

# Gender Audit of Collective Displacement Shelters in Lebanon

Gender Audit of Collective Displacement Shelters  
Lebanon | May 2026  
Prepared by ABAAD | Resource Center for Gender Equality  
Shelter Sector | Protection Cluster | Lebanon Response

<b>52</b> SITES AUDITED	<b>7</b> GOVERNORATES COVERED	<b>8,091</b> DISPLACED PERSONS HOSTED
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Protection analysis for safer, more dignified collective displacement shelters

## Acknowledgements

ABAAD gratefully acknowledges the support of its partners whose contributions under their respective projects made this Gender Audit exercise and report possible. This collective support reflects a shared commitment to strengthening evidence-based protection analysis and advancing safer, more dignified conditions for women and girls in Lebanon, as well as their families and communities.



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<b>COVERAGE</b> 52 sites across 7 governorates	<b>ASSESSMENT TOOL</b> 58 indicators across 3 sectors	<b>DATASET</b> 3,016 observations reviewed
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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of ABAAD's Gender Audit of collective displacement shelters across Lebanon, conducted between March and May 2026. A total of 52 sites were assessed across seven governorates, hosting 8,091 displaced persons. The audit evaluated compliance across three key sectors: Shelter, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), and Distributions using a structured observational tool developed in line with international humanitarian standards.

<b>52</b> SITES AUDITED	<b>63%</b> COMPLIANT	<b>30%</b> NON-COMPLIANT	<b>7%</b> NOT OBSERVED
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The overall compliance rate across all 3,016 observations stands at 63%, with 30% non-compliant responses and 7% not observed. While this reflects meaningful progress in some areas, critical gaps persist in shelter privacy, gender-sensitive infrastructure, and protection information.

### Key Headline

Door locks are absent in 58% of shelters. Dedicated safe spaces for women and girls do not exist in 52% of sites. PSEA awareness materials are visible in only 17% of shelter areas and 10% of WASH facilities. These are not incidental gaps; they represent structural failures that directly compromise the safety and dignity of displaced women, girls, and vulnerable individuals.

## Summary of Findings by Sector

Across the three sectors, the audit recorded the following aggregate compliance:

Sector	Compliant	Non-Compliant	Not Obs.
Shelter (all indicators)	63%	30%	7%
WASH (all indicators)	60%	34%	6%
Distributions	72%	17%	11%
Overall	63%	30%	7%

## 1. Introduction

The 2026 escalation of hostilities in Lebanon has generated mass displacement at a national scale and intensified existing protection risks. By 20 April 2026, Lebanon recorded 8,619 hostilities and 2,387 cumulative fatalities, while 1,049,328 displaced individuals had been registered by the Government of Lebanon's Disaster Risk Management Unit as displaced. Of the total displaced population, only 117,421 people are living in 631 available collective shelters, with a peak of around 140,000 people in 700 shelters, indicating that the majority of people (~89% of internally displaced persons) are residing in host communities, rented apartments, unfinished buildings, streets, or other precarious arrangements. Women and girls represented roughly 52 percent of the displaced population, including an estimated 13,500 pregnant women.

ABAAD – Resource Center for Gender Equality conducted a systematic Gender Audit of 52 collective shelter sites between March and May 2026. The audit was designed to assess the extent to which humanitarian standards for gender-responsive shelter, WASH, and distribution are being met in practice, with a particular focus on the safety, privacy, and dignity of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.

## 1.1 About ABAAD

ABAAD - Resource Center for Gender Equality is a Lebanon-based civil society organization working to advance gender equality and protection from gender-based violence. ABAAD combines survivor-centered services, prevention, advocacy, capacity strengthening and humanitarian action to support safer, more equitable communities.

## 1.2 Methodology

The audit was conducted by ABAAD social workers deployed to 52 sites across seven governorates. Each site was assessed using a structured observational checklist covering 58 indicators across three sectors: Shelter, WASH, and Distributions. Responses were recorded as compliant (Yes), non-compliant (No), or Not Observed. Qualitative observations in Arabic and English were recorded to provide context for non-compliance. Donor partners supporting the audit included NPA, World Vision (WV), Solidarités International (SI), DIAKONIA, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and FCDO.

