainable funding with flexible reporting requirements considering the structure and capacities of the organisations.

Organisations in Lebanon have urged the international actors to fund women-focused CSOs, particularly women's rights organisations, since they are frontline responders in all humanitarian responses as service providers, community leaders, unwavering advocates, skilled peacebuilders, and sustainable drivers of progress.

Additionally, women and girls working in the informal sector are primarily involved in caregiving responsibilities and are the hardest hit by the pandemic. They have limited economic resources to access critical physical and mental health resources. National and international actors must allocate and disburse targeted funding to fulfil these basic needs in urban and rural settings of Lebanon, particularly where marginalised communities live. The most effective means of doing this is in partnership with civil society and women's rights organisations. Immediate funding is also critical to ensure that women and girls are kept aware of the key information regarding the pandemic and institutional measures that are available to them.

### 3.2. Recommendation 2:

**Gendered Health Services National Action Plan:** National COVID-19 response plans must factor in and commit resources to the needs of marginalised communities to provide health services that include primary healthcare, free/subsidised COVID-19 testing, and sexual and reproductive health rights care. The government, along with the international community should explore the possibility of deploying mobile units to address needs at the community level, specifically the needs of marginalised women and girls. Action plans must task, and fund, local actors and women's rights organisations and women-focused CSOs with the responsibility of identifying the needs of the community to set up sustainable and institutionalised solutions for addressing issues related to gender equality. The plan must be inclusive of essential sexual and reproductive health rights and needs of women and girls.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

#### Evidence:

Interviewees reported that migrant domestic workers, refugee women, elderly women, widows, women with children and gender nonconforming persons were most affected by COVID-19. They lacked the financial resources to access essential health services and COVID-19 testing. Syrian refugee women and girls, migrant domestic workers, elderly women and gender nonconforming people also lacked the mobility to access medical support.

Interviewees also reported that the nursing community, predominantly consisting of women was at high risk of exposure to the virus. They also worked for long hours with precarious conditions. The national government must prioritise the safety and wellbeing of essential workers who have additional care-giving responsibilities, especially to vulnerable persons.

Sidelining women's and girls' sexual and reproductive needs can lead to life-threatening complications. CSOs, including the [Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises](#) have recommended the full implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Emergencies. The national government and the international actors have a role to provide sustained funding to ensure that such essential services and needs are met. Additionally, the relevant actors and service providers need to be sensitised to the unique needs of the community.



### 3.3. Recommendation 3:

**Women's and girls' meaningful participation:** Women's and girls' representation, particularly from marginalised communities is critical to identify the needs of the community and to advance a gendered lens while developing action plans and campaigns, particularly during pandemic and crisis response. The international community and donor organisations must lobby for women's and girls' meaningful inclusion in assessment, planning and implementation of humanitarian work. Women must be represented in consultation processes, decision-making roles and awareness campaigns with national, international and local actors.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

#### Evidence:

Interviewees outlined the absence of women, girls and trans persons in decision-making positions and processes leading to gender-insensitive measures disregarding their needs. They observed that efforts to include women in leadership processes came to a standstill during the pandemic. Inclusion of persons identifying with the target group of policies and programmes helps efficient policy-making and better implementation which meets the rights, needs and experiences of such groups. For example, interviewees highlighted that although migrant workers and refugee women have organised themselves within their communities, they are not represented in decision-making positions within the local actors.

Women's rights organisations have flagged the absence of women's representation in decision-making roles and processes. **They** recommended that decision-making processes can be more gender-inclusive by conducting local meetings in local languages and ensuring that CSOs are informed about the meetings by disseminating key information to the CSO networks who are well connected at community level. The representation must also include members of the LGBTQIA communities, refugees, adolescents, migrant workers and persons with disabilities.

### 3.4. Recommendation 4:

**Gender-based violence prevention, protection and response:** The Lebanese government must enhance the institutional response measures to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, protect marginalised communities and respond effectively. First responders must also include psychosocial support, shelter, safe spaces and hotlines for victims and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). The Lebanese government must coordinate with local organisations to set up support groups for survivors. Importantly, any SGBV measures must include the voices of women and girls of all affected communities. They must also ensure that the justice mechanisms continue to function during emergencies to enable victims and survivors to report SGBV.

The international community must lobby for the government to set up secure online SGBV reporting services where any case of SGBV can be reported to appropriate authorities.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

### Evidence:

Participants outlined that a higher number of cases of SGBV have been reported to the Internal Security Forces (ISF) during the pandemic. Militarism due to the lockdown has also caused insecurity among women, girls and trans communities due to increasing incidents of sexual harassment in public. Victims and survivors are unable to report the incidents to the justice mechanisms because the perpetrators are often members of the army. Also, members of the trans community are at a higher risk of arrest and interrogation due to the added presence of army on the streets, who routinely check identification cards.

CSOs have been supporting survivors of violence by also setting up shelters that function as safe spaces. Migrant domestic workers and Syrian refugees have been at higher risk of violence after the pandemic since they are confined with their employers for a longer period of time. Establishment of support groups for marginalised communities will also serve as referral pathways for survivors of GBV who may not be fully aware of the methods of accessing justice mechanisms and psychosocial support.