### Limitations

The audit is based on direct observation at a single point in time and reflects conditions at the moment of assessment. Conditions in collective shelters change rapidly, and this report should be read as a baseline snapshot rather than a definitive or static picture. Some indicators could not be assessed due to access or time constraints, hence the 'Not Observed' category.

## 2. Site and Population Profile

### 2.1 Geographic Coverage

The 52 assessed sites span all seven Lebanese governorates, with the highest concentration in Mount Lebanon (11 sites), Bekaa (10 sites), and Baalbek-El Hermel (9 sites).

Governorate	Sites	% of Total
Mount Lebanon	11	21%
Bekaa	10	19%
Baalbek-El Hermel	9	17%
El Nabatieh	7	13%
Akkar	6	12%
South	5	10%
North	4	8%

### 2.2 Site Typology

The overwhelming majority of assessed sites (50 of 52, or 96%) are Government of Lebanon (GOL) sites, collective shelter spaces opened and managed by Lebanese ministries, primarily schools, and coordinated through the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Unit. Two sites fall under the 'Other' category: a dispensary and a church. No Non-GOL, self-settled, or commercial sites were assessed in this round.

Of the 52 sites, 46 (88%) are housed in educational facilities; public schools converted for emergency shelter use. Five sites (10%) are public government facilities. One site is a community/religious building. This heavy reliance on schools carries implications for educational continuity as well as for shelter design: schools were built for daytime use, not for overnight habitation, and typically lack the privacy infrastructure; partitions, private sleeping areas, secure locks that displaced families require.

33  
In-Camp sites (63%)

19  
Off-Camp sites (37%)

## 2.3 Population Demographics

The 52 assessed sites host a combined 8,091 displaced persons, with an average of 159 people per shelter. The maximum recorded occupancy at a single site is 640 persons (more than four times the average) reflecting severe overcrowding in the most impacted locations. The minimum recorded occupancy is 21 persons.

The population includes a significant proportion of groups with heightened protection needs:

<b>343</b> FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS	<b>602</b> ADOLESCENT GIRLS	<b>61</b> PREGNANT WOMEN	<b>92</b> LACTATING WOMEN
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24  
Unaccompanied/separated children

56  
Women & girls with disabilities

### Context

The presence of 343 female-headed households, 602 adolescent girls, 61 pregnant women, 92 lactating women, 24 unaccompanied children, and 56 women and girls with disabilities within the assessed shelter population underscores the acute importance of gender-responsive programming. These groups face compounded vulnerability in collective shelter settings and require dedicated, specialized measures.

## 3. Shelter Sector Findings

The shelter sector assessment covered 15 indicators examining physical safety, privacy, space adequacy, access for vulnerable groups, and the availability of protection information. The following findings reflect conditions observed across all 52 sites.

### 3.1 Physical Safety and Infrastructure

#### Lighting

77% of sites were found to have adequate lighting in shelter areas. However, 11 sites (21%) reported significant lighting deficiencies. Field notes consistently identified irregular electricity supply as the primary driver, with near-total reliance on solar power that suffers from malfunctions, limited operating hours, and frequent maintenance failures. State electricity supply and generator access are severely rationed or entirely absent in some cases.

Particularly concerning is the lighting situation in essential facilities: restrooms, access corridors, and outdoor areas are frequently unlit after dark. This forces residents to resort to unsafe alternatives such as candles and hand torches that create serious safety risks, especially for women and girls accessing sanitation facilities at night.

#### Space Adequacy

71% of sites were assessed as providing adequate space for the number of residents hosted. However, 15 sites (29%) present severe overcrowding, with multiple families sharing single classrooms, hallways, corridors, and even outdoor playgrounds. Field notes describe situations where up to 15–17 persons share a single room intended for one family, and where families without assigned rooms sleep on open playground surfaces with no shelter from elements or view.

## Door Locks - Critical Gap

Only 40% of sites have functional internal locks on room doors. This is one of the most critical findings of the audit. In the majority of shelters, rooms and sanitation facilities cannot be secured from the inside. Where keys exist, they are frequently held by school administration or site management rather than distributed to residents, effectively denying families the ability to control access to their own living spaces.

### Critical Risk

The absence of internal door locks, particularly in sites where unrelated men and women share spaces or corridors, constitutes a direct protection risk. Single women, female-headed households, and unaccompanied children are especially vulnerable. Improvised solutions such as wedging furniture against doors, tying handles with cloth are widely used but wholly inadequate.

## Emergency Exits

Emergency exits are clearly marked, accessible, and verified safe only in 42% of assessed sites. In 44% of sites, emergency exits are inadequate or unmarked; 12% could not be assessed. The majority of sites have a single entry and exit point shared for both regular access and emergencies. This represents a life-safety risk for the thousands of persons housed in these facilities, particularly at night when lighting is minimal.

## 3.2 Privacy and Gender-Sensitive Arrangements

### Partition Walls

Internal partition walls between families or between male and female residents are present in only 46% of sites. In over half of assessed shelters, there is no structured separation. Families rely on blankets, bed sheets, furniture, and improvised barriers to create minimal privacy. Where multiple, unrelated families share the same room, these improvisations are often the only barrier between sleeping spaces.

### Visual Privacy

75% of sites have adequate shelter materials and design to prevent visual intrusion from outside. In the remaining 25% of sites (13 shelters), windows, corridor openings, and doorway glass panels are left exposed, allowing outsiders to see directly into sleeping and living areas. Residents self-manage this gap by covering windows with cloth, towels, newspapers, and paper makeshift solutions that provide no structural guarantee of privacy.

### Separation of Single Women and FHHs

Single women and female-headed households (FHHs) are not assigned to shared sleeping spaces with unrelated men in 75% of sites. However, in 11 sites (21%), field workers observed situations where gender-separated sleeping arrangements could not be ensured, typically due to inadequate space. The audit recorded specific cases of single women residing in rooms alongside unrelated families headed by men.

### Safe Spaces for Women and Girls

A dedicated, private safe space for women and girls within or adjacent to the shelter exists in only 48% of assessed sites. In the remaining 52%, no such space exists. This gap is most commonly attributed to full occupancy of all available rooms; however, even where informal arrangements are made, corners of shared rooms or outdoor space lack the privacy, security, and consistency required to constitute a safe space.

## 3.3 Access for Vulnerable Groups

Access for women (88%) and girls (88%) was rated adequate in the majority of sites. However, access for persons with disabilities was assessed as adequate in only 57% of sites, with 40% rated non-compliant. The multi-storey structure of most educational facilities without ramps, elevators, or accessible sanitation on ground floors creates significant mobility barriers. Elderly persons, pregnant women in advanced

stages, and persons with physical disabilities depend entirely on family members or other residents for movement between floors.

### 3.4 Protection Information

The absence of protection information materials is one of the most consistent and alarming findings across the entire audit. Across 52 sites:

#### **PSEA materials visible in only 17% of sites**



Survivors and at-risk individuals cannot report abuse or exploitation if they do not know their rights or the channels available to them. The near-absence of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) materials leaves the overwhelming majority of shelter residents without any visible information about reporting mechanisms.

#### **GBV awareness materials visible in only 8% of sites**



Gender-based violence is a known risk in collective shelter settings, heightened by overcrowding, loss of privacy, and the breakdown of community support structures. Yet fewer than 1 in 10 assessed sites displays any GBV awareness or referral information.

#### **Disability/inclusion materials visible in only 4% of sites**



Persons with disabilities and their caregivers are among the most invisible populations in humanitarian response. The near-total absence of disability-inclusive communication materials at assessed sites reflects a systemic gap in inclusion-responsive programming.

## 4. WASH Sector Findings

The WASH sector assessment covered 16 indicators examining proximity, privacy, sex-segregation, physical accessibility, menstrual hygiene management (MHM), and protection information at WASH facilities.