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Interviewees reported that migrant domestic workers were denied wages, and were subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and were sometimes abandoned by their employers. Yet, these cases are underreported and undocumented since survivors lack the resources and mobility to access state services. To tackle the multiple issues of migrant domestic workers, interviewees recommended the abolition of the kafala<sup>1</sup> system. Interviewees also outlined that members of the LGBTQIA community, particularly the trans community could not access essential services since they are at home with their families.

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### 3.5. Recommendation 5:

**Critical information about COVID-19 and marginalised communities and access to technology:** The Lebanese government must take the following steps to ensure marginalised communities receive essential information on COVID-19 and future health and other emergencies:

- a. critical information regarding COVID-19, testing facilities, access to justice and essential services must be disseminated through verified profiles on social media platforms;
- b. grassroots CSOs must be equipped to disseminate information with a gendered lens to marginalised communities on access to health services and justice;
- c. appropriate measures must be taken to prevent misinformation and to hold persons accountable for spreading misinformation;
- d. the international community and CSOs must collaborate with, lobby for and offer technical support to the Lebanese government to prepare and disseminate critical information in the form of 'Know Your Rights' templates;
- e. the Lebanese government must also ensure that quality internet services are available at reasonable prices for all communities so that they can access essential services.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

<sup>1</sup> Kafala refers to the 'sponsorship' system under which migrant domestic workers are recruited in Lebanon. Kafala excludes migrant domestic workers from Lebanese Labour Law. Their legal residency is instead tied to the contractual relationship they have with their employer (or sponsor). Under the system, migrant domestic workers cannot enter the country, change jobs, or leave the country without their sponsor's approval. Commonly, the sponsor confiscates the migrant worker's passport and travel documents, exerting further control. Migrant workers lose their migration status if the employment relationship ends, putting them at risk of detention and deportation. This context of extreme control and unequal power creates an environment ripe for human rights violations and multiple forms of abuse, including physical, sexual and psychological abuse.

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## Evidence:

Most interviewees were unaware of epidemics in the past due to insufficient information and stigma attached to some health conditions such as HIV. This not only causes lack of information about the virus but also encourages spread of misinformation. For instance, interviewees reported that Syrian refugee women were often perceived to be carriers of COVID-19, therefore meaning they face additional discrimination. This adds to the risk that vulnerable communities already face. Such inaccurate information, which is deeply damaging to communities and individuals targeted, and to attempts to limit the spread of the virus, is widely spread on social media.

Social norms have also exacerbated women's and girls' challenges in access to technology and cyberbullying. Social norms limited women's and girls' opportunities to learn how to navigate internet-based services due to cost and access to technology not being prioritised at a household level. Cyberbullying has increased drastically, disparately affecting women and girls where women and girls are threatened and defamed. Women and girls also face financial constraints to access high quality internet. The Lebanese government must have the political will to ensure that all communities receive essential services, including stable internet connection which is an imperative during the pandemic.

Women's rights organisations, including the Palestinian Women's Humanitarian Organization (PWHO) and Women Now for Development, are using virtual social media platforms to fill the information gap among the most vulnerable communities. PWHO is using virtual social media platforms to reach out to people living in refugee camps with necessary information about COVID-19. Grassroots organisations are also going door-to-door to ensure that marginalised communities receive timely health information, hygiene kits, and temperature checks to monitor symptoms of COVID-19. Women Now for Development also shifted its empowerment and protection services to virtual programmes, which also addressed mental health impacts of the pandemic. These organisations should be supported to ensure their vital work can continue to take place.

### 3.6. Recommendation 6:

**Complementary labour and employment legislation and access to justice:** The international community must lobby for protective policies that safeguard the rights of women, girls and the LGBTQIA community. The Lebanese government must commit resources to enhance access to justice for marginalised communities, including migrant workers and refugee women. Emergency legislation and policy-making must include a gendered lens and protect women and girls against abuse and exploitation at home and at their workplace. It should institute measures to secure the rights of informal workers, protect them against discriminatory policies and abolish the kafala system.

**Recommendation for: Multilateral institutions, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

#### Evidence:

Interviewees highlighted the need for the international community to lobby for gender-inclusive policy-making that factors the needs of marginalised communities, including informal workers and migrant domestic workers. Lebanon does not have appropriate legislation that adequately safeguards the right to a dignified life and labour rights of informal workers and domestic migrant workers. Interviewees outlined that the lack of legislation and protective policies that are inclusive of non-Lebanese women puts Syrian refugee women and girls at the margin and hinders their access to justice. The lockdown has resulted in a lack of avenues for survivors of abuse and violence to access justice mechanisms.

Interviewees outlined that women in the informal economy were heavily impacted as they lost employment and had no protections. They recommended that the Lebanese government work with existing employers to ensure they have protective policies for women, particularly in informal sectors to ensure that recruitment, retention and promotion policies and procedures are non-discriminatory.