### 4.1 Proximity and Accessibility

85% of sites have water points, latrines, and WASH facilities within the required maximum distance of 50 meters from shelter areas. Accessible WASH facilities in the facility layout are confirmed at 81% of sites. However, field notes from the remaining sites describe scenarios where functioning toilets are located in distant school yards, on inaccessible upper or lower floors, or shared with adjacent buildings, effectively increasing travel distance and reducing safety, particularly at night.

### 4.2 Sex Segregation and Privacy

Sex-segregated WASH facilities are available at 71% of sites; a critical standard that is unmet in nearly 30% of assessed shelters. In these cases, men and women share the same sanitation facilities, creating acute privacy and dignity concerns. Visual privacy within WASH facilities is adequate at 73% of sites; in the remaining 27%, facilities lack functioning doors, proper screening, or adequate lighting, with some residents resorting to cloth barriers for privacy.

Latrines can be locked from the inside in 69% of sites. The 31% non-compliance rate mirrors the shelter-level finding on door locks and reflects a systemic gap in basic security infrastructure. Combined with inadequate visual privacy and shared facilities, this creates conditions where women and girls face serious risks when using sanitation at night.



### 5.3 NFI Card Issuance

NFI and ration cards are issued to allow women and other at-risk groups to receive them directly in only 48% of cases where this was applicable. In the majority of assessed distributions, cards and kits are issued to the designated head of household, who is typically male. This practice, while administratively convenient, systematically excludes women including FHHs, separated women, and women in difficult marital situations from direct access to essential supplies.

### 5.4 IEC and PSEA Materials at Distribution Points

Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) banners informing beneficiaries that aid is free and providing PSEA reporting mechanisms are visible at distribution points in only 29% of assessed activities. PSEA and GBV messages in distributed NFI kits are present in only 25% of cases. The majority of distribution activities lack any accompanying protection messaging, representing a missed opportunity to reach large numbers of displaced persons with critical rights information.

## 6. Critical Protection Gaps

The following gaps, based on the audit data, are assessed as the most urgent protection risks requiring immediate action. They are presented in order of severity and reach; the combination of how many people are affected and the severity of the protection risk posed.

**1 Door locks absent in 58% of shelters**

Functional internal locks for room doors and sanitation facilities are absent in the majority of assessed shelters. This is the single most widespread and actionable physical protection gap. Residents — particularly single women, FHHs, and those sharing spaces with unrelated persons — cannot secure their living spaces. Improvised solutions (furniture against doors, tied handles) are entirely inadequate. Keys, where they exist, are often controlled by administration, not residents.

**2 Safe spaces for women and girls absent in 52% of sites**

More than half of assessed sites have no dedicated safe space for women and girls. This eliminates a critical mechanism for confidential case management, GBV service referral, psychosocial support, and dignified distribution of hygiene and dignity items. Overcrowding is the most commonly cited reason, but even low-cost interim solutions (designated room corners with privacy screens, scheduled time-based access to shared rooms) are rarely employed.

**3 Internal partitions absent in 54% of shelters**

Over half of shelters have no structured internal division between families or between male and female residents. This means unrelated men and women — and unrelated families — sleep, dress, and conduct daily activities in shared, undivided spaces. Blankets and furniture are the primary coping mechanisms. This represents a fundamental breach of privacy and dignity, and creates ongoing protection risks.

**4 Emergency exits inadequate or unmarked in 44% of sites**

The majority of assessed shelters rely on a single entry-exit point. Emergency exits are not clearly marked, adequately lit, or verified safe for use at night in 44% of sites. For facilities hosting hundreds of persons — many with mobility limitations — this represents a life-safety risk.

**5 MHM materials available at only 37% of sites**

Menstrual hygiene materials are absent at 63% of assessed sites, with no regular resupply mechanism. Half of sites also lack private disposal mechanisms and washing/drying areas. This is not only a dignity issue but a health risk, and disproportionately impacts adolescent girls who may have had no prior experience managing menstruation in a collective setting.

### **PSEA, GBV, and disability materials near-absent**

6

Protection awareness materials are visible in fewer than 1 in 5 shelter sites and fewer than 1 in 10 WASH areas. This near-total absence means that the vast majority of displaced persons have no visible information about their rights, available services, or reporting channels. It also signals that protection mainstreaming is not consistently integrated into shelter programming.

### **NFI cards not issued directly to women in 52% of distributions**

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The practice of issuing NFI cards exclusively to male heads of household systematically excludes women from direct access to essential supplies. This affects female-headed households, separated women, and women with limited household decision-making power.

## **7. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this audit, ABAAD recommends the following actions, organized by urgency and timeline. These recommendations are addressed to implementing partners, site management authorities, the Shelter Sector, and the Protection Cluster.

### **7.1 Immediate Actions (Within 4 Weeks)**

1. Install and repair functional internal door locks on all room doors and WASH facility doors across 100% of assessed sites. Ensure keys are distributed to and held by the household residing in each room, not only by administration.
2. Procure and distribute plastic sheeting, curtains, or partition materials to all sites where internal partitions are absent. Prioritize sites with more than 10 families per shared space.
3. Ensure emergency exits are clearly marked with visible signage and emergency lighting at all 52 assessed sites. Conduct a rapid fire-safety assessment where only one entry/exit exists.
4. Conduct an immediate sweep of all sites to post PSEA, GBV, and disability/inclusion awareness materials in both Arabic and English in shelter areas and WASH facilities. Include reporting hotlines prominently.
5. Procure menstrual hygiene kits for distribution at all sites where MHM materials are absent, and establish a monthly resupply schedule in coordination with NFI sector actors.
6. Develop and implement a standardized Protection Information Package (PIP) to be posted at every collective shelter site and WASH facility, including PSEA hotlines, GBV referral pathways, and disability-inclusive communication.
7. Establish gender-responsive complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) at all sites, with dedicated female staff members responsible for receiving and following up on complaints from women and girls.
8. Designate and secure a dedicated safe space for women and girls at every assessed site. Where full rooms are unavailable, work with site management to schedule timed, exclusive access to shared spaces, and install privacy screens.

### **7.2 Short-Term Actions (1–3 Months)**

1. Review NFI card issuance protocols at all active distributions to allow direct issuance to any adult household member, with specific provisions to enable FHHs and separated women to receive cards independently.
2. Install private disposal bins for MHM products in all female WASH facilities. Designate and screen a private area in each site for washing and drying undergarments.
3. Conduct basic accessibility assessments at multi-storey sites and identify interim measures to support persons with disabilities and elderly residents in accessing WASH facilities and services.
4. Strengthen access monitoring and site management at all sites to ensure consistent presence, controlled entry and exit, and documented check-in/check-out of residents.

5. Advocate with site management authorities and the DRM Unit to fully utilize underused shelter capacity (locked floors, unused rooms) to reduce overcrowding and enable proper family-based room allocation.
6. Install ramps, accessible sanitation, and mobility aids at priority sites identified as inaccessible to persons with disabilities and elderly residents.

### 7.3 Ongoing Monitoring

1. Maintain the strength of distribution sector conduct by institutionalizing female staff inclusion as a non-negotiable standard and continuing respectful, inclusive service delivery practices.
2. Repeat the Gender Audit on a quarterly basis for all active collective shelter sites, with particular attention to sites in Baalbek-El Hermel and Bekaa where overcrowding and protection gaps are most acute.
3. Ensure all audit findings, including this report, are shared with the Shelter Sector, Protection Cluster, MOSA, and relevant donors, and that corrective action plans are developed and tracked.

## 8. Conclusion

Lebanon's collective displacement shelters are hosting thousands of vulnerable individuals under conditions that frequently fall short of minimum humanitarian standards. The Gender Audit findings presented in this report reveal a system under extraordinary pressure; understaffed, underfunded, and operating in facilities never designed for habitation.

The 63% overall compliance rate reflects the genuine efforts of implementing partners, social workers, and site management authorities working in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. The strength in distribution practices, including respectful conduct, female staff inclusion, and safe access for women, demonstrate that gender-responsive programming is achievable even in emergency contexts.

But the failures documented here, including absent door locks, no safe spaces for women, near-zero protection information, and a menstrual hygiene crisis affecting 63% of sites, are not inevitable. They are addressable gaps with known solutions, most of which require coordination and resources, not impossibly complex interventions.

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