**Equality Now** reported similar evidence as the interviewees regarding the worsening living and working conditions of migrant domestic workers. The organisation recommended that the Lebanese government officials introduce new labour protections to safeguard the rights of migrant domestic workers which meet international human rights and labour standards. This aligns with Legal Action Worldwide's **recommendation** to amend Lebanese Labour Law to provide protection to migrant domestic workers including legal rights to minimum wages, annual leave, working hours and social security.

Interviewees reported that the LGBTQIA community has also been at risk due to the increased militarism. The armed police routinely check identification cards of persons on the streets adding a higher risk of interrogation and prosecution, therefore affecting their employment and employment opportunities.

### 3.7. Recommendation 7:

#### **Social norm change and transformative approach including public awareness:**

International organisations have committed resources by providing cash assistance and hygiene and dignity kits. However, the Lebanese government must proactively challenge social and cultural norms adversely impacting women, girls and gender nonconforming persons including in accessing sexual and reproductive health needs and unpaid care. These efforts must be made in a sustained and long-term manner through public awareness programmes, gender sensitisation of key stakeholders and targeted policy changes.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

#### **Evidence:**

Interviewees outlined that existing gender inequalities and norms were exacerbated during the pandemic in terms of women's and girls' role in the household, care-giving work, vulnerability to SGBV and lack of access to health services. Interviewees also reported that norms, stigma and financial constraints prevented women from seeking sexual and reproductive health services including contraceptives. A [survey](#) conducted by Plan International reported that a majority of adolescent girls reported not having physical access to menstrual products and/or the financial resources to buy menstrual products. Interviewees also reported that sexual and reproductive health services were available for the LGBTQIA community only in Beirut.

The inequalities are further deepened due to the effects of the economic collapse, the Beirut port explosion and the lockdown, reinforcing gender norms. Interviewees observed that this led to loss of employment, financial dependence on husbands and additional responsibilities relating to their children's education. The impact differs according to the socio-economic profile. In the case of migrant domestic workers, employers stopped the payment of wages, and in some cases, abandoned them. As a result, some social norms have become further entrenched.

Interviewees noted that existing gender inequalities became more reinforced during the lockdown. This increased the expectations of women's and girls' roles in the household and care-giving responsibilities. Interviewees observed that women's and girls' situation was worsening by the day. Interviewees recommended that there is an urgent need for creating awareness among local actors and stakeholders about the issues arising from gender inequality and the impact of COVID-19.

### 3.8. Recommendation 8:

**Comprehensive, coordinated and accountable approach:** The implementation of national action plans and the international community's intervention must be monitored for efficiency and opened for public feedback. This would ensure that target communities and affected persons can report service gaps and rights violations. Additionally, the feedback and accountability mechanisms would contribute to bridging the data and knowledge gap on the impact of COVID-19 on different communities.

**Recommendation for: multilateral institutions, donors, national and local governments, INGOs and CSOs.**

#### Evidence:

Continuous, holistic assessments, upon which response plans are developed, are required for the international community and the government to prioritise essential services according to different demographics with a gendered lens. In conjunction, feedback mechanisms also ensure accountability and provide a platform to assess whether the needs of the community are being met, gauge the gaps and examine the effectiveness of the national action plans and humanitarian services. This will also assist grassroots organisations and advocacy organisations to approach donor organisations to seek funding that reaches the community.

Interviewees reported that there was a data gap around the impact of COVID-19, particularly with respect to women and girls who are burdened with care-giving work and are victims and survivors of domestic violence. They noted that the international community contributed to raising awareness about the gendered impact of COVID-19. However, the absence of women's and girls' participation in policy-making created an information gap.

This creates an urgent need for collecting disaggregated data based on age, gender, employment status and caregiving responsibilities to assess the impact of the pandemic combined with the national economic crisis and the Beirut explosion. These assessments should be inclusive of the experiences of marginalised groups to examine whether response plans meet the needs of the population. Effective assessments of the current and upcoming policies of the government, and of relief work conducted by CSOs will provide further evidence on making response plans more inclusive.

# 4. Partners

**Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)** is an independent, non-profit organisation comprised of a network and think tank of prominent human rights lawyers and advisors. LAW provides innovative legal assistance to the least represented people in fragile and conflict-affected states. LAW has been at the forefront of the fight against gender inequality violence against women and girls in Lebanon, providing legal assistance, representation and awareness to thousands of vulnerable women and girls.

**ABAAD – Resource Center for Gender Equality** is a UN ECOSOC accredited organisation that aims to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region, comprised of dedicated activists, lawyers, consultants, social workers and researchers. As a leading actor on gender equality in the region, ABAAD is perceived as a reliable reference and partner by the local, regional and international entities that promote gender equality, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

**Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)** is the UK's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) civil society network. We are a membership organisation of NGOs in the fields of development, human rights, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. We were founded to promote WPS, including United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. GAPS promotes and holds the UK government to account on its international commitments to women and girls in conflict areas worldwide.

This is an independent report commissioned and funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government, however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Funded by:



HM Government





